Aston University
BIRMINGHAM UK

My Performance and Development Conversation Guide 2023-2024

My Performance and Development Conversation

What is it?

My Performance and Development Conversation (MPDC) is the approach we use for performance reviews.

MPDC is about setting your work priorities for the year, aligned to the <u>Aston University Strategic Plan</u>, your department or service plan and underpinned by our vision, purpose and values.

Our Vision

Our Vision is to be a leading university of science, technology and enterprise, measured by the positive transformational impact we achieve for our people, students, businesses and the communities we serve.

Our Purpose

Our core purpose is to make our world a better place through education, research and innovation, by enabling our students to succeed in work and life, and by supporting our communities to thrive economically, socially and culturally.

Our Values

Ambition: our ambition drives us to advance and accomplish our goals, strive for excellence and impact, and create value for our beneficiaries and communities.

Collaboration: we believe in the value of working together for a shared purpose, by engaging and collaborating across our teams and disciplines, as well as with our beneficiaries.

Inclusion: we provide an inclusive, caring and empowering environment for all and respect and support the values that diversity and inclusion bring to our whole community.

Innovation: we nurture an innovative environment that values new ideas, seeks diverse perspectives and pursue game-changing innovations that make a positive impact.

Integrity: by valuing honesty, trust, fairness and ethical behaviour we always act with integrity and hold ourselves and others accountable.

My Performance and Development Conversation

It isn't just about what you do to achieve your objectives for the year but also how you do it that counts. The underline behaviours framework should be discussed in your meetings. These behaviours enable you and your manager / reviewer to discuss not just the outcomes you've achieved but also how you achieved them.

Remember, your priorities should be aligned to your department or service plan and to the University's strategic plan.

For example - my priority: Internal Apprenticeships
Objectives for this priority:
- Ensure all apprenticeship applications follow the internal process.
- Keep the apprenticeship intranet page up to date – reviewing monthly.
- Send an email report on the last Wednesday of every month to the Head of Organisational Development on the number of active apprenticeships, apprenticeships in the pipeline and the amount drawn down from the apprenticeship levy.

What do I need to do to prepare for my performance and development conversations?
- When preparing for your meeting to discuss setting your priorities and objectives, reflect on your work and identify the areas you believe are essential to your role. Consider the elements of each priority and the objectives or goals you need to meet.
- Think about what you need to enable you to achieve these objectives – is it skills development, specific resources, coaching/mentoring or access to networks/committees.
- Consider any wellbeing and inclusion concerns you wish to discuss with your manager and how you will take responsibility to manage your wellbeing needs.
- Your manager will discuss your ideas in the meeting and will support you to confirm your priority areas (the what) and the objectives (the how) so you are clear on expectations and deliverables. Any additional support will also be identified.
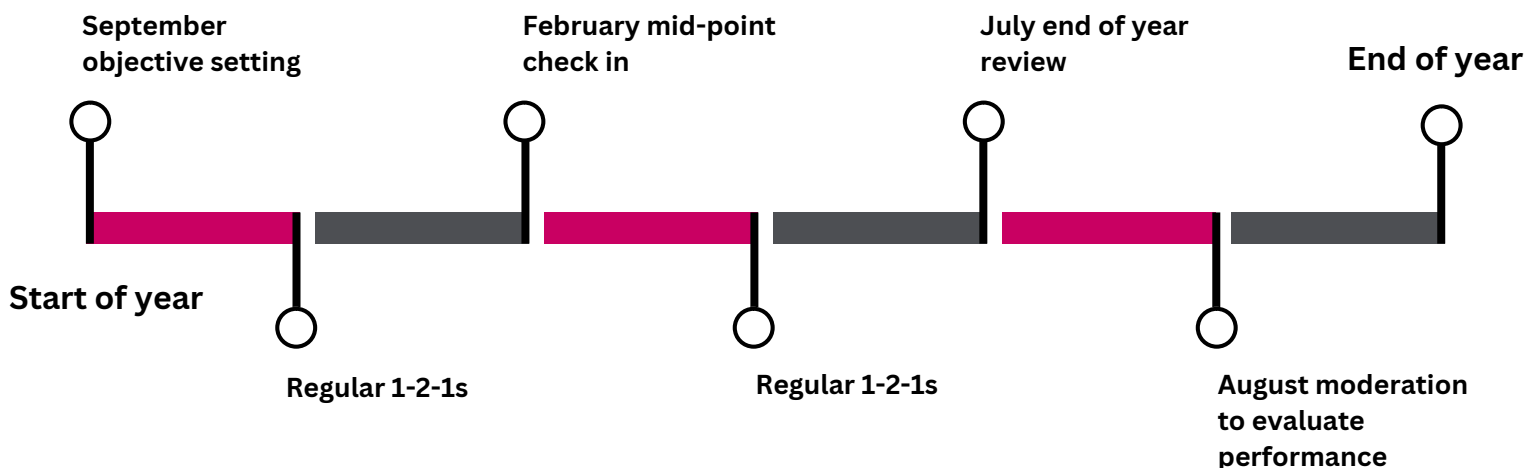
Setting and recording objectives

When will my objectives be set?

