

# YOUR ANNUAL APPRAISAL FOR 2007

The bank has now published a guide to the appraisal process for staff and managers called "Performance Management at HSBC: taking personal responsibility for HSBC's success". Unite sees this document as a step in the right direction for a number of reasons.

## • Not just managers

The document is for staff as well as managers. Up to now, it has been seen as the managers' job to comprehend and deliver appraisals whereas this document seeks to empower staff to understand and take ownership of their own appraisal. From Unite's perspective this is the only way to correct some of the problems we have seen over the years with the appraisal system but it will not happen overnight, or even in one year.

## • "TUPIS"

This procedure is not perfect but it is a far better and fairer way of managing underperformance than the less rigorous alternatives. The new document emphasises the "no surprises" principle and says "Performance issues must be dealt with as they arise during the year with reference to the TUPIS guidelines."

## • The bell-curve

Unfortunately, from the union's perspective, the desired corporate distribution curve for performance ratings has not been abandoned by the bank (see below). However, the new document accepts that for a team of less than 100 people it may not be possible to calibrate performance in accordance with the 20/70/10% pattern. In previous years, the minimum size has been 50 in theory but a lot smaller in practice.

## • 4 ratings

Following on from the above, the document outlaws a practice the union has seen, over the last year in particular, by stating, "It is not acceptable for a line manager to use the bell-curve or absence as an excuse to assign a 4 rating".

## STILL AN ISSUE - THE BELL-CURVE ITSELF

This continues to be an underlying problem, from Unite's perspective, in terms of the scope for transparency in the appraisal process. Even with the new higher minimum size, we believe the process of comparing ratings with a peer group is not transparent which means that staff and managers find it nigh-on impossible to find objective data to challenge its application to their appraisal rating.

What's more, there seems to be a real lack of clarity in the bank about who ones peer-group is. Is it all staff in an area or department or all those doing the same job at the same grade? Any information that would be needed to challenge a rating affected by the bell-curve is likely to be confidential so cannot be used.

## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

We would advise you to read and keep a copy of the new bank document. In addition, the union produces a Q&A each year for members to help them through the appraisal process. We have amended this in light of the new document and it follows on from this newsletter.

## FEEDBACK

Unite welcomes your feedback on the new document or the appraisal process in general via

- Your local Unite JAOR or Unite Managers' Committee (UMC) rep
- Our helpline on - 020 7253 9642
- Fax – 020 7780 4142
- email – [hsbc@unitetheunion.com](mailto:hsbc@unitetheunion.com)

### **1. What should the appraisal consist of?**

The appraisal should be a genuine two way conversation between yourself and your manager looking at your performance over the previous year. All of your key result areas should be looked at and ratings given. It is important that you prepare for this and bring along evidence of the work done over the year. There should also be a discussion regarding areas for development for the forthcoming year. If the following year's objectives are available these should be related but the focus of the appraisal should be on the year that has already passed.

### **2. I am not happy with the rating that I have been given, what should I do?**

In the first instance you should have the discussion during the appraisal itself and provide evidence to back up the rating that you feel is appropriate. Do not refuse to sign the appraisal. Instead ensure that your own comments are added to the appraisal also. It is essential that evidence is provided to back up any claims for a higher rating. You should then seek to resolve the matter informally with your line manager and counter-signing manager. If you are still unhappy, the next step is to raise a grievance which the procedure states must be within six months of being informed of your rating. However UNITE's legal advice is that you must initiate the grievance within three months to protect your position. The bank will in the first instance attempt to resolve it informally with both the line manager and counter signing manager. If you have already had a proper discussion with your line manager this may appear to be a fruitless exercise but there is certainly no harm in attempting to change their mind.

### **3. During my appraisal I was told that I under performed during the year but this is the first that I heard about it.**

A guiding principle for managing performance is that underperformance should be tackled as soon as it is identified. To not do so is unfair and is considered to be 'setting someone up

to fail'. As such it would be unfair to give someone a 4 or 5 rating if they have not been made aware of the areas that they are underperforming in over the year and proper coaching and support implemented. The form that this support should take is outlined in the bank's Turning Underperformance into Success document, found on the Human Resources Procedural Manual. If you have been marked down and feel you were not given support you should proceed as in Question 2 above.

### **4. What's this 'Bell curve' that my manager is talking about?**

The bell curve is a statistical phenomenon that you would expect to see in any large enough sample. Put simply it is the fact that you would expect to see some people underperforming, some over performing with most people concentrated round the middle and numbers decreasing as you move to either extreme of the spectrum. The bank is aiming for a 20/70/10 split, ie 20% of staff rated a 1 or 2, 70% of staff rated a 3 and 10% of staff rated a 4 or 5. The guidelines state that this should be adhered to in teams with 100 or more staff but accepts that this may not be possible in departments with less staff than that.

