Departmental Work Plan – Guidance Note for Managers

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Version no. & date:	Version 1.1 – 23 October 2026
Author:	Head of People and Culture
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Next review due:	October 2028
Responsible Committee:	College Management Team (CMT)
Approved by & date:	College Management Team (CMT) – 23 October 2026
External reference points:	N/A
Linked policies:	PC 5.8 Personal Development Plan; GA 3.2 Risk Management Framework; PC 5.4 Annual Performance Management and Appraisal Policy and Procedure; PC 5.9 Departmental Work Plan
Audience:	Staff

1. Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance note provides managers with instructions on how to complete, implement, and monitor their Departmental Work Plan. The work plan ensures that departmental activities are aligned with the College's strategic objectives and that performance is monitored consistently throughout the reporting period.
The Departmental Work Plan serves as a key management tool for planning, accountability, performance monitoring, and continuous improvement.

2. Departmental Information

Head of Department must ensure that the following information is completed accurately:

- **Department Name** – Clearly state the department responsible for delivering the plan.
- **Head of Department** – Name of the accountable senior lead.
- **Reporting Period** – Normally aligned with the College's Academic cycle (e.g., 01 August – 31 July).
- **Date Prepared** – Date the work plan is finalised.

This section establishes ownership and accountability for delivery.

3. Aligning Objectives with the College's Strategy

Departmental Work Plans form an integral part of the College's integrated planning and performance management framework. They translate the College's Strategic Plan and annual institutional priorities into practical departmental objectives, planned activities and measurable outcomes, providing a clear line of sight between the College's strategic ambitions and the day-to-day work undertaken by departments and an individual employee.

The planning hierarchy is as follows:

College Strategic Plan
↓
Annual Institutional Priorities
↓
Directorate Objectives
↓
Departmental Work Plans
↓
Individual Annual Performance Management and Appraisal Reviews

This framework ensures that departmental activity is aligned with institutional priorities, supports effective resource planning, enables consistent performance monitoring, and provides assurance that the College's strategic objectives are being delivered across all areas of the College.

When developing a Departmental Work Plan, Heads of Department should:

- identify the College's Strategic Plan, annual institutional priorities and directorate objectives that are relevant to their area of responsibility;
- develop departmental objectives that contribute directly to the achievement of institutional and directorate priorities;
- define clear, measurable, realistic and outcome-focused objectives that demonstrate successful delivery;
- ensure objectives promote service improvement, employee capability, operational effectiveness and, where appropriate, enhanced student outcomes;

- identify cross-departmental dependencies and opportunities for collaborative working where objectives require joint delivery;
- identify the resources, risks, performance measures and success criteria necessary to support effective implementation; and
- ensure departmental objectives provide a clear framework for setting individual employee objectives through the Annual Performance Management and Appraisal Review process.

All departmental Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) should support continuous improvement in service quality, operational performance, workforce capability, student experience and institutional effectiveness.

Examples of departmental OKRs include:

Strategic Objective	**Key Results**
Improve service delivery	• Achieve agreed stakeholder satisfaction targets. • Reduce service response and resolution times. • Meet or exceed departmental service standards and performance targets. • Reduce the number of service complaints and recurring issues. • Increase the percentage of services delivered within agreed timescales.
Strengthen employee capability	• Increase completion rates for mandatory and role-specific training. • Achieve agreed Personal Development Plan (PDP) objectives across the department. • Improve employee performance and competency levels through the Annual Performance Management and Appraisal Reviews. • Increase participation in professional development and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities. • Develop succession capability and leadership readiness within the department.
Improve operational efficiency	• Streamline key business processes to reduce delays and duplication. • Improve compliance with College policies, procedures and regulatory requirements. • Increase productivity through more efficient use of people, systems and resources. • Reduce operational risks and process errors. • Deliver departmental objectives within agreed budgets and timescales.
Enhance student outcomes	• Improve student engagement, attendance and participation. • Increase student retention, progression and completion rates. • Improve student satisfaction and feedback measures. • Reduce attainment and progression gaps where identified. • Achieve or exceed agreed academic quality and student outcome key performance indicators (KPIs).

