Why set objectives?

Setting work objectives is central to the Planning, Development and Review process. The objective setting aspect of PDR sets the framework for review and feedback. Clearly formulated objectives describe what you are aiming to achieve during the year and how you will measure the outcome of each objective.

Clearly formulated objectives:

- Enable achievement of the strategic and School/Unit priorities.
- Increase focus and commitment toward reaching targets and goals.
- Provide a benchmark against which the individual’s progress and achievements can be discussed and reviewed.
- Assist staff in gaining experience and achievements that are continually developing their knowledge and capabilities and support career progression.
- Ensure that staff members are working towards a balanced portfolio of activities appropriate to their role and the stage of their career.

Useful questions to ask when setting objectives

To be effective, an objective must be meaningful and achievable; there is little point in setting objectives that are so large or unclear they cannot be achieved. So, when setting objectives with staff members it is useful to ask the following:

- How does the individual’s role support the strategic priorities and School/Unit key objectives?
- What objectives are appropriate for the role of the individual?
- How do they fit with the workload allocation model/workload expectations?
- What are the resource requirements?
- How do they impact on the objectives of others?
- How can the objectives be measured? What sources of evidence, data, and feedback are available to enable on-going review?
- What challenges are anticipated in seeking to achieve these objectives?
- What assistance might be needed to enable achievement?
- If required, how might the objectives be prioritised?
- If very large, how can the objective be broken down into smaller, clear and attainable ‘chunks’?
Applying the SMART principle

Keeping the principle of **SMART** front of mind when setting objectives ensures that they are:

**Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Relevant – Time-framed**

**Specific:**
Is the objective clearly defined?
Work objectives should state specifically what needs to be achieved; they need to clearly specify the intended outcomes. Vague objectives lead to vague attempts to achieve them! Express the desired action and result using active verbs such as: *increase, develop, implement, publish, decrease, set up, negotiate, etc.* (see useful verbs for describing objectives listed below).

**Measurable:**
Is it clear what success is and how one would know when it is achieved?
This means that it is possible to monitor progress and outcomes and determine the extent to which objectives are achieved. Consider both qualitative and quantitative indicators of success. It should be possible to evaluate the progress based on evidence. Therefore, objectives need to include a way of verifying whether the objective is being progressed, has been achieved and to what standard. Measures may be qualitative (quality of work, satisfaction) or quantitative (numbers achieved, costs incurred, revenue achieved). Generally there are four ways to measure; *quality, quantity, costs (or revenue) or time*.

**Achievable:**
Is the objective realistic, yet challenging?
While objectives should provide challenge, they must also be achievable – there is no point setting yourself and staff up for failure! Consider the requirements and level of the role as well as the availability of resources.

**Relevant:**
Is the objective important; does it add value?
To be meaningful and worthwhile, the objectives must be relevant to the level and priorities of the individual’s role, as well as aligned with and contributing to University and School/Unit goals. When setting work objectives, identify the key priorities for the University / Portfolio/ Unit that relate to the staff member’s position and identify how the individual can add value or contribute to achieving these priorities.

**Time-framed:**
What are the timeframes in which the objective should be achieved?
Clear target dates should be set for achieving work objectives and completing interim steps. Timeframes – which can include milestones - are useful for enabling individuals to monitor progress toward the objectives as well as to allow for interim adjustments that may be required due to changing priorities. Although the Planning, Development and Review process is annual, objectives can be set for longer timeframes. This may be particularly appropriate for research based objectives, with the ability to set milestones for the annual review cycle.
### Useful verbs for writing objectives

Use action verbs to describe what needs to be achieved. Here are some options:

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Key Result Areas – Academic
Example Objectives - Academic Staff

**KRA: Teaching**
- Coordinate “Arts and Engagement” Level 1 course in Semester One.
- Deliver “Contract Law” Level 2 course in Semester Two.
- Pre-course visit to Africa for AusAID/GRM on 2014 trade policy and negotiate courses under Australia Award for Africa (AAA) Short Course awards.
- Contribute to events and course content for Semester One (Group 1) in Australia AAA trade policy and negotiation Foundation Course.
- Review status of IIT post-graduate courses (MITD/PCIT) for Semester Two.
- Deliver in-Africa Module 3, AAA Short Course, Cape Town by June 30.

**KRA: Research**
- Publish at least two articles in high quality journals (e.g. ERA A* or A journals) and publish at least two articles in books or B ranked journals by November 2014.
- Publish at least 2 commissioned reports by 30 September 2014.
- Ensure doctoral staff participate and attract HDR students, with the aim of 4 per year.
- Prepare annual research development report for the Institute by December 2014.
- Prepare and submit category 1 and category 2 and 3 applications, including at least one ARC linkage grant in 2014.
- Present final AusAID-funded Research Study for Palau on implications of PACER Plus by May 28.

**KRA: Financial**
- Prepare and update 2014 annual budget and ensure that revenue exceeds expenses over the year, including meeting obligations for investing in staff and infrastructure.
- Work with the School and Faculty to develop collaborative research links with external bodies to contribute to research income growth in line with University targets and the Faculty’s plan.
- Report to Board on 2014 activities, finances and planning upcoming activities and other agenda items by 30 June 2014.
- Contribute to improvement in research income on a full cost recovery basis, including compliance with the Compliance Neutrality Levy requirement. Annual results to demonstrate income exceeds expenditure on a cash basis.
**KRA: People**

- Complete PDR planning and review conversations with all direct reports within set deadlines.
- Ensure that all academic appointments to the Centre achieve the Faculty research threshold for research-focused staff.
- Provide regular supervision (at least one session per month) for research and administrative staff involved in the Institute’s research programs, in conjunction with the School.
- Introduce a workload model that considers the variety of tasks and outcomes expected of academic staff, by 30 June 2014.

**KRA: Other**

- Finalise 2014-2016 IIT Strategy Paper, for submission to Board intersessionally.
- Represent the Institute throughout 2014 at meetings within the University and externally, including committees, boards and advisory groups.
- Develop Africa Networks as Conference Commentator / Session Chair for Society of International Economic Law Biennial Conference, Singapore by June 30 2014.
- Manage IT Finances, Staffing and Resources for delivery of contract commitments, and according to plans, in 2014.
- Prepare draft IIT Medium-to-Long Term Strategy Paper (3-5 years) in consultation with Chair of Board of Governors and Executive Dean of Faculty of Professions by 30 September 2014.
- In collaboration with the Executive Dean and Faculty Finance Manager, develop academic, human resources and finance and infrastructure planning and monitoring processes by the end of 2014.