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KURSUS  
strategi  
UDVIKLING

# STAFF DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE



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# A GUIDE TO STAFF DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUES (SDD)

## Introduction – Why hold SDD dialogues at Aarhus University?

At Aarhus University, staff development dialogues (SDD) are an annual dialogue between managers and individual members of staff. Staff development dialogue is abbreviated in Danish to MUS (Medarbejderudviklingssamtalen), while the English abbreviation is SDD.

The SDD dialogue focuses on the staff member's daily working life, and the dialogue gives the manager and the staff member the opportunity for more in-depth dialogue and a reconciliation of mutual expectations as regards the staff member's goals, tasks, well-being, cooperative relations and professional and personal development. The SDD dialogue thus links the employee's professional and personal competence development with the development of the workplace.

The dialogue is intended to ensure that the development of the employee's competences is approached strategically and systematically. Strategically, by ensuring a direction for the competence development that matches the needs of the workplace while supporting the overall strategy of Aarhus University. Systematically, in that the employee and his or her manager complete an agreement form and follow up on what has been agreed in the course of the year. This is also described in the Agreement on Competence Development in the State Sector (Aftalen om Kompetenceudvikling på Statens arbejdspladser). At Aarhus University, there is – as in the rest of the state sector – an obligation that the manager and the staff member hold an SDD dialogue once a year.

Moreover, the SDD dialogue must, according to Aarhus University's personnel policy, support competence development that helps guarantee the employee good job prospects in the labour market both at and outside the university. In addition, the personnel policy standards as regards professional staff management, professional and personal competence development, an appreciative approach to management and the balancing of family and working life are adhered to through the holding of SDD dialogues.

The manager and the staff member have a shared responsibility for ensuring that the dialogues have an effect. The manager must ensure that the dialogues are held and that it is possible for the necessary competence development to take place. For their part, the employees must work to fulfil their development goals and complete the planned development activities.

In this way, SDD is a mutual development dialogue with a forward-looking focus. SDD does not replace the ongoing daily dialogue and feedback between managers and staff members. Nor is SDD an occasion to focus exclusively on problems at which the manager or the staff member focuses on accumulated criticisms. Such issues must be handled in separate dialogues, if necessary with the involvement of the union representative and AU HR.

Finally, it is important to remember that SDD is not a pay negotiation. For this reason, the SDD dialogues at Aarhus University are held in the autumn so they are quite distinct from and take place at a different time to the pay negotiations which are held in the spring.

## Dialogue guides for manager and staff member

The SDD concept comprises four dialogue guides: The dialogue guide for technical-administrative staff, the dialogue guide for academic staff, the dialogue guide for managers and, finally, the dialogue guide for academic staff with managerial responsibility.

For every single member of staff, the manager must decide which dialogue guide to use and inform the employee well in advance. The dialogue guide is consultative, i.e. additional questions may be asked, questions may be omitted, and the order of the questions may be changed. However, it should be noted that the concept is based on extensive experience with what works in staff development dialogues at Danish workplaces. In addition, the dialogue guide ensures compliance with the fundamental SDD principles in relation to discussing the past working year, well-being and job satisfaction as well as future tasks and competence development. Basically, the manager must ensure that the dialogue addresses the employee's past, present and future in the workplace.

In the dialogue guide, the designation 'unit' covers the local group to which the employee belongs, where the manager invites the employees for SDD dialogues – regardless of whether they belong to a research group, administrative unit, workshop, laboratory or other unit charged with a common task.

It is the management's responsibility to define which managers hold SDD dialogues with which members of staff. SDD dialogues can be conducted whether or not the manager conducting the SDD dialogue is authorised to make decisions/promises

of a financial nature. As a manager, it may be necessary to examine the unit's overall competence development needs or seek financial assurances before making any definite promises to individual employees. Here, it is simply important to state in the agreement form when a definite promise can be made, and how to follow up on it.

The SDD materials are also found in Danish.

### **SDD and the liaison committees**

It is recommended that SDD be discussed by the local liaison committee well in advance of the annual SDD dialogues. The aim is to discuss SDD as a competence development initiative and to ensure that it is sufficiently clear who is responsible for the SDD dialogues for which groups of employees in the year in question.

The liaison committees play a central role in determining the guidelines for holding the SDD dialogues and for evaluating how the workplace uses the SDD concept. Therefore, AU's SDD concept is approved by HSU and revised each year based, among other things, on the liaison committee evaluations.

