

A COVENTRY UCU PAMPHLET

COVENTRY UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

**ROTTEN TO THE
CORE AND CLEAR AS
MUD**

NOVEMBER 2018

Performance Review at Coventry University – The Back Story

Where did the system of Performance Related pay which was adopted in Coventry in 2006 come from? In 2004 the University and College Employer's Association (UCEA) and the education unions agreed a National Framework Agreement (NFA) concerning the implementation of a new HE pay spine and associated pay and grading arrangements by August 2006. While this Framework set broad parameters regarding how this was to be undertaken, it also allowed scope for some arrangements to be implemented locally. Coventry University management saw this as an opportunity to depart significantly from the recommendations agreed between the Unions and UCEA and declared they would implement their own distinctive version of a Performance Related Pay system called the Development and Performance Review (DPR).

In the Coventry's DPR system, the normal expectation of an annual increment to the top of your grade, as was implemented in almost every other university in the UK, was abandoned. Instead in this new system a distinction between what was called the **standard zone** and what was called the **contribution zone** was created – the contribution zone within most grades was set from roughly the mid-point of the scale but for the PL scale (grade 9) the entire scale above the grade 8 maximum was within the contribution scale (See Figure 1). As a 'carrot' an additional scale point was introduced at the top of each scale giving the illusion of an increased pay opportunity. This meant that once a member of staff progressed out of the standard zone, **every** increment in the **contribution zone** had to be earned. Instead of normal progression based on the years of service within your job, this was a system which required individuals to demonstrate that they had 'exceeded normal expectations of job performance' in order to gain increments. In addition to this, the criteria by which high performance was defined and demonstrated remained incredibly unclear and arbitrary. With this proposal Coventry University management created a system which lowered the normal progression rate but increased the amount of discretionary pay available. While this offered this as a good deal for staff on the basis that the notional pay rate per grade had increased, for the vast majority of staff the DPR system represented a pay cut, not to mention the unfairness of the process of demonstrating 'outstanding' performance.

UCU opposed this system in 2006 on the basis that it represented an attack on the previously existing progression arrangements, as well as being divisive and arbitrary. The University responded to this by taking the highly unusual and aggressive step of declaring a dispute with UCU over the union's rejection of the plan. Management sweetened this in 2007 by offering an "incentive" to accept its proposals which it then imposed. However UCU never accepted the DPR system and remained steadfast and committed to shed light on the unfair practices inherent in the DPR system.

8026		6 pt 26	£29,527
8027		6 pt 27	£30,401
8028		6 pt 28	£31,310
8029	7 pt 29	6 pt 29	£32,243
8030	7 pt 30	6 pt 30	£33,208
8031	7 pt 31	6 pt 31	£34,194
8032	7 pt 32	6 pt 32	£35,222
8033	7 pt 33		£36,264
8034	7 pt 34		£37,353
8035	7 pt 35	8 pt 35	£38,467
8036	7 pt 36	8 pt 36	£39,616
8037	7 pt 37	8 pt 37	£40,802
8038		8 pt 38	£42,043
8039		8 pt 39	£43,276
8040		8 pt 40	£44,567

8041		8 pt 41	£45,902
8042		8 pt 42	£47,272
8043		8 pt 43	£48,688
8044	9 pt 44	8 pt 44	£50,141
8045	9 pt 45	8 pt 45	£51,641
8046	9 pt 46	8 pt 46	£53,182
8047	9 pt 47	8 pt 47	£54,772
8048	9 pt 48		£56,415
8049	9 pt 49		£58,098
8050	9 pt 50		£59,838
8051	9 pt 51		£61,627
8052	9 pt 52		£62,558

Figure 1. Coventry University Pay Spine: Standard Zone White; Contribution Zone Coloured

