



1. Introduction

Delivering feedback can elicit a range of employee responses. Understanding these reactions, especially unexpected or negative reactions, and ways to handle these can support candid and timely feedback where under performance has been identified.

2. Common Employee Reactions to Performance Feedback

Below lists some negative employee responses that can arise when providing performance feedback:

- **Hostility/Resistance/Denial** – Employees may question your credibility and the facts of the feedback. Employees may not acknowledge the issue, deny that the incidents have taken place or downplay the impact of their actions.
- **Indifference** – Employees react to the feedback in an apathetic manner and do not fully commit to doing things differently.
- **Lack of Confidence/Self Pity** – Employees are uncertain in their abilities to improve.
- **Responsibility Skirting** – Employees may acknowledge the negative feedback, but imply they cannot change as others are at fault.
- **Emotional Response** – Employees may cry, shout, be angry and/or leave the room

3. Maintaining Objectivity

It is important that capability conversations remain objective about the matters in hand. Setting realistic and appropriate goals, with incremental improvement that are SMART should encourage the employee to understand what is expected of them.

4. Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias is a term used to describe the associations that we hold which, despite being outside our conscious awareness, can have a significant influence on our attitudes and behaviour. Regardless of how fair minded we believe ourselves to be, most people have some degree of unconscious bias. This means that we automatically respond to others (eg people from different racial or ethnic groups) in positive or negative ways. These associations are difficult to override, regardless of whether we recognise them to be wrong, because they are deeply ingrained into our thinking and emotions. (Jones, September 2013).

Consideration should be given to unconscious bias ahead of a capability conversation-taking place.

You should refer to the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policies and access relevant training via [Training Courses](#) for additional support in this area.

5. Checks and Balances

It can be perceived by employees that it is unfair that they are in a capability process and that the reviewing manager is unreasonable/unfair/biased.



The agreed Capability Policy provides for a Senior Manager in the Department/Faculty to decide who should be a reviewing manager. Under the Policy, an employee can object to the appointment of a reviewing manager, and the Senior Manager must give consideration to their objections and assess whether there is any merit in them. This process provides a checkpoint to reassure employees that the reviewing manager will be reasonable and fair.

The Capability Process also provides for a decision on any sanction to be made by someone more senior than the reviewing manager. It is their role to review all the documentation and to listen to any comments from the employee and on balance to make a determination as to whether or not performance has met the standards required given all the circumstances. The opportunity to appeal against sanctions provides a further check in the process.

Employees are entitled to be accompanied to any formal hearing by a Trade Union Representative or work colleague. The presence of the accompanying person can help ensure that the hearing is carried out in a fair way and there is clear explanation of the evidence and reasons for the decision.

6. Additional Web Resources

- [HR Employment Relations and Performance Management Team](#)
- [Leadership and Management Academy](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Dignity at Nottingham](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity](#)