- You should have 6-8 objectives that will be discussed and set in Term 1 (by end of Sept) in agreement with your line manager / reviewer. We recommend having these conversations in June / July to ensure you are clear on what you need to achieve in the new academic year.
- Your overall performance of what went well and what could be improved, over the whole year, will be discussed in term 3 (by end of July) with your line manager / reviewer. We recommend you have this conversation in June so you have time to reflect and review before the deadline.
- This will enable additional objectives to be discussed and set throughout the year as you complete existing ones or where they are no longer required.
- Objectives should be created using SMART principles.

Development for managers and for staff on setting priorities and objectives can be found on the MPDC intranet page. Remember that conversations should happen throughout the year to ensure your performance is on track.

September objective setting

February mid-point check in

July end of year review

End of year

Start of year

Regular 1-2-1s

Regular 1-2-1s

August moderation to evaluate performance

How do I record my objectives?

- The online form* enables you to capture your conversations throughout the year.
- Dates for MPDC conversations will be set at least 3 weeks before the date of your meeting.
- The self-assessment section should be completed online by the employee at least 2 weeks before the meeting.
- The line manager's initial assessment should be completed online at least five working days before the date of the meeting and available for the employee to view. There should be no surprises at this stage as regular performance feedback should be taking place throughout the year.
- Any changes made to either employee self-assessment or line manager initial assessment (based on discussions during the MPDC meeting) should be recorded on the online form by employee/line manager / reviewer as relevant.
- Any career aspirations and development needs should be jointly discussed and recorded in the staff portal.
- Any wellbeing and inclusion issues discussed should be recorded in the 'support received/difficulties experienced' section including any recommendations.
- Line managers should provide a review outcome, informed on the above discussions and evidence available.
- The employee should record their objectives and update the status of these objectives using the Staff portal.

Some roles in Professional and Support services will continue to have job chats and may use a paper form, speak with your line manager to see if this applies to you.

ℹ **Guidance on how to use the Aston Staff Portal to record your MPDC is available in <u>Solve</u>**

Categorising your objectives

You may find it helpful to categorise your objectives as a: development (or personal), service and / or team or citizenship objective.

Category*	Example
Development	This objective relates to developing knowledge or skills and could involve: training, elearning, mentoring, coaching, job shadowing, reading, research or networking.
Service or Team	This objective relates to the delivery of departmental or team activities aligned to the University's strategy.
Citizenship	This objective relates to how you demonstrate citizenship in your work or how you make a positive contribution to the University and our beneficiaries. This could include: volunteering for graduation or Clearing, being an active member of a staff network, supporting new students or helping a colleague. Watch the [Citizenship at Aston video](#) to find out more.

Academic staff have additional categories to choose from - research, teaching and external engagement. Information regarding these categories is detailed on page 11.

We know that this is not an exact science and that some objectives can fall into multiple categories – that's okay, choose the one where you feel the objective fits best.

Mid-point and end of year review

The mid – point review is an optional but highly recommended step in the MPDC process. The mid – point review should occur in February and enables you to discuss progress to date, realign objectives and if needed, adjust deadlines. This avoids getting to the end of the MPDC cycle with incomplete objectives or missed opportunities to re-focus work. This is also an opportunity to identify any challenges to achieving desired outcomes.

The end of year review is the time to reflect and review performance. It is also a time to plan for the year ahead and to discuss career aspirations and identify professional development that will support professional and personal growth.

Finally, it is important to recognise the contribution made so that your staff member knows that you notice their accomplishments and are grateful for the hard work to make things happen and achieve desired outcomes.

Guidance on how to access MPDC withing the Staff Portal is available on [Solve](#)

If you need further assistance using the Staff Portal you can contact hrsystems@aston.ac.uk

Objectives for academic staff

For academic staff

Academic promotion for Lecturers, Senior Lecturers and Readers is based on peer assessment of three areas of activity: Learning & Teaching, Research and External Engagement. It is expected that Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Readers and Professors will engage in all three areas of activity. For others it is dependent on role e.g. Teaching Fellows are not required to carry out academic research and some Researchers may not carry out teaching, however, they may do so for developmental reasons.

The academic promotions criteria may be helpful in supporting career development and agreeing priorities.

Learning and Teaching Staff

All staff with a requirement to teach will have at least one priority set related to their learning and teaching activities.

Research Staff

Where relevant to their contract, staff should have at least one priority set related to research activities.

Knowledge exchange

All academic staff should have at least one priority set related to knowledge exchange. This is defined as the contribution to the wider external mission of the University, including contribution to businesses, the public sector and the community relevant to the University's mission.

Citizenship

All academic staff should consider how they demonstrate citizenship in their work and make a valued contribution to the University and our beneficiaries.

Leadership (for academic staff in leadership roles)

Below are examples for each area of activity for staff with teaching responsibility.

Area	Characteristics
1) Learning and Teaching	**Module Feedback:** Reflect on the student feedback for the modules you teach on, in particular: • Any high or low rating. • Any significant variances from the previous year or term. • Specific comments made by students relating to your teaching practice. **Peer observation:** • How many peer observations you have performed and the number of times you have been observed. • Who you have observed (you do not need to name staff, rather their status, College, School and academic group) • Any changes you have made to your practice as a result of your observations or feedback you have received from others. • Any ideas you have identified for implementation in the future. **Innovation and Enhancement:** Reflect on any learning and teaching innovations or enhancements you implemented this year and reflect on how successful they were. Where appropriate, support this with feedback, statements/testimonies and any research conducted in relation to the innovations or enhancements.
2) Commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	**Fellowship of the HEA:** State your current Fellowship status (if applicable) and explain what progress you have made towards the next stage of Fellowship during the academic year. List your targets for the next 12 months in relation to working towards the next stage of Fellowship and/or to retain your Fellowship. (Note in reflecting on the next sections that the Higher Education Academy require evidence of CPD in relation to ongoing Fellowship).

Area	Characteristics
	Relevant CPD Activity: Any relevant activities undertaken during the academic year and reflect upon how these activities have impacted your approach or philosophy in relation to learning and teaching. Relevant CPD activity could include: • Attendance at conferences and consequent briefing for staff and the University, where relevant. • Education publications/submissions. • Development/CPD sessions/,mentoring and or coaching. • Learning and Teaching events attended. Involvement with other organised CPD events. • Have you achieved Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy? If not, might you apply for this, or Senior or Principal Fellowship or our MEd, or a National Teaching Fellowship. How are you ensuring that you remain in "good standing" in relation to your teaching practice and HEA membership?
3) Citizenship in teaching	**Contribution to the development of teaching practice within your College, School and/or the wider University:** Reflect on your involvement in relevant activities over the last 12 months, this could include: • Mentoring of colleagues or HEA Fellowship applicants. • Presentation at any Learning and Teaching events. • Contribution to events and initiatives. • Participation in University RITE teams. **Leadership in Teaching** Describe any leadership activities/roles you have undertaken in the last 12 months, this could include: • Programme Directorship. • Supporting the Associate Deans and Head of Group with teaching initiatives and projects. • Undertaking the role of group Learning and Teaching Convenor/Enhancer. • Attendance at Learning and Teaching and/or Programme Committees, dissemination of information back to groups and co-ordination of group responses. • Chairing committees and boards.

Area	Characteristics
	Knowledge Exchange Record your involvement in relevant activities such as: • Delivery of masterclasses outside of Aston University. • Participation in other school liaison activities. • Participation in Open Days. • Participation in collaborative educational initiatives regionally, nationally and / or internationally. • External examination. • Presentation at educational conferences and events. • Influencing Government policy at a regional and / or national level.
4) Teaching Related Administration	**Overview** Please reflect on the completion of your administrative responsibilities during the year and what steps you took to manage these. Responsibilities could include: • Undertaking of all scheduled teaching. • Preparation of assessment documentation to deadlines. • Completion of marking to deadlines. • Attendance at all timetabled invigilation. • Completion of programme and module specifications to deadlines. • ·Attendance at all relevant committees and exam boards. • Completion of programme level reviews to deadlines.
5) Leadership	**Overview** Responsibilities could include: • Accountability for setting and advancing the academic strategy of the Department in line with College and University strategic plans and direction. • Ensuring that staff performance is managed appropriately and that fair workload allocation processes are in place. • Creating and exploiting new opportunities for knowledge transfer activity to secure additional income streams and new areas of teaching and/or research. • Ensuring the highest levels of quality, integrity and ethics in all research undertaken. • Review and develop new programmes to attract new students, partnerships and markets. • Taking responsibility for devolved budgets and comply with University financial regulations.

Area	Characteristics
	• Maintaining compliance with auditing, quality assurance and risk management procedures both internal and external. • Promotion and representation of the University both internally and externally.

Need more information?

View the My Performance and Development Conversation Intranet page or speak with your manager, HR or OD Business partner.

Visit the Organisational Development intranet pages to see the range of face to face and online solutions, on offer, to improve your professional and personal skills.

Go to the HR intranet page for information on policies and processes related to performance management.

Evaluating performance

Evaluating performance is an integral part of the conversation and should be a reflection of the whole MPDC cycle not just performance at the end.

There are 4 levels of evaluation that can be attributed to a staff member's performance:

Outstanding

Achieving all priorities and **consistently** exceeding expected outcomes, values, and development objectives in **all areas.**

For example, makes an outstanding contribution that has been sustained for at least six months and is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Serves as an inspirational role model for behaviours consistent with Aston's purpose and values.
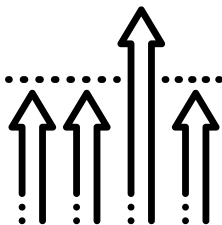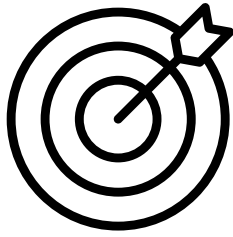
Exceeds Expectation

Achieving all priorities and frequently exceeding expected outcomes, values, and development objectives in **several areas.**

For example, successfully delivering a one off project, process improvement or initiative. Sets an excellent example of behaviours consistent with Aston's purpose and values.
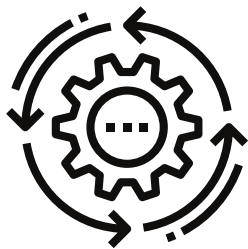
Evaluating performance

Meets Expectation

Achieving all expected outcomes, values, and development objectives

For example, employee meets established expectations in most areas of the work performed, achieves and occasionally exceeds established goals. Demonstrates behaviours consistent with Aston's mission and values.

Improvement required

Meeting expected outcomes, values and development objectives in some areas, other areas require improvement
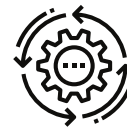
For example, employee is inconsistent in meeting expectations in one or more areas of responsibility or the most critical objectives were not met. Behaviour may not be consistent with Aston's purpose and values.

The outcome should be discussed within the end of year conversations. Once the conversation has finished, the manager will send their assessments to their Dean or Director for final sign off before going to the moderation panel.

Moderation process

To ensure consistency and transparency of the awards, a panel chaired by the Chief People Officer with representatives from the executive will review and agree all recommendations for salary increments, one-off payments and any non-standard payment increase requests.

Find out more about the rewards related to those identified as exceeding or outstanding here (FAQs tbc).

Development opportunities

How can I develop my skills in objective creation and reviewing?
We will be offering sessions to support staff and managers hold effective performance conversations throughout the year.

1 Creating objectives

How to assess your team's potential and work together to create realistic and motivating objectives that engage team members and contribute to the Aston strategy.

2 Managing objectives

How to check in throughout the year, ensure that priorities are on track and adjust these if needed, and how to keep momentum and wellbeing going throughout the process.

3 Reviewing objectives

How to have powerful conversations to respond to excellent performance, encourage reflection and development and how to address underperformance meaningfully.

Sessions can be booked through Staff Portal and this content will also be available on demand, with a wide range of additional resources on the My Performance and Development Conversation intranet page including:

•How to guides and self-assessments
•Video content and concept walkthroughs
•e-learning for managing your career development conversations

Roles and Responsbilities

Manager

- Ensure all MPDC conversations occur and entered onto the Aston Staff Portal by the deadlines outlined in the MPDC guidance.
- Hold regular performance conversations with staff to ensure they are clear on what is expected of them, work outcomes are achieved, staff develop their skills, knowledge and experience and are supported in their role.
- Review and sign off objective setting and end of year reviews and to consider holding a mid – point review conversation by the deadlines outlined in the MPDC guidance.
- Support the wellbeing of a staff member and if required, put in place, suitable adjustments to support.
- Complete performance assessments objectively and fairly and ensure the reason for the outcome level is discussed with the staff member.
- Discuss any signs of dips in performance early with the staff member to avoid escalation of the issue.
- Be an ambassador of MPDC and ensure staff members are aware of the purpose of the process and the benefits of having these conversations.

Employee

- Come prepared to discuss your objectives with your manager, set deadlines for delivery and identify any development needed.
- Raise any wellbeing concerns you may have and suggest ways that could help you to be well and working.
- Discuss ways you can get involved with citizenship activities across the University.
- Input your objectives onto the staff portal by the deadlines outlined in the MPDC guidance.
- Complete the Introduction to MPDC for colleagues e-learning. if you are unfamiliar with MPDC or would like a refresher.

Human Resources (HR)

- Maintain accurate records of MPDC conversations logged in the staff portal.
- Distribute reports to managers and the executive based on agreed frequencies.
- Provide support on using the Aston Staff portal to input, review and approve objectives to all relevant staff.
- Offer support to managers on holding effective MPDC conversations.
- Signpost managers and staff to development opportunities and resources available.