By January 2017 the problems with the DPR system were there for all to see and HR (now known as the People Team) undertook their own survey to assess how staff felt about it. The results were damning and showed that staff did were really unhappy with the way merit payments and increments were delivered to some but denied to the majority. In the same year UCU carried out its own survey of union members and this also showed that an overwhelming majority felt the system was unfair and opaque, with people particularly upset by the way managers were not required to give staff any reasons for why they were denied the ratings that would allow them to progress, and the fact that there was no appeal procedure. UCU's view has always been that the DPR system has been entirely lacking in accountability and transparency, and these concerns were strongly evidenced in our as well as management's survey. Following this, HR/People met with the three recognised unions (UCU, Unite & Unison) at the University to discuss an alternative to the DPR system. There was clear agreement on all sides that the DPR system was not fit for purpose. UCU also asked about the demographic profile of those staff who had received increments for high performance – we wanted to know if men were gaining more increments than women, and how were the University's BME staff faring in these arrangements. How did DPR affect staff with disabilities? However, HR/People have claimed throughout that they did not have this data and were not prepared to discuss these questions further. Throughout this consultation all three unions consistently stated that what was fundamentally wrong with the system was the way it linked appraisal with pay and progression. In the vast majority of universities pay and progression and appraisal are two entirely separate systems. Given the strength of staff feeling around this which was demonstrated by surveys we had carried out of members views, we hoped that management would take this point on board. To our

disappointment, we were informed in a Joint Negotiation Committee meeting in February 2018 that it had never been the intention of the University to change this linkage of pay and appraisal. So much for 'consultation'! It is now clear that management were seeking to make changes to the system, but that none of the changes being introduced sought to change any of the aspects of the system to which staff most objected to. Management are now seeking to impose this the new performance management system, now known as Core/Clear Review, for the new academic year of 2018-19.

DPR – not fit for purpose

The old DPR system was paper based, cumbersome, time consuming and lacked transparency. At the end of the process you received a letter with a rating: unsatisfactory, development required, improvement required, strong, excellent, outstanding. There was no way of finding out how this outcome was reached, or the criteria by which any individual was assessed. The process involved senior managers meeting in secret to "moderate" individual performance outcomes. Senior managers could overturn outcome performance decisions made by line managers, without any requirement on them to justify this to the manager or the member of staff. Staff were not permitted access to any of the correspondence regarding them between managers in which their work was discussed. At the end of this process you received a letter stating the outcome of your appraisal – offered without explanation and no right of appeal

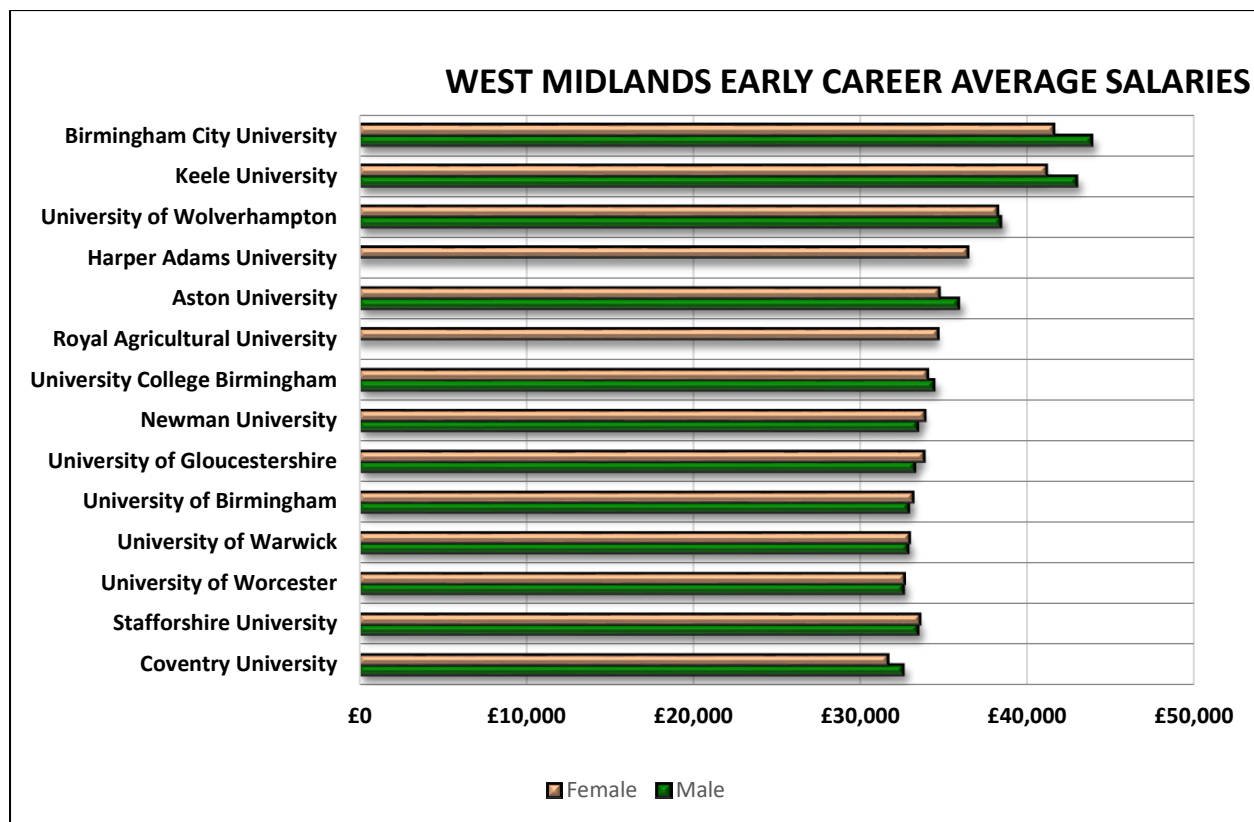
It was also very difficult for staff and staff unions to get information on how the system was working overall. What we were informed was that each year, most staff (in some years around 80%) received a rating of 'strong'. Year on year, across all sectors of the university, the vast majority received a rating which actually means 'performing averagely'. A very small number got 'excellent' and some obtained 'improvement required'. While the Unions were given these broad figures from management UCU made repeated requests for information about the breakdown of which staff were receiving which ratings, which was never forthcoming. We were particularly interested in which staff were in the 'outstanding' category on the basis of ethnicity, gender, disability, or by job seniority. Management consistently refused to provide this.

