

SCHOOL OF CHEMISTRY

University of Manchester

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

DIAGNOSTIC ADVISORY REPORT

24th October, 2007

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

The school has a top level commitment to improve its approach to the development and leadership of its people. It has decided to use the Investors in People Standard for this purpose. The school's own assessment was that it had made progress, met about half of the 39 evidence requirements of the standard and had a number of issues where further progress was needed before coming forward for assessment.

The school accepted the offer of a diagnostic check, which broadly confirmed its views about its current progress towards the standard, During a day on-site a cross section of 30 people were seen. They provided a good range of evidence indicating a balance of strengths and areas for development. The results of the discussions are summarised in this report.

In summary, 46 percent (18) of the standard's 39 evidence requirements were met. Action points have been suggested under each indicator. When the school has made progress it should present itself for assessment.

FINDINGS AGAINST THE STANDARD

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

(An Investor in People develops effective strategies to improve the performance of the organisation through its people)

1 A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- The majority of people are aware of the Towards Manchester 2015 overarching strategic plan but are not clear about how their roles fit into it.
- At the group level or within teams, people feel that planning is clear and that they usually have opportunities to contribute.
- People comment that many of the strategies underpinning performance improvement are not always robustly applied. Often this is due to: time and lack of commitment or absence of belief in the need for personal development reviews.
- The majority of people seen are able to describe the key objectives and outcomes for their roles and how they contribute to the school, although they do not necessarily recognise them as objectives.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- In the forthcoming planning round, develop ways of involving people in offering their views on the school's objectives and plans. This can be done through representative groups.
- Identify and communicate in a simple format the key links between the school's objectives and Towards Manchester 2015.
- Use the personal development review to make sure people understand that planned outcomes are objectives.

2 Learning and development is planned to achieve the organisation's objectives.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- Managers and people can identify and describe the school's main learning and development needs. Examples include: mentoring, development programmes for new lecturers, development for new systems and the use of conferences as a source of keeping highly specialist skills up to date.
- Methods of evaluating learning and development are not specified at the planning stage.
- People are clear about how they identify their learning and development needs. Methods include the personal development review, self-identification and personal discussion with managers and within team meetings.
- People can articulate the outcomes they expect to achieve from their development. These include: knowledge of how to use laboratory equipment, improving the quality of teaching, achieving published papers, developing specialist knowledge.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- Using the forthcoming planning round, define how overarching evaluation of learning and development will occur.

3 Strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity in the development of the organisation's people.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- Strategies are in place to encourage ideas and improvement. Examples include: the personal development review, team meetings, Wednesday Symposia, mentoring, allowing people to be self-starters and peer observation of teaching. There are examples of people developing into enhanced roles.....Technicians to Managers and Undergraduates to Post-Doctorate researchers.
- Post Doctorate staff believe that their inclusion could be improved and suggest representation in planning and further help with career progression as offering potential for improvement.
- The school recognises differing needs and offers people different and relevant ways of learning. Part-time staff are able to access development. Examples of different methods of learning are: learning through cascading knowledge, presenting at conferences and on research projects, formal development through the University's

programmes and learning from suppliers.

- People believe that there is a commitment to learning and development but that it has recently been affected by resource constraints and time pressures created by merger and organisational change.
- People provide several examples of ideas that they have put into practice. Examples include: putting new research theory into practice, identifying potential for funding bids, reorganising teaching to make courses more challenging.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- Develop ways of involving Post-Doctorate staff more in areas such as school planning and support for their career development. This can also be done through a group approach and / or representation. It may also be worth considering if part of or an extension of the Wednesday afternoon sessions could be used for this purpose.

4 The capabilities managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively are clearly defined and understood.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- There are mixed views on management qualities in relation to managing and developing people. Whilst there is very clear top level commitment, some of the more “traditional” managers do not see themselves as having a lead role in developing people.
- Where there are positive views about leadership and management qualities, these include: accessibility, coaching and mentoring skills, ability to listen and offer advice, strong technical knowledge, team leadership and valuing people through feedback and recognition.
- Where there are less positive views, people identify features such as: lack of: commitment to providing feedback through the personal development review, unwillingness to remedy underperformance, extended decision making time scales, dismissal of ideas, inability to prioritise, lack of feedback on key matters such as progress with funding bids.
- Most people seen comment that their support and development “*depends on your manager.*”
- There are management development opportunities available through the University but there is limited evidence of these being taken up.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- Build on the work that is in place on defining management qualities and identifying managers that have people development roles.
- Consider communicating, possibly through a management charter, a simple statement of what people can expect from their managers.
- Ensure the appropriate people are aware of, and have flexible ways of accessing, relevant elements of management development.

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

(An Investor in People takes effective action to improve the performance of the organisation through its people)

5 Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- Management effectiveness is variable and mirrors the picture highlighted in the first two bullet points under 4 above,
- Comments about effective management include: *“my line manager listens and acts”.....“Took care to ensure I had the right mentor”.....Give you credit in research publications.”.....“always around and available.”.....“Make a point of visiting the lab every day and talking to people.”.....“Let our group get on with it and make their own decisions”.....“I give him credit for the commitment to training.”.....“Respect and have confidence in our skills.”*
- Comments about management style that is perceived to be less effective include: *“Never see our line manager”....“Difficult to understand some of the decisions”.....“Don’t give feedback in time to make improvements to grant applications.”.....“I’ve never had a personal development review”.....“Under too much pressure and have too many commitments so staff development goes by the wayside.”.....“Some people are allowed to get away with it; underperformance isn’t challenged.”.....“Not always informed of the bigger picture and how we fit into plans.”*
- The school has made progress with the use of the personal development review as a tool for providing regular feedback. It recognises the need to expand coverage further.
- All of the Post Doctorates seen confirm that they had received a recent personal development review.
- Where managers are effective in giving feedback, people value other forms such as personal thanks for extra effort, recognition in grant applications and papers and opportunities to present research work.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- Continue the improvements in the coverage of the personal development review. In an Investors in People context and for an organisation of the school’s size, about 75 to 80 percent coverage would be expected.
- Improve communication skills and channels so that the issues in the third bullet point are dealt with.

