

# Team brief guidelines



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### 1 INTRODUCTION

Many large organisations use team briefing as a way of keeping staff members up to date with key organisational decisions, progress and information. They're also a forum for managers to listen to staff feedback and answer any questions.

These guidelines give you all the information you'll need to carry out a successful team brief here at The University of Manchester.

### 2 WHAT IS TEAM BRIEF?

The team brief brings managers and supervisors in every part of the Professional Support Services (PSS) together with their teams on a face-to-face basis once a month.

Research has shown that face-to-face communication between managers/supervisors and their teams is really important in ensuring the efficient and effective operation of an organisation.

The University Staff Survey carried out in 2013 and 2015 revealed that most PSS staff felt that team brief was useful, but they'd like more opportunity to feed their thoughts and ideas upwards to the PSS Leadership Team (PSS LT).

The team brief process has therefore been reviewed and these new guidelines reflect the changes which have been introduced.

### 3 TEAM BRIEF TRAINING

As a manager or supervisor, you are vital to the success of your team brief. Training is strongly recommended if you're required to deliver team brief on a regular basis. There's a team brief workshop available at Staff Learning and Development. This will give you all the information you need to deliver a successful team brief – as well as being an opportunity to practice some of the skills you'll need.

Newly appointed or promoted managers in the PSS are required to attend team brief training. To find the dates of the next team brief workshops contact Staff Learning and Development at: [StaffLD@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:StaffLD@manchester.ac.uk) or call 52525, or to book your place visit:

[www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/employment/training/personal-development/communication-skills](http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/employment/training/personal-development/communication-skills)

### 4 TEAM BRIEF CALENDAR

#### Academic year 2016-17

#### Core Brief

5 October	9 November	7 December
1 February	1 March	6 April
3 May	7 June	6 July

### 5 THE BENEFITS

- Team brief provides a channel for delivering clear messages from the Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer and the PSS LT.
- It's an opportunity for you to meet with your team face-to-face on a regular basis to deliver a range of news and information relevant to your team.
- It ensures that your team is well informed and reduces misunderstandings/rumours.
- It's two-way - it's not just about giving information, but listening and responding to questions and concerns from your team and ensuring feedback reaches the PSS LT.

## 6 THE PROCESS

The team brief process operates as a cascade throughout the PSS, with managers/supervisors at every level delivering a mix of the PSS-wide and local team information and news.

There's nothing particularly special about the process that we use here at the University – many other organisations use a very similar approach because it's a quick and effective way of keeping teams informed and gives their employees a voice.

### i) The start of the cascade

The team brief process begins on the first Wednesday of the month when the Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer outlines PSS-wide updates with the PSS LT. This is called CoreMunicate (previously Core Brief).

A written version of CoreMunicate is made available to each member of the PSS LT. Each member of PSS LT must nominate a deputy who should attend this verbal CoreMunicate session in their absence.

### ii) Adding the local brief at a Directorate/ Faculty Office level

PSS LT members must then deliver the CoreMunicate to their senior teams. At this point they must also add their own local briefing information. This information should include any items which they believe the whole Directorate/ Faculty team needs to know about. The proportion of the team brief should be 30% CoreMunicate: 70% local brief.

### iii) The onward cascade

These managers then brief their own teams – again including the CoreMunicate, the local brief from their senior management team and any information which they themselves feel their teams should be aware of.

The cascade of briefings should continue throughout each level of management/supervision until all teams have received a face-to-face team brief.

The cascade will look and feel very different in each part of the PSS/Faculty Office. In some areas the cascade will be very short, while in others it may feature many different management and supervisory levels.

To ensure that all PSS staff receive the information in a timely manner, all briefings should be delivered within five working days of the cascade starting – see **4 Team Brief Calendar**.

## 7 PREPARING YOUR TEAM BRIEF

The single most important factor in the success of the team brief process is the person who is giving the brief – that's you! The following points will help you to prepare for your team brief.

