

Rewarding Exceptional Performance Guidance Notes for Managers / Panels / Employees 2023-2024

1. Introduction

Rewarding exceptional performance should be a positive experience for both the line managers involved and the employees for whom nominations are made. It is a time to celebrate and reward employees who have made a significant contribution to the workings of the University.

These guidance notes supplement the [Rewarding Exceptional Performance Policy](#) and should be read in conjunction with the policy.

2. The difference between one-off and sustained exceptional performance

An employee may do something on a one-off basis to an exceptional standard. This may or may not have been a normal requirement of their role.

Whereas sustained exceptional performance is more likely (although not exclusively) to involve carrying out a requirement of their role to an exceptional level over a long period of time.

Where a case for sustained exceptional performance is approved, the employee will be awarded one incremental point which is permanent. Therefore, maintaining that level of exceptional performance will continue to be rewarded and they should not be considered for further sustained exceptional performance awards unless there is a significant increase/step change in the level of their contribution.

Note – where an employee is expected to undertake duties/responsibilities at a higher grade, this should be considered through the re-grading procedure or through an acting-up or additional responsibility allowance. These cases should be discussed with your People and Organisational Development Partner in the first instance.

Those who received Incident Recognition payments in relation to the cyber and marking/assessment boycott should not be nominated under REP for associated activities unless part of a broader case evidencing efforts.

3. Making nominations

Line managers have a responsibility to consider whether anyone in their team should be put forward for an award. The number of nominations will vary from one area to another. However, line managers should ensure that nominations are representative of their staffing ratios and of the diverse ways employees contribute. Data will be circulated by your People and OD Partner to assist you with this.

Line managers may want to tell an employee that they have been nominated for an exceptional performance award. However, some managers choose not to do so to avoid disappointment if

unsuccessful. If an employee is successful this may be a welcome surprise. Please note that rejection letters will only be sent to those employees who were made aware of their nomination. Most nominations will be made by line managers, but employees are also able to self-nominate. In these circumstances it is expected that the individual will discuss their personal nomination with their line manager. The line manager must respect the right of the staff member to nominate themselves. However, the line manager must be honest and should clearly state their reasons as to whether they agree or disagree that the nomination demonstrates exceptional performance on the form and discuss this with the individual prior to submission. The line manager should be positive and constructive in their feedback.

The nomination will still be considered even if the line manager does not agree that it constitutes exceptional performance.

Nominations should consist of:

- i. Specific and detailed evidence of how the performance is considered to be exceptional and how it reflects the [University's values](#). (see Appendix 1 for examples)
- ii. A copy of the latest agreed job description. This helps provide context to the decision making panels and sets out the normal expectations in terms of duties/responsibilities of the role.
- iii. Supplementary documents may be included where they help to demonstrate the contribution made. For example:
 - Letters / email of commendations from colleagues / customers
 - Project summary reports
 - Examples of internal / external communications / publicity

4. How decisions are made

Panels can request further information to assist in their decision making to obtain a clear picture and 'feel' for the contribution made. This acknowledges that not all nominations will be written to the same standard.

The decisions are subjective, the panel will be determining in their view, based on the evidence provided, whether the contribution is exceptional enough to merit an award and is truly more than the normal expectations of a jobholder in that particular role.

Panel members are expected to have a monitoring role in ensuring that nominations are representative of the staffing ratios and of the diverse ways employees contribute. Your People and OD Partner will provide data to assist with this.

The panels (for Professional Services staff) will use an assessment system similar to shortlisting in order to help them consider the merits of each case. This will also be useful in providing feedback to the employee.

5. Feedback on successful and unsuccessful applications

Line managers will be issued with the REP outcome letters by People and OD Reward. If the nomination was successful, congratulate the employee and explain how much they will receive and when they can expect this.

Please note that rejection letters will only be provided for employees who were made aware of their nomination by their line manager. If an employee receives a rejection letter it is important that the line manager explains to employee the reasons why, based on the information provided by the panel. Line managers may seek further explanation if necessary, before holding this conversation. Line managers should also explain the right of appeal - the grounds upon which an appeal can be made and how to do this.

An individual must have sufficient grounds in order to appeal. An appeal cannot be made simply because the individual disagrees with the decision. The grounds can only be that:

- a) they believe the process was not carried out in accordance with the policy
- b) they believe, based on the feedback, that part of their nomination was not considered

If a nomination is unsuccessful the line manager may wish to consider recognising the employee's contribution through the [Thank You Scheme](#).

Appendix 1

All nominations should include specific and detailed evidence of how the performance is considered to be exceptional. For example, it may explain what they did which resulted in:

- A significant impact upon the operational effectiveness / enhancement of the workings of the University (e.g.) efficiencies / improvements in working methods which result in budgetary savings, or enhanced services / student experience
- Significantly exceeding agreed and realistic performance targets
- Completion of a project(s) to exceptional standards
- Responding to or managing significant and unpredictable events
- Maintaining service standards in the face of significant operational/resourcing difficulties
- Contributing to improvements/events of significant reputational importance to the University with far reaching implications
- Gaining recognition within / external to the University, (e.g.) as an exemplar of best practice in a particular field / activity with far reaching benefits
- Exceptional customer service (e.g.) going beyond normal expectations to assist colleagues / students / customers.
- Being an exemplar of Our Values: Knowledge, Wisdom, Humanity, Academic Freedom, Courage and Pioneering Spirit. <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/our-future/our-values>