

MANAGING PERFORMANCE GUIDANCE



About this Guide

This guide is for all staff to help build an understanding of, and clear expectations around our performance management process. It will give you an overview of Durham Students' Union's Be At Your Best framework and how you and your line manager will work with it to develop performance throughout the year.

Our vision is to make sure that **students have the power and opportunity to transform their time at Durham**. Our mission is to **champion every Durham student**. We're interested in the things that matter to them. We stand up for their rights. We bring them together. We celebrate their success.. To achieve our vision and goals we need to be an organisation that continually raises its performance, and in which our people are motivated and inspired to be their best.

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Introduction

Thanks for taking the time to read this guide and to develop your own understanding of what we mean by managing performance.

It's really important to me that our staff have a positive experience at work. There should be challenge, excitement and stretch in people's roles, and people should know when they are doing really well – and when they could do better with a focus on training or development.

We want to have high quality conversations with you about how you're doing at work – and here's where this Be At Your Best framework comes in. It should help good performance by linking with Durham Students' Union strategy and objectives, helping all members of our team understand how their role helps deliver for members and how together, we are more than the sum of our parts.

All members of staff should have their performance reviewed. Everyone can improve and everyone deserves to know what excellent performance looks like, so they can achieve their best.

So, I hope you find this guide useful and practical, and if you have any questions about implementation please talk through with your line manager.

Gary Hughes, CEO.

[picture]

SECTION 1: Performance at Durham Students' Union

Our approach to managing performance is built on a series of conversations throughout the year, intended to guide, challenge and support you to make your best contribution to our collective work.

These conversations are designed to:

- Reinforce every individual's contribution to our overall mission and goals.
- Encourage you to bring our values and behaviours to life every day.
- Facilitate quality and constructive conversations that build strong, productive working relationships between you and your manager.
- Inspire and motivate all staff to be the best they can be.
- Create an environment of support and challenge for you in carrying out your role effectively.
- Encourage continuous growth and development for current, and as relevant, future roles.
- Ensure that there are no surprises at the annual review regarding feedback on performance.

What do we mean by performance?

The expression 'performance management' can often be seen as negative, focusing on addressing poor performance. But actually it should be seen as a positive thing. Good performance management is about supporting you to be at your best and consistently deliver excellent performance. It is about recognising good performance just as much as it's about dealing with poor performance.

There are a number of things that are part of our overall Be At Your Best 'framework':

- Objective setting – are you clear about your priorities and success measures?
- Personal Development Plans – what support do you need to be at your best?
- 1:1s to ensure regular tracking of performance and coaching.
- Employee recognition and thank yous to recognise positive role models and good performance.
- The Values Framework to support you to deliver work in line with our values.
- Capability procedure to set out a clear process for managing poor performance and concerns.
- Annual Be At Your Best review to reflect on the past year, and start planning for the year ahead.

Four elements of great performance

We want high-performers that not only deliver results but also behave in a way that ‘lives’ our values. When we talk about performance we will consider four different elements:

ROLE: Are you fulfilling all of the accountabilities and responsibilities in your job description?

BEHAVIOURS: Are you ‘living our values’ by displaying the relevant behaviours within our values framework.

OBJECTIVES: Have you achieved, or are on track to achieve, your objectives for the year? Objectives represent ‘what’ people need to achieve in their role.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT: How well equipped are you with the knowledge, skills and experience required to fulfil the role effectively? Do you ‘own’ your own development?

Each of these elements are important and your line manager will be key in coaching and supporting you to perform well across all four areas.

It’s the combination of these areas which will lead to you, and to the organisation as a whole, being truly successful in what we set out to achieve.

Your responsibilities in the process

Although your line manager needs to ensure good and timely performance management happens, you are expected to be proactive and positive in making things happen. You are expected to:

- Participate actively in all phases of the annual process.
- Work with your line manager to ensure that timely meetings are arranged.
- Prepare for meetings.
- Take the initiative and make the necessary plans and arrangements to achieve your objectives.
- Pursue your own professional development by drafting out a learning and development plan, and agreeing it with your line manager.
- Find the range of support and guidance you need to help you to achieve what you are here to do.

Your line manager’s responsibilities

The performance framework is designed to be a two-way process between you and your manager.

