People Management Framework

University of Leeds
What is this about?

The university-wide People Management Framework (PMF) was introduced in 2007 and its purpose was to ensure a consistent, strategically connected and measurable high-quality approach to people management, based on the university values. This has had a positive impact on academic excellence and organisational success. Effective collaboration between HR, faculty and professional service leaders and the trade unions, together with the strong and active support of the vice-chancellor and senior team, has been critical to success.

PMF is built on Valuing and Developing All Our Staff (VADAOS), the objectives and principles which guide staff management and development activities in supporting the university’s strategic objectives and one of the strategic enablers for the achievement of academic excellence. A key feature of PMF is the 25-question, school- and service-level online survey, which is based on topics derived from VADAOS data such as culture, values and staff engagement, all of which are critical to the university’s quest for academic excellence. The survey measures organisational performance and provides a holistic picture of university-wide strengths and weaknesses.

PMF is now widely known and understood by the majority of staff, and produces measurable and quantified performance data and results. Embedding the framework into core business processes has been a big step forward and has resulted in a more impactful outcome. Leaders are now beginning to see the impact that good people management has on staff wellbeing, morale, engagement and therefore, crucially, on academic results.

During the last four years the university has been particularly diligent in measuring outcomes and can now clearly demonstrate sustainable impact and progress.

Work is underway to cross reference PMF with National Student Survey scores as there appears to be a strong correlation in some areas. The next step will be to cross reference some research indicators with PMF data, with the aim of showing whether good practice in people management affects research excellence.
What we did and why

As a first stage, between 2007 and 2010, the emphasis was to ensure that HR processes were being used consistently across the university.

At that time the university employed 8,500 staff and there were 1,600 people at all levels with line management responsibilities. Through a process of consultation, the university developed its own leadership and management standard, a statement of 30 behavioural expectations grouped into the three broad areas of self-awareness, working with others, and building future success. The leadership and management standard was built into recruitment, induction, probation, staff review, staff development and promotions procedures. A two-year management knowhow programme was introduced for the 1,600 managers. It included short and practical sessions on management essentials such as recruitment and selection, induction and probation, reward and recognition, management of fixed-term contracts, and performance management.

This led to significant improvement in the management of people issues. A university-wide staff survey, which focused on health and wellbeing issues was also completed. This improved baseline performance led to further development of the PMF initiative.

The next phase began in 2010 when the HR interview survey and wellbeing survey were merged into a simple but powerful online PMF survey with four themes – planning, objectives and progress; values and engagement; leadership, performance and change; and work, training and development – grouped into 25 statements.

Whereas the leadership and management standard gauges individual leadership performance, PMF measures organisational performance via a survey in each school and service. This results in a traffic light score on each statement, supplemented by qualitative comments. This forms the basis of the school/service action plan which is reviewed at the annual integrated planning exercise. HR supports heads of school/service in creating action plans to improve performance and these are then owned by the school/service.

In 2013 for the first time, all school and service data were collated into a spreadsheet to give an instant, holistic picture of university-wide strengths and weaknesses.

Key features of PMF

- The initiative has been long-term and university-wide. It has produced two university standards to develop and measure performance at individual and organisational level, a management programme for all managers, and the replacement of a university-wide survey with surveys in every school and service resulting in bespoke action plans. It has significantly raised the importance of good leadership and people management and has been shown to have strategic impact.

- The PMF framework and survey are home-grown and short, yet based on best practice from several sources including Investors in People, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, civil service research into staff engagement, and other commercial staff surveys. This knowledge was distilled into just 25 questions, which were in Leeds University-accepted language and terminology, which has helped to engage (or at least not alienate) academic staff. Feedback from some academic school teams shows that they have found the structure of the PMF a good foundation for understanding what is required of them regarding the people management elements of leading and managing a school.

- The Bristol Online Survey is used, enabling HR managers to run their own surveys at a time convenient to the school/service (unlike a university-wide survey, which may be launched at an inconvenient time for some staff). By using this approach there is no delay while waiting for the number crunching and lengthy report characteristic of institution-wide surveys. As soon as their survey closes, the results are with the HR manager.

- The questions are all on topics based on VADAOS data and so HR managers can be confident that these are areas where the university can take action, hence there is no ‘wasted’ data collection. A decision was taken to collect very little respondent bio data, as this can run into pages and deter staff from responding. The survey is designed to take approximately 10-15 minutes.

