

**People Management Guidance**  
**Managing Informal Conduct or Disciplinary Matters**

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## 1 Introduction

Leaders, managers and supervisors are expected to undertake their role in line with the [Imperial Expectations](#) ethos. Effective people management ensures a culture where all members of staff, regardless of contractual status or any protected characteristic<sup>1</sup>, know their contribution is valued which in turn means the College is able to achieve high levels of organisational performance. As such it establishes a shared understanding about what is required, and an approach to leading and developing people which will ensure that goals are achieved.

Everyone at Imperial College London that manages or supervises people are expected to act in accordance with the 'Imperial College Expectations' principles set out below.

- **Communicate regularly and effectively within, and across, teams**  
You use communication styles appropriate to different people and situations to foster respect, understanding and collaboration. You present information clearly, concisely and accurately to promote understanding.
- **Encourage inclusive participation and eliminate discrimination**  
You treat individuals with respect, encourage involvement, and challenge behaviour, actions and words that do not support the promotion of equality and diversity. You comply, and ensure others comply, with legal requirements and organisational policies.
- **Consider the thoughts and expectations of others**  
You discuss and agree what is expected of others and what they can expect of you. You give people opportunities to express their views and provide feedback, and you respond appropriately
- **Support and develop staff to optimise their talent**  
You value the contributions of your team, and encourage and support staff to make the best of their abilities. You give feedback to others to help them enhance their performance.
- **Champion a positive approach to change and opportunity**  
You lead and manage change taking into account the impact on people and the needs and priorities of Imperial. You generate and recognise imaginative and innovative solutions.
- **Deliver positive outcomes**  
You deliver results, as an individual and team member, and consistently seek to improve your performance and that of your team. You monitor the quality of work and progress against plans and take appropriate corrective action, where necessary.
- **Work in a planned and managed way**  
You prioritise objectives and plan work to make best use of time and resources. You show integrity, fairness and consistency in decision making.

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<sup>1</sup> The Equality Act 2010 introduced the term “protected characteristics” to refer to groups that are protected under the Act.

The College's policies, procedures and processes are designed with good people management practice at the forefront and aim to be in line with Imperial Expectations. These include and are not limited to; Recruitment and Selection Procedure, Induction Process, Procedure for Managing the Probation Period, Personal Review and Development Plan, Capability Procedure and the Disciplinary Procedure. Equivalent policies and procedures are in place in relation to academic staff; these can be located in the *Appendix to the College Charter and Statutes 2015*. Further support and development can also be accessed via the Imperial Professional Development and Leadership and Management Development Programmes.

The purpose of these procedures, programmes and processes is to ensure:

- Members of staff are recruited fairly and to clearly defined roles
- They have a structured introduction to the College and their new role
- Expectations on delivery, communications and development are clear during their probation period and if there are any concerns, they know how these will be managed and that it will be done in a way that is both reasonable and fair
- Throughout their employment, they can access development programmes to support the delivery of the skills required to undertake their role and/ or future roles
- If they perceive they have been subject to unacceptable behaviour, support is available to address concerns either informally or formally
- An annual meeting to review their performance and agree the coming years objectives
- A structured procedure for dealing with any performance concerns

## **2 Equality and Diversity**

The College treats equality of opportunity seriously and has an equality framework that is applicable to staff in order to promote and ensure equality of opportunity. Implementation of this guidance must be clear and transparent and not subject to any unfair discriminatory practices.

Line managers and supervisors are required to familiarise and understand this guidance.

## **3 Responsibilities of Leaders, Managers and Supervisors**

It is expected and understood that managers/supervisors should manage in line with the Imperial Expectations principles listed above, they should meet with their staff on a regular basis to discuss work and give advice and guidance on work matters, ensuring appropriate support and development when required. The standards they should deliver and will be assessed against should be clearly communicated by their manager/supervisor in accordance with the reasonable requirements of the post. If the member of staff is unsure of the required standard or has identified training/or development that would help them perform their role better, they should discuss this with their manager/supervisor.

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## **4 Responsibilities of Members of Staff**

Members of staff have a responsibility during the probation period to work hard to achieve a good level of performance, and thereby confirm their suitability for the post. Thereafter all members of staff should strive to maintain a good level of performance and be proactive in seeking support if they have any concerns about the requirements of the job or their capabilities to perform the role.

## **5 Where there are performance concerns**

This guidance provides information on how to manage performance concerns informally, prior to instigating any of the formal procedures outlined in the Probation, Capability or Disciplinary procedures.

The College's Capability policy defines "Poor Performance" issues as:

"problems arising where a member of staff is not sustaining the acceptable level of performance required to meet the requirements of their role on the quantity and quality of work despite genuine effort."

Where a line manager has concerns about a member of staff's performance, the line manager must, in the first instance, discuss these with HR who will consider the issues and options for addressing these, such as through one-to-one discussion, mediation, coaching and training. Where any such steps are agreed, the action will be taken forward without attendance from Human Resources or Trade Union representatives. If it is judged that the concerns are such that they should be managed under the support section of the relevant HR policy, HR will undertake a one-to-one briefing session with the manager to guide on the appropriate policies and support and advise the manager on how to discuss this with the member of staff. Following the discussion(s), the line manager will discuss their concerns with the member of staff informally, in line with the advice received, and will also provide the member of staff with the details of what support is available.

## **6 Approaching the support meeting**

In line with the principles of good people management practice, the member of staff should be kept fully informed of performance issues as they arise. Concerns raised at the support meeting should not be completely unexpected to the individual. The main aim of the meeting is to understand, clarify and address the reasons why the staff member is not achieving the required standards and to identify a reasonable strategy which will enable the member of staff to improve and meet the required standards.