### **Preparing for SDD – as a manager**

It is recommended that the SDD process starts with the manager informing his or her members of staff about the forthcoming SDD dialogues. The information must ensure that the staff are aware of the purpose, framework and schedule for the SDD process, including Aarhus University's and the unit's respective goals, strategies and tasks etc. This creates a common frame of reference for managers and employees in advance of the individual dialogues. To provide inspiration for the coming SDD process, the manager can briefly describe the competence development work which has taken place in the unit since the last round of SDD dialogues. This information can be given at a scheduled section meeting, a joint meeting or by email.

If possible, it may be a good idea also for the manager and employees to discuss which competence-related challenges the unit faces, and how these can be addressed.

In preparing for SDD, it is recommended that the manager read 'Checklist for the manager – the three phases of the SDD process'. The manager then prepares for the individual dialogue using the dialogue guide in AUHRA (Aarhus University's staff administrative system) to make his or her own notes to take to the dialogue. The IT guide for managers contains more information on using AUHRA in connection with SDD.

As a manager, it is preferable if you have held your SDD dialogue with your own manager before holding SDD dialogues with the staff in the unit. This is a way of ensuring strategic alignment of the employee development efforts with Aarhus University's objectives. By having attended a staff development

dialogue with your own manager, you are likely to have a clearer picture of his or her expectations and the strategic objectives for the unit in the coming year.

### **Preparing for SDD – as an employee**

Before the dialogue, the employee should complete the necessary preparations using the dialogue guide in AUHRA to make his or her own notes to take to the dialogue. The IT guide for employees contains information on using AUHRA in connection with SDD. It is the employee's job to raise topics which are important to discuss in relation to his or her work. The employee may also want to consider:

- What is particularly important to discuss with my manager?
- What are my ambitions and development wishes?
- How do my present competences and wishes in relation to my future working life harmonise with the objectives and development of my workplace?
- What is my feedback to my manager?

Clarifying the above helps to ensure that you get to talk about what is most important during the dialogue.

### **Feedback to the manager and employee during SDD dialogue**

As part of the SDD process, the intention is that the manager and the employee give each other feedback on, for example, work performance and collaboration during the past year. To ensure that the feedback can be used constructively, it is a good idea to use this simple feedback model:

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#### **CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**

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##### **1. Describe facts**

- Start with a specific example, for example a situation or a word-for-word quotation which prompts feedback. Repeat facts without trying to interpret them.
- 

##### **2. Describe your experience**

- Your experience is about you, so therefore use expressions such as "I feel ..." and "I am ...".
  - For example impressed, confused, unsure, sceptical, happy, relieved, inspired, unhappy, proud or angry.
  - Judgemental expressions are not suitable for giving feedback, for example "You are ...", "You will be ...".
- 

##### **3. Say what you want**

- Say what you want the other person to do.
  - Say what you want and what you want in future rather than what you don't want.
-

**Holding SDD – the dialogue**

To ensure that an SDD dialogue is characterised by quality, meaning and effect, both the staff member and manager must do their utmost to have a forward-looking and developing dialogue.

A developing dialogue requires that both the manager and employee listen to each other and seek to understand what the other person is saying by asking elaborating questions rather than by arguing.

If it becomes apparent during the dialogue that there is a pressing need for a different type of dialogue (e.g. discussion of problems, coaching etc.), it is agreed when this can take place, after which the SDD dialogue continues according to the dialogue guide.

It is recommended that approx. 1½ hours be allocated for an SDD dialogue.

**The agreement form**

The SDD dialogue always ends with the manager and employee agreeing what should be entered in the agreement form for the coming year. The more specific the agreement form, the easier it is to relate to and follow up on. It is important to agree who is responsible for implementing the individual items listed in the form. Is it the manager or employee who is responsible for initiating the activity in question? The agreement form is entered in AUHRA by the employee after the dialogue. If it is possible to do this while concluding the dialogue, by all means do it together. However, based on experience, it is unlikely there will be time. Once the agreement form has been entered by the employee, the manager approves it via AUHRA.

The form is confidential between the manager and the employee, and these are the only two people who can access it. If a new unit manager is appointed, the employee decides for him/herself whether to submit previous agreement forms in paper format to the new manager if it is deemed beneficial for their future collaboration.