- It is run at school and service level, so the request to staff to complete the survey comes from the head of school, not from the central university. For the sake of consistency the 25 questions cannot be altered, but explanations and extra local questions can be added. This approach delivered an increase in response from 33% to the last university-wide survey in 2009 to 70% when adopting the local approach to the survey in 2010/11.
What impact did it have?

University wide
The University of Leeds strategy is based on a balanced scorecard approach, with Valuing and Developing All Our Staff (VADAOS) as one of the strategic enablers for the achievement of academic excellence. Since 2006, VADAOS has had a range of strategic objectives and measures, which are reported to the council on a regular basis.

Additionally, heads of schools and services are held to account for progress and future plans at the annual integrated planning exercise. Whereas the integrated planning exercise previously focused on student education, research and innovation and finance, for the last three years it has included progress on the PMF.

It is held every other year so that management teams have time to address issues before re-surveying. However, in a few cases, mainly where there have been some major difficulties, heads have asked to run it every year, which has been done and proved worthwhile in those instances.

Results and updated action plans are presented to the integrated planning exercise every year, ensuring that outcomes become a key part of the strategic planning cycle. For example, we have moved from 70% to 80% of staff whose individual objectives are aligned with the school/service plan. Current action plans show how local school/service management teams intend to ensure that the next target of 90% will be achieved.

Support from HR and SDDU can be targeted on local issues, eg improving communications; developing a values-based approach to local leadership; engaging staff with local strategic planning.

Heads are expected to update staff on progress with the PMF actions, and indeed this update is the first stage before the launch of the subsequent survey. This ensures that staff can see tangible outcomes from participation.

A simple traffic light approach to progress makes targeting resources across the university more effective. For example, if a particular school or one theme across the university shows a lot of red, we know immediately where to target resources.

The PMF results are discussed in detail and the vice-chancellor and senior team use the data to take the temperature of leadership and people management in each area. This is regarded as a major breakthrough: sustained good people management is now seen throughout the university as critical to achieving the overall strategy.

The five strategic measures and progress against them are tabulated below, along with university-wide achievement to date and future targets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measured via PMF</th>
<th>2010/11 Actual</th>
<th>2012/13 Actual</th>
<th>2014/15 Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University-wide % improvement in achievement of PMF standard</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University-wide % positive rating of the quality of leadership and change management</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University wide % participation in staff review and development scheme</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% staff whose individual objectives are aligned to school/service plan</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% staff who show a positive rating for their personal engagement</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School level

The above table indicates a very positive progress across the university but there are some variations between schools. One school has progressed in its PMF score from 29% to 54% to 79%. As it had such a low score initially, it decided to run the survey annually and many actions were taken to improve results, including school away days, refresher training and a staff blog to improve communication. Discussion of the PMF results and action plans has also taken place at faculty level via away days facilitated by HR and staff development.

Correlation with National Student Survey and research indicators

There does appear to be a strong positive correlation between high PMF and high National Student Survey scores, especially in the National Student Survey categories of Organisation and Management and Assessment and Feedback. Where communication is problematic in PMF there appears to be a correlation with lower scores on Assessment and Feedback in National Student Survey. As a next step we intend to cross-reference the progressive journey of several research indicators with PMF data, again with the aim of showing whether good practice in people management affects research excellence.

The positive impact on some university-wide indicators since the introduction of PMF are demonstrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time international fee-paying student population</td>
<td>4071</td>
<td>4315</td>
<td>3839</td>
<td>4350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research grants and contracts income per academic fte</td>
<td>£89.9k</td>
<td>£85.7k</td>
<td>£90.3k</td>
<td>£90.9k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate research students per academic fte</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student satisfaction (NSS)</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of assessment and feedback (NSS)</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total tariff score</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>423</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of home/EU graduate-level employment/continuing study after six months</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of serious reportable incidents (per 1000 employees)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income per total staff fte</td>
<td>£87.9k</td>
<td>£84.9k</td>
<td>£84.9k</td>
<td>£88.1k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons learned

This is a flexible approach which could be adapted for a range of HEIs.

1. Not a quick fix
In terms of improving people management, getting the procedural basics right before moving onto cultural change is critical and it takes time. The initiative has been on-going for seven years and there is still work to do, although steady progress is undoubtedly being made.

