Queen Mary
University of London

Professional Services Career Development Guide: For Managers
Their career, supported by you

Introduction

Queen Mary University of London has made the commitment to all staff to engage with them in their career development, and has made this an integral part of the institution's Mission and Values. Our leaders and managers are essential to helping us achieve our stated goals.

Our objective is to develop a modern, person-centred approach, where we give agency to the individual to plan and design their own career journey.

This guide is designed to help you understand more about this responsibility, and to supply guidance on how you can work with and support your staff in their career development.

From Our Mission:

> *"To create a truly inclusive environment, building on our cherished cultural diversity, where students and staff flourish, reach their full potential and are proud to be part of the University."*

From Our Values:

> ***Inclusive:*** *Maintaining our tradition of nurturing and supporting talented students and staff*

> ***Ambitious:*** *We...will foster innovation and creativity...and respond with imagination to new opportunities to further our vision, mission and academic ambitions*

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Benefits of career development

We see a number of benefits to improved engagement with staff on their career development. As you identify other outcomes of this approach, we'd love to hear about them, with a view to adding them to this list: please contact opd@qmul.ac.uk.

a) **It improves staff motivation and retention, both within your teams and the wider organisation.**

   Career development can mean developing and building skills within an existing role. Research consistently shows that where staff feel that they have no opportunity or support for their growth, there is an increased likelihood that they will start looking for other roles. It is typically cited as one of the most significant reasons why a member of staff leaves an organisation.

b) **Where staff see lateral moves as an option, it can make hiring easier and onboarding faster.**

   When someone reaches a natural point in their development where they start to look for their next opportunity, they are more likely to look within their own organisation first if they have felt supported. The University benefits from people who understand the institution and have built networks. Additionally, teams which have a reputation for harnessing and developing talent might find that recruitment gets easier!

c) **It can increase staff confidence and performance in their current role.**

   As you support staff for their future ambitions, you are developing their skill set and giving them motivation to do better-quality work. Naturally, it follows that we would expect to see the quality of work rise.

d) **It can uncover hidden potential.**

   Not everyone will feel confident enough to develop their career proactively. Perhaps they have never been given the expectation that they can aspire to better career outcomes, or maybe they are worried that they might fail. Whatever the circumstances, with the right support, you can help them feel safe enough to explore and uncover abilities that they weren't aware of.

e) **It is rewarding when people make their next career step after you have helped them.**

   It is rewarding to help someone achieve their next step, and what you learn from that experience can be added to interactions with other staff to enhance the support that you give them.

f) **It can help you create succession plans within your own department.**

   When people move on, the investment in members of staff can minimise the impact of the gap, through capable cover from the rest of the team. It can even help fill that gap, as another member of the team could be interested in taking up that position. This can make it easier to replace people in more specialised roles and faster to re-establish your normal service levels.

g) **As Higher Education continues to evolve, it promotes staff agility and makes it easier for them to adapt.**

The workplace, and higher education as a sector, continue to evolve at an increasing pace. It is useful to help staff regularly review their skills and career circumstances to help them prepare to take advantage of opportunities that may present themselves. Promoting that kind of agility is also important to help them navigate changes when they do arise, as the ability to change will be important for their ongoing performance.

> "In volatile times, [staff] may want reassurance about their employability, information to help them to make decisions and to understand what options may be open to them … If you don't talk with people about their future most will assume there are no opportunities for them – and become disenchanted and leave."
>
> **Maggi Evans PhD**
> **Talent Management Researcher**
> *https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/explore-inform-how-lead-great-career-conversations-maggi-evans/*

h) **It is an essential leadership skill to develop.**

With a greater focus on the development, wellbeing and careers of staff, the University will increasingly value those who can show their ability to deliver in this area. This theme is reflected in the wider working world and is very much considered essential by employers across the spectrum of all types of work. You should also be aware that staff are wanting to discuss this with someone who can help them develop in this area, and their leaders are very often the people that they will look to first.

Your role in staff development

As one of Queen Mary's leaders, we look to you to help the University achieve its goals and embody its values. In this section we will start by making the link between taking an active role in staff career development and the 'Leading Together' framework.

- **Inclusive**: Value and nurture differences within your team to enable everyone to reach their best performance, and open up opportunities for growth and career progression.