In relation to managing staff performance, we expect all of our line managers to:

- Provide comprehensive induction programmes for new starters to help them to become effective as soon as possible.
- Ensure that all job descriptions are up to date.
- Explain our strategy so that staff understand the part that they play in it.
- Ensure that every employee has an agreed Be At Your Best plan in place with clear performance expectations.
- Provide regular feedback on performance through 1-2-1s and end of year review.
- Be a good coach by listening to and understanding your staff’s perspective, and asking insightful and challenging questions.
- Raise and address any under-performance at an early stage, so it can be addressed quickly.
- Support people with disabilities, health-concerns or well-being issues.
- Explicitly recognise good work and celebrate success.
- Act as a role model for the required level of performance and behaviour.

In your performance conversations, with their line manager, your line manager will receive support and feedback about how they’re supporting you and other team members.

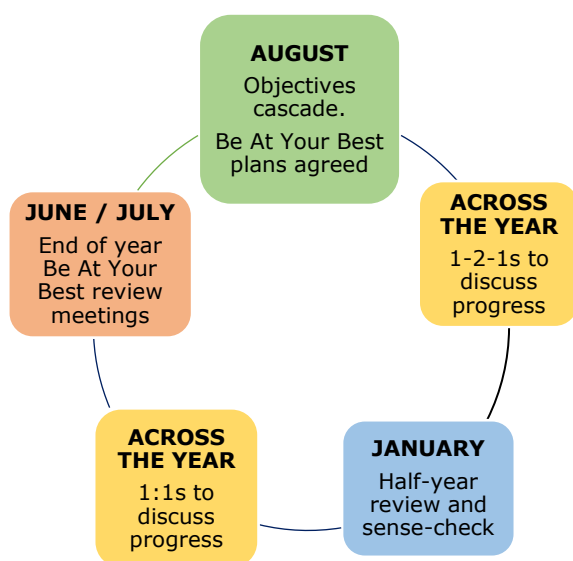
Student staff

Student staff form a big part of our overall staff team. Great performance from student staff members is just as important as across the rest of the team. They will not have full Be At Your Best Plans but the principles that underpin this framework are just as relevant:

- Student staff will have a short 1-hour Be At Your Best review at the end of every term.
- The review at the end of Michaelmas term will double up as a probation review meeting.
- There is a simple review form that is applicable for student staff review meetings.
- Student staff will receive an end of term performance rating and feedback on how to develop their performance in the future.

The annual Be At Your Best cycle

The annual Be At Your Best cycle is intended to synchronise with the planning and budgeting cycle:



The process starts with Durham Students' Union agreeing its priorities, plans and targets for the year. The Chief Executive will have objectives agreed and these will be shaped by the strategy and emerging priorities. The Chief Executive's objectives flow through the Senior Leadership Team, so there is a clear link across the organisation.

SECTION TWO: Be At Your Best Plans

Durham Students' Union strategy

Our strategy drives everything we do. Within it we outline our key themes of work and the objectives we need to deliver to achieve these.

Whatever your role, everyone who works for us has a part to play in the delivery of the strategy.

You should be briefed by your manager on the plan and objectives for the year ahead. They should also include what this means for your department or team's objectives.

Following that, you will jointly agree an individual Be At Your Best plan with your line manager for the year ahead. Everyone has a Be At Your Best plan. They set out what needs to be delivered and how it contributes to the bigger picture, including

achievement of department objectives, and our strategy.

What is a Be At Your Best plan?

A Be At Your Best plan should be considered like a map. It sets out the expectations of each staff member, including objectives and development needs, to guide their work for the next 12 months.

The Be At Your Best plan will contain all of the expectations around your performance for the year, including:

- Your job description;
- Reviewing the values framework;
- Objectives;
- Personal development plan.

The plan, once agreed, is designed to be a 'living' document that you can update with your progress throughout the year. Everything relating to performance is in this one place – the idea is that the document is updated as you go along, reflecting the conversations you and your line manager have throughout the year.

To keep you on track with achieving your performance plan, your line manager will ensure you have regular conversations about your progress. These will take the form of regular 1-2-1s throughout the year and an annual performance review meeting.

Agreeing a Be At Your Best plan

Be At Your Best plans consist of six parts:

1. **Job description**, so you and your line manager are clear about the responsibilities relating to the job.
2. **Values Framework** – the values and behaviours which are important for the role.
3. **Objectives** – SMART objectives and key measures for the year.
4. **Personal development plan**.
5. Record of regular **1:1s**.
6. **Annual appraisal** meeting.