The successful delivery of departmental objectives should be monitored throughout the year and reviewed regularly through departmental performance meetings and individual Annual Performance Management and Appraisal Reviews. This ensures that departmental priorities remain aligned with changing organisational needs and continue to support the successful delivery of the College Strategic Plan.

4. Developing the Key Activities and Work Plan

Heads of Department are responsible for completing the following fields:

- **Objective –** state the College's priority being addressed.
- **Key Activities –** outline actions required to achieve the objective, for example:
    - reviewing departmental processes
    - delivering training programmes
    - conducting monthly team briefings
- **Responsibilities –** assign a named role responsible for delivery (e.g., Estates Manager, Head of Operations).
- **Timeline –** specify delivery periods such as:
    - Quarterly (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)
    - Monthly
    - Annual milestones

Success Indicators

Define measurable outcomes such as:

- Process improvement report completed
- Percentage of employees trained
- Improved employee feedback scores

Progress Update

Head of Department must regularly update progress to track achievements, delays, or required adjustments.

5. Monitoring and Performance Management

Head of Department should:

- Review progress monthly or quarterly with their team members.
- Discuss updates during team meetings and one-to-one sessions.
- Identify barriers early and take corrective action.
- Maintain evidence of achievements and outcomes.

The work plan should remain a live document, updated throughout the reporting period.

6. Risk Management Responsibilities

Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that risks which may affect the successful delivery of departmental objectives are proactively identified, assessed, monitored and managed throughout the reporting period. Risk management should form an integral part of departmental planning, performance monitoring and decision-making and must be undertaken in accordance with the College's GA 3.2 Risk Management Framework.

When developing and reviewing the Departmental Work Plan, Heads of Department should:

- identify risks that could prevent the successful delivery of departmental objectives or adversely affect the achievement of the College's strategic priorities;

- assess the likelihood and potential impact of each identified risk using the College's approved risk assessment methodology;
- identify and implement appropriate control measures and mitigation strategies to reduce risks to an acceptable level, including workforce planning, resource reallocation, prioritisation of critical activities and business continuity arrangements where appropriate;
- allocate ownership for each significant risk and monitor the effectiveness of agreed mitigation measures throughout the reporting period;
- review departmental risks regularly as part of performance monitoring and update mitigation actions where circumstances change; and
- maintain appropriate evidence demonstrating that risks have been actively reviewed, monitored and managed.

Examples of departmental risks include, but are not limited to:

- budget or resource constraints;
- staffing shortages, recruitment difficulties, employee absence or succession risks;
- regulatory, legislative or policy changes;
- operational or service delivery issues;
- information technology or systems failures;
- dependencies on other departments, suppliers or external partners; and
- project, programme or organisational change risks.

For each identified risk, the Head of Department should evaluate the potential impact on departmental objectives, determine the likelihood of occurrence, implement appropriate mitigation measures, and monitor the effectiveness of those actions throughout the reporting period. Where mitigation is insufficient to reduce the risk to an acceptable level, further action should be identified and implemented.

Where a risk exceeds the department's delegated authority, affects multiple departments, or has the potential to significantly impact the College's strategic objectives, legal or regulatory compliance, financial sustainability, reputation, operational performance or student experience, it must be escalated through the relevant Director in accordance with the GA 3.2 Risk Management Framework for consideration by the Executive Leadership Team or the appropriate governance body.

Departmental Work Plans should be reviewed alongside departmental risk registers, where maintained, to ensure that strategic objectives, planned activities, performance measures and risk management arrangements remain aligned throughout the reporting period and continue to support the successful delivery of the College's strategic priorities.

7. Approval Process

Once completed:

- The Head of Department reviews the work plan for accuracy and alignment.
- The plan is submitted to the relevant Director for approval.
- Signed approval confirms the College’s commitment and accountability.

No work plan should be implemented without formal approval.

8. Roles and Responsibilities of Managers

Heads of Department are expected to:

- Translate strategic objectives into operational activities.
- Engage team members in delivery.