Where informal discussions are taking place with a member of staff who has disclosed a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010 see [Manager's Guide for more information](#)), it is important to ensure an assessment/discussion has taken place to put reasonable adjustments in place to enable the staff member to do their job. These could be temporary or permanent depending on the nature of the disability.

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Where there are concerns relating to their performance, then every effort should be made to understand the impact that disability may have upon the member of staff's role. This could involve seeking specialist OH, equality and/or HR advice, Current adjustments that have already been put in place since the member of staff disclosed their disability can be taken into account when reviewing performance.

Before holding the support meeting, in line with the advice provided by HR, the manager/supervisor should take time to prepare and plan how they intend to conduct the meeting. The discussion could form part of a regular one-to-one meeting where work is normally discussed, or a specific meeting arranged for the sole purpose of discussing the member of staff's performance.

Members of staff may be anxious about the meeting and may request brief background prior to the meeting to allow them to prepare. Such a request is not unreasonable.

The manager/supervisor should take time to think about what they want to achieve as an outcome of the meeting, and be ready to discuss and agree:

- **The performance concerns:** Be specific, and have evidence of the concerns to support the discussion.
- **The objectives that need to be achieved in relation to the areas of concern:** These need to be specific, and in line with the normal standard of performance expected of staff in the same/similar role
- **The review period within which the objectives should be achieved:** think about what is a reasonable time period in which to improve/achieve the objectives that have been set. **Please note:** the College would normally expect the management of concerns to vary in line with the nature of the role to give a reasonable opportunity to address the concerns in an informal environment.
- **Whether it is appropriate to set interim objectives:** this may be appropriate where the objectives are to be achieved over a long timescale (e.g. 6/12 months)
- **The support which will be provided during the review period:** This might include training, mentoring and/or other appropriate support
- **The potential repercussions if the objectives are not met:** it is important that members of staff are aware of the potential repercussions. These should be outlined in a supportive manner. Further guidance can be obtained from the HR Staff Hub.

The meeting should be supportive, and it may be helpful for line managers to think about:

- Focus on behaviour, not the person [e.g. "You have not completed the paper on time." versus "You are poor at achieving deadlines."]
- Be specific and clear. Tell the person what is correct/ incorrect
- Encourage and enable the member of staff [e.g. "I can support you to improve" and will provide training [if appropriate]
- Be descriptive rather than evaluative [e.g. "There are seven misspelled words on this page." rather than "The spelling in this paper is terrible."]

- Encourage self-assessment/self-evaluation [e.g. ask the member of staff “How do you think you did?”]
- Be as concrete as possible, but go with impressions if that is all you have. If giving impressions or opinions, let the person know it [ e.g., “This is how I see it” or “This is my opinion”]
- Emphasise mutual responsibility: [“I may have a concern, but it’s not just your responsibility to resolve.”]
- Emphasise building strengths as well as improving weaknesses

It is important not to underestimate the emotions that might be felt by both parties during the conversation and to be prepared for these. To ensure that your member of staff is aware of the various support mechanisms available to them, please provide them with the list you received from HR and make them aware they can also seek informal support from HR.

In advance of the meeting, you must have discussed how you intend to approach the meeting with your HR representative. The College’s Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider, Confidential Care (CiC), offer a management advice line who are available to take part in a ‘dry run’ when required. CiC are contactable at the following web address: <http://www.cic-learning.co.uk/confidentialcare/login>. The required user ID and password is available from the Occupational Health website: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/advice-and-support/>.

The Learning and Development Centre also run courses which may be useful, for example “Handling Difficult Conversations”. Further details are available from: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff-development/learning-and-development-centre/courses/ipd/professional-development-online-resources/difficult-conversations/>.

## **7 Following the support meeting**

After the meeting, the manager/supervisor should make a brief record of the discussion. This should include details of the agreed objectives and review period, the support measures that will be put in place, and confirm the potential repercussions if objectives are not met as discussed with the member of staff. A copy of the meeting record, along with information on the follow-up meeting, should be forwarded to the member of staff via email.

## **8 During the support period**

During the review period, regular meetings should be arranged with the member of staff to review progress. These meetings will also provide an opportunity for the manager/supervisor to provide feedback on performance, and to discuss any concerns, and review how the support measures are operating.

As above, brief records should be kept of these review meetings, and copies forwarded to the member of staff via email.

## **9 At the end of the support period**

Where, at the end of the review period, the objective(s) have been achieved, no further informal action is required. However, it may be appropriate for the support measures put in place during the informal review period to continue. In addition, the member of staff's performance should continue to be monitored in line with the usual processes for all staff.

If the objectives have not been achieved at the end of the informal review period, before determining the next steps, consider:

- Were the objectives and support put in place reasonable/correct?
- Is this due to factors outside the individual's control?
- How far have the objectives been achieved? What additional time/support is required to complete the objectives?

There are several alternative outcomes, which may include:

- Extending the support period and/or putting in place any additional support identified.
- Move to the relevant formal procedure.

If the manager/supervisor is satisfied that the member of staff has sufficiently met their objectives, no further action is required. The manager/supervisor should continue to meet the member of staff on a regular basis to discuss work matters together and provide feedback where necessary.

Where the concerns continue regular milestone reviews should take place.

If formal measures are considered, before confirming the next steps, the manager/supervisor should seek guidance/advice from the HR Staff Hub.