



A guide to effective appraisal.



The basic appraisal cycle

Staff appraisal is an important part of any organisations development and improvement planning. We have developed Filio to support the appraisal process in schools; using Filio will take you and your staff through the appraisal cycle in a clear and logical way. The system is designed to reduce the administrative burden and keep the process focussed on evidencing the impact of actions taken to achieve objectives and meet standards.

This short guide is designed to help you think about the appraisal process in your school, particularly the start and finish points. It also provides some tips and ideas about getting the most out of the process by preparing both appraisers and appraisees to ensure they are clear about their responsibilities.

1. Plan and Prepare

- Have in place a policy and process and make it available to all appraisees and appraisers.
- Ensure that the process is consistent and transparent
- Ensure there is a lead person taking responsibility for appraisal and implementing your policy.

The lead person should also be familiar with Filio and be able to manage simple admin tasks if required, or direct queries to an administrator who can fulfil this role in the school – for example to change an appraiser or reset a password.

Our experience working with 100's of schools is that an identified lead person is key if they are able to drive and quality assure the process – for example, making sure that objectives are SMART, that there is time available for reviews, supporting and quality assuring evidence collection, especially in the first year and proving support to appraisers.



2. Setting objectives and creating an action plan

Agreeing specific and appropriate objectives can be difficult for both the appraisee and the appraiser.

- It is important that there is a shared understanding of what an objective is, its purpose and how it

differs from a goal or outcome. In practice there are several definitions of objectives/goals/aims etc. and it can be confusing.

- The important factor is that the language and definition used is common and understood.
- An agreed definition should ideally be provided as part of appraisal training and preparation.

The number of objectives is not fixed but generally no more than 4 is the norm.

In practice many heads set objectives centrally for staff – these may be common for a particular group, for example all teachers, all TA's etc. However the principles of what makes a good objective are the same.

- Objectives must adhere to the SMART rules - specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, time-bound.
- At least some of the objectives should link to or be derived from an existing school development plan – made relevant to the individual's capacity and role.
- The objectives, if achieved, should benefit the individual, the school and above all the students.
- Objectives may not all necessarily be completely job-related although typically most objectives will be.
- The objectives together with the strategies, success criteria and target date/s linked to them will form the action plan.

If the same objective is set for a number of people it is good practice to tailor the action plan to context in which each is working – not everyone may use the same strategies, the success criteria may be different for a more experienced teacher or for different students.

Filio allows you to set objectives centrally and easily copy to others in the system – you can also create an action plan to start the conversation or leave this to be discussed and completed on an individual basis.

3. Adding evidence

For most staff adding evidence to demonstrate what they are doing and how they are meeting their objectives is the key activity. This is a very simple process and is completed via the portfolio page in Filio. The type of evidence collected should be informed by the action plan – the strategies and the success criteria. At the start of the appraisal cycle there should be a discussion around what and how much is required as a minimum. It can be helpful to have a list of example evidence that can be used to show progress towards meeting the relevant standards, especially for NQTs or those looking for promotion.

4. Interim support and review

At the start of the year appraisers can be linked with appraisees via the account page – these can be changed at any time. The appraiser then has access to the review page and the appraisal report for each of their appraisees – this is accessed via the support page. Most organisations have a formal interim review about half way through the appraisal cycle. At this point objectives are reviewed and evidence can be quality assured with ideas for further example discussed. It may be useful to identify any further CPD needs at this point. These can be added directly to the objective or be recorded on a word template, which could be put in the resources section. Both appraisers and appraisees can add comments to the appraisal report at any time – ideally as part of the review. Appraisees can also add comments via the status box for each objective and standard.

5. The final review/appraisal interview.

The appraiser and appraisee should meet in a formal setting to review the year and close the appraisal. The appraisal interview is important as it sets the tone for the importance of appraisals in your organisation. If appraisal is valued and seen beneficial and fair the impact of the process will be greater – ie the actions taken in the year to meet objectives will be obvious and their impact on the organisation and students will be positive and evidenced.

Prepare and have access to all materials, records of performance, achievements, and observation reports – all documentation and evidence that will help inform a discussion about performance and achievement; *Including the relevant standards* – Filio gives you instant access to all this.

- **The appraiser** should ensure they have the information they need, be confident about the process and feel comfortable about the expectations and limits of their role.
- **The appraisee** should have a copy of key documents before hand and have been given the opportunity to collect supplementary evidence in advance – for example feedback from peers, feedback from students, examples of additional input and achievements, evidence they have collected over the previous 12 months/appraisal period.
- Preparation should also consider 'whole-person' development - beyond the formal standards/competencies to be assessed.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

Ensure the appraisee is informed of a suitable time and place and clarify the purpose of the appraisal meeting.

Give the appraisee the chance review and prepare relevant performance and achievement records and materials they have collected themselves – they can see their own review page in Filio and fill gaps in evidence if needed.

The Filio appraisal form/template can be followed to suggest a natural order for the discussion

Make sure there is an agreed time limit.

Ensure a suitable venue is available - private and free from interruptions - observe the same rules as with recruitment interviewing. This may seem obvious but lack of forward planning can lead to a disrupted and unsatisfactory experience for both appraiser and appraisee.

The appraiser should lead the meeting, but not dominate, be confident about the structure of the meeting and the outcomes required.

The review process forms the bridge between the old and new and provides a solid foundation for setting future objectives and identifying development needs.

- The objectives and action plan are reviewed and progress discussed with a focus on success criteria.
- Development of, or progress towards, core standards and competencies may be reviewed at the same time if the objectives are linked. If not these can be reviewed and assessed separately.
- If this is the first meeting and there are no previous objectives, any evidence available should still be presented and reviewed as this will form the benchmark for future appraisal and help create the first set of objectives.
- Review one objective or standard at a time and avoid going off on tangents or dwelling on vague unspecific views.
- Concentrate on hard facts and figures and solid evidence - avoid conjecture, anecdotal or non-specific opinions, especially about the appraisee or her or his colleagues.
- Being objective is one of the greatest challenges for the appraiser – facts, figures and concrete evidence are the acid test and provide a good neutral basis for a discussion, free of bias and personal views.
- For each item agree a measure of competence or achievement, as relevant. This might be simply a yes or no or there may be a grade/level descriptor. The terminology you want to use can be set up in your Filio system.

At the end of the interview the appraisal maybe completed and 'signed off' at this stage Filio saves a copy of the appraisal in both accounts and the form is visible to the head. If the head has final sign off the form will be automatically sent to the heads 'waiting for sign off' area and can be reviewed and agreed before final completion.



The cycle then moves to the next appraisal year and Filio resets the individual's account.