When you agree expectations with your line manager at the start of a new performance year, you'll be focusing on discussing and making notes in parts 1 – 4 of the plan. Once agreed these are the performance expectations for the year.

You should make sure that you have a copy of your agreed Be At Your Best plan.

How to agree objectives

Every member of staff needs to understand the part that they play. Always start with the mission and strategy, then consider any departmental objectives and plan. Think about what you need to do to support that. Your manager may consider some team based objectives that every team member will have as well as discussing with you what you need to deliver individually.

You should aim for three to five main objectives. Anything more than this may not be realistic and could risk the quality of what is delivered.

Objectives set should always allow for a meaningful conversation about priorities and focus.

All objectives should be **SMART**. This means that they should all be:

- Specific enough to outline what will be achieved;
- Measurable so clear when they're achieved;
- Achievable so that they motivate;
- Relevant to the role and the needs of the Students' Union;

- Time bound so that it's clear by when they need to be delivered.

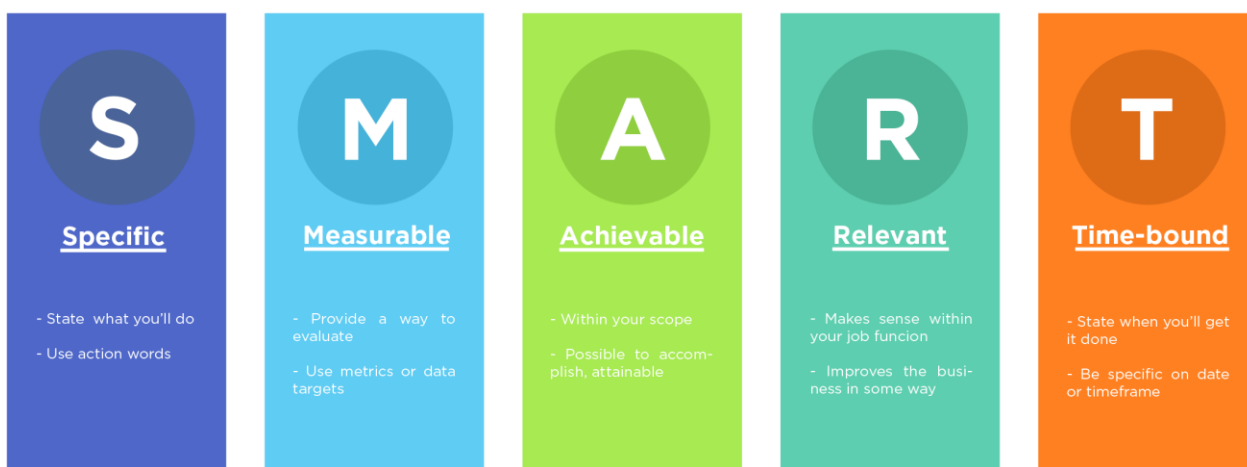
Remember that the Be At Your Best plan is meant to be a living document. If circumstances or priorities change during the course of the year, objectives should change to reflect this.

How to measure success

It's helpful to define the success measures that will demonstrate your progress or completion against an objective. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are a good way of assessing performance and are encouraged for all objectives. The five broad types of indicators are:

- Quantitative - based on numbers or statistics.
- Financial - based on cost.
- Qualitative - based on feedback about how good a service/activity is.
- Process - based on how decisions are made or people are involved.
- Comparative - based on comparing what our SU does with others.

Good objectives include a balance of measures across these five areas. Your manager should help guide you so that your objectives contain KPIs.



Examples of good objectives

Objective 1
10% increase in the number of Totum Card Sales to members this academic year
Actions Required - What will you do to achieve this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the Totum sales league table and identify unions who do well with sales • Speak to other students' unions to understand how they achieve high sales • Meet with NUS for support, guidance and new ideas • Ask colleagues for ideas • Track sales compared with other students' unions throughout the year • Track sales from each promotional activity to understand what works well and not so well
Success Measures - How will you track and measure your progress?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number sold • Aim to be in the top 25% of the Totum Card sales league table • Student feedback from promotional activities is positive
Objective 2
To ensure that the management accounts are complete and sent to SLT by the 10th of the month
Actions Required - What will you do to achieve this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all processes and procedures to identify the information needed by the finance team and when to achieve this objective • Review all processes and procedures to identify areas where they can be improved to ensure the objective is achieved. • Meet with business partners to discuss any problems or concerns and get the buy in.
Success Measures - How will you track and measure your progress?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts received on time – any delay noted and the reasons for it to facilitate improvement
Objective 3
To improve employee engagement within my department by 20% over the next 12 months
Actions Required - What will you do achieve this?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the employee engagement survey scores for my team from the current survey • Identify and reflect on areas that are red or amber or that are shown as a key driver of employee engagement within my results report • Brief the team on the results, discuss areas of improvement and agree action plan • Discuss progress throughout the year at team meetings
Success Measures - How will you track and measure your progress?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employee engagement score in the next survey exceeds 75% • The red/amber areas from the last survey show improvements • Employee feedback on the improvements is positive