- Monitor performance against agreed indicators.
- Provide timely progress updates.
- Support employee development linked to departmental goals.
- Ensure effective communication within teams.

9. Review and Continuous Improvement

At the end of each reporting period, the Head of Department should undertake a formal review of the Departmental Work Plan to evaluate overall performance and ensure that learning from the reporting period informs future planning and continuous improvement.

The review should:

- evaluate the extent to which departmental objectives, key results and performance measures have been achieved;
- assess the effectiveness of activities, resource utilisation and risk mitigation strategies implemented during the reporting period;
- identify lessons learned, examples of good practice, challenges encountered and opportunities for improvement;
- obtain and consider feedback from employees, stakeholders and, where appropriate, students to evaluate the effectiveness of departmental activities and identify areas for enhancement;
- use the findings from the review to update departmental priorities, objectives, resource requirements and risk assessments for the next planning cycle, ensuring continuous improvement and organisational learning (the feedback loop); and
- share significant lessons learned and improvement opportunities with relevant departments, the Executive Leadership Team and the People and Culture Department, where appropriate, to support institution-wide learning and continuous improvement.

This end-of-period review establishes a continuous feedback loop that supports ongoing organisational learning and continuous improvement. Performance outcomes, stakeholder feedback, lessons learned and evaluation findings should be used to inform future departmental planning, objective setting, resource allocation and decision-making. The findings should also be used to identify opportunities to improve departmental performance and respond to changing organisational priorities. This ensures that Departmental Work Plans remain aligned with the College's Strategic Plan and continue to support the successful delivery of its strategic objectives.

Appendix 1 – Departmental Work Plan

1. Departmental Information

Department Name: | **Head of Department:**

Reporting Period: (e.g., 01 August – 31 July) | **Date Prepared:**

2. Departmental Objectives aligned with the College's strategy

No.	Strategic Pillar (Including Commitment)	Objectives	Key Result Expected
1	Our Approach to Education	Deliver high-quality, applied and authentic education that enhances learner success and exceeds regulatory expectations.	• Improved student continuation, completion and progression outcomes. • Student outcomes consistently above Office for Students regulatory thresholds. • High levels of learner satisfaction and engagement. • Robust academic quality, standards and compliance across all programmes.
2	Our People	Build a high-performing, capable and engaged workforce that supports the College's strategic ambitions.	• Increased employee capability through learning and development. • Strong leadership and succession capability. • Improved employee engagement, wellbeing and retention. • Performance objectives aligned with organisational priorities and KPIs.
3	Our Learning Community	Foster an inclusive, supportive and collaborative learning environment that	• Improved access, participation and learner belonging. • Reduced attainment and progression gaps.

		promotes belonging, equality and student success.	• Enhanced student engagement and student voice. • Strong partnerships that enrich the learner experience and community impact.
4	Our Operational Excellence	Strengthen governance, financial sustainability and operational effectiveness to support continuous institutional improvement.	• Sustainable financial performance and diversified income streams. • Effective governance, regulatory compliance and risk management. • Efficient, data-informed decision-making supported by KPIs. • Continuous improvement in institutional performance, systems and services.

3. Key Activities and Work Plan

Objective	Key Activities	Responsibilities	Timeline	Success Indicators	Progress Update
Improve service delivery.	Review departmental processes	Estates Manager	Q1	Process improvement report	
Strengthen employees' capability.	Conduct operational training programmes	Head of Department	Q2-Q3	80% employees trained	
Improve communications.	Monthly team briefing.	Head of Department	Monthly	Employees feedback improved	

4. Risk Management

Risk	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Budget constraints	Delayed activities	Prioritise critical actions
Employees shortages	Reduced productivity	Workforce planning
Policy changes	Operational disruption	Regular review meetings

5. Approval

Name	Job Title	Signature	Date
	Head of Department		
	Director		

Version History

Version	Date	Author	Summary of changes	Approved by
1.1	23 October 2026	Head of People and Culture	Role titles updated following organisational restructure; front sheet, footer and cross references updated for approval. Front sheet completed and KPIs spelt out, in line with GA 3.1 (26 October 2026).	College Management Team (CMT)