

## Briefing Document for SUCU Caseworkers: Appraisal LEVEL 7 ERE & 4-6 ERE and MSA, TAE, CAO staff

This document is designed to support caseworkers dealing with appraisal related issues at the University of Southampton. It is not an exhaustive guide so please talk to Amanda Bitouche ([ucu@soton.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@soton.ac.uk)) or our Regional Official if you are unclear about what to do.

**We are aware that some members of staff are being asked to attend meetings with managers and HR, including so called 'protected conversations' where they are informed of capability, disciplinary procedures or asked to consider leaving the University. We advise that members should request to be accompanied by a colleague or UCU caseworker into such a meeting and are also entitled to ask the reason(s) for the meeting and who will be present. They should not agree to settlement or other offers made in a protected conversation/meeting.**

Please see SUSSED links for current policy and documentation. Amanda has copies of the PDFs outlining policy.

### Appraisal Process

Appraisal policy differs for ERE/non-ERE staff despite UCU request that the processes should be harmonised:  
ERE: "Appraisal is a shared responsibility between the appraisee and line manager"

MSA, TAE and CAO: "The line manager is responsible for undertaking the annual appraisal of their staff"

**This is an important distinction as shared responsibility is not described for non-ERE staff and this implies that only the line manager is responsible.**

<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Roles%20and%20Responsibilities.aspx>

### *Closing of Appraisal*

The Appraisee should review the Appraiser's comments at the end of the appraisal process/form, and be able to respond, before the Appraisal is closed/submitted.

There is explicit guidance in the PDFs:

Appraisal – ERE staff only. From: HR/Reward Date: 28 May 2014 and

Appraisal – MSA, TAE and CAO staff From: HR/Reward Date: 27 October 2015

and here <https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Following%20the%20Meeting.aspx>

## *Disagreements*

The procedure for disagreements is described on the Appraisal Website.

<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Equality%20and%20Fairness.aspx>

Should an occasion arise where an appraisee does not agree with the outcome of the appraisal process, the head of department or major function will act as arbiter. (Should the head of department or major function be one of the parties to the appraisal process, this responsibility will pass up the line).

The role of arbiter is to ensure that the outcomes of the appraisal process are reasonable and in line with the expectations and standards of the department. After consideration and consultation with both parties, the arbiter will append their comments to the appraisal record.

If the appraisee remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may invoke the University's [grievance procedure](#) if they feel that any aspect of the appraisal process has not been followed correctly.

Note this includes the possibility of being given an appraisal rating they do not agree with (see below). In supporting casework, members should be aware of this.

## Appraisal Ratings

### *Definition of Expectation*

The definition of ratings 1-5 is meant to be defined locally. FOR ERE: this is at a discipline level (e.g. academic unit/subject area) within Faculty.

For MSA, TAE, CAO: this is defined locally within Service or designated Faculty. If this has not been done, then staff cannot assess if they have met/exceeded expectations, and this should be highlighted as a breach of policy.

However, appraisals are now also 'calibrated' - Deans/Executive Directors will:

- Confirm that expectations and standards across the Faculty/Directorate are consistent and that the definition of excellence is calibrated so that all departments are aligned in the criteria that they appraise against.  
<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>

These definitions are supposed to be local/at discipline level and should be matched to the relevant Contribution Matrix, available for every job family/grade which were part of the consultation with UCU. See for example <https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/pathways/ERE/SitePages/The%20Areas%20of%20Contribution.aspx>  
If local definitions cannot be mapped to the agreed Contribution Matrices, then they should be challenged.

*Distribution of Appraisal Outcomes*

Policies agreed with UCU did not specify how ratings will be distributed, beyond an indicative expected distribution. However, this has been re-interpreted as a benchmark distribution (see below) such that Academic Units/ Services have been given a specific distribution they are expected to meet.

