

24 March 2008

Ms Carolyn Kennett
Chair
Staff Consultative Group
Macquarie University

Dear Carolyn

RE: Response to Resolutions – SCG Meeting of 29 November 2007 & 5 February 2008

Since the SCG meetings of 29 November and 5 February I have had an opportunity to consider the Working Party Report and recommendations related to the Recruitment & Selection policy and the further feedback received related to the PDRP Policy and Process. We have also progressed investigations of the issues related to accessibility raised at the November SCG meeting.

University Service Policy

In response to resolution 07/36 I wish to offer the following comments. Contribution to University service is a usual expectation for both Academic and General Staff positions. For general staff, key examples would include participation on O H & S or Selection Committees. If staff are experiencing difficulty gaining access to release time to participate in University Service initiatives then this is a management issue rather than a policy issue. For academic staff, there has always been a Divisional Workload model in place which covers the three elements of academic work, teaching research and service. If the issue of service is around release for or support of staff activities on the SCG itself, I'm happy to discuss and if necessary champion this specific issue. On this basis I am not convinced that Macquarie requires a separate service policy.

Performance Development & Review

In addition to the feedback received related to the PDRP policy I have now had an opportunity to consider the Workgroup report related to the Forms and supporting PDRP Guidelines and I have also met with a sub-group of the SCG to discuss the PDRP process and implementation.

My comments in response to the report are as follows:

360 degree feedback

360 degree feedback can be an effective tool in developing staff with management experience when it is implemented effectively. 360 degree feedback is deeper, more personal, and more sensitive than other forms

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of feedback. Implementing it across the university is at least as large a cultural change in itself as implementing the PDR. Given the amount of cultural, educational and procedural change involved in the initial rollout of the PDRP, it is not feasible to implement 360 degree at the same time. We really need to walk before we run in providing feedback to managers. I do consider 360 degree to be a good idea for incorporation into the PDR process following the initial implementation. I have discussed the adoption of 360 degree feedback with the VC and he is supportive of its introduction. He has asked me to investigate it further after the PDR process has been established and bedded down.

Behavioural Indicators

I have discussed the rationale for the need to be able to discuss behaviours as part of an effective feedback and development process. This is an important aspect of the process given that in some instances staff will effectively meet required objectives but may exhibit inappropriate behaviours in achieving the objective. The behavioural indicators inform “how” objectives are achieved. After discussion with the PDRP Sub Committee, I have taken on the feedback that the proposed reporting/recording method can be improved and I have agreed to review the use of the reporting of demonstrated behaviours and will make changes to this part of the form, process and training.

Concrete criteria for rating

We will be providing benchmark examples at each level of performance in the 3rd and 4th modules of training to assist managers with this task, We consider that this will be the most effective mechanism for facilitating consistency of evaluation.

General Staff Forms

Forms to reflect that not all areas are applicable to all staff

This aspect is covered in the training and I have asked the training facilitators to ensure this is reinforced. Clearly for most general staff their work is covered under the Service and Organisational Sustainability component, with a smaller number of general staff undertaking tasks that would fall into the Teaching & Learning, Research and Outreach categories.

Academic Staff Forms

As above.

Mock Level B objectives

Sample Level B objectives arising out of the ACES trial have already been incorporated into the training process. Care has been taken when using ACES data to ensure that the identity of individual staff and their objectives is protected.

Objectives vs Aims & Tasks vs Developmental Activities

The terms objectives and aims are used interchangeably in the context of training however all the documentation reflects the term KPI's for senior staff and objectives for all other staff and on this basis I do not intend to vary this terminology during this phase of the roll out.

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It is also important to note that not every task will be a developmental opportunity and again I do not intend to vary the terminology in this regard.

Further, there is no preclusion on staff including interim milestones and timeframes as subsets of the end date section. It is recognised that there are often interim milestones that need to be met prior to the end date.

Cascading of objectives

The cascading of objectives is an important element of the PDRP process. While the PDRP process is designed to identify development opportunities for staff, it is also an important outcome of the process that organisational objectives are achieved. I have changed the Q & A to better explain the relationship between individual and organisational objectives. The revised Q and A's have been provided to the Sub Committee and placed on the web.