### **5. Throughout the year I was told I was on course for a 3 rating. But at my year end appraisal I was told that because of the bell curve I will be a 4I rating in line with guidance. Is this correct?**

No. The guidance notes are quite clear on this and state "There should be no surprises in a formal review. Performance issues must be dealt with as they arise during the year with reference to the Turning Underperformance Into Success (TUPIS) guidelines". If your manager believed that because of the expected distribution of ratings you would fall below a 3 they should have tackled that there and then and set in place a proper coaching and development plan to enable you to bring the performance back to a 3 or better. Leaving it until the appraisal to inform you is not acceptable.

**6. I was set a coaching and development plan at half yearly review which I met. But because of the bell curve I was told that I will still be rated a 4I. What should I do?**

The guidance issued for end of year appraisals states: "It is not acceptable for a line manager to use the bell curve or absence as an excuse to assign a 4 rating! Refer to TUPIS and absence management guidelines for further information". Bring this fact to your manager's attention and highlight that you met the plan that they set you.

**7. I was never told what my objectives were or what I was working towards and now I have been marked down, what should I do?**

It would seem fair that you work to your existing objectives until told otherwise so if the bank puts harder objectives in place but your manager does not inform you properly then you would have a reason to grieve. Your objectives may change in line with the new appraisal year (January to December) and you and your line manager will meet to discuss them. Whilst operationally it may not be possible to have this discussion at the very beginning of the year, it should take place as soon as reasonably practicable. Changes to your objectives should not take effect until this discussion has been held. Another example of this is when the bank tries to backdate changes to objectives. This should only be accepted when they are more favourable.

**8. I work in a small department. My manager told me that because of the bell curve two of us have to be rated a 4 and that I am one of those. I met all my objectives and this does not seem right.**

The bank is overall aiming for a 20/70/10% split. Where teams contain 100 or more staff the guidelines state that this should be adhered to. However, the guidelines acknowledge that for smaller groups this may not be possible to achieve. As above the bell curve of itself is not justification enough to assign a 4 or lower rating.

**9. How should I best prepare myself for the review?**

Bring evidence along of your achievements throughout the year.

If there have been external factors that prevented or inhibited you achieving certain objectives bring evidence of that also. Familiarise yourself with the guidance notes that the bank has issued to staff and managers on performance management this year.

Be prepared to have an honest discussion about your performance, taking on board constructive criticism and equally challenging any feedback as necessary. Be prepared to challenge the rating given, and to give your reasoning, if you do not agree.

**10. I was told by my manager that all the figures have been finalised and it is too late to change them. Is this true?**

No. It is true that there is a date by which the bank wishes to have everything input to enable timely processing, that does not mean that it is not possible to go back and make amendments if necessary.

**11. My branch/department under performed overall though I did well, but I am still being marked down. Is this fair?**

If you met your personal objectives and outperformed your peers, you would expect to receive a higher, not a lower rating. Other than this peer comparison, the overall performance of the department or branch should not be a factor, unless you have overall responsibility for that branch or department and your personal objectives reflect this.

**12. I am told I am being marked down because of my attendance record over the year. Is this allowed?**

The bank's procedures allow for this sort of adjustment, though it should be stressed that there is no need to automatically apply it and local discretion can be exercised. Any adjustment that is made should be

proportionate to the time off. Absence due to pregnancy related illness or as a result of a disability should be discounted, as should authorised absence for public or bank duties such as jury service or trade union duties. A full explanation of the policy is available on the intranet under the Bonus scheme. If you have any concerns that your bonus is not within the policy contact your local rep.

**13. I believe that the reason that I have been marked down is because of discrimination, what should I do?**

It is a sad fact that discrimination still occurs throughout the UK and the bank has a very clear policy on the matter, as contained in the HR Procedures Manual, which confirms that such behaviour will not be tolerated or condoned. Whether it be because of your race, your sex, your religious beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, gender reassignment, a disability or, since October 1st 2006, your age, any form of discrimination is unlawful. If you believe that the reason that your rating is lower than you deserve is because of an act of discrimination then let your rep know as soon as possible so appropriate steps can be taken. Unite has a zero tolerance policy towards discrimination.

**14. Who can I turn to for help?**

As always your local rep should be your first port of call. If you do not know who this is or you cannot get a hold of them because, for instance, they are on holiday, then call the rep's helpline on 0207 253 9642. If there isn't a rep in your area then why not consider putting yourself forward for it? Full training is given and it can help both yourself and others. Ask to speak to a seconded representative for full details of the role and the sort of personal development that comes about as a result of it.

**15. How long do I have?**

Unite's legal advice is that you have 3 months from the date on which you were given your appraisal rating to raise any grievance and to ensure that your legal rights are protected.

**16. I don't have any evidence; can I still proceed with the grievance?**

Unless it is a case that you have been awarded a 4 or a 5 rating and there is no evidence of proper support and coaching then there is little point in proceeding. However, do remember that evidence is held in many places and so it is worth having a look through your staff file, examining old emails, checking your sales results etc to see what evidence you can pull together.