Values and Behaviours

Our values framework sets out the expectations around the behaviours that we want to see from all who work here. It helps to bring our values to life with clear examples of behaviours that all should aim to demonstrate at work.

The framework encourages one consistent, positive culture which will ultimately lead to better experiences for members and you.

There are three values for all staff that should underpin all of our work and behaviours within the Students' Union.

Values
We champion students - We're a student rights organisation. Our collectivism makes us stronger. We know students make the best decisions about things that affect them. We trust our members.
We're proud of Durham - We always recognise success but we always strive for better. Our collegiate University means we do things differently here. We like that.
We make the future better - We're a students' union with a purpose. We're relentless in pursuit of our mission. We make change for students, with students, in their interests.

How will it apply to you?

The values framework will apply to everyone. You should review it and reflect on areas that you feel are strengths and areas that need improvement, and/or focus, in the year ahead.

The framework is not meant to be a tick list - some of the examples given may apply more to some roles than others. You should have a full discussion with your line manager to make sure that the behaviours are real for you in your role, clarifying both the standard expected and the aspiration.

You are encouraged to discuss the behaviours with your line manager throughout the year. Examples of the questions and conversations that your manager might have with you include:

- What else could you do in that project to show some of the behaviours?
- Your work on this has demonstrated a lot of the excellent examples for this behaviour and that's great.

- The way you managed the stakeholders is a strong example of what excellent looks like in this area.
- Talk to me about this value, do you have any examples that you could describe that demonstrate the effective behaviours?
- I think that this particular value is one of your strengths - I regularly see you doing some of the excellent behaviours (give specific examples) and I've had feedback from others too.
- In recent weeks I have seen a few times where you have displayed the behaviours we want people to avoid. Specifically they were - what could you do to stop these things from happening again?
- Looking at the values framework, do you have any feedback for me to help me be a better line manager in the future?

Learning and Development

Everyone needs to take personal responsibility for their own learning and development. Your line manager will guide you and your team in identifying areas of personal development and support you in making it happen. It's important that you make the link between your individual performance and the overall performance of the organisation.

The purpose of a personal development plan is to:

- Address any areas of improvement identified through performance conversations.
- Continually improve and raise your performance levels in the current role.
- Identify additional and new ways to demonstrate our values.
- Support your future development and career aspirations.
- Support the delivery of your objectives.

A course is not always the answer

Often people's first instinct would be to go on a training course when it comes to learning and development. Whilst courses can add value and may be the best solution in some situations, many other simple and cost-effective learning and development activities can be considered, including:

- E-learning packages.
- Books/e-books/research articles.
- NUS Connect website resources.
- Websites, journals or magazines.
- Podcasts/webinars/YouTube videos.

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- Job shadowing or deputising for a colleague or your line manager.
- Learning from role models in particular areas.
- Internal or external guest speaker for a team meeting.
- Free guest lectures at universities.
- Professional social networking forums.
- Coaching or mentoring (you can be coached yourself or be a coach for someone else).
- Action learning.
- Report writing.
- Sitting in on a project team.
- Visits to other charities or organisations.
- Internal or external networking group.
- Volunteering.

Courses and formal qualifications are still an option, but you should also consider other routes.

SECTION THREE: Monitoring Performance

Once Be At Your Best plan is in place, your manager will help to support, inspire and coach you to achieve it. The annual Be At Your Best cycle is made up of regular opportunities to meet your line manager, to discuss progress and to keep things on track (or to change them if need be).

Regular 1-2-1s

You should expect regular 1-2-1s with your line manager throughout the performance year.