Stretch Objectives

Stretch objectives are not part of the current design of the PDRP process. The revised Q&A describes the option for their use in development.

Support person

The SCG proposal presupposes that there will be issues with the PDRP meeting process. There is no dispute unless the staff member and supervisor disagree. Clearly, if the PDRP process leads to a process in accordance with the Unsatisfactory Performance provisions under the Enterprise Agreement then the EA is explicit in identifying that a staff member can access this type of support. On this basis I do not intend to vary the policy.

Response to Staff Development Sub Committee Recommendations concerning resourcing for the PDRP roll out

Human Resources is engaging additional resources to support the roll out of the PDRP. In addition existing University staff are being trained as coaches/mentors to assist supervisors with the roll out of the PDRP process.

Reward Component

A performance bonus component is not a part of the current PDR system. It is proposed to include such a component as early as 2009. If this proposal goes ahead as planned there will be a further discussion as to the nature and processes around it. I have also commenced discussion on the financial implications and any system will be fully budgeted.

Recruitment & Selection Policy

Thank you to the Recruitment and Selection policy working party for their comments and recommendations. I have identified below the areas where amendments have been made to the policy.

The recommendations related to Principles and Selection criteria have been incorporated.

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Direct appointments & recruitment timeframe requirements

Related to advertising of positions and direct appointment the working party has recommended that positions should be advertised after 12 months as opposed to 24 months. The 24 month period intentionally coincides with the Parental Leave provisions which allows for an absence up to the child's 2nd birthday and our need to appoint to cover parental absences, the timing of which can be somewhat variable. Secondly, our recruitment processes can generally take up to 2 months which effectively means that by the time the recruitment process is concluded the staff member would be in the position for just 10 months under the SCG proposal. Considering these issues I do not intend to vary the policy in this regard.

While I do not intend to alter the circumstances under which a direct appointment can be made, I have changed the approval level so that direct appointments requiring a highly specialised skill set are approved at the DVC level. An example to illustrate this point would be the appointment of Michael Morgan. Clearly the University needs to be able to retain the capacity to make appointments of this nature outside of the usual recruitment and selection process.

Casual Employment Register

I agree in principle that it would be advantageous to set up a Register, but that is a process matter which lies outside the recruitment and selection policy. It will take IT resources to set up such a database and I will consider it with other HR IT priorities for our future IT plans.

Development of Guidelines

The University will develop guidelines to support the recruitment and selection process in line with the recommendation of the SCG.

Selection

Further to my feedback at the SCG meeting of 29 November 2007 relating to candidates being interviewed multiple times by different panel members, contemporary research evidence such as that supporting the SDI targeted selection recruitment methodology, supports the view that conducting multiple interviews with different panellists and overlapping question sets resulted in increased validity and reliability in the selection outcome. More practically, the University's recruitment history contains some appalling examples of delay and collapse in recruitment assignments where a panel member has missed an interview and could have quite easily scheduled a meeting with candidate(s) rather than the whole process being abandoned.

Composition of Selection Committees

Following feedback, the policy has been amended to incorporate the requirement that the Chair advise panellists of their responsibilities and further that Human Resources is available to provide training and support to the process.

Selection Committee report

The procedure has been amended to identify that the outcomes of Selection processes will be treated confidentially and documentation retained on the position file.

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Accessibility of SCG Documents

These issues are being explored with the assistance of Pheobe Dangerfield, MCAS staff, Andrea Lerche and Lorraine Francke from my office. We will provide an update on progress at the next SCG meeting.

Other Working Party Reports

I acknowledge receipt of the paper from Dr Ian Stewart related to Outside Work & Privacy and will be responding separately to this report. Further, thank you for forwarding the working party reports (received 12 Feb) for the Casual Employment Policy, Flexible Working Arrangements, Probation and Increment policies. We are considering these reports will provide feedback as soon as we have completed our review of these policies.

Yours sincerely



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