- **Self-Awareness:** Use your self-awareness and your own personal development as a role model for your team. Being open about your own growth will create a safe environment for members of your team to talk about theirs.

- **Strategic Ambition:** Contribute to delivering excellence in support of Queen Mary's strategy through staff development and helping the University increase opportunities for staff across a range of departments. Encourage staff to look at a broad range of opportunities at the university.

- **Enabling:** Help members of staff to create, and encourage them to explore, career pathways that are appropriate to them. Support them so that they can take personal ownership of their development, exploration and strategy.

- **Influencer/Motivator:** Create a compelling vision of the benefits of being proactive about career planning in order to encourage staff to be active in their own development. Help them connect their personal goals with those of the organisation.

As you have probably experienced, supporting staff isn't 'one size fits all'. This guide shares four approaches/roles that you can adopt for career development discussion. This will give you options for approaching future conversations that are appropriate to where the member of staff is in their journey.

It's OK that you are not a careers professional; you are not expected to be. Don't worry! Discuss the different roles with each person and decide on the one that would work best for them. This is a collaborative process. Keep in mind that you may need to use different roles at different points in the process.

No matter the role, the emphasis is on staff leading their own development. However, this is a mutual process, and you should not wait for someone to approach you, as not everyone will feel comfortable doing so. Help them to understand that you are there to guide and support them in *their* journey.

Roles you can adopt

Coach	
Using questioning to promote exploration and encouragement, a coach will help a member of staff find their own solutions.	***What it involves:*** • Showing belief that an individual has the answers within them. • Asking challenging questions and helping interpret the answers. • Helping identify skills, values and interests, and linking them together to empower an individual to create pathways. • Being committed to and encouraging regular review. Making sure to follow up on previous discussions. • Helping the member of staff to review the realism of their ideas. ***When it could be useful:*** • When the member of staff is unsure about what direction to go in. • When a staff member is confused or frustrated with their progress against career goals.

Advisor	
This role actively seeks to provide information, intelligence and organisational understanding that supports and enhances a staff member's career development plans.	***What it involves:*** • Communicating and interpreting University and departmental goals. • Helping the staff member connect these to their career goals. • Sharing your understanding of what challenges may be encountered and helping adjust goals accordingly. • Sharing opportunities or potential opportunities across the University. • Helping interpret the needs and requirements of target roles and ambitions. ***When it could be useful:*** • When a staff member asks for specific information. • When you are presented with career options of interest.

Analyst	
Working with staff to evaluate performance in both technical and soft skills, the analyst empowers others to understand and measure their progress and identify appropriate opportunities.	***What it involves:*** • Showing a path of progress and waypoints based on the individual's skills to help them meet their career goals. • Setting up regular evaluation of progress, with an emphasis on teaching the individual how to lead that evaluation. • Showing how the development of abilities connects to their aspirations. • Creating deliberate plans of action, that also take into account that not every plan will work out how you intend. ***When it could be useful:*** • When the member of staff needs help identifying their performance level. • When helping match a staff member to a job opportunity.

Connector

Providing specific and targeted help for members of staff through your network at the University or beyond.	**What it involves:** • Introducing staff to people and resources that help them with their career journey. • Proactively create or connect staff with opportunities that will help build skills, recognition and visibility. • Helping staff strategically approach the opportunities to get the most out of them. • Informing yourself of the range of opportunities available to staff. • Help staff identify what kinds of connections would be useful both now and in the future. **When it could be useful:** • When your familiarity with staff goals helps you recognise that your contacts could help a member of staff progress with their stated objectives. • When a staff member is capable but unsure of what roles they might enjoy in the future and just needs to expand their horizons with something practical.

How to manage career development conversations

How to introduce and prepare for career conversations

It is important that career discussions are introduced in a positive way, in order to minimise the chance of people seeing them as a threat to their current role. It is ultimately an ongoing planning process that is designed to be supportive of the staff member's growth.

Introducing

Assuming you are not already having discussions around careers, you may want to consider letting your team know that you will be championing career development, rather than springing surprise meetings on them! Perhaps you can do this as part of a team meeting. Share Queen Mary's commitment and Values with them, so they can understand the context. They may well have already seen the staff career guide and are expecting to have conversations on the subject.