2. It need not be complicated or expensive
The purchase of long, expensive surveys is not required to get the management information needed. In fact, the shorter and more targeted the survey, and in your own organisational language, the better. Having the locus of influence at school/service level really appears to work.

3. Consult thoroughly
Consult and involve senior and middle management, staff and unions before implementing new approaches. It does take time – a year to get the leadership and management standard agreed – but once it was agreed, it has not been challenged.

4. Embed into core processes
Embed standards/initiatives into all HR processes. There will always be a core of people who do not want to engage but, ultimately, give them no escape.

5. Support not punish
Use poor scores to offer help, not to punish. Although heads are held accountable for their PMF results, they are supported with action planning and development.

6. Make connections
Always make connections, especially for academic leaders, about how improving people management skills can ultimately improve academic performance. Many have been able to see this for themselves but be prepared for some to need more support with this. HR must be seen as a strategic enabler towards achieving academic excellence.

7. Embed into planning processes
Embed people management initiatives into annual planning. It puts HR in the same reporting arena as student education, research and finance, and sends a message that good people management is critical to the university.

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Also in this series:
- Sustainable Excellence Programme
  University of Birmingham
- People Management Framework
  University of Leeds
- Delivering excellent campus service with passion, pride and professionalism
  University of Kent
- Performance Enabling Programme
  University of Swansea
- Academic Promotion and Progression programme
  Kingston University
- Financial turnaround
  University of Cumbria
- Cost efficiencies through creativity
  Ravensbourne
- HR contribution to business efficiency: Management of Academic Workloads
  Nottingham Trent University

New case studies will follow this launch series, so please check back on our website for the latest resources.
About the case studies

This series of case studies has been developed from the work of the Leadership Foundation and partners for the report ‘Efficiency, Effectiveness and Value for Money’ led by Professor Sir Ian Diamond and published by Universities UK in February 2015.

Partners in the ‘Diamond’ higher education workforce group (UCEA, UHR, Hefce, GuildHE, UUK and the Leadership Foundation) commissioned the case studies with support from the joint Hefce/Leadership Foundation Innovation and Transformation Fund.

Dr Lesly Huxley, director of membership and organisational development, leads the LF’s Innovation and Transformation Fund and our contribution to the HE workforce group. She said: “The leadership, development and commitment of people at all levels in higher education is fundamental to successful change and delivery of greater effectiveness in the core activity of our universities and colleges. These case studies and other work funded through the second phase of the Innovation and Transformation Fund show the importance of staff engagement and development in helping higher education institutions improve organisational performance.”

Gwen Wileman, LF Associate, who worked with the universities to develop this series, explained: “The case studies all provide powerful success stories and some real measures of impact on efficiency and effectiveness. However, the challenges of culture and complexity also come through loud and clear and there are many lessons to be learned and shared.”

About the Innovation and Transformation Fund

Acknowledging the central role of leadership in driving change, in 2012, together with Hefce, the Leadership Foundation initiated a £1m, UK-wide Innovation and Transformation Fund (ITF) to progress key themes of the first ‘Diamond Report’ on efficiency in higher education.

Nine projects were funded and have now concluded.

Sir Ian Diamond was invited by the Department of Business and Innovation Skills to lead a second phase of this work early in 2014, looking particularly at organisational change and development, the higher education workforce, estates and research assets, open data and evidencing efficiency. In 2014-15, further joint investment totalling £500,000 is supporting the sharing of existing effective practice particularly in the leadership, management and development of the higher education workforce. A key to the Innovation and Transformation Fund is in unlocking and making best use of good practice. For more information go to: www.lfhe.ac.uk/ITF

About the Leadership Foundation

The Leadership Foundation is a membership organisation that delivers leadership development and consultancy advice to higher education institutions in the UK and around the world. The focus of the Leadership Foundation’s work is to improve the management and leadership skills of existing and future leaders of higher education.

The services provided include consultancy, leadership development programmes and events, including a major series of events for governors. This work is supported by a highly regarded research and development programme that underpins the leadership development programmes and stimulates innovation.

The Leadership Foundation has a small team of experienced leadership and organisational development professionals drawn from higher education, other parts of the public sector, and also from the private sector. Much of the Leadership Foundation’s work is delivered in partnership with the higher education sector and other partner organisations. www.lfhe.ac.uk

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