THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

CDR Guidance 2020

How to do one-to-ones

Guidance for professional services staff and managers

1

How to do one-to-ones

Introduction

The Career Development Review (CDR) process for Professional Services Staff is based on regular one-to-ones (catch-up meetings) between managers and individual staff members.

One-to-ones are known to strengthen relationships between managers and their team members. The concept is fairly straightforward: meet regularly to discuss progress on goals, engagement, professional development and anything else which either would like to discuss. A one-to-one should be informal, constructive and supportive.

While one-to-ones can sometimes feel time-consuming, the return on the investment of time is worth it. Regular conversations help to develop trust. Trust in turn helps to solidify teams, creating a safe environment for people to work in new and collaborative ways.

Keep in mind that each one-to-one will be different depending on who is involved, the role and what is discussed. Frequency of one-to-ones will vary; however, we recommend that they are held **at least twice per term**. Equally, there is no ideal length for a one-to-one. Some one-to-ones can be as quick as 30 minutes; sometimes they may need an hour and a half.

A little structure for one-to-one meetings can go a long way. Preparation, a properly collaborative agenda and thoughtful notetaking will help to make your one-to-ones effective and meaningful.

How to prepare for a one-to-one

1. Have the right mindset

Don't overthink the meeting. Remember that it's meant to be an informal discussion that gives both of you the opportunity to discuss what's on your mind. To help keep it informal, you could go on a walking meeting, have a coffee or meet for breakfast - just remember to take your discussion points with you! Sometimes, meeting outside the formal office environment can help people to feel more comfortable discussing certain topics.

2. Set a Recurring Schedule

One-to-ones need to happen regularly to be effective. Once you've agreed how often one-to-ones will take place, make sure that they are scheduled and added as a recurring meeting in the calendar.

Of course, schedules can change, but it's important that one-to-ones aren't cancelled. Cancelling can send the message that the meeting isn't important, when in fact it is the cornerstone of a good manager-employee relationship. If something comes up, do your best to reschedule for a more convenient time – this shouldn't be too far in the future.

3. Keep it flexible

One-to-one agendas should be collaborative, and managers should encourage staff to share in advance what they would like to discuss. Common topics might include:

- Progress against agreed objectives
- Prioritising workloads
- Monitoring work and work performance
- Sharing information relevant to work
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Ensuring a good work/life balance
- Identifying learning and development needs
- People management (if relevant to role)

Where appropriate, the one-to-one should also include pastoral matters relating to personal issues that have been raised through work, such as discussing any outside factors that could be affecting work, as well as approaches to handling stress.

How to run a one-to-one

What is said in the one-to-one should be confidential between the manager and employee. The manager should focus on asking questions and listening attentively to understand the feedback. Both manager and employee may want to prepare some questions in advance, but in general it's important to keep an open mind about the direction that the conversation could take.

Managers should…	Individuals should…
Prepare areas they want updating on	Come prepared with progress
Actively listen	Share progress openly
Give and receive feedback	Give and receive feedback
Support the individual to manage their workload	Ensure that they are managing their workload and share any challenges
Support and learning and development required	Identify learning required
Ask after the individual's wellbeing	Take responsibility for own wellbeing
Agree clear next steps	Take notes of next steps
Be open-minded	Be open-minded

The progress review form is a useful ongoing way to capture progress against agreed objectives. This will be helpful for the one-to-one in April/May each year, when all progress made during that year should be collated and uploaded to the CDR (PS) Sharepoint site.

Giving and receiving feedback is a key part of the one-to-one. You can find more about how to do this well in the separate **How to give and receive feedback**.

How to wrap up the one-to-one

Make sure, before the one-to-one ends, that you've discussed all of the talking points and, where relevant, have agree what actions are to be carried out by the next meeting. You will find it helpful to take notes so that you can keep track of what's been discussed and can review the discussion before the next one-to-one. If it has been difficult to take many notes during the one-to-one itself (for example, if it took the form of a walking meeting), it's helpful to share a brief written summary afterwards so that you can both refer to it later.

Support resources available

There are a range of additional resources available to support effective one-to-ones:

- CDR Review Guide
- Creating your Personal Development Plan
- How to set objectives
- How to give and receive feedback
- Wellbeing
- Learning and development available

LSE Human Resources
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE

Design: LSE Design Unit (lse.ac.uk/designunit).