It would be helpful to remind staff that the process is mutual: you will aim to engage them in career conversations, and they will 'own and direct' them, with you supporting and guiding them.

Frequency

It may help to separate these discussions from formal processes (such as objective-oriented one-to-ones), so that they can adopt an agreed frequency that is appropriate to the individual situation. This will allow these discussions to find their own natural style. Additionally, in order to emphasise the commitment to career development, they can benefit from not being seen as an 'add-on'.

However, the reality of the situation may be that you already find it hard to schedule regular one-to-one meetings with your staff. This could be due to workloads or different working patterns. So, as an alternative, you could instead create a regular agenda item on career development in the meetings that you already have.

The main point is to **avoid** saving up everything for a single annual appraisal meeting! One conversation per year won't help staff feel encouraged or supported – instead, it will feel like a 'tick box' exercise and have the opposite effect.

Someone might prefer to discuss things in a monthly or quarterly meeting. Sometimes discussion might evolve into something that is part of the day-to-day conversation, such as giving your usual encouragement and feedback within the context of their career goals.

After an initial meeting, discuss with your staff member what an appropriate check-in frequency should be. As much as is realistic, let them make this decision. You may need to negotiate alternatives if you consider that they may be too frequent or not frequent enough.

Ahead of meetings

It is advisable to encourage staff to come to meetings having done some thinking already, or perhaps to have a go at some of the exercises from the staff career guide. Some suggestions that you could give are as follows:

- Do you have something specific you are interested in, short term and/or long term? What do you think would be the next step towards that?
- What is important to you in your work? What do you value and enjoy?
- What are the skillsets that you feel good about, and which ones would you like to develop or spend more time in? What do other people give you positive or negative feedback on?
- What examples can you recall where you have demonstrated the IPACE values?
- Try classifying your achievements using the 'Leading Together' framework to identify which areas are your strongest.

Consider where you will have the discussion, and whether that location is appropriate and private enough for a conversation that may be sensitive for the staff member. Consider also, the possibility of interruptions and minimising those.

Starting discussions and initial meetings

Expectations and trust

Setting up a mutual understanding around your discussions will be important to help make the meetings productive and to establish trust. Things that you might consider talking about at the start are:

- That conversations are confidential unless permission to share is explicitly granted.
- Career development isn't just limited to their current role. The intent is to help them grow and reach both short-term and long-term goals.
- It is also OK to not have any idea of what they would want to do next. Developing within their current role, doing great work, and learning about themselves can be very valuable.
- What their hopes would be for these discussions and why.
- You are there to guide, support and encourage but the actions will be theirs to own.
- Career development is important, and they do still have accountability to achieving the goals of the role that they are currently in. The two are not mutually exclusive! It is likely that as their work improves and they hit their goals, they will be growing and developing towards where they'd like their next step to be.

Being consistent with what you have agreed is essential. In particular, making sure you are available for career discussions as you have promised will build up trust. Not everyone will be ready to open up fully until this trust has been established.

Getting started

A good way to start initial meetings is to ask what has been going well and why they think that might be. It sets up the meeting in a positive way, and can be a useful introduction to thinking about the value they bring to their current role and how that can help them identify options for the future. Watch out for the tendency of people to focus on what has not gone so well. While personal improvement will undoubtedly form part of career development, their strengths are more likely to point towards the right direction for them than their development areas!

This discussion can help both staff and managers identify opportunities for growth of strengths, and even where there might be new opportunities to leverage those skills (in the existing team or beyond).

It can also be useful to ask about their ideas and interests for their career in the future. Let them know that there is no judgement on what they say. Also, let them know that this doesn't have to be a particular named role. For example, they really enjoy a small creative communication part of their role and would like to do more of this in the future, or perhaps even pursue a career in that area.

When asking questions, give them time to think. Avoid jumping in and answering the questions where you have insight that they might not.

Role model

It can be helpful to talk about your own career to help you illustrate ideas to the person you are meeting with. For example, if you haven't decided what you want to do next and are working on your next move, sharing this can help the person understand that this is ok.

