**PROTOCOL for the**

**SUPPORT, DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW**

**OF Heads of Departments**

1. **Background**

At the Head of Department’s Imbizo held on 20 and 21 July 2007, a HoDs’ Task Team was established comprising representatives of all faculties. This task team explored a range of issues related to being a Head of Department (HoD). The recommendations served before Senate and Council in 2009 and were approved. One of the agreements was a review of the HoD. This protocol seeks to operationalize this agreement, and extend it to include the support and development of HoDs.

1. **Definitions**

*Balanced feedback* This feedback is constructive, establishing that which is positive as regards the individual’s execution of the roles and responsibilities of HoD well as provide feedback on areas of concern and development.

*Competencies* This encompasses knowledge, skills or attributes needed to successfully execute particular responsibilities. Attributes are characteristics or qualities e.g. caring, or service orientated or proactive.

*New HoD* This is a HoD that is newly appointed for the first time and/or is appointed for a new term after a break. This is in contrast to a HoD who is serving a second or more term.

*Support Divisions* These relate to Divisions such as Communication and Marketing, Development and Alumni Relations, Finance, Infrastructure and Operations, Human Resources (HR) etc that provide a service to the academic departments.

*Term of office* This is usually a three year period, typically from July to June.

1. **Understanding the role of the Head of Department**

The HoD has a range of roles and responsibilities. These are:

* Academic leader: While academic leadership may be a shared responsibility amongst the senior staff in the department, the HoD is responsible for ensuring that appropriate academic planning and quality assurance takes place and that excellence in teaching, research and community engagement are pursued by all staff in the department. Part of the academic leader role is to partner with CHERTL, the Research Office and Community Engagement Office in the development and implementation of teaching, research and CE related strategies;
* People Manager: The culture of the department is key to how staff are treated within the department and how people related processes such as induction, probation, development, personal promotion etc are executed by the HoD. These are not simply administrative processes but processes put in place to maximise the success of staff within the department and institution. Part of the people manager role is to partner with HR in the development and implementation of effective and efficient people related processes;
* Advocate: The Head represents the department, seeking to further its interests and reputation by promoting the department and its staff within the institution and conveying the right impression of the department and staff;
* Change Agent: The HoD needs to be a change agent within the University representing the needs of the department and a change agent within the department, representing the needs of the institution. The HoD needs to be able to facilitate the necessary change within the department in line with strategic developments within the institution;
* Resourcer: The HoD has a responsibility to secure appropriate resources internally (typically for the running of the department) and externally (typically for student bursaries and/or scholarships; and/or research related activities);
* Administrator: This role underpins many of the roles above as good governance requires the keeping of accurate records whether these relate to students, staff and/or finances.

For more detail on these roles, the HoD is referred to the web-based HoD Guide which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the HoD.

It is appreciated that the role of HoD is becoming more complex in an environment of increasing governance demands (external and internal); threats of managerialism; changing staff needs and demands; increasing student diversity with all the challenges and opportunities that this presents; and heightened scarcity of resources, to name a few.

Within this context, the HoD is appointed for three years. In some instances, the HoD may be appointed for second or subsequent terms. The nature of this appointment requires an individual who can develop a sustainable future for the department in line with Faculty and University imperatives, a future that is independent of him or her being HoD, a future that can be developed with the co-operation and commitment of peers.

Given these challenges, it is important that the HoD is supported in this role.

1. **Supporting the Head of Department**

The Head of Department is supported in a number of ways:

* 1. The Dean provides guidance and support to the HoD. In practice, this takes the following forms:
* *Soon after appointment*, a meeting is held between the HoD and Dean to clarify expectations of being HoD. This meeting should include a frank discussion about the state of the department prior to the HoD starting the term of office and the challenges, if any, this presents to the HoD;
* *After a few months of appointment*, the HoD and Dean discuss the HoDs goals and priorities for the department and the strategies that will be used to achieve them. The Dean will guide the HoD in this regard, assisting in the alignment of department strategies with Faculty and University imperatives;
* *After first year of appointment*, a formative assessment of HoD will take place to identify successes, strengths as well as any areas of development. This will also include an exploration of the impact of the HoD role on the research and teaching of the individual and support that may be needed;
* *Ad hoc meetings* at the request of the HoD when the HoD is seeking guidance or advice;
* *Ad hoc meetings* at the request of the Dean if there are concerns or opportunities that the Dean wishes to address with the HoD.
  1. A HoD mentor is identified at the request of the new HoD. This is an academic who is either serving as HoD or who has served at least one term as HOD, who has volunteered to be available to the new HoD to assist;
  2. Web-based resources focusing on key relevant issues are available to the HoD;
  3. The Human Resources Division offers further individual assistance in the following ways:
* The new HoD is invited to have a strategic discussion with the Dean of the Faculty and the Director: HR to explore issues related to the department and to explore ways that HR can assist the HoD;
* Strategic meetings are held at least every two years with the HoD and the Dean to discuss staffing issues and identify challenges;
* Ad hoc meetings are held as and when required e.g. when there is a vacancy in the department, when the department is thinking of applying for additional resources.