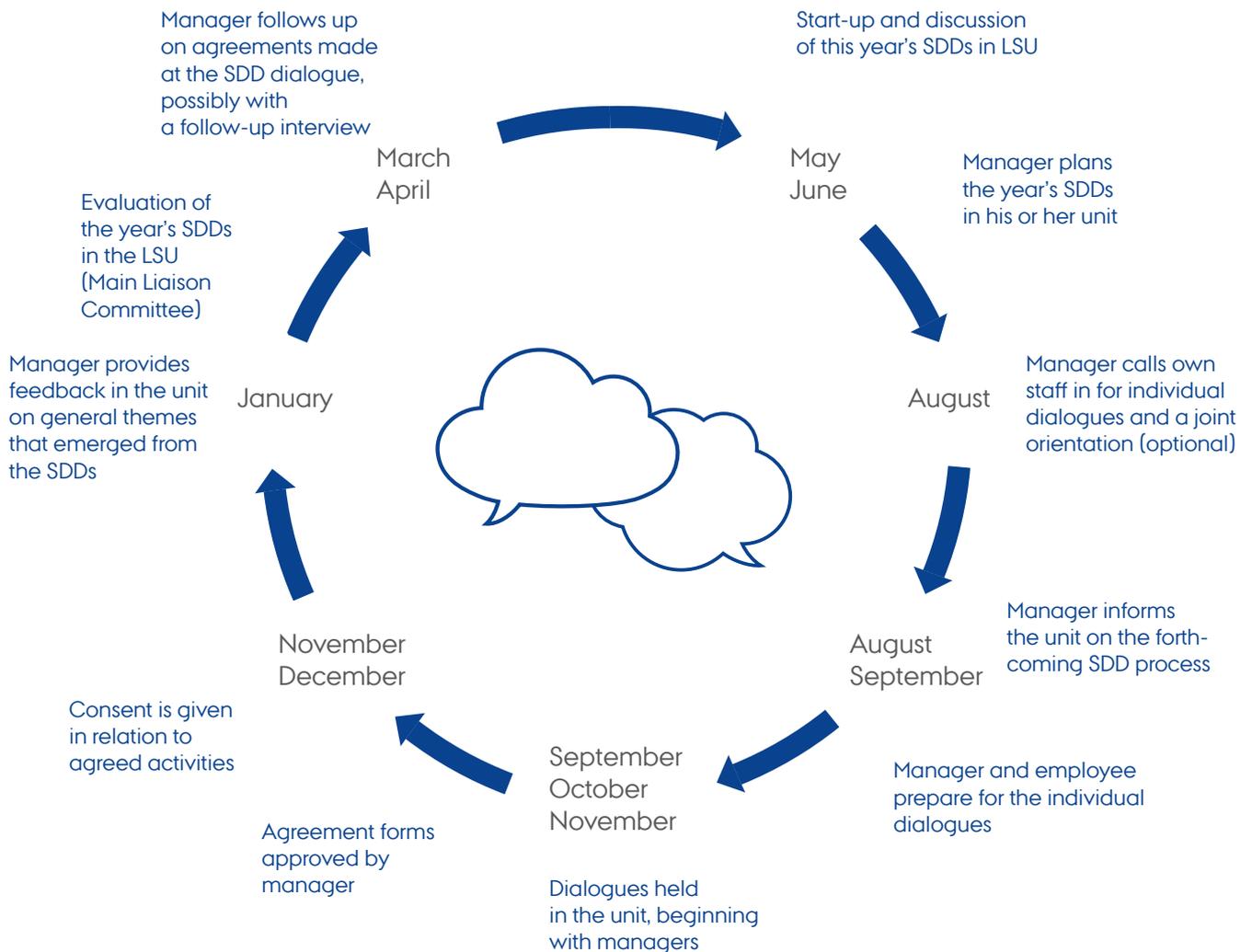
**Follow-up on SDD**

After holding all the SDD dialogues in a unit, it is advisable that the manager provides general feedback to the staff at a follow-up meeting or as an item on the agenda of a meeting which is already scheduled. This is an opportunity for the manager to report back from a general organisational and developmental perspective and outline which particular points the dialogues have raised and how follow-up will be handled in the unit. For reasons of confidentiality, it is important that no reference is made to specific content from the individual dialogues.

The manager also plays an important role in relation to follow-up on whether the individual development activities are on the right track and whether the employee is benefiting as intended. If some of the activities are not going as expected, the manager and the employee should discuss why, and whether new initiatives are needed. Experience shows that individual follow-up is vital for both the manager and the employee to feel that the SDD process is effective.

# LOCAL ANNUAL SDD SCHEDULE

The local annual SDD schedule describes the various phases of SDD over the course of a year, the initiatives which are launched and when, and who does what. The annual schedule is specifically intended for managers and liaison committees.



**MAY - JUNE****Start-up of the unit's planning****Discussion in LSU**

It is recommended that the SDD process is kicked off each year by including it on the agenda at an LSU meeting. Workplace competence development through SDD is a special focus area for the liaison committees, cf. the Cooperation Agreement.