This has the added benefit of building trust and safety, allowing people to feel more comfortable talking about their own careers, challenges, and ambitions. However, be careful not to imply that the way you progressed your own career is the only or best way to do so!

Which stage of career development is the member of staff at?

It is important to take an interest and understand what your staff member is thinking and feeling in terms of their career at any point of discussion. This will help you establish what support you can offer and what kind of role you might need to adopt to support them. A simple way to do this is to use the 'career planning approach' from the staff career guide and discuss what stage they might find themselves at.

1. **Self-assessment**
   Working out what they want from their career
2. **Career exploration**
   Investigating all their options
3. **Decision making**
   Effectively evaluating the opportunities
4. **Plan implementation/Next Steps**
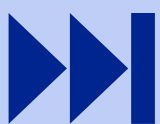   Increasing their chances of success

For example:
   a) A staff member who doesn't know what they want to do with their career. They might not have an idea of what they can offer in a new role, and so it is difficult for them to think of options. The **Analyst role** would be a good start here to help them. Then, follow up with the **Coach role** to help them develop their own **self-assessment** habits.
   b) Someone might know what is next for them but cannot see what **actions** to take. The **Advisor role** could help them with their planning, while the **Connector role** could help them find opportunities in your department or others.

Using the GROW coaching technique to help staff achieve their goals

The GROW model can be used for problem solving, goal setting, and performance improvement. Through your questioning, it is designed to get the other person thinking about what they can do for their particular situation.

G = **Goal**   What is the challenge you are looking to resolve or the goal that you're aiming for?

R = **Reality**   Where are you now?

O = **Options**   What could you do?

W = **Will**   What will you do? (Also sometimes 'Way Forward' or 'What Now?')

When asking questions, give them time to think and resist any temptation to answer for them. You don't have to use these questions only within the context of this model; feel free to use them to support whatever style you prefer.

Goal	
Goal	- What skills would you most like to use in a future role? - What goals have you considered? - What roles have you considered? - What would you like to achieve in your career? - What area would you like to develop? Why? - What would you like to change about …?
Reality	- Thinking about the skills you'd like to use in the future, what is your current experience of using them? - How much have you done towards this goal so far? - What have you found out about the path you are interested in? - Who have you spoken to for advice? - Where are you now? - Are there any conflicts between your goals?
Options	- What can you do to bring more of what you want into your role? - What skills are a good fit for the role you are interested in? How did you find that out? - Who could you talk to, to find out more? Inside Queen Mary, outside Queen Mary? - What experiments can you try to test the direction that you are interested in? - What skills does this progression require? How could you acquire the skills you have less of?
Will	- What is the smallest manageable step you could do next? - What will you do next? By when? - What might get in the way? How will you overcome that? - What, specifically, could I help you with? - What will you do if you hit a roadblock? What is your best alternative course of action? - How often do you need to review your progress against this goal?

An example:

An administrator aspiring to project coordination roles.

Goal	**What goals have you considered? Why?** "I really enjoyed the project to improve our management of finance data. Setting up the procedures and sharing these with all the different data holders in our department. I was proud of coordinating everyone to get their data into the new system." **What skills would you most like to use in a future role?** "I have always thought that I would like a role in project coordination but now that I have actually been involved in a project, I would be really interested in doing more of this."
Reality	**Thinking about the skills you'd like to use in the future, what is your current experience of using them?** "I got on well with everyone and it wasn't too hard to get them to commit to the deadline. I'm not quite sure what I did to make that happen! This is the only project coordination I have been involved with." **What have you found out about the path you are interested in?** "I found it really easy to keep track of everything and created a spreadsheet to measure tasks, deadlines and accuracy. Of everything I do, I believe I do this kind of thing the best."
Options	**What skills does this progression require? How could you acquire the skills you have less of?** "I could go on a course to help understand how to manage projects properly rather than just using my instincts." **What can you do to bring more of what you want into your role?** "I could ask for more responsibility on the next project that comes up." **Who could you talk to, to find out more? Inside Queen Mary, outside Queen Mary?** "I could ask to shadow someone who is already doing this role for the University. I could also look at job descriptions for the role and see what skills they are looking for."
Will	**What is the smallest manageable step you could do next?** "I can sign up for the next available project management skills course. Would you be willing to support that?" **What, specifically, could I help you with?** "Do you know anyone who is a project coordinator that you could connect me with? I haven't been at the University for very long." **How often do you need to review your progress against this goal?** "Could you help me review the skills needed and set a plan to develop these? I would like to review these monthly as I am worried that there might not be another project for a while, and I don't want to wait!"