These meetings should be a catch up about work guided by some questions:

- How are you?
- What's gone well and why?
- What's not gone so well and how can you/we learn from this?
- Have any actions or milestones agreed at the last meeting been completed?
- Are you concerned about anything, including the delivery of your performance plan?
- Does your line manager need to do anything to help you?

Both you and your manager are expected to give some thought to these questions before the meeting. You can use the meeting preparation form to help you with this.

Part five of the Be At Your Best plan allows you and/or your line manager to capture key points discussed and any resulting actions.

Half-year review

This 1-2-1 acts as a 'checkpoint' to summarise the last six months, to check things are on track (and discuss what to do if not) and to change any objectives which are no longer relevant.

This is not a formal review as such, but an opportunity to look back and identify any themes, sense check where you are, clarify where things are heading and to make any changes required.

Team meetings

As well as talking to people individually, where practicable, line managers are expected to hold regular team meetings to discuss performance as a group – including how you can help each other to achieve personal and team or departmental objectives. Team meetings should also cover what else is happening around the organisation so you understand the bigger picture.

Performance issues

You should raise with your manager as soon as possible any concerns or worries you might have about your work or your performance plan. It's important that we create an environment where you feel you can raise things at an early stage.

If your manager begins to have concerns about any aspect of your performance, they will talk to you to try to understand the cause(s) and determine how they can support you to get back on track.

Interventions, if required, may include personal development, training, coaching or adjustments to your role. Your line manager will take reasonable steps to help you and give you a reasonable amount of time to make improvements. Typically 8-12 weeks is reasonable, although it may be less than this depending on the particular issue.

All performance concerns will be documented within your Be At Your Best plan.

If your performance doesn't improve, and your line manager has taken reasonable steps to give support over a period of time, it may be necessary to take more formal action through our capability and disciplinary procedures.

Please note – You are not on your own. You should feel free to talk to your own line manager, or a colleague in the Senior Leadership Team, for

guidance or a second opinion on a situation like this at any time.

SECTION FOUR: Annual Be At Your Best reviews

Preparing for the end of year review

In June / July each year, your manager will arrange an end of year review meeting with you. This will discuss your performance across the full year - you'll consider what's gone well, what's not gone so well and strengths and areas for development.

You should prepare for the review meeting by updating your progress, against objectives, behaviours and your personal development plan, and completing the relevant sections in part six of your Be At Your Best plan, including:

- What you're most proud of and why?
- If you could have done anything differently what would it have been and why?
- How have you performed against the values?
- What have you learnt through your personal development activities?
- Describe how any learning and development has benefited your role and the organisation.
- Feedback for your line manager.

You should fill in the relevant sections of part six and email to your line manager [a week in advance](#) of the meeting so that they can fully prepare.

Review meeting

This meeting should be a summary of the year, drawing together key themes which have emerged during your 1-2-1s and giving an opportunity to recognise good performance and achievement. There should be no surprises.

In the meeting, you should do most of the talking. Your line manager should ask you to take them through your Be At Your Best plan, and be prepared to provide examples of the good things you've done around the different elements and to be honest about where you could improve.

You should come to the meeting prepared to highlight your views on your key strengths and areas for development, and to discuss your performance against objectives, the values framework, and your learning and development plan. You'll also start to discuss a new Be At Your Best plan for the year ahead and check that the job description is still relevant and up to date.

Your line manager should ask about your future aspirations, and discuss how you might get there and how they could support you. This is a genuine question – they ask it because they want to support and encourage you to follow your interests and fulfil your potential.

Summary statement

After the end of year review meeting, your line manager will complete a summary statement that covers:

- How you have performed across the year against each element.
- Recognition for the things that you are most proud of and your strengths.
- Recommended areas of development.
- If you're underperforming, what you need to do to improve.

Moderation

Staff performance will be discussed at an SLT moderation meeting. Moderation meetings ensure that managers are judging your performance fairly and consistently across the organisation. They also ensure we can identify the highest performers and continue to develop them, as well as being aware of any areas of concern or underperformance.

Annual appraisal checklist

Before the end of year Be At Your Best meeting:

- Your line manager will book the review meeting.
- Ensure you complete your sections and send to your line manager a week beforehand.

As you prepare think about:

- How you've performed across all elements.
- Your views on your individual strengths, how they've developed and areas for improvement.
- Supporting examples or evidence where you feel you have or haven't the expectations of good performance.

After your end of year review:

- You'll receive a copy for your records and it will be added to your HR file.