1. **Development of the HoD**

While a number of the resources listed in section 4 above are also development in nature, further development and training offered includes:

* 1. Induction for new HoDs, organised by the HR Division;
  2. Management development training for new or prospective HoDs, organised by the HR Division;
  3. Following a review and identification of areas of development, focused development for the individual.

1. **Reviews of the HoD**

6.1 For the new HoD

Two reviews take place during the term of office of the new HoD. The first review takes place at the end of the first year of appointment and is formative in nature, seeking to provide feedback to the HoD on strengths, successes and/or areas of development. The Dean[[1]](#footnote-1) will also explore with the HoD what support is needed to assist with the responsibilities, any difficulties experienced as well as the service provided by support divisions.

The second review will take place about 6 months before the end of the term of office. This review will be a summative assessment with the purpose of:

* determining the suitability of the HoD to continue as HoD (assuming that the individual is prepared to be considered for a second term and this is also suggested by member/s of the department)
* making a recommendation related to academic HoD leave (see the protocol governing the allocation of this leave)
* recommending the HoD for a merit award in the event of a very positive assessment. The individual may also seek to include aspects of the review in a personal promotion application.

6.2 For the HoD in their second or consecutive term

Where the HoD has already served at least one term of office, and provided that no substantive concerns or areas of development were identified in the previous assessment, the Dean and HoD may agree to not conduct the first review. In this instance, the Dean and HoD shall still meet after the first year to allow the HoD to give the Dean feedback on departmental dynamics and for the Dean to explore what support, if any, the HoD needs to effective execute the roles and responsibilities of HoD.

The second review would still take place as described in 6.1 above.

6.3 The Formative Review

The formative review may include the following data sources, used at the discretion of the Dean:

* Confidential survey input by members of staff (academic and support). An on-line resource will be developed for ease of use;
* Interviews with staff. These could be held on their own or as a follow-up on particular issues identified in the survey;
* Input from the HoD (a personal assessment);
* Input from the Dean;
* If available, input from students, e.g. minutes of class rep meeting, input from post-graduate supervisor reports.

The various data sources will be used by the Dean to get a holistic picture of the HoD’s execution of the different roles and responsibilities as well as of the HoD’s successes and strengths as well as difficulties and areas of development. A detailed formative review is advocated in order to support the HoD and identify any potential problems.

Should the first review indicate that there are substantive and serious concerns with the HoD’s role in the department, a short-term plan of dealing with these concerns must be outlined together with the HoD and the plan very carefully monitored by the Dean. If there are no improvements in the specified time-frame, after consultation with the staff, the Dean may propose that the HoD’s term of office be terminated. This shall follow the process outlined in the Protocol for the Premature Termination of the Contract of the Head of Department. The HoD may also elect to resign but there is no obligation to do so. The outcome of this process will not impact the individual’s job security as an academic.

6.4 The summative review

The summative review shall be integrated with the process of identifying and appointing the HoD for the next term of office. Please refer to the Protocol for the Appointment of Heads of Departments.

6.5 The Relationship of the Review to other staff processes

The review does not focus on issues of misconduct[[2]](#footnote-2). Should concerns of this nature come to light in the review, the matter should be referred to the Director: HR to allow for a full investigation to take place and for action to be taken consistent with the Staff Disciplinary code and procedure. Depending on the nature of the misconduct, this could not only impact the individual’s term of office as HoD but also their employment contract as an academic.

As noted already, evidence from the formative and summative discussions could be used to motivate for a merit award for the HoD. These discussions will also lead to a personal development plan for the HoD.

1. **Process of review**

7.1 Formative assessment

* Shortly before the end of the first year of the term of office of the new HoD, the Dean shall contact the new HoD and advise that the first review process is due to commence. The process to be used will be explained (specifically what data sources will be accessed). The HoD will be asked to conduct a self-assessment relative to the roles and responsibilities of the HoD, identifying strengths and successes and difficulties and areas of development;
* The Dean shall also advise the staff of the department that a review is to take place and what this process will constitute. This must include that the outcome of this assessment is confidential (i.e. will not be shared with staff) and that areas of concern raised will be addressed;
* The relevant data should be collected and then integrated by the Dean. This should be compared to the self-assessment of the HoD;
* The Dean shall then meet with the HoD and discuss the self-assessment relative to the other data collected, identifying points of commonality and difference. Differences should be explored with the HoD before the Dean reaches a conclusion on the matter;
* A summary report is then written by the Dean. This is shared with the HoD who has an opportunity to talk back to the report in an Appendix to the report. This report will be placed on the HoD’s personnel file. This report will not be made available to the staff of the department;
* Where there are serious concerns the Dean shall meet with the Vice-Chancellor and Director: HR before meeting with the HoD;
* The Dean shall collate concerns raised that relate to support provided to HoDs and raise these with the respective Divisional Directors.

7.2 Summative assessment

* About 7 months before the end of the term of office of the HoD, Dean shall commence the process for identifying and appointing the next HoD needs to commence. This will include the summative assessment of the current HoD. This assessment will be included as an Appendix in the written report as part of the appointment process (see separate protocol for this);
* After this process has taken place, the Dean shall make a recommendation:
* Institutional Planning Committee: regarding the appointment of the next HoD;
* Director: Human Resources: regarding the awarding of HoD (academic) leave.

1. **Transitional arrangements**