LSU decides whether there are special themes, possibly stemming from the most recent WPA, the unit's strategy etc., which the unit wants to be discussed at the autumn's SDD, in addition to those which are already laid down in AU's SDD concept.

**Manager plans SDD**

The manager decides on a timetable for holding SDD dialogues and a date for a joint meeting on SDD in the unit.

**JUNE - AUGUST****Managers summon employees to SDD dialogues**

The managers invite their employees to participate in an SDD dialogue (See checklist for managers). Relevant materials, e.g. strategy etc. are enclosed. The actual preparation material (dialogue guide etc. ) must be sent to the employee via AUHRA (see the IT guide).

**AUGUST - SEPTEMBER****Joint meetings in the units**

The managers inform their employees about the coming SDD dialogues at a joint meeting or at a pre-scheduled departmental meeting, at which everyone discusses competence development challenges and needs etc. in the unit. The aim is to clarify the SDD framework – e.g. strategic objectives and competence development needs. If necessary, it must also be announced who will be holding the SDD dialogues and with whom.

**SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER****Dialogues held and agreement forms approved**

Managers and employees prepare for the dialogues using the dialogue guide in AUHRA, and the dialogues are held. The dialogue is confidential. The dialogue ends with the manager and employee agreeing on what to enter in the AUHRA agreement form. If they do not complete and approve this together as the last part of the dialogue, it is the employee's responsibility to enter the agreements in AUHRA and send it to the manager for approval.

**NOVEMBER - DECEMBER****Consent in relation to activities**

Once the year's SDD dialogues have been held, the manager assesses the unit's overall development needs. Once he/she has clarified the unit's development needs (and if the manager does not have budgetary responsibility: once budgetary approval has been obtained), consent is given to the individual employees who can then start on the various activities. The deadline is mid-December for applying for co-financing from the Competence Fund, under AU HR.

**NOVEMBER - DECEMBER****Follow-up in the units**

The manager provides general feedback on the themes for the year's SDD dialogues and the agreed competence development. Did the dialogues, for example, identify recurring themes of general relevance to the unit?

**JANUARY****Evaluation of the year's SDD process**

Evaluation of the year's SDD process and competence development is put on the agenda in LSU, which sends any wishes regarding changes to the SDD concept to Competence Development, AU HR.

**SPRING****Follow-up**

A follow-up dialogue may be held in the spring to review the agreements made at the SDD dialogue. Have both parties adhered to the agreements?

# CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS

## THREE PHASES OF THE SDD PROCESS

A checklist with recommendations to help managers prepare, hold and follow up on SDD dialogues.

### Phase 1: Prior to SDD dialogues

Preparing SDD dialogues in the unit:

- Read the "Guide to SDD" and "Local annual SDD schedule".
- Determine the unit's goals, future plans, financial leeway for competence development as well as competence development needs for the coming year – ideally in consultation with your own manager in connection with your own SDD.
- Remember to check up on and to inform your employees of any special themes which the local liaison committee (LSU) has decided must be discussed at the year's SDD in addition to the three main themes in AU's SDD concept.
- Make a timetable for holding the SDD dialogues which covers: Date for a joint meeting in the unit, the period and dates for individual dialogues as well as the date of the follow-up meeting in the unit.
- Inform the employees at a joint meeting, departmental meeting or by email. Here, information can be provided on when SDD will take place, who will be holding the SDD dialogues and with whom, how long the dialogues last, and which documents (e.g. strategy etc. for your unit) employees can benefit from studying. Finally, it is a good idea to talk about the unit's competence development needs for the coming year.
- Invite employees to SDD via AUHRA and Outlook, and select the appropriate dialogue guide for each individual member of staff (Read more in the IT guide).

Preparing for the dialogue:

- Prepare a status on agreements and follow-up since the last SDD dialogue.
- It is a good idea if you refer to the questions in the dialogue guide.
- Prepare acknowledging and constructive feedback on the employee's assignments and development.

### Phase 2: The dialogue

- Plan the dialogue to allow time for addressing all the main themes and special focus areas.
- It is recommended that you allow about 1½ hours for the actual dialogue.
- Allocate sufficient time to agree on what to write afterwards in the agreement form – who will be responsible for what, and when to follow up.

### Phase 3: Following up on the SDD dialogue

- Coordinate any competence development needs locally before making any final commitments to the employees.
- Hold a follow-up meeting (possibly as part of a departmental meeting) at which significant themes and general issues from the dialogues are discussed, including how follow-up will be handled in the unit. For reasons of confidentiality, it is important that no reference is made to specific content from the individual dialogues.
- To follow up on the individual dialogues, it is recommended that follow-up dialogues are held after approx. six months.