Useful questions

In addition to the questions used above in the GROW model, here are some additional questions which you might find helpful in getting people talking about the different elements of their career exploration.

Questions to uncover values

- What is important to you?
- What are you not getting in your current role that you would like to have?
- What are you getting in your role that you might like more of?
- What motivates you?

Questions to uncover strengths

- What work are you most proud of? At Queen Mary? Elsewhere?
- What work have you most enjoyed?
- What parts of your work would you like to do more of?
- What do people ask you for help with?

  Consider using the '**IPACE**' values or the '**Leading Together**' framework to help with strength identification. Listen out for the examples which indicate strong achievement in an area, or where there may be an abundance of evidence.

- What examples of supporting the Queen Mary community are you most proud of? (Drawing from *Inclusive* in IPACE values.)
- What work that is over and above the usual scope of your role would you point to as something that has been a positive achievement for you? (Drawing from *Ambitious* in IPACE values.)
- What strategies are working most effectively for you in developing and supporting the people that work for you? (Drawing from *Enabling* in the Leading Together framework.)
- Which changes have you implemented that you are most proud of? Why? (Drawing from *Strategic Ambition* in the Leading Together framework.)

Questions to help prompt career discovery and action

- How did you choose this job?
- Tell me about your previous work history.
- What skills does this progression require? How could you acquire the skills you have less of?
- What groups/meetups/conferences are you aware of where you could meet people who work in your areas of interest? How could you find them?

Next steps

Following up is essential. If you have agreed to follow up, make sure that you don't miss this, as deprioritising conversations on careers can send the message to a member of staff that they are not important. As part of any meeting, it would be a good idea to discuss when you should follow up next.

What if …?

What if they don't want to discuss their career?
Try to understand why this is. Is there some kind of block that is causing them to avoid engaging, or have they got it covered already? Is there a way you can remove that block? Do they feel comfortable enough to talk about careers?

If someone really doesn't want to talk about career development, despite your best efforts, then you might have to accept that you can't win them all. Make sure they understand that the door is always open for this discussion; perhaps they just aren't ready yet.

What if we just need to get the job done and there isn't enough time for career development discussions or actions?
Staff who feel valued and have a sense of purpose have a tendency to deliver increased performance. This can be partly achieved through engagement with their careers. Naturally, staff should feel accountable for the work that they are expected to do, but career development and performance are not mutually exclusive.

What if they leave my team?
If they have left your team because they have made the next step in their career plan, then this is to be celebrated. It's inevitable that people aren't going to be in their roles forever, and it reflects well on you if a member of your team is able to move 'onwards and upwards' thanks to your support and engagement. All the more so if Queen Mary is the beneficiary of this next move!

What if they aren't skilled enough to get the roles they are aiming at?
As a starting point, you should help staff assess what is required in the roles and directions that they are interested in. You can then help them evaluate their own abilities and reflect on the differences themselves. Where the difference is dramatic, they can make a personal evaluation on whether that path is appropriate or not. Should they choose that path or apply for the job, then be supportive – you may not always be right about whether they can reach the appropriate level.

What if they don't get the job they are applying for? What if they blame me?
The career guides emphasise, as you should, that you are there to guide and support staff, but they are responsible for their actions. You can help them review why they were unsuccessful and support them in deciding what they should do next. Most people will not get every job that they go for and there will be factors that affect this which are out of their control. It might be valuable to discuss, in advance, what they will do if things don't go to plan. This will help give staff a sense of momentum and continuity in those unfortunate moments.

What if they say it is my responsibility to get them promoted?
You are there to support staff and help them grow but cannot carry the responsibility of actually getting them the next job/promotion. A response from a member of staff along these lines should prompt you to try to understand why they think like this, and how they are feeling about their career development in general, as it a surprising stance to take. There might be some underlying issues that aren't obvious from the statement, e.g. perhaps they are struggling to make progress themselves and are feeling helpless.