Note: Indicators 4 and 5 are linked and it is unlikely that one can be met without the other.

6 People's contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- Where managers are effective and committed to staff development, they use a number of methods to recognise contribution. These include: feedback through the personal development reviews, contributions to the Research Assessment Exercise, opportunities to apply for research fellowships and personalised techniques such as “coffee and cakes” sessions.
- People confirm the above methods are used but highlight how recent organisational changes have created pressures that have reduced morale and led to them feeling under valued.
- Teaching staff see feedback from students and their involvement in tutorials as useful forms of recognition and feedback on the value of their work.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- The action points on personal development reviews and improving communication will strengthen this indicator.

7 People are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- People in most posts believe that they have the autonomy to organise and get on with their day to day roles. There is a feeling that decision making can be over bureaucratic.
- In some areas, people feel that managers are reluctant to let go of their decision making powers and have a fear of delegation.
- There are some examples of involvement and contribution to decision making and these include: prioritising workflows to meet deadlines, taking responsibility for revising courses and in the research groups, making decisions on methodologies.
- People believe that more information and involvement in planning would help to engender a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- The action point about involving people in planning and taking ownership under Indicator 1 will strengthen this indicator.
- It may also be worth examining how management development programmes can help managers to delegate and this is a skill that could be included in future succession planning and recruitment.

8 People learn and develop effectively.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- Learning needs are met through a range of methods covering: bespoke learning for technical and specialist functions, the central University offer, supervision and mentoring, conferences and symposia and formal course-based learning.
- People are clear about how they apply new knowledge and skills gained from learning and development. Examples include: using new research and testing techniques, applying the new financial management system and developing lecturing skills.
- Whilst there were a few negative comments about induction, these are largely historic and concern extended time scales. Recent starters confirm that induction is in place both for the school and the University.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- None.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

(An Investor in People can demonstrate the impact of its investment in people on the performance of the organisation)

9 Investment in people improves the performance of the organisation.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- There is a good understanding of the resource implications of learning and development. Managers and people are well aware of the need for prudence in the management of resources for development. In-house resources are also seen as a valuable tool for meeting learning and development needs.
- There is no systematic way of providing an evaluative overview of the impact of learning and development on the school's performance and achievements.
- People can articulate benefits that they have achieved as a result of their development. These include additions to their skills and knowledge and in some cases the ability to progress in their roles and careers.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- Develop a succinct overall evaluation of the impact of training plans which shows examples of how learning and development has impacted, using measures where possible. Examples could be: student achievement, recruitment and retention, grant funding successes and efficiencies from investment, for instance, in systems,

Note: this indicator is linked to indicator 2 which requires evaluative methods to be described at the planning stage.

10 Improvements are continually made to the way people are managed and developed.

Summary of Evidence from Discussions:

- There are some examples of improvements and developments but as evaluation of learning and development is not robustly in place, it is not possible to confirm that they have resulted from evaluation.
- Areas where people believe changes are starting to occur include: top level commitment to Investors in People, increasing use of the personal development reviews, better induction and improved course content to meet the needs of higher

quality students.

Suggested Action Prior to Assessment:

- By acting on the suggested points identified above, the school should be able to show progress and improvements in its approach to people management and development.

Note: this indicator will usually be met by making significant progress with the suggested actions identified under each of the Indicators 1 to 9.

Additional Feedback Points:

Additional Feedback Points (not within the requirements of the Investors in People Standard)

- Managers believe that lessons could be learned from the application of the voluntary severance package, particularly in making sure that it is focused on the business needs and avoiding the perception that has developed of there being an automatic right to severance once applications have been made.
- People believe that an association area such as coffee area or staff common room would help team building, informal exchange of knowledge and ownership.
- Feedback when applications for other posts within the school are unsuccessful would be helpful.
- Some administrative staff are unsure of their futures with the school following reorganisation.
- There is a perception that the University did not plan and communicate the merger as well as it could have and that the financial implications and outcomes were miscalculated.
- The lack of investment in up to date laboratory equipment is leading some people to question the future of their work.
- Time pressures can restrict opportunities for reflection on how to improve and do better.
- Some people questioned if a personal development review was needed for jobs that remain the same year after year.
- A few people thought that budgetary constraints were unfairly affecting the availability of external development opportunities.

Table of Evidence Requirements Met / Not Yet Met

Indicator	Mandatory Evidence	Met	Not Yet Met
1	1.1	X	
	1.2	X	
	1.3		NA
	1.4		X
	1.5		NA
	1.6		X
2	2.1		X
	2.2		X
	2.3	X	
	2.4	X	
3	3.1	X	
	3.2	X	
	3.3	X	
	3.4		X
	3.5	X	
4	4.1		X
	4.2		X
	4.3	X	
5	5.1		X
	5.2		X
	5.3		X
	5.4		X
6	6.1	X	
	6.2	X	
	6.3		X
7	7.1		X
	7.2		X
	7.3		X
8	8.1	X	
	8.2	X	
	8.3	X	
9	9.1	X	
	9.2		X
	9.3		X
	9.4	X	
	9.5	X	
10	10.1		
	10.2	X	
	10.3	X	