### i) What's my role?

First, you need to establish whether you are responsible for delivering team brief to your team. Wherever possible the person leading the team brief should be the line manager of the people they are briefing, however in some cases this might not be practical ie: if you only line manage one or two people. If you're not sure, then speak to your line manager for clarification, using the advice in the 'Arranging the logistics' section below.

Each Directorate/Faculty Office has been asked to keep a list of the managers/supervisors who are responsible for delivering team brief.

### ii) Arranging the logistics

#### • Timing

Look at the **4 Team Brief Calendar** and work out when you need to deliver your brief. Set a series of dates for your team brief - setting dates for the whole academic year is a good idea so that your staff can put the dates into their diaries. When choosing dates, aim for a day when most of your team is around - take into consideration those who work part-time or shifts/rotas.

#### • Size

The ideal team brief is made up of around 4-15 people. If you're responsible for large numbers of staff then it makes sense to identify supervisors/managers/deputies within your team who can deliver team brief meetings to smaller groups of staff.

#### • Venue

Choose a suitable venue for your team brief. Take into consideration the number of people who will be involved in the brief and any access requirements they may have.

## 8 THE CONTENT

Team briefs should be made up of 30% CoreMunicate and 70% local brief content.

As with all meetings, it's best to put in some preparation beforehand. You could write a short agenda with headings and notes of key points – to remind you of what you want to get across.

Remember, you'll be delivering your brief verbally so you want it to sound natural - not scripted.

Here are some pointers to help you prepare.

### CoreMunicate

Your manager will tell you about CoreMunicate from the Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer. They may also give you a printed or email version of this. You can let your staff see this if you think it would help them be better prepared for the team brief, but doing this should not replace the face-to-face team brief meeting itself.

Before your team brief, make sure you read through CoreMunicate and see how you can make the topics relevant to your team. You should never read out CoreMunicate word for word in your team brief meeting.

Remember that CoreMunicate is written for all 5,000 PSS staff so it can't be relevant to everyone. It's your job to take the information provided in CoreMunicate and make it as relevant as you can to your team. You can do this by explaining the significance of CoreMunicate items to your team.

### CoreMunicate discussion topic

A new feature of CoreMunicate is a monthly discussion topic. This is either a question or topic which is put forward by members of the PSS LT which they've asked for specific feedback, ideas and suggestions about. These topics are usually forward looking and are aimed at gaining feedback on projects which are currently underway, being planned or have just been launched.

You should ensure that you include this discussion point in your team brief. You should also make sure that you take a record of the feedback, ideas and suggestions you receive and let your line manager have these as soon as possible after the team brief. There is a paper feedback form at the back of this document for you to use, or you can email your feedback to your line manager. Feedback will be presented at every PSS LT meeting.

### Local brief

The majority of your local brief should be made up of information which is relevant to your team. Depending on where you are in the team brief cascade, you might already have received some elements of your local brief from your own line manager.

You should also always include your own local brief information which is relevant to just your own team. The 'Four Ps' is a good way to think about what to include in your local brief:

#### ► Progress

A key question team brief can help answer is "How are we doing?" Your team needs to know how what it's doing contributes to the University's overall aims and goals. You might want to cover:

- Figures, returns, numbers, financial results
- Updates on the progress of key projects
- Outline and discuss new projects
- Success stories and significant achievements
- Quality issues

#### ► Policy/plans

People like advance warning about things that are going to happen and this is an opportunity to float new ideas and outline planned proposals to your team for discussion. The kinds of topics you might want to cover include:

- Reorganisations
- New services
- Building/office moves
- New projects
- Changes in procedures

#### ► People

Team brief is all about people so it's a great opportunity to:

- Welcome new team members
- Say goodbye and thank you to staff who are retiring/leaving
- Praise work which has been done well
- Tell people about changes in locations/promotions etc