<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Appraisal%20Ratings.aspx>

Appraisal Rating	Short Description	Benchmark Distribution	Long Description
Box Five	Expectations Exceeded Significantly	5 per cent of University staff	A Box Five rating is an exceptional accolade. It recognises an outstanding contribution from those staff that have significantly exceeded all of their agreed objectives, and by doing so have had a demonstrable positive impact upon the delivery of University strategy. The select group achieving a box five rating will be a role model for their peers.
Box Four	Expectations Exceeded	15 per cent of University staff	A Box Four rating is for those staff that have substantially exceeded agreed expectations in major parts of their role, delivering clear, additional benefit to the University as a result.
Box Three	Expectations Fully Met	75 per cent of University staff	A Box Three rating is for those staff that have contributed fully to the University; consistently meeting all agreed expectations, and perhaps exceeding expectations in some areas. The majority of staff operate at this level and 75 per cent of the workforce is expected to lie within this category.
Box Two	Expectations Partly Met	3 per cent of University staff	A Box Two rating is for those staff that have made an acceptable contribution to the University, but have only partially met agreed expectations. There are likely to be good reasons where expectations have only been partially met, and this rating may well apply to those who are at a developmental stage of their career. Some improvement will be required. This rating will also be assumed to apply to any staff for whom no appraisal rating is forthcoming.
Box One	Expectations Not Met	2 per cent of University staff	A Box One rating is for those staff that don't meet agreed expectations and fail to make an acceptable contribution to the University. Significant improvement is required.

- A high performing department is likely to have more individuals exceeding or significantly exceeding expectations than a department that is not meeting its overall objectives. Appraisers will be expected to consider these contextual elements when carrying out appraisals.  
<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>
- The overall distribution curve and whether it is aligned with the University's benchmark distribution and the Faculty/Directorate's performance.  
<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>

Each Faculty/AU/Service has performance indicators and targets, linked to the 10 year plans. Generally, it appears neither targets or Specific Benchmark distributions are made available for all staff. Indeed, we are aware that some Faculties/Departments are maintaining restricted guidance / criteria for ranking staff. Caseworkers or members challenging appraisal decisions should insist, via a *data subject access request*, on seeing this data.

<https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/personal-information/>

UCU has a model DPA Subject access request text on the support section of the website, or a more detailed model letter can be provided from the Regional Office or from Amanda.

### ***Individual Objectives Ratings***

Objectives, agreed at the start of the Appraisal process, should focus on SMART targets to be achieved in a specified timescale. <https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Setting%20Objectives.aspx>

Objectives should be revisited during the year, and deleted if no longer relevant.

Members should be advised to save all versions of appraisal forms as a pdf when appraisal is finalised, and whenever they make changes to objectives.

### ***Relation of Individual Objectives Ratings to Overall Contribution Rating***

Individual ratings given by Appraisee and Appraiser, are not meant to be averaged and used to define the Overall Contribution. This was confirmed by HR in presentations to staff. Special circumstances must be considered

<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Special%20Circumstances.aspx>

Moderation panel should see only the Overall contribution:

- To facilitate moderation discussions, meeting participants will have access to a report containing (for each appraisal being moderated) the appraisee's and appraiser's 'Overall Contribution Summary', the provisionally assigned appraisal rating and any additional comments entered on the appraisal form.  
<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>

### ***Moderation of Appraisal outcome scores***

UCU are aware that some staff have been threatened with capability process and /or managed out of their posts because of appraisal scores of 2/1, before these scores have gone through moderation and ratification. Appraisal ratings are not final until moderated and ratified. Any attempt to pre-empt this process, should be opposed.

**In our collective *Reward Agreement*, the moderation process was only specified for colleagues with a 4 or 5 rating. This has since been altered**

Moderation meetings will need to work through and confirm the following:

- All appraisals assigned either a Box One or Box Two rating, to ensure that the definition of not meeting or partly meeting expectations has been applied fairly and consistently.
- All appraisals assigned either a Box Four or Box Five rating, to ensure that the definition of exceeding or significantly exceeding expectations has been applied fairly and consistently.
- A sample of appraisals assigned a Box Three rating, to ensure that the definition of meeting expectations has been applied fairly and consistently.
- Any disputed appraisal ratings (if applicable).