DPR system - The impact on staff salary

What is DPR, and the new version of it called CORE/Clear Review really about? We believe at the core of this Coventry University management has promoted this system in order to hold down and diminish staff pay so this money can be used to fund the Senior Leadership team's ambitious growth plans for the University and its subsidiaries. As the graphics enclosed demonstrate, Coventry University management has used DPR to hold down staff pay across the entire group for more than 10 years. During this period Coventry University has moved up the ranking tables. While we are happy that the University has moved up in these tabled, we also think that the people who are making this happen - that is the people who do all the teaching, marking and research, as well as the staff who support this – should be appropriately rewarded. We are in no doubt that DPR is the mechanism by which the Coventry University Group pays its staff less than comparable Higher Education Institutions. The DPR system has successively depressed your pay by removing automatic progression and instead requiring you to jump through the hoops of the contribution zones. Nationally, the value of members' pay has declined and continues to fall. Since 2009, the cumulative loss to pay (compared to rises in RPI) is over 17%. If inflation increases as predicted by economists advising the Treasury, then by the end of this year, the total real terms decline in pay since 2009/10 will be 19.3%. The DPR

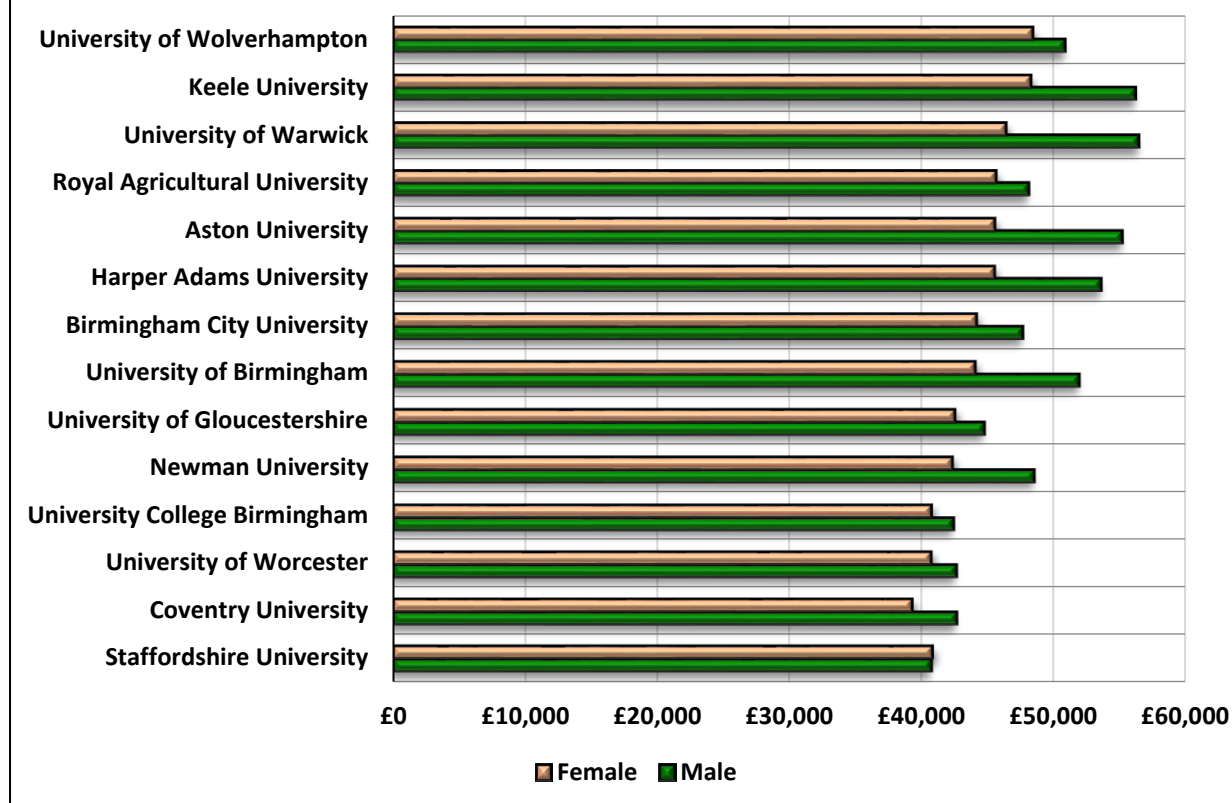
system has made things significantly worse at Coventry University as our staff have on average had their real pay eroded by more than 25%. (The data to prove this explicitly has unsurprisingly not been made available by the University)

It is clear to us that the old DPR system has been deeply unfair in the way it linked yearly pay increments with appraisal. Progression from the 'standard zone' through the 'contribution zone' was only possible by obtaining an 'excellent' or 'outstanding' rating. This was an unfair system, which denied hard working staff pay increments because of an entirely arbitrary and opaque evaluation system. In addition to this there is substantial anecdotal evidence that female, BME and disabled staff were the least likely to be rewarded.



Source UCU Website "HE Rate for the Job" (taken from HESA staff record 2016/17)

WEST MIDLANDS ALL STAFF AVERAGE SALARIES



Source UCU Website "HE Rate for the Job" (taken from HESA staff record 2016/17)

CORE/Clear Review – Is it any better?