#### ► Points For Action

Spend some time on the question: "What do we need to do?" What actions need to be carried out, when and by whom? This section can be used for:

- Reminders and deadlines
- Talk through new procedures

## 9 DELIVERING TEAM BRIEF

- **Be clear** – avoid unfamiliar technicalities, acronyms, names and jargon
- **Be brief** – don't ramble or go off the point
- **Be interesting** – use real examples that the group will recognise to help bring CoreMunicate and local brief to life.
- **Be in control** – arrange the group so that you are its focus. Watch the reaction you are getting as you go along
- **Be positive** – if you appear nervous or unsure it can give your staff the impression that you don't really believe what you're saying. Don't give your own personal views about decisions which have been taken at a University level
- **Be you** – use your own words and your own style

## 10 FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW UP

One of the main reasons for doing team brief is to seek the views of your staff and gain their feedback. While you're not expected to know the answers to every question your teams put to you, there are some things you can do to encourage and handle feedback:

### Anticipate questions it's likely will be asked

Put yourself in the shoes of your team members – what questions would you ask? You could even come up with some answers in your own mind before you start. You should be able to answer most questions arising from the local brief element of your team brief.

### Commit to finding out the answers to questions you can't answer straight away

If someone asks a question which you don't know the answer to, make sure that you get back to the person with an answer within five working days of the team brief.

### Take a note of feedback

There's a feedback form available at the end of this document and you should use this to record the feedback from your team meeting and give it to your line manager. Alternatively you could email your comments to your line manager. It's best to do this as soon as your team brief finishes – it shouldn't take long and it will be easier to do while it's fresh in your mind.

### What happens to this feedback?

It's vital that you send feedback from your team brief to your line manager. In this way, feedback will work its way up the management cascade. Each PSS Director or Director of Faculty Operations will be asked to provide feedback on the CoreMunicate discussion topic at the next PSS LT meeting.

## 11 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How often should I hold a team brief?**

Monthly (apart from January and August) – see the Team Briefing Calendar. You should organize your team brief well in advance and let your team know about the dates, times and venues.

### **How long should my team brief last?**

Between 15-30 minutes – you can keep this flexible.

### **How many people should there be in a team brief?**

Ideally between 4 and 15 people. If you're part of a very large team you may need to look at the way you structure team brief. Perhaps you can delegate responsibility to deputies/supervisors who could deliver a brief to a smaller group of team members. Discuss this with your line manager if you're in any doubt.

### **My team is geographically dispersed and it would be hard to get them all together for a 30 minute meeting. What should I do?**

It's still likely that you'll meet with your team at least once a month for a team or operational meeting. If this is the case you should carry out the team briefing at the same time ie: before the operational team meeting. You should make sure that you make the distinction between the team brief and the operational meeting so that attendees are clear what's going on.

### **I'm responsible for front line staff and I can't just shut down essential services to call a team briefing meeting. What should I do?**

Try to arrange your team brief at a time when the majority of your team can attend. If however there are members of the team who can't leave their post you could look into arranging cover for half an hour so that they can attend. If this is not possible, you may have to brief these members of staff separately.

### **What should I do about briefing absentees?**

You should make sure that those who are unable to attend the team brief still receive the information which was discussed and are given an opportunity to contribute or ask questions. This may mean that you have to speak to them individually when they are back at work. You should try to do this as soon as they are available so that the briefing cascade is completed.

### **What should I do with the feedback I receive?**

It's really important that you do something constructive with the feedback you receive - your team will quickly tire of the system if they feel their views are not being taken seriously. Fill in a paper form (see the Feedback Form at the end of this document) or simply send an email to your line manager.

### **I'm not very confident doing face-to-face briefings - can I get some training?**

Regular team briefing workshops take place at Staff Learning and Development and you can find out more information and dates by contacting them at [StaffLD@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:StaffLD@manchester.ac.uk) or calling 52525.

It's particularly important that any newly promoted or appointed managers or supervisors attend this training.