

APPRAISAL

NEU Guidance for members in England and Wales

Appraisal is particularly important because it affects decisions on your pay. This guidance document aims to answer the most common queries NEU members have on appraisal. You should read this guide in conjunction with your school/college appraisal policy.

What we say

When you read through this document you may have questions about what happens in your particular school or workplace and there may be collective issues that affect other members. In most circumstances, you should initially discuss the matter with your workplace rep, as they will know whether similar concerns have been raised by other members. If you do not have a rep at the moment, it would be a good idea to get members together to elect one. Further advice on this is available at:

<https://neu.org.uk/becoming-a-rep>

Although you may sometimes feel that you are the only person affected by or concerned about a particular issue, in reality this is seldom the case. Any difficulties you may experience are likely to be linked to wider conditions at your workplace and as a member of the NEU you have the advantage of being able to act collectively with your colleagues. This should give you the confidence of knowing that you have the weight of the Union behind you.

How long should my appraisal period be?

If you are in regular employment your appraisal cycle should be 12 months. It should usually run from 1 September to 31 August, but your school's policy should detail this. If you are on a fixed-term contract of between one term and one year then your appraisal period will match the length of your contract.

I am starting a new job part-way through a cycle. How will my appraisal be affected?

The headteacher of your new school should appoint a reviewer as soon as you start and a planning meeting should take place within a reasonable time of you taking up that employment, usually within six weeks. The aim should be to integrate you into the cycle, so that by the end of the cycle and start of the next one, you will be on track with the rest of the staff in the school.

I work for a supply agency. Should I have an appraisal?

There is no legal requirement for agency-employed staff to be included in the appraisal process but many schools will want their more regular agency staff to be involved. Certainly, if you have a contract of one term or more then you should be appraised.

I have missed part of my appraisal cycle due to illness/maternity. What should happen?

School pay policies must not discriminate on grounds of disability or pregnancy/maternity status. Schools should base any appraisal and pay determination on the evidence of performance to date in the current appraisal year, or in previous appraisal periods if there is very little to go on in the current year. Keeping in Touch (KIT) days should not be used for the purposes of appraisal.

Who should my appraiser be?

The appraisal policy must state whether the reviewer for all staff will be the headteacher or whether he/she has delegated that responsibility to someone else. The NEU's view is that the reviewer should be the teacher's line manager, as they will have the best knowledge of the teacher's work.

Appraisers must be suitably trained so they understand the appraisal system and can agree objectives that meet the priorities of the school and the aspirations of the teacher. Schools must appoint an external adviser to provide advice and support in relation to the appraisal of the headteacher.

I have more than one line manager at my school - who should be my appraiser?

You should only have one appraiser. This should ideally be the line manager with whom you work most closely. Other line managers may feed in to your performance review and the details of how this happens should form part of your review statement.

What if a teacher has an objection to the person who has been appointed as their appraiser?

Reasonable objections should always be considered so teachers who have concerns should raise these as early as possible within the appraisal cycle and request an alternative where possible.

How many objectives should be set as part of the appraisal process?

Although there is no legal maximum, it is not good management practice to set more than three – they have to be manageable in order to succeed, and avoid unreasonable workload pressures. See NEU observation protocol in *Further Resources* below.

I work part time but I have the same targets as everyone else. Is this fair?

It would not be appropriate for a part-time teacher to have the same number and weight of targets as a full-time teacher with comparable experience and responsibilities. Your targets should be decided through discussion between you and your appraiser, taking into account the time you spend in school and what is achievable and appropriate.

What should my objectives be?

Your objectives should be appropriate to your role, working time, level of experience and responsibility. Your objectives should link into your school's improvement plan but you may also wish to have objectives that meet your own aspirations. The objectives may identify some training that would be beneficial or necessary for you to undertake. The objectives should be 'SMART' ('specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound'). You should be clear what success in meeting your objectives will look like and how progress will be measured.

Careful consideration must be taken where any objective relates to meeting specific percentage targets or outcomes from tests or examinations. These objectives must be reasonable. Where possible, the NEU would advise against setting such objectives.