CORE is name given by the University to the new system of appraisal. The software, which holds your data, is called Clear Review. It is only designed to record performance, not to determine 'performance' outcomes. You are currently being asked to sign up for something with uncertain implications for your future. If you met your line manager for two Clear Review meetings before the end of July 2018, you will be about to get a non-consolidated bonus at the end of October 2018 or an increment if you are in the standard zone for your grade. However, you do not know the consequences of not meeting next year's targets, which in many cases are not connected to your job description. At the same if you don't meet for the review meetings, you will miss out on a bonus of 3% of your annual salary, or the increment.

Under the old DPR system there was one DPR review per year, and an interim review for some handled remarkably inconsistently. With Clear Review you will have a total of four reviews per year, which for a reviewee means spending more and more time feeding the system. For line managers this is also going to require more and more of time monitoring and responding to things staff are required to place on the system. Just in the old DPR system, problems of accountability remain; so your targets can be changed on Clear Review without your knowledge or without you being consulted. There has been no change to the relationship between the standard and contribution zones – so for the Principal Lecturer grade, the whole pay scale above grade 8 continue to be in the contribution zone.

The most contentious part of the 'new' system is the outcome process, which is being run entirely by HR/People with no reference to your respective School or Faculty, but which is essentially being 'bolted on' to Clear Review. Just in the old DPR system, under the new system there is no moderation process or any right of appeal. So-called 'new' outcome measures of unsatisfactory/achieving/ exceeding are to replace the old ratings. If you are in the contribution zone and identified by your line manager as 'exceeding' then your line manager will apparently have to make a "business case" to HR/People who will make an evaluation and decide – but on what basis? This is no more transparent, and no fairer, than the old system – it simply replicates the inherent injustice of determining pay according to arbitrary and secretive 'performance' criteria. The key issue is what will happen at the end of the process and what will be the impact on your pay.

