**MPLS Academic Appraisal Scheme**

The MPLS Academic Appraisal scheme covers MPLS Faculty (including Associate Professors, all staff who hold the title of Associate Professor or the title of Professor, and Statutory Professors).

Objectives of the scheme

The Academic Appraisal scheme gives individuals the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing and what they wish to do, and it also provides an opportunity to comment on what the University (whether in the form of the department, division, or the central bodies) could realistically do to improve individuals’ working lives. Both are equally important.

The University believes that any formal opportunity given for reflection, however brief, is valuable when pressures are such that it is difficult to find time for this. It believes too that a means by which academic staff can regularly express views on possible improvements is an essential element in the University’s exercise of its responsibility to maintain conditions in which the highest quality teaching and research can take place. The scheme is not linked in any way to discipline, reappointment, promotion or the recognition of distinction.

In addition to compulsory 5-yearly Academic Appraisals under this scheme, all faculty are also encouraged to consider arranging a career conversation whenever they feel this may be helpful – more information about career conversations can be found at. [Promoting good conversations at work | People and Organisational Development (ox.ac.uk)](https://pod.admin.ox.ac.uk/personal-development-review-principles-0#collapse1776971)

Arrangements for discussions

The head of department is responsible for appointing an appraiser for each member of staff covered by the scheme, except that the appraiser for statutory professors and serving heads of department is appointed by the head of division. The head of department or head of division (as appropriate) may carry out appraisals themselves, or may appoint an appropriate senior colleague. (An individual member of staff may appeal against the appointment of a particular appraiser or request the appointment of an additional appraiser.)

A compulsory discussion between the appraisee and the appraiser (the Head of Department, or sub-department, or their nominee) must be held every five years. Departmental HR teams will notify the appraisee of the year in which a compulsory discussion is to be held. Discussions may be held in the intervening years at the request of either the appraisee or the appraiser; issues may well arise which can be dealt with much more satisfactorily in a conversation (whether in person or via a video call) than is possible otherwise. For Associate Professor postholders in their initial period of office, the first compulsory discussion will be held during the third calendar year after the year of their appointment, and every five years thereafter, assuming reappointment to the retiring age. For staff holding appointments which do not correspond to the pattern of a five-year initial period of office followed by reappointment to the retiring age, a compulsory discussion will be held at a time to be determined by the head of department and at five-yearly intervals thereafter, should the appointment be held for long enough.

Process

1. In the year of a compulsory discussion, or in any other year in which the appraisee wishes to hold a discussion, the appraisee should contact the appraiser to arrange a meeting. (Appointments with the Head of Division can be made by contacting the Head of Division’s Executive Assistant.)

2. The appraisee should

* reflect on their work objectives and successes and difficulties in meeting them since the last appraisal (over the last five years in the year of a compulsory discussion), their objectives for the coming year (coming five years in the year of a compulsory discussion), and any support, career development or training needs they may have. It may be helpful for the appraiser if appraisees enclose with the form a brief summary of their main academic activity during the previous year (last five years in the year of a compulsory discussion)
* consider and comment on what the department, division, or the University as a whole could realistically do to improve their working life. Suggestions and requests should be realistic, e.g. it might be realistic to suggest that the arrangements for teaching a particular option be reviewed, or that a department consider providing more administrative support.

3. Forms to record this thinking are available on the MPLS website (locally adapted versions may be posted on the relevant departmental website).

The appraisee should send the completed form to the appraiser, to arrive in good time before the date of the meeting, if one has been arranged.

4. After the meeting, the appraiser adds any comments of their own, indicates any issues which need to be drawn to the attention of the department or division, signs the form and returns it to the appraisee. The completed form should also be passed to departmental HR. The head of department should note any general issues raised by the appraisal process, to be addressed at local level or to be passed on to the divisional board or to the officers of the People Committee where appropriate. All documentation relating to the scheme should be kept securely for five years (or longer if local arrangements make this desirable).

***Support for Teaching, Leadership, and Professional Development***

The MPLS Division provides a range of courses focused on developing aspects of research, teaching and leadership. [Researcher Training & Development — Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (ox.ac.uk)](https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/training)

As well as colleagues in the division, and in department and colleges, the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the People and Organisational Development team may be able to provide useful resources and support on teaching and professional development. Information may be obtained here: [www.learning.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/).

Associate Professors holding college tutorial fellowships (APTFs) may wish to consider the Variation of Duties scheme (<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/variation-of-duties>) /), which allows APTFs to vary the balance of their duties between college and university, enabling them to focus on different aspects of their work at different stages in their career.

Confidentiality

It is emphasised that completed documentation is confidential to the appraisee and the appraiser; and to the relevant HR officers. Heads and other appraisers are reminded of the need to ensure that the documentation remains secure and confidential. Where any general matters of concern are raised, either at a departmental or divisional level or with the officers of the People Committee, confidentiality should be preserved by individuals not being named. Appraisees and appraisers are reminded that appraisal must in no way infringe the academic freedom of the individual member of staff.