# GUIDELINES FOR AU EMPLOYEES COVERED BY SDD

All employees at AU who work more than 15 hours a week and who have been employed for more than six months are covered by the annual staff development dialogues (SDD).

Managers and employees are mutually obliged to hold the dialogue cf. the Competence Agreement (Circular on the Agreement on Competence Development of 8 June 2011 (Cirkulære om aftale om kompetenceudvikling af 8. juni 2011)). The competence agreement also states that strategic development goals must be formulated and followed up on.

For employees in salary grade 37 as well as employees in salary grades 36 and 35 who are assigned formal personnel responsibilities, the dialogue is voluntary, as these persons are not covered by the Competence Agreement. HSU recommends, however, that these dialogues are conducted, as it will support both the personal and organisational well-being and competence development (see the result of the psychological WPA).

It is recommended that some staff groups are, for practical and resource-related reasons, exempted from SDD. However, managers may, for special, local reasons, choose to involve employees from these groups in the annual SDD. The groups exempted include employees with less than 15 hours of work a week and less than six months of employment, student assistants, newly appointed members of staff as well as employees who will be stepping down within the foreseeable future. There are other types of status dialogues which are more relevant for these staff groups. For newly appointed employees in particular, it is recommended that they have a three-month interview before an SDD dialogue becomes relevant. For employees who are resigning, it is more relevant for them to have a resignation dialogue.

For salaried PhDs on part B, where AU is their main workplace, SDD dialogues are carried out on an equal footing with other employees.

# SDD DIALOGUE GUIDE

## ACADEMIC STAFF

### INTRODUCTION

A good staff development dialogue (SDD) starts with being well-prepared. Before the dialogue, it is recommended that you read the 'Guide to SDD'. The dialogue guide is consultative, and the questions are intended as a source of inspiration, i.e. they do not necessarily all have to be answered, and other questions may certainly be asked, by both the manager and the employee. The idea is that it is a fluid dialogue with both the manager and employee asking the questions which come to them naturally. However, the dialogue should, as a minimum, address the three main themes around which the dialogue is structured.

The three main themes are:

1. What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future
2. Well-being and job satisfaction
3. Future tasks and competence development

Each main theme comprises as many as five related questions. In addition, the dialogue starts with a reconciliation of expectations and desired outcome between manager and staff member and ends with a summary of the agreements made in an agreement form.

In this way, SDD is a mutual development dialogue with a forward-looking focus. SDD does not replace the ongoing daily dialogue and feedback between managers and staff members. Nor is SDD an occasion to focus exclusively on problems at which the manager or the staff member focuses on accumulated criticisms. Such issues must be handled in separate dialogues, if necessary with the involvement of the union representative and AU HR.

### INTRODUCING SDD

#### Expectations of the dialogue

The dialogue starts with the manager and staff member presenting and agreeing on which themes to prioritise. This increases the likelihood of a satisfactory outcome. The following procedure is recommended:

- a. The manager outlines the dialogue framework, i.e. its duration, content and any priorities or special focus areas as well as the expected outcome of the dialogue.
- b. The employee adds his/her expectations with respect to outcome and any special topics he/she would like to discuss.
- c. Together, the topics are prioritised and time allocated to the individual themes.

### MAIN THEME 1

#### What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future

*A dialogue about the work experiences and challenges over the past year can provide a shared understanding of what works and what may need to be done differently in the year ahead. Here, the intention is also for the manager and employee to give each other feedback on how successful they have been – in performing their tasks and in undertaking their managerial functions. See the 'Guide to SDD' for guidance on how to give constructive feedback.*

- a. Agreements resulting from last year's SDD dialogue – how have they been followed up on, what has the effect been?
- b. Which professional and collaborative tasks and challenges have you undertaken and tackled in the past year?
- c. How have you and your job developed as a result of these challenges?
- d. The manager's feedback to the employee on the performance of tasks and development points  
*Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.*
- e. The employee's feedback to the manager on the manager's leadership and development points  
*Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.*

**MAIN THEME 2****Well-being and job satisfaction**

*Well-being is a central theme in any SDD dialogue and is important for employees to be able to perform their work satisfactorily, develop and achieve their goals. It can be a good idea to base the dialogue on specific work situations to get a shared idea of how to enhance well-being. If there are any special personal or other factors which have a bearing on the work which the employee wants to discuss, it is a good idea to mention it here.*

- a. What motivates and inspires you at work?
- b. To what extent are you thriving with your current tasks?  
Is there anything you would like more/less of?
- c. How is your collaboration with your colleagues and other close partners?
- d. In terms of my management, what would you like more/less of to improve your sense of well-being?
- e. How is your collaboration with other units at Aarhus University? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?