UCU has argued throughout all our meetings with management that the link between appraisal and pay increments be severed. Despite all three unions making a clear demand that this become the basis of the new system, we see once again the way management have disregarded what you as members of staff have told us is the most unfair aspect of the whole system.

Stress & Ethical Dilemmas

We have asked members to share their experiences of the pay and reward system. Staff are regularly receiving emails on Saturdays asking them to check into Clear Review and many feel they have been mis-sold employment at Coventry University by not being fully informed that their salaries would be capped at the top of the standard zone. Some staff joining Coventry University have been offered jobs at the top end of the scale only to find that their salary is effectively frozen, as are now only able to progress through the contribution zone by obtaining 'outstanding' ratings. Many of these staff have told us they now regret coming to work at Coventry University for this reason.

Both the old DPR system and the new CORE/Clear Review system are alike in the way they compromise our professional integrity in terms of the marks we awarded to students. Staff are not in a position to negotiate many of the targets we are expected to reach – these are simply presented to us as requirements. UCU has argued for some time that the arbitrarily way these targets are created by the University management is not in the interests of staff or students. For instance you will have had over many years targets such as 90% module pass rates and more, with your modules assessed against these targets at exam boards. This creates an assurance on staff to pass students in order to meet Faculty marking targets, devaluing standards and our professional integrity. Individuals who fail to meet targets like this are reminded how they should be behaving by pressuring emails from School Management. We are always told by management that Performance Related Pay systems improve the quality of education – this one example demonstrates the way these systems weaken professional academic judgment and devalue the quality of education our students receive.

Performance Management Systems are discriminatory

Coventry University has done well in the higher education league tables, which has included TEF Gold. These are clear indications of our teaching success as around 80% of the University group's revenue is generated from teaching activity. As at 31st July 2017 Coventry University had £59 million in cash and £191 million of cash on short-term deposit (less than 12 months to access) totaling £250 million. Yet despite this our pay is held back by DPR and the use of contribution zones, which result in staff being paid less compared to other universities. For women and early career staff this reduction in pay is even more pronounced. There has now been a two-year period with no proper pay and reward along with a poorly implemented Clear Review system which means that many staff will have non-consolidated bonuses that will lead to lower pension pay-outs in the future. Overall our fundamental concern is the principle of linking appraisal to reward. We want to have a system where pay and reward are separated.

On 6th June 2018, Coventry University UCU unanimously passed a motion, which resolved to call on management to enter into genuine negotiations with the purpose of seeking a meaningful negotiated settlement which sees a modern and fair pay and appraisal system that severs the link between the two. Such a system should better reflect the sector wide standard of the normal expectation of pay.

Performance Treatment at Subsidiaries

The situation in Coventry University Group subsidiaries (including CU Services, CU Group (CU Coventry, CU Scarborough, CU London), Coventry University London, FutureLets, FutureWorks) is even worse with lower pay and inferior pension schemes. Fundamentally Coventry University Group has unfairly and immorally constrained and reduced pay to its staff whilst at the same time exploiting those staff to move up the ranking tables.

UCU Members tell the real story

What follows this material are a series of accounts from members about their real experiences of DPR and CORE/Clear Review. While our management group live in a world of ever-improving metrics where things can only get better, our members' accounts tell the real story. Please read these accounts now, and we hope you will agree that it is time to say no to the system repeatedly imposed on us by Coventry University management.

“Coventry UCU Members Speak Out”

<Member 1>

"My experience of the pay and reward system has been pretty poor overall. The outcome seems to depend on what type of manager you have and whether or not they like you, compounded by a secretive HR moderation process. Early in my career here, I experienced years of taking on a significantly increased workload under an unpleasant manager. This culminated in me taking on significant managerial work on a low grade, with absolutely no recognition, continually receiving a demotivating 'strong' rating, with no recognition of the extra duties undertaken - the pay and reward system lacked both the pay and the reward.

