

Appendix 8

Joint guidance and checklist on appraisal policies

This guidance on appraisal policies in Sixth Form Colleges has been agreed by the Sixth Form Colleges' Association and the NJC Staff Side. The aim of this guidance is to ensure that local appraisal policies support colleges in making fair, consistent and effective decisions on teachers' pay progression, as introduced by the new Sixth Form Colleges' pay framework.

All colleges should have an appraisal policy for teachers, although there is no single nationally recommended appraisal model for colleges to adopt. Many colleges have sophisticated appraisal schemes successfully operating. The introduction of the new pay framework for Sixth Form Colleges does not in itself require these local appraisal policies to be changed, beyond including a clear link to the new pay framework.

This document sets out joint advice on:

- matters that should be considered and covered in each college's appraisal policy; and
- guidance on good practice to be followed in college policies.

The successful implementation of appraisal policies, like other policies, is best achieved through consultation with those involved, including with teacher trade union representatives.

College appraisal policies - for consideration

Successful appraisal policies will support the achievement of college development priorities, support individuals' professional development and therefore support student achievement, as well as informing pay progression decisions.

Policies should, therefore, always contain a clear statement that the appraisal process is intended to be developmental and supportive and to foster professional dialogue between colleagues. The expectation of the new pay framework is that every teacher should perform at an acceptable level.

They should also:

- be linked to the college improvement/development strategies;
- apply to all teachers, including those on fixed term contracts (other than newly qualified teachers, for whom the induction process performs the same function); and
- provide for their application to teachers joining part way or promoted part way through the year.

Appraiser

All Sixth Form College teachers should have a designated appraiser, who should normally have line management responsibilities for the teacher whose performance they are reviewing, and who conducts all aspects of the review, including providing a pay recommendation, for teachers who are eligible. The pay recommendation will then be considered by the college Principal who will determine the teacher's pay progression.

Appraisal Period and Timetable

The appraisal period should run for 12 months. Sixth Form Colleges will conduct annual appraisals at different times of the year but will need to make decisions about pay progression taking effect from 1 September of each year where appropriate.

Policies should contain a clear timeline for the completion of the appraisal process in the annual cycle, together with provisions governing the process of appraisal in line with the following guidance:

At the start of the cycle -

The planning meeting at the start of the cycle is the most critical part of the process. This meeting sets the parameters for the appraisal process and maximises the opportunities for a successful outcome. The outcomes of the planning meeting should be recorded in a written planning statement which should include:

- all factors against which the teacher's performance will be reviewed at the end of the cycle;
- the teacher's objectives for the cycle and the timescales in which they will be met;
- the success criteria against which the objectives will be assessed at the end of the cycle;
- any support needed to enable the objectives to be met;
- any training and development needs; and
- any comments the teacher wishes to add.

At the end of the cycle -

The appraiser and teacher should meet to discuss the appraisal cycle as soon as possible after the end of the appraisal period.

The outcome of this review meeting should be recorded in a written appraisal review statement which records:

- an assessment of the objectives set at the start of the cycle against the success criteria also set at the start of the cycle;
- an assessment against the SFC Teachers' Standards, which takes as its starting point the assumption that the teacher is continuing to meet those Standards unless there is evidence to the contrary;
- an overall assessment of performance;
- a written recommendation on pay progression (as appropriate); and
- any comments the teacher wishes to add.

The draft written statement should be sent by the reviewer to the teacher for comment as soon as possible after the meeting.

All planning and review meetings should form part of directed time.

Objectives

Objective setting is an important part of the appraisal process. Policies should therefore contain clear guidance on effective objective setting as set out below.

Objectives should be:

- SMART i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time limited;
- clearly defined and fair, appropriate to the teacher's personal needs/priorities and reasonable with regard to their role and individual circumstances, consistent with work life balance, and not seeking to cover all of the teacher's role,
- related to and contribute to the college's priorities and development plan
- agreed if possible, with teachers having a right of appeal and entitlement to record concerns about the choice of objectives

Objectives should focus on demonstrating and assessing performance, not simply results.

The teacher's objectives should be the focus for the appraisal review. In order to make the review and discussion meaningful, no more than three objectives should be set for any teacher.

In judging progress against objectives:

- good progress towards challenging objectives should be deemed to be equal to successful achievement of objectives;

- individual circumstances should be considered when judging whether objectives have been achieved;

and

- any failure to provide any support or CPD agreed in the planning statement should be taken into account.

Measures of Performance

Appraisal policies will describe how the college intends to capture evidence to support judgements on pay progression. The recommendation is that colleges develop a balanced approach which utilises evidence from a number of sources. A good appraisal system therefore will incorporate a range of measures like exam outcome measures, especially value added measures, observation records, perception surveys and other instruments which record teacher performance and effectiveness.

No individual measure should be used as the single arbiter of performance for pay purposes and College line managers will point to a range of evidence to support their judgements.

The new pay framework places considerably less emphasis on classroom observations as a factor in pay progression decisions. Observations are no longer a mandatory component of pay progression. The introduction of the new pay framework is not intended to require or result in a change to existing practices e.g. any increase in the number or duration of lesson observations.

Relationship between appraisal and SFC Teachers' Standards

Appraisal policies should state clearly that while the SFC Teachers' Standards will be used to underpin the teachers' appraisal process, they should not be used as a simple checklist against which teachers' performance is assessed. As noted earlier, assessment against the SFC Teachers' Standards should start from the premise that the teacher is continuing to meet the SFC Teachers' Standards unless evidence to the contrary is provided.

Relationship between appraisal and CPD/professional development

Policies should make it clear that:

- CPD provision for individual teachers, and the college's CPD policy, will be linked to college development priorities and informed by appraisal outcomes
- Principals should report annually to college governing bodies on CPD provision as part of their reports on the appraisal process

Links to pay progression

The pay framework makes it clear that teachers should receive pay progression, in line with the national terms and conditions agreement, following the appraisal review in the case of acceptable appraisal outcomes.

The appraisal review should be the only source of evidence required to support pay progression. The pay progression process does not require any application by teachers.

While teachers may wish to submit additional evidence, if they choose, in addition to that considered in the appraisal review, they should not be requested or directed to submit additional evidence or penalised if they choose not to do so.

Teachers in difficulties (informal capability support)

Where a teacher's performance begins to cause concern, support should be provided within the appraisal process before recourse to formal capability procedures.

Policies should make it clear that:

- informal support will in such cases be offered as part of the appraisal process prior to recourse to capability procedures
- the appraiser and teacher should seek to agree programmes of support and reasonable periods for monitoring and review, with teachers entitled to be accompanied at such meetings

Teachers who continue to show no or little improvement will normally be considered through the College's capability procedures.

Resolving grievances

Policies must be consistent with statutory provisions relating to employee grievances. For that reason they should allow teachers the right to register concerns and/or to seek a review of decisions by appeal on matters such as choice of objectives and content of the planning statement and review statement. The pay appeals process should be used for matters relating to pay decisions.

Record keeping/confidentiality

Policies should be clear about record keeping and about confidentiality. Records should be retained for a minimum of 6 years but should be confidential to the Principal and Senior Leadership Team, appraiser and teacher only.

Monitoring

Policies should provide for an annual report by Principals on the appraisal process, including on appraisal outcomes, equality information and appeals outcomes, to the college governing body and to teacher union representatives.

Assessing the workload impact of appraisal

The potential workload impact of appraisal policies should be considered before implementation with the aim of ensuring that their operation does not add unduly to the workload of anyone involved.