

## Agreeing SMART Objectives – managers guidance



My contribution gives you the opportunity to create, agree and capture SMART objectives which will help you and your team perform, develop and grow. SMART is a tool to help managers and team members set and agree targets and objectives.

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Agreed/ Achievable**
- **Relevant/Realistic**
- **Time Bound**

Clear SMART objectives provide a basis for reviewing past performance in the My Contribution performance cycle which includes a mid-year and an end of year review. You will be expected to measure and rate individual performance during the end of year review. Individual objectives cascade from the University's strategic objectives.

### SMART Objectives and how to write them

You may already be familiar with the concept of writing effective objectives, however when writing objectives, it may be helpful to consider:

- What are the School/Service strategic objectives in the context of the reviewee's team / role and grade?
- What are the emerging key issues for the School/Service that will impact the reviewee's work over the coming period?
- Are there programme or process changes that can help the School/Service meet its objectives?
- What improvements could be made to the quality of service or deliverables?

The aim is to set SMART objectives which are characterised by being:

**SPECIFIC** – is about clarity, being clear and unambiguous about what result you want to see, and often what you want to see different to what is happening currently. S is about describing every detail of the change you that you want to see. It is about mapping out a vision of the future that is inspiring and that you want to get to.

More importantly if we want to motivate people, they need to understand **why** it is important and what kind of difference their performance would make. Even if this seems obvious it still needs to be explicit.

**Tip** - The why is never just because it is on the plan that just makes it relevant! If that is the best you can come up with it is unlikely to be a motivating target.

In discussing objectives consider:

- Replacing ambiguous/ general wording with specific language that creates a common understanding.
- Would someone else from the team have the same understanding of the objective
- Is the reviewee's role clear?
- What is expected?
- What is the expected result?
- Why is it important?
- Who is going to do what?
- Who else needs to be involved?

**MEASURABLE** – Is about knowing when you have achieved the goal. If you want to be able to support and develop performance you need a combination of **Input** and **Output** measures.

- **Outputs** - are hard measures i.e. results – were they achieved or not?

However, if you want to develop performance you need to understand the

- **Inputs** – are the ingredients that make up outstanding performance. You need to give some guidance on what people need to do to get the results. If you do this, you can have a conversation around how well people are performing.

Each objective must have a measurable and verifiable outcome to show how well the objective has been achieved. This may be descriptive of quantity and /or quality. Detail this in a clear and specific way.

Results need to be measurable so that it can be decided, without argument, whether the desired result has been achieved. Sometimes measurement can be easy using:

- Quantity – for example numbers, completion rates, income, cost or
- Quality – for example by levels of accuracy or a defined measurable standard

In discussing objectives consider:

- What will indicate that the objective has been achieved?
- What will it look like?
- What will / won't be happening?
- What will have changed?
- What evidence will be provided to show the objective has been met?
- What mechanisms are in place to measure results?

**ACHIEVABLE/AGREED** – If you want the objective to help with motivation then it is important that the overall objective is achievable but stretching. Most people are motivated by achievement, so a goal needs to stretch an individual to reach it. If a goal is too easy the motivational impact will be nil or even negative. However, you should guard against it being too difficult the goal must be possible to achieve. Also, if we want to build confidence better to set a goal that is in reach and then make it more stretching

To really help in this area ensure that you have an honest conversation and come to some agreement.

**Tip-** To check agreement it is worth asking 2 questions

- 1) On a scale of 1-10 how motivated are you or your team member to achieve this objective
- 2) On a scale of 1-10 how confident are you to achieve this objective. If the answer to either of those questions is lower than 8, then that is the issue.

In discussing objectives consider:

- Can it be achieved in the time set?
- What resources are available? Can it be achieved with the resources available?
- Is there support for this to be done?
- Is the objective a priority?
- Is it within the reviewee's capabilities but also challenging?

**REALISTIC/RELEVANT** – Realistic is linked to achievable and associated discussions. This is about having an honest look to check the objective is realistic and gives you permission to explore things that make achieving the objective difficult or un-realistic (maybe the resource requirement to achieve it outweighs the benefits etc.).

**Relevant** – is ensuring that the objective aligns to school or service plans which in turn form part of the strategic theme and/or the academic framework.

In discussing objectives consider:

- How the reviewee's performance in this area relates to what the School/ Service is trying to achieve?
- How does this objective fit within the context of the individual's role?
- What would be the impact if this objective wasn't achieved?
- Is the objective challenging and relevant to the reviewee's role and grade?
- Does the reviewee have the relevant skills?
- Can the objective be achieved with the resources available?

**TIME** – We all work best when we have a deadline, it is another motivation and creates a sense of urgency around completion. Without a deadline goals have a habit of slipping. Set review dates before actual required deadline this gives you/them chance to make alterations if required.

If objectives stretch more than an academic year, then make sure you capture what elements of the overall objective will be delivered in that year.

In discussing objectives consider:

- When will, this objective be accomplished?
- Is another objective contingent on the completion of this objective?
- Is there a stated deadline?
- If the objective stretches further than 12 months, then make sure you capture what exactly is going to be achieved within the academic year to help with the success of the overall target.