Overall, my 10 years+ experience of Coventry's' system of pay and reward means that I am now only motivated to do my job as explicitly stated in my contract; after all, this is what I am required to do, nothing more. I've had enough of stressing myself out in order to attain a non-existent pay reward as a result of a farcical process. Now that I have progressed to the 'grey zone' on my pay scale, I see little point in bothering to fully engage with the 'new' process (which effectively is no different to the DPR) as it will do absolutely nothing for my personal development or salary. In fact, I am seriously considering moving to a different institution in order to get out of the 'grey zone' limbo."

<Member 2>

"The DPR process has become even more opaque since the move to CORE/Clear Review. The guidance has been terrible and even more vague than the old system. My line manager felt obliged to set relatively straight forward objectives with me as he could not be clear how they would be used against me. The phrase 'used against me' may seem harsh but that is what happens - targets are not set to give you guidance on how you are performing but rather something against which to justify the fact that you are not getting the increment...again. I feel sorry for my line manager because he doesn't know how to answer any of the questions I have about how I will be measured or how this relates to my grading.

In other ways this system is exactly the same as the old one that CU agrees is not fit for purpose. Gradings are subjective and do not appear to relate to set criteria - I have watched too many colleagues thrash their targets and still come out with 'strong' (after some mysterious moderation process) with no justification. The number of staff who get each grading is not revealed but it feels like it is the senior people or their favourites as I have yet to meet anyone who got their increment in the contribution zone, apart from management. It also encourages staff to be in competition as helping someone exceed their targets means I sacrifice exceeding my own - it places personal success over the organisation as a whole. Surely the system should make me want to support colleagues rather than view them as my competition?

My pay shouldn't be based on some opaque process that the university appears unable and/or unwilling to make transparent for us to see how it is distributed and the criteria used for moderating gradings down. If we assessed students the way we assess staff for pay and reward we would be rightly sued by them."

<Member 3>

“Having worked at a few universities before coming to Coventry, I was quite shocked when I was told that all staff would be part of a DPR process which directly linked performance with pay. My reviews at previous institutions now seem like fairy tale conversations with managers who were interested in guiding me in my development as an academic. I even reminisce about feeling valued as a staff member.

I have had a revolving door of line managers here at Coventry, each bestowing different objectives and moving targets on me, no doubt passed on by those above them. My first few years here, I worked my butt off publishing, teaching, project managing and supervising and was given an ‘outstanding’ from my line manager each year only to learn in the traditional Christmas letter from HR that I had achieved a ‘strong’ in my DPR. From that point on, I thought why should I go above and beyond when it’s not recognised? This isn’t about personal development and recognition of hard work and achievements but an exercise in ticking off boxes and attempting to meet unattainable targets.

I have also found as a female, my objectives were much higher than male colleagues on the same grade. Additionally, I have felt that being a single parent has, in some cases, been used against me and a line manager berated me when I said I wanted to have a healthy work-life balance to fulfill my duties as a parent. This was used against me in my DPR that year. I feel like I live in a state of limbo and fear that I will fail my DPR and lose my job making myself and child homeless. I have come to find the DPR process at Coventry nerve-racking, unfair and discriminatory. I love my colleagues and think that Coventry has a lot to offer but the DPR process is not one of them—it’s time to say adios to the DPR.”

<Member 4>

“When I joined Coventry, I was delighted with the opportunity of being part of a diverse University where people from migrant communities and ethnic minorities, like myself, felt welcome. During the first couple of weeks, I was invited to attend DPR training as part of the induction process. I was a bit confused at the time as to what this DPR process involved particularly that this was not mentioned at any stage during the interview or in the job offer. When the DPR system was explained to us during this training, I remember feeling alarmed. But at that time I had already committed to the job by moving to the city and making other changes to childcare and family life. So I felt obliged to give it a chance and to make it work. I was a foreigner and not entitled to benefit and my family could not afford to lose my income. They talk about how families in the UK are one or two months from homelessness, would it surprise you to know that even as an academic, I was myself in that same boat. Needless to say, I pushed my doubts and gut feelings aside and assumed my role at CU. After all, I am a survivor, a hard worker and a resilient person and so if I do my job well, I would be fine or so I thought.

