

Pilot assessments: Component 1

Component 1): Appraisal: Setting and Reflecting on Personal Learning and Work-based Objectives

We want to trial coaching each undergraduate's involvement in the research project within an 'appraisal framework.' This process comprises an initial 'looking forward' conversation designed to discuss and agree a number of objectives for their work on the research project, and a 'looking back' conversation designed to reflect on and evaluate how far these objectives have been met and identify future development needs.

- There is a dual focus on personal development needs (expectations and aspirations) and on the requirements of the work-place, in this case the research project outcomes.
- This component 1 roughly corresponds to QMUL Model level 5 Learning Outcomes (though some rewording would be necessary):
 - o Evaluate and demonstrate their own attitudes, values and skills for being enterprising on their programme, in the workplace and/or in the wider world
 - o Evaluate and demonstrate evidence of their enterprise skills and how this has influenced their practice, their subject discipline and their career expectations
- As students are not likely to be familiar with Appraisal, we have developed the following resources to help them prepare for the objective setting conversation: 1. A brief outline of the Appraisal process and guidance on setting objectives; 2. Appraisal preparation activities: two questionnaires that help students to think about and identify their expectations from the project and project supervisor, and their current and future research competencies; and 3. Resources for the final evaluation and reflections in the form of questions that will help students to reflect on their involvement in the project as a whole, what they have learned and any specific development needs. The project lead should forward these documents to the students, together with a copy of the Appraisal Form.
- As the project lead may not have experience of using undergraduates in their research, we encourage them to prepare for the Appraisal by engaging with the 'Conceptions of Research Supervision at Undergraduate Level' and 'Benefits of a Research Experience at Undergraduate Level' questionnaires which cover a range of expectations for the project and the supervisor's role.

STEPS:

Meeting One

- 1) Towards the beginning of the research project, the project leader schedules an individual 30 minute Appraisal meeting with each student. (In future, with larger groups, appraisal may be done in pairs).
- 2) In advance of the meeting, the project leader sends the students:
 - An outline of the appraisal process and guidance on setting objectives;
 - Appraisal Preparation questionnaires. These are solely to help participants prepare and think about the appraisal conversation and won't be handed in;
 - The Appraisal Form (to be drafted before the meeting and finalised by the student after the appraisal).
- 3) The meeting itself:
 - *the student brings*: draft objectives, the appraisal preparation questionnaires (for reference) and any other notes and thoughts about what they would like to gain from the research work-experience;
 - *the project supervisor brings*: ideas about their expectations of the student, workloads and timescales, project outcomes and the opportunities they should gain through the project.

The purpose of the meeting is to negotiate and agree a set of personal learning and work-based objectives, and identify opportunities to meet these in the research project.

- 4) After the meeting: The student should write up the objectives using the Appraisal form and send it to the project leader for approval (this may or may not require minor re-negotiation). This document forms the starting point for the second conversation which should be held at the end of the project.

Meeting 2

- 5) Towards the end of the research work-experience period the project supervisor schedules a further 30 minute meeting with each student and gives advice on how to prepare.
- 6) Preparing for the second Appraisal conversation should involve the student revisiting and reading:
 - the initial Appraisal Preparation Activities;
 - the record of objectives;
 - the tasks and material s/he has gathered as part of the Research Process Component (assessment component 2);

- the questions at the end of the Final Appraisal Form intended to guide the reflective commentary and self-assessment.

The project supervisor should also prepare by reviewing the Preparation Activities and Appraisal objectives.

- 7) In the meeting itself the student and project supervisor will discuss the extent to which the objectives have been met. The appraisal should be assessed on the basis of the reflective insights that the student brings to the conversation and that are subsequently generated and captured in the written commentary and self-assessment generated. This should include, for example, reviewing the student's competencies at the beginning of the project in relation to where they are now, and any areas they need to develop.

Writing up

- 8) After the meeting, the students then write an account and reflective commentary on their objectives, which includes a final section in which they think more broadly about their contribution to the project, what they've learned, what they still need to learn, etc. In the final section of the written commentary, students then assess themselves and grade their performance (out of 10) on the project (worth 10% of the 30% for the component) and accompany it with a justification.

Assessment Criteria:

- PLANNING: Ability (through dialogue with project leader) to articulate objectives for personal learning and for the work to be carried out.
- EVALUATION: Ability to evaluate the extent to which the work-based objectives have been met.
- Ability (through dialogue with project leader and through the written reflective commentary) to judge own progress and achievements in relation to the objectives and the research work-experience as a whole.
- Ability to judge personal and work-based areas for further development.
- Ability to communicate insights in writing about the research process that emerge from the appraisal process.

Grading system: Simple grade-based approach: A, B, C, D (where the numerical value is A= 75%, B= 65%, C= 55% and D=45%)

Assessment weighting in module: 30% (20% from supervisor and 10% from student)

The supervisor gives his or her grade after the student has done their self-assessment, which he or she then takes it into account in their grading.

Sources from which Component 1 has been developed:

- ECS550U Industrial Placement Project assessment
- QMUL HR appraisal guidelines
- Learning Contracts – agreeing expectations/ good practice in undergraduate research project supervision (Wisker)
- Two surveys: PProE and CORE (developed for evaluation of QResearchers)