**Dialogue framework for exit dialogues between a manager and an outgoing employee (permanent employee)**

**RETAIN KNOWLEDGE**

**PREPARE**

**HAVE THE DIALOGUE**

**INVITE**

* Use your new knowledge   
  actively in relation to hiring a replacement, as well as developing your unit and your own leadership approach.
* Any useful new knowledge should be shared with your management team: Explore whether your new knowledge gives cause for joint initiatives.

You facilitate the meeting, so you set the tone. You should:

1. Be curious: This is your chance to gain more or new knowledge.
2. Practice appreciative leadership:   
   It is important that both of you feel that the dialogue is productive and pleasant.
3. Ask about what new knowledge   
   you may share: Exit dialogues are confidential unless otherwise agreed upon: if there is any new knowledge you would like to share, for example with your management team, you should ask the employee for their consent to do so.
4. You may wish to encourage the outgoing employee to maintain contact with Aarhus University, for example by connecting on social media.

* Send the reflection   
  questions (appendix) to the outgoing employee about one week before the dialogue.
* Invite the outgoing   
  employee to an exit   
  dialogue – usually   
  during the last week   
  of employment.
* Allow 45-60 minutes for the dialogue.

WHY HAVE AN EXIT DIALOGUE?

The purpose of the exit dialogue is partly to round things off properly with the outgoing employee, and partly to invite feedback that you can draw on to develop the position and the workplace in the future. So, the point of the dialogue is to get the employee to talk about how they did their job and what challenges they encountered. This will help ensure continuity in the role, provide ideas for ways to develop the position in question, and give you valuable information about your leadership approach. All this input can help you take steps to prevent future employees resigning from their position prematurely.

BEFORE THE DIALOGUE

We recommend that you clarify as early as possible whether it is meaningful for both you and the employee to have this conversation.

Plan the dialogue well in advance, and at the very latest, schedule it during the employee’s last week on the job. This will ensure that the dialogue is as professional as possible, as leaving a job can be very emotional for many.

The appendix (page 4) contains a number of questions for the outgoing employee to prepare before the dialogue. You may not get around to addressing all of them but do try to get to the most important questions for you with regard to hiring a replacement, developing your unit and getting the employee’s perspective on your leadership.  
  
DURING THE DIALOGUE

Make sure that the dialogue takes place in private. For the dialogue to be productive, it should take place under conditions that put both of you at ease and allow you to have a private conversation.

1. **Set a framework for the dialogue:**   
   Tell your employee how much time you have available, and stress that the dialogue is confidential. Explain that the topic of the dialogue is purely about the outgoing employee’s experience of their employment. The dialogue should not be used to vent any frustrations about relationships with colleagues or partners.
2. **Signal curiosity with your questions and body language:**Listen to the employee’s responses. Do not explain or rationalise – and do not attempt to interpret responses but ask again if you’re not sure you understand a response.

If the employee feels that you are being defensive, or that you are treating the dialogue as a matter of routine, they may react negatively, and the responses they provide will probably not be particularly informative.

1. **Don’t drag out the dialogue:**  
   If both you and the outgoing employee feel that you have covered all the important points, then it’s fine to wrap up the dialogue early. If this happens, explain why.
2. **Be prepared for the unexpected:**  
   During the dialogue, you may be made aware of problems that you did not know about. This may be a personal problem or a conflict that has contributed to the employee’s resignation. You don't necessarily have to ask the employee to elaborate on the situation during the dialogue; instead, it may be more appropriate to express your surprise that the employee has not told you about the situation until now. You can wait until after the dialogue to investigate the situation or you can decide not to take any further steps.

AFTER THE DIALOGUE

After the dialogue, consider what perspectives you want to take with you and how.   
For example, you may have found out about something that works particularly well, a work process that should be organised differently, physical working conditions that need improvement, or a division of labour between employees that does not make sense.  
Consider whether the dialogue has generated knowledge that should be shared with the employee’s replacement or your management team.   
During the dialogue, there may also be perspectives that make it relevant or necessary to consider work-environment related conditions that need to be addressed, and which require the involvement of HR and the occupational health and safety group.

**APPENDIX: EXIT DIALOGUE PREPARATION QUESTIONS FOR THE OUTGOING  
EMPLOYEE**

Aarhus University has a set of [standards for daily work](https://medarbejdere.au.dk/administration/hr/politikkerogstrategier), and now that you are leaving your position at the university, I would like to know more about how you have actually experienced your work here, and learn more about what aspects of your job you found positive, and what you think could have been different.  
  
Before the exit dialogue, I would like to ask you to reflect on these questions:

**Introductory questions**

* Why did you decide to resign? *(Leave out if employee has been dismissed.)*
* How long have you been thinking about changing jobs? *(Leave out if employee has been dismissed.)*
* Which parts of your job have you found particularly rewarding?
* And which parts of your job have you enjoyed less?
* Which skills and competencies have been important for you in order to do your job?

**Regarding staff policy norms**

* Do you believe that you have had freedom of speech in your employment?
* Have you encountered the openness and trust in your job that you needed?
* Do you feel that you have received important information at the appropriate time?
* How would you describe your relationships with your colleagues and collaborators?
* Would you say that our unit has done a good job of making colleagues with different backgrounds feel included?
* Has my leadership approach suited you?
* What else do you feel that you might have needed from me?
* Do you feel that your knowledge and skills have been brought into play and acknowledged sufficiently?
* Do you feel that there has been an appropriate balance between your work and your private life?
* How well do you think that we in our unit/our department/school have dealt with stress?
* Have you been met with the respect and courtesy you expect?
* Have you been given sufficient opportunities for personal development in your job?
* And what about opportunities for professional development in your job?
* What (if anything) has been missing?
* Do you feel that you have been free to conduct research in what you consider to be the right way? (academic staff only)
* Have you been given enough support in your academic career development? (academic staff only)

**Final questions**

* What could have made you stay in the job? *(Leave out if employee has been dismissed.)*
* What could make you return to a job at Aarhus University? *(Leave out if employee has been dismissed.)*
* Do you have any advice I could give to the person replacing you? *(Leave out if employee has been dismissed.)*
* Is there anything else important I should know?

**Questions that are particularly important for our specific unit/department/section**[If necessary, insert two or three questions that are not covered in the above]  
  
Unless otherwise agreed in advance, the meeting is confidential – and knowledge you share with me will only be used in connection with recruiting a replacement and developing the unit and my leadership.

However, if any knowledge emerges that I think may be particularly significant for my management team or the section/department/school/institute, I would like to ask permission to share it with my manager colleagues and/or HR.

If you have any questions before our dialogue, please contact me.