Having been through this for years, I can tell you that this has not been fine. The problem with measuring performance starts with the very fact that there are no specific measurable minimum requirements for academic jobs. The job description does not say teach one module or publish one-journal article per year. These targets are set and agreed with your line manager. Having experienced more than one DPR manager, I can tell you that the DPR system is too arbitrary and open to abuse and bias (gender, racial and other bias) to be used for measuring and evaluating performance. Even though I was teaching, supervising, publishing, successfully applying for funding and managing research projects this did not seem to be enough. Depending on your line manager, you can be required to achieve targets that are unachievable and which can be even higher than those of the person managing you. I also realised that myself and other female colleagues were required to achieve significantly more than what our male colleagues were expected to do under the same manager. The reality is that because of the nature and frequency of the DPR system, I am constantly terrified not only of not getting an increment but of losing my job.

Over the years, the DPR system has become almost like a noose around my neck and a source of anguish, anxiety and self-doubt. With no workload model and unachievable and arbitrary targets, my work-life balance has been completely obliterated. I work in the evenings, on the weekends, and on holidays and I am often still nowhere near achieving the unrealistic targets and objectives. I have no time left to do things with my family, kids or husband. My husband has had enough of me complaining about my work, my mood swings, my unhappiness, my anxiety and of my busy work schedule. Unsurprisingly, this has had an impact on our relationship—once happy and strong, now very fragile and on the verge of breakdown.

The DPR system has also become another stick by which the institution destroys my confidence. The system is almost a trap set up for me to fail. The message is whatever we do is not enough. The DPR meetings, which often resemble an inquisition, are nerve-wracking. These have typically become the time where I break down in tears and desperation in front of my line manager. Tears that I am no longer able to hold back. I am a survivor of gender-based violence and the power imbalance and the nature of this process knocked down my confidence and re-traumatised me.

As a result, I am now a regular subscriber to the Guardian jobs and to jobs.ac.uk. I feel that with no change in sight that my life, my family, my mental health and my happiness are at stake. This is so sad because I still love Coventry University. My message for others thinking of joining Coventry is don't be fooled, the Coventry DPR system has nothing to do with your development and everything to do with being held to account not for what you have done but for what you have supposedly failed to achieve."

<Member 5>

"I have been with Coventry University for more than 10 years. When I started, my line manager was always an academic who worked with me closely, supported me and encouraged my development. Even when DPR was introduced, the old style academics continued to ignore the box ticking part of it, shield me from the system and ensure it did not affect me adversely. When those academics retired I experienced a large shock. In the last 5 years I had 4 different line managers. Every one of them I only really met once in the DPR. None of them knew what I was doing day-to-day.

The very first one (after the professor) looked at my sheet with all targets proudly completed and wrote that my targets were not challenging enough in the conclusion. After the meeting he sent me an amended sheet where he has added multiple targets for the next year in addition to what I have put there. I replied that some of those targets were unachievable and others irrelevant. That was the end of it, I have no idea what the final version looked like. Bizarrely, looking back I think he was the best out of the four.

The second one opened the conversation with a phrase "I heard that you are not interested in progression..." and then continued talking about his own career. The third one when confronted directly told me I should not expect promotion in the next 3-4 years. My final (current) line manager in the first meeting said that the research I have been doing was of no interest to him.

Line management structure has been bizarre in the recent years. None of our school management had a single PhD between them but told us how to do the research part of our jobs. In reality all they do is check that we meet the "measurable" and unrealistic targets (sent from above) of 95% student satisfaction, 85% pass rate and so on.

We soon learned how to play the game. To increase pass rates we dumbed down the contents and the assessment and ensured we did "relevant" (read: nearly identical) examples in the revision session before. To increase student satisfaction we schedule the MEQ before marks are released, in the early morning session when only conscientious students turn up who are likely to give good feedback. Management also play the game by moving the staff they want to promote to modules, which are more popular with students and traditionally have higher satisfaction scores.

We produce multiple rubbish grant applications in a hurry to show we are applying for more than £100k a year (I think this particular target has been scrapped now). We let PhD students submit sub-standard theses in a hope they polish it while waiting for the viva. This means that we meet the 3 year completion target, the external and internal examiners are reading an appalling document written in a rush (which is ok as we ensure we get our mates to be examiners, not the most relevant

experts) and then these embarrassing half-baked "theses" will stay on external databases to show the quality of our teaching and research.