- The overall distribution curve and whether it is aligned with the University's benchmark distribution and the Faculty/Directorate's performance.

<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>

Caseworkers and members should note:

- Where concerns exist about an employee's capability, managers should **avoid 'saving up' concerns until the next appraisal meeting**. This is not an appropriate use of the appraisal process. Such concerns should be addressed as soon as possible in order that the possible causes can be understood, and realistic expectations for improvement can be established  
<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Other%20Processes.aspx>
- A Box Two rating is for those staff that have made an acceptable contribution to the University, but have only partially met agreed expectations. There are likely to be good reasons where expectations have only been partially met, and this rating may well apply to those who are at a developmental stage of their career. Some improvement will be required. This rating will also be assumed to apply to any staff for whom no appraisal rating is forthcoming. <https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Appraisal%20Ratings.aspx>
- If the appraisee remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may invoke the University's [grievance procedure](#) if they feel that any aspect of the appraisal process has not been followed correctly.  
<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Equality%20and%20Fairness.aspx>

Capability Policy for L4+ states that

21. *Action under this Ordinance may be taken in respect of: inability to perform some or all of the duties or to comply with some or all of the conditions attaching to the post; or inability to perform those duties or to comply with those conditions in a satisfactory or adequate manner.*

If a member of staff has made an acceptable contribution then capability process should not be invoked.

## Moderation process

Policy agreed with UCU, for both ERE/non-ERE staff, is that only box 4/5 ratings were subject to moderation and formal approval. **Extended Moderation has not been agreed or discussed with UCU.**

For MSA, TAE and CAO HR Advice in 2015 was:

*We are currently in the process of defining how moderation will work for MSA, TAE and CAO staff at Levels 4-6. It will be taking place for the first time in May 2017.*

*The important message at this time is that ratings will be moderated to ensure fairness and consistency. It is key to the University that these principles are met.*

*We will work with the Directors of each department or area, and Managers of staff based in Faculties to define how it will work best for their area.*

## **Moderation Meetings**

**The only part of the Moderation process agreed with UCU is this item**

- All appraisals assigned either a Box Four or Box Five rating, to ensure that the definition of exceeding or significantly exceeding expectations has been applied fairly and consistently.  
<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>

## *Ratification/Oversight*

It appears after moderation an individual could be downgraded based on an aggregate distribution. This goes against all the agreed principles for appraisal.

## **4. Oversight and Ratification**

Once moderation meetings have taken place, outcomes will be sent to the next level of management for oversight and ratification.

In general, Level 7 appraisal outcomes will be ratified at University Executive Board and Level 4-6 appraisals will be ratified at Faculty Executive Group/Professional Services Leadership Team.

This stage of the process is about ensuring that moderated appraisal outcomes provide a true reflection of the relative performance of faculties and directorates, relative to their strategic objectives (i.e. an underperforming area of the University could be expected to have returned fewer Box Four and Box Five ratings than an area that is exceeding expectations against its strategic objectives).

The oversight and ratification process is at the level of aggregate distribution and it is not the intention to go back into the detail of individual appraisals and outcomes.

All final, moderated appraisal ratings must be communicated to appraisees and entered in the online appraisal form by line management in a timely manner

<https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>

## *Outcomes*

Note that only after ratification is an appraisal score final, and the line manager is responsible for informing staff. Failure to inform staff of final outcome could also therefore be a breach of agreed process.

## **5. Outcomes**

Once appraisal outcomes have been ratified, all final, moderated appraisal ratings must be communicated back to appraisees and entered into the online appraisal form by line management.

Both of these actions should take place in a timely manner, and the reasons for any altered appraisal ratings should be explained in person to the appraisee, along with appropriate feedback. It is of utmost importance that the direct line manager is involved in the process of communication to the individual, and remains fully engaged in the process. <https://intranet.soton.ac.uk/sites/hr/appraisal/SitePages/Moderation.aspx>