**MAIN THEME 3****Future tasks and competence development**

*In particular, focus on research, publications, teaching activities, supervision, applications and public-sector consultancy etc. The questions are a selection which could be relevant to ask, depending on the employee's tasks. The manager and the employee are encouraged to choose the most important questions at the dialogue.*

- a. What are your research goals for the coming year?
- b. What are your plans as regards external funding and publications in the coming year?
- c. What are your goals for your teaching, supervisory and other activities?
- d. What are your plans and wishes with regard to maintaining and developing your academic level over the next year (courses, conferences, project work etc.)?
- e. Which career and development options do you find interesting, both internally and externally?

**CONCLUSION AND AGREEMENT**

At the end of the dialogue, it is necessary to agree on what to write in the agreement form, who will follow up on it and when. The member of staff then completes the agreement form in AUHRA, after which his or her manager approves the form (see IT guide).

# SDD DIALOGUE GUIDE

## ACADEMIC STAFF WITH MANAGERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### INTRODUCTION

A good staff development dialogue (SDD) starts with being well-prepared. Before the dialogue, both the manager and employee should read the 'Guide to SDD'. The dialogue guide is consultative, and the questions are intended as a source of inspiration, i.e. they do not necessarily all have to be answered, and other questions may certainly be asked, by both the manager and the employee. The idea is that it is a fluid dialogue with both the manager and employee asking the questions which come to them naturally. However, the dialogue should, as a minimum, address the three main themes around which the dialogue is structured.

The three main themes are:

4. What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future
5. Well-being and job satisfaction
6. Future tasks and competence development

In addition, the dialogue starts with a reconciliation of expectations and outcome between manager and staff member and ends with a summary of the agreements made in an agreement form.

In this way, SDD is a mutual development dialogue with a forward-looking focus. SDD does not replace the ongoing daily dialogue and feedback between managers and staff members. Nor is SDD an occasion to focus exclusively on problems at which the manager or the staff member focuses on accumulated criticisms. Such issues must be handled in separate dialogues, if necessary with the involvement of the union representative and AU HR.

### INTRODUCING SDD

#### Expectations of the dialogue

*The dialogue starts with the manager and staff member presenting and agreeing on which themes to prioritise. This increases the likelihood of a satisfactory outcome. The following procedure is recommended:*

- d. The manager outlines the dialogue framework, i.e. its duration, content and any priorities or special focus areas as well as the expected outcome of the dialogue.
- e. The employee adds his/her expectations with respect to outcome and any special topics he/she would like to discuss.
- f. Together, the topics are prioritised and time allocated to the individual themes.

### MAIN THEME 1

#### What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future

*A dialogue about the work experiences and challenges over the past year can provide a shared understanding of what works and what may need to be done differently in the year ahead. Here, the intention is also for the manager and employee to give each other feedback on how successful they have been – in performing their tasks and in undertaking their managerial functions. See the 'Guide to SDD' for guidance on how to give constructive feedback.*

- f. Agreements resulting from last year's SDD dialogue – how have they been followed up on, what has the effect been?
- g. Which managerial challenges have you encountered in the past year, and which specific tasks have challenged you most?
- h. How have you and your job developed as a result of these challenges?
- i. How successful have you been in combining your managerial functions with continuing to pursue your own research/education etc.?
- j. The manager's feedback to the member of staff on his or her leadership, including his or her job performance. Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.
- k. The employee's feedback to the manager on the manager's leadership and development points  
*Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.*

**MAIN THEME 2****Well-being and job satisfaction**

*Well-being is a central theme in any SDD dialogue and is important for employees to be able to perform their work satisfactorily, develop and achieve their goals. It can be a good idea to base the dialogue on specific work situations to get a shared idea of how to enhance well-being. If there are any special personal or other factors which have a bearing on the work which the employee wants to discuss, it is a good idea to mention it here.*

- f. What motivates and inspires you at work?
- g. To what extent are you thriving with your management responsibilities and your current tasks? Is there anything you would like more/less of?
- h. How is your collaboration with your colleagues and other close partners?
- i. In terms of my management, what would you like more/less of to improve your sense of well-being?
- j. How is your collaboration with other units at Aarhus University? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?