What happens if I do not agree with the objectives?

If you do not agree with your objectives then you should raise your concerns with your appraiser. If, after discussion, changes are not made then you must be given the opportunity to note your concerns alongside the objectives. These will be taken into consideration at your review.

If your headteacher is not your appraiser, then your headteacher should moderate the objectives of all the teachers in the school to ensure consistency. Moderation may be delegated to a member of the senior management team.

Inappropriate objectives can be challenged using the grievance procedure.

Can objectives be revised?

The NEU believes objectives should only be revised in exceptional circumstances, that is, where there have been significant changes in your duties; significant changes in the pupils or the type of pupils taught; or significant change(s) in other circumstances related to the development and improvement of your professional practice.

To ensure that you are not disadvantaged, your objectives should also be reviewed following a period of absence, for example, after maternity/parental/adoption leave or long-term sickness.

For information on the impact of Covid-19 on objectives, read the NEU guidance on Coronavirus – Teacher pay and Appraisal here <https://neu.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-teacher-pay-and-appraisal-england>

Is there a statutory limit on the number of observations for the purpose of appraisal?

Not any longer. However, NEU policy is for a maximum of three per year for **all** purposes, not exceeding three hours in total. Just because there is no statutory limit, this does not mean that schools cannot adopt an observation protocol that includes such a limit. See NEU observation protocol in *Further Resources* below.

Who can undertake observations?

Observations for appraisal can only be undertaken by qualified teachers. Full details can be found in <https://neu.org.uk/policy/appraisal-and-classroom-observation>

What sort of feedback should teachers be given following an observation?

There is no requirement for Ofsted grades to be used. In the NEU/NAHT Model Appraisal Policy (see *Further Resources* below) we assert that feedback about lesson observations should be '*developmental*', not simply a judgement using Ofsted grades.

Do teachers in England have to be 'audited' against each of the Teachers' Standards, including the bullet points within each Standard?

There is no such requirement. The NEU believes that assessment against the Standards should start from the premise that all teachers are meeting the standards, and should be assessed as meeting the standards, unless clear, compelling written evidence to the contrary is provided.

What should I do if I have not met an objective?

You will need to look at the reasons why you have not met an objective. You may wish to use the following questions to help understand why you did not meet the objective:

- Were you given the time or resources required to achieve the objective?
- Have priorities changed since the objective was set?
- Had you raised concerns when the objective was first set, and is this recorded on your review statement?
- Has the make-up of your class(es) changed since the objective was set?
- Have you or your appraiser previously raised concerns that you were unlikely to meet the objective?
- If so, did you agree and implement an action plan to help you to achieve the objective and has this been followed?

The review meeting should hold no surprises for you and so any concerns your appraiser has over your performance should have been raised during the appraisal cycle. The DfE makes this clear in its guidance to schools.

Does my appraisal review affect my application to cross the threshold?

You need to make clear to your reviewer if you wish to be assessed to cross the threshold. Your objectives should then be set to ensure that you can be assessed against the post threshold standards. You should ensure that your reviewer knows you wish to be assessed against the post-threshold standards and progressed onto the upper pay spine.

Can my appraisal review affect my pay progression?

In England, performance appraisal reviews will have an impact on your progression on the main, upper, leading practitioner and leadership pay ranges. Your reviewer must make a pay progression recommendation to the headteacher/governing body. Although your reviewer can recommend 'no progression', there is no provision for the school to move you down the pay range.

In Wales, performance related pay will be abolished from 1 September 2020 in favour of experience based pay progression.

Where should I go for further advice and support?

Your first point of contact for advice and support from the union is your National Education Union workplace representative. If there is no representative in your workplace, you should contact the relevant region using the details at <https://neu.org.uk/contact-us>.

Further Resources

DfE Standards Guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachersstandards>

NEU/NAHT Appraisal Guidance - <https://neu.org.uk/advice/appraisal-model-policy>

**National Education Union
September 2020**