Several colleagues have even approached me to ask if I could include them on my papers for publication, as they need it for promotion. This is where I personally draw the line but many others do not. So we have multiple co-authors who have contributed zero on papers. The management decided to stop it now by considering only the main author. Which now hits the people who produce multifaceted research (e.g. a study that combines experiments and modelling where several authors make equal contributions).

This is what I have seen happening as a result of the DPR process. I have not had an increment in more than 5 years. My workload has at least doubled. Not once I even had a proper pat on the back from someone who understands my work and cares. I was told to not expect a promotion for at least 3 years. I am looking to follow the steady stream of people leaving the university."

<Member 6>

"As part of the core review, I have met with People to explain, that I was struggling due to my disability to use the Clear Review system, this then led me to be unable to complete Core Review. I also explained this to them in an email too. As a response from People, I had to do two emails to try and sort this out with my Line Manager and IT. I did this, but then sent an email again to People to inform them that my Line Manager and IT could not make any amendments. I informed People again, and they then advised that you could make any amendments. I informed People again, and they then explained to my Line Manager of my issues and that was due to my disability and specialist packages that you require and that they are not compatible with the Core Review System. All this has been causing me severe stress, especially since even at the weekends on Saturday I was receiving emails to check into the Core Review System.

My Line Manager received an email from People insisting that they will input the data objectives onto Clear Review on my behalf. My Line Manager expressed concerns:

Ethically and morally this could be inappropriate and that he could write anything on this system.

As a Line Manager they do not have the time or capacity to do this as this was not his job.

My Line Manager raised the issues with the HOD. People were still insistent that I should do this. Every time I received a Clear Review alert – I advised by email that I am unable to access due to my disability.

All this has been going on, my Line Manager advised that if we don't do the check ins we do not get the pay increment. I feel that I'm basically being blackmailed, harassed and bullied due to my disability. My Line Manager and I have now met and my Line Manager has inputted my objectives, which I sent in a word document, which have been approved.

This system is discriminatory and non-inclusive with people who have disability needs"

<Member 7>

“DPR is a time of extreme anxiety for myself and many other colleagues. The 12 page plus document (plus evidence) sets out the targets you speculate to achieve in an ideal future world that get treated as tombs set in concrete, that maybe used as evidence to sink your career and spirit if they have not been reached in retrospect. It could be a time for motivation and opportunity, but I saw many deflated and physically upset people coming out of their DPR meetings; intelligent, professional, dedicated and confident people reduced to tears. We shared examples, and comforted each other with cakes and coffees, so I know I was not alone in this horrid procedure.

Changes in leadership, policy and line management came in quickly and frequently, the latter of these had standards, preferences and styles that varied greatly from their predecessor which resulted in my DPR outcomes falling from consistently ‘strong’ to ‘unacceptable’, which meant my targets had not been attained (even after a period of legitimate illness). I asked, ‘could I be present when the outcome meetings were held?’ – what outcome meetings? ‘Could I know who is on the panel that preside over the outcome decisions’ – what panel? ‘Is there any consistency in targets with other colleagues?’ – all confidential. ‘Can I appeal the outcome?’ No.

So much for evidence-based decision making and transparency. It is a one-sided, unfair and mysterious process open to bias and manipulation at a line manager’s will, with no means of comeback or appeal. What many staff at Coventry do not realise is that this process can be used to terminate your employment, which has happened to people I know.

My advice – revamp the system, make it transparent and unlinked to pay, and set reasonable targets, check regularly what they are through the year, collect positive evidence and insist on leaving it in your DPR, don’t rush it, don’t leave it until the last minute, read through the version you get returned to you to sign off, don’t sign off in a hurry – it remains with you and in your file. Make sure you have other things to show as over and above your remit. Don’t leave the gut instinct of a grievance – if you can prove you are being poorly treated, be wise - collect evidence dates and times immediately. It is time restricted from when it is happening until the time you can place a grievance. Read the universities policies and consult your union rep.”

Join UCU

Almost 110,000 of your colleagues have chosen to belong to UCU - the largest union and most effective voice for people like you working in post-school education.

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Or join over the phone:

0333 207 0719*

*Lines open 9.15am-4.45pm Mon-Fri. Calls are charged at standard rates; if you have inclusive call minutes or an allowance calls to this number are usually included

UCU COVENTRY BRANCH SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION:

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4. INSTAGRAM: coventryucu
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