**MAIN THEME 3****Future tasks and competence development**

*When interviewing academic staff members with management responsibility, it is important that the dialogue covers the classic VIP disciplines and that it focuses on the staff member's specific development as a manager.*

- f. As a manager, what would you like to succeed at in the coming year?
- g. What are your research goals for the coming year?
- h. What are your plans as regards external funding and publications in the coming year?
- i. What are your goals for your teaching, supervisory and other activities?
- j. What are your plans and wishes with regard to maintaining and developing your academic level over the next year (courses, conferences, project work etc.)?
- k. Which competencies and frameworks are important for you as a manager to be able to handle future challenges and success criteria?
- l. What are your expectations and wishes with regard to your career and other development perspectives for the next 3-5 years?

**CONCLUSION AND AGREEMENT**

At the end of the dialogue, it is necessary to agree on what to write in the agreement form, who will follow up on it and when. The member of staff then completes the agreement form in AUHRA, after which his or her manager approves the form (see IT guide).

# SDD DIALOGUE GUIDE MANAGERS

## INTRODUCTION

A good staff development dialogue (SDD) starts with being well-prepared. Before the dialogue, it is recommended that you read the 'Guide to SDD'. The dialogue guide is consultative, and the questions are intended as a source of inspiration, i.e. they do not necessarily all have to be answered, and other questions may certainly be asked, by both the manager and the employee. The idea is that it is a fluid dialogue with both the manager and employee asking the questions which come to them naturally. However, the dialogue should, as a minimum, address the three main themes around which the dialogue is structured.

The three main themes are:

7. What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future
8. Well-being and job satisfaction
9. Future tasks and competence development

Each main theme comprises as many as five related questions. In addition, the dialogue starts with a reconciliation of expectations and desired outcome between manager and staff member and ends with a summary of the agreements made in an agreement form.

In this way, SDD is a mutual development dialogue with a forward-looking focus. SDD does not replace the ongoing daily dialogue and feedback between managers and staff members. Nor is SDD an occasion to focus exclusively on problems at which the manager or the staff member focuses on accumulated criticisms. Such issues must be handled in separate dialogues, if necessary with the involvement of the union representative and AU HR.

## INTRODUCING SDD

### Expectations of the dialogue

*The dialogue starts with the manager and staff member presenting and agreeing on which themes to prioritise. This increases the likelihood of a satisfactory outcome.*

The following procedure is recommended:

- g. The manager outlines the dialogue framework, i.e. its duration, content and any priorities or special focus areas as well as the expected outcome of the dialogue.
- h. The employee adds his/her expectations with respect to outcome and any special topics he/she would like to discuss.
- i. Together, the topics are prioritised and time allocated to the individual themes..

## MAIN THEME 1

### What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future

*A dialogue about the work experiences and challenges over the past year can provide a shared understanding of what works and what may need to be done differently in the year ahead. Here, the intention is also for the manager and employee to give each other feedback on how successful they have been – in performing their tasks and in undertaking their managerial functions. See the 'Guide to SDD' for guidance on how to give constructive feedback.*

- l. Agreements resulting from last year's SDD dialogue – how have they been followed up on, what has the effect been?
- m. Which managerial challenges have you encountered in the past year, and which specific tasks have challenged you most?
- n. How have you and your job developed as a result of these challenges?
- o. The manager's feedback to the member of staff on his or her leadership, including his or her job performance. Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.
- p. employee's feedback to the manager on the manager's leadership and development points  
*Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.*

**MAIN THEME 2****Well-being and job satisfaction**

*Well-being is a central theme in any SDD dialogue and is important for employees to be able to perform their work satisfactorily, develop and achieve their goals. It can be a good idea to base the dialogue on specific work situations to get a shared idea of how to enhance well-being. If there are any special personal or other factors which have a bearing on the work which the employee wants to discuss, it is a good idea to mention it here.*

- k. What motivates and inspires you at work?
- l. To what extent are you thriving with your management responsibilities and your current tasks? Is there anything you would like more/less of?
- m. How is your collaboration with your colleagues and other close partners?
- n. In terms of my management, what would you like more/less of to improve your sense of well-being?
- o. How is your collaboration with other units at Aarhus University? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?

**MAIN THEME 3****Future tasks and competence development**

*Management development is a special strategic focus area at AU. Therefore it is important that the dialogue focuses on the manager's specific development.*

- a. What would you like to succeed at in the coming year?
- b. Which competences and conditions are important for you to be able to handle future challenges and success criteria?
- c. What are your expectations and wishes with regard to your career and other development perspectives for the next 3-5 years?

**CONCLUSION AND AGREEMENT**

At the end of the dialogue, it is necessary to agree on what to write in the agreement form, who will follow up on it and when. The member of staff then completes the agreement form in AUHRA, after which his or her manager approves the form (see IT guide).

# SDD DIALOGUE GUIDE

## TECHNICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

### INTRODUCTION

A good staff development dialogue (SDD) starts with being well-prepared. Before the dialogue, it is recommended that you read the 'Guide to SDD'. The dialogue guide is consultative, and the questions are intended as a source of inspiration, i.e. they do not necessarily all have to be answered, and other questions may certainly be asked, by both the manager and the employee. The idea is that it is a fluid dialogue with both the manager and employee asking the questions which come to them naturally. However, the dialogue should, as a minimum, address the three main themes around which the dialogue is structured. The three main themes are:

10. What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future
11. Well-being and job satisfaction
12. Future tasks and competence development

Each main theme comprises as many as five related questions. In addition, the dialogue starts with a reconciliation of expectations and desired outcome between manager and staff member and ends with a summary of the agreements made in an agreement form.

In this way, SDD is a mutual development dialogue with a forward-looking focus. SDD does not replace the ongoing daily dialogue and feedback between managers and staff members. Nor is SDD an occasion to focus exclusively on problems at which the manager or the staff member focuses on accumulated criticisms. Such issues must be handled in separate dialogues, if necessary with the involvement of the union representative and AU HR.

### INTRODUCING SDD

#### Expectations of the dialogue

*The dialogue starts with the manager and staff member presenting and agreeing on which themes to prioritise. This increases the likelihood of a satisfactory outcome. The following procedure is recommended:*

- j. The manager outlines the dialogue framework, i.e. its duration, content and any priorities or special focus areas as well as the expected outcome of the dialogue.
- k. The employee adds his/her expectations with respect to outcome and any special topics he/she would like to discuss.
- l. Together, the topics are prioritised and time allocated to the individual themes.

### MAIN THEME 1

#### What has happened since the last SDD? – A good starting point for talking about the future

*A dialogue about the work experiences and challenges over the past year can provide a shared understanding of what works and what may need to be done differently in the year ahead. Here, the intention is also for the manager and employee to give each other feedback on how successful they have been – in performing their tasks and in undertaking their managerial functions. See the 'Guide to SDD' for guidance on how to give constructive feedback.*

- q. Agreements resulting from last year's SDD dialogue – how have they been followed up on, what has the effect been?
- r. Which professional and collaborative tasks and challenges have you undertaken and tackled in the past year?
- s. How have you and your job developed as a result of these challenges?
- t. The manager's feedback to the employee on the performance of tasks and development points  
*Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.*
- u. The employee's feedback to the manager on the manager's leadership and development points  
*Can be angled to focus on what you want more/less of.*

**MAIN THEME 2****Well-being and job satisfaction**

*Well-being is a central theme in any SDD dialogue and is important for employees to be able to perform their work satisfactorily, develop and achieve their goals. It can be a good idea to base the dialogue on specific work situations to get a shared idea of how to enhance well-being. If there are any special personal or other factors which have a bearing on the work which the employee wants to discuss, it is a good idea to mention it here.*

- p. What motivates and inspires you at work?
- q. To what extent are you thriving with your current tasks? Is there anything you would like more/less of?
- r. How is your collaboration with your colleagues and other close partners?
- s. In terms of my management, what would you like more/less of to improve your sense of well-being?
- t. How is your collaboration with other units at Aarhus University? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?

**MAIN THEME 3****Future tasks and competence development**

*An important aspect of SDD is that together you set specific goals for the employee's competence development for the coming year based on the unit's most important tasks. The goals must be inspiring and realistic for the staff member. It is also necessary to agree on how these competences can actually be achieved in practice.*

- a. Which goals and tasks are important for you and the unit in the coming year?
- b. What would you like to succeed in doing?
- c. Which competences (professional, personal/social) are particularly important in relation to your tasks and the interaction with your colleagues to help achieve these goals?
- d. Which particular competences do you need to focus on developing?
- e. What ideas and wishes do you have in relation to your career and other development perspectives over the next 3-5 years?

**CONCLUSION AND AGREEMENT**

At the end of the dialogue, it is necessary to agree on what to write in the agreement form, who will follow up on it and when. The member of staff then completes

# SDD AGREEMENT FORM

**SDD Agreement form**

The agreement form should be completed on the basis of the SDD agreements which have been made. During or immediately after the dialogue, the employee should write down any agreements reached in the form.

**Main themes of the dialogue**

Here, the main themes of the dialogue can be outlined. It is not necessary to produce a detailed record of the dialogue.

	<b>A. Agreement</b> Describe the agreement. This might take the form of professional/ academic and personal development goals or other agreements	<b>B. Activities</b> Describe the activities which the agreement involves in general terms	<b>C. Responsible</b> Manager or employee	<b>D. When</b> When to follow up first time?
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

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