

Annual appraisals at the TU Darmstadt – a handout

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Introduction

Annual appraisals are a primary component of improving collaboration between managers and employees. In its mission statement on staff development the TU Darmstadt¹ has committed itself to ensuring a management culture guided by the principles of fair, trusting treatment of one another, mutual regard and respect and a strong sense of responsibility on the part of everyone in his/her respective working area.

What is an annual appraisal?

An annual appraisal is an employee appraisal² that is regularly conducted at all organisational and management levels of the TU Darmstadt.

It is a private, confidential consultation and development appraisal conducted between a manager and an employee. The interview should be conducted in an atmosphere of openness and honesty. It assumes a willingness to engage with the other's point of view on both sides.

It is the managers who initiate annual appraisals. They are responsible for preparing and conducting appraisals. However, an employee can also suggest an annual appraisal. In this case a manager is committed to conduct the appraisal.

The outcome and insights of the annual appraisal and any agreed measures and objectives are documented in agreement, signed by both sides and treated as absolutely confidential. The participants keep them.

Objectives and use of annual appraisals

In annual appraisals managers and employees should be made clear about the objectives in their working environments and in the organisation and reflect on how they contribute to achieving these objectives.

Employees have the opportunity to evaluate their work situations, the organisation of their work, collaboration with others and the layout of their workplaces, together with their managers. Together they analyse their assignments so far and agree on any new assignment fields if applicable.

In this context employee performance is recognised, allocation of performance-related bonuses and performance-based payments are checked.

Annual appraisals also act as opportunities for discussing the objectives of professional and career-related qualifications, and agreeing on any professional development measures with managers. This can include recognising employee potential and better tailoring work plans to employees' individual strengths.

¹ See mission statement on staff development at the TU Darmstadt, May 2007.

² See framework document, Employee Appraisals

Better communication between managers and employees benefits not only specific working areas but also the organisation of the TU Darmstadt as a whole.

Who conducts appraisals?

Annual appraisals are always conducted between line managers and their employees. Line managers are the people who can issue instructions to their employees and have the authority to instruct them professionally.

Preparation of annual appraisals

Annual appraisals must be prepared thoroughly by both sides. The date and time of an annual appraisal should be set at least two weeks in advance so that manager and employee have sufficient time in which to prepare. Both sides should use the appraisal guidelines in the attached handout as a preparation sheet. The participants keep the preparation sheet. In addition, there is advice on how to prepare the appraisal.

A date and a time window of at least an hour should be agreed for the appraisal. The appraisal should be in a place where it is not disturbed (no telephone etc.).

Contents of annual appraisals

The following topics should be discussed in an annual appraisal:

- Review of the past year, recalling the agreed objectives
- Evaluation of current assignments and the work situation
- Plans for future assignments with agreements that are then included in agreed objectives if applicable
- This includes explaining which development measures or what professional development the employee wishes or the manager recommends.

Documentation of annual appraisals

The outcome and insights of the appraisal and any agreed objectives and measure are recorded in writing and signed by both sides. In order to reduce workload, a form for ensuring an outcome and agreeing on objectives, which is based on the structure of the preparation sheet, is available as a file.

If no agreement can be reached on the outcome of the appraisal, both sides have the option of writing this down in the shared document under 'open questions'.

The agreed objectives should be realistic, specifically formulated and include a time frame for their implementation.

The contents of the appraisal, the documented outcome and the agreed objectives are confidential. Only the participants in the appraisal keep the relevant documents.³ Information, e.g. on the agreed measures for obtaining qualifications, can only be passed on to third parties by mutual agreement. This is recorded in the shared documents.

Note on disagreements

If, in an annual appraisal, consensus cannot be reached in the preliminary stages or when agreeing on the objectives, or should there even be conflict, each side involved has the right to turn to an institution or person whom they trust, in order to solve the problem.

³ From a data protection point of view and in accordance with the purpose of employee appraisals only the protocol of each current appraisal should be kept. The 'old' protocol must be destroyed after a recent appraisal, for which the previous appraisal document acts as a memory aid. This means the manager only ever has one employee appraisal document. Assuming an appraisal takes place every year, the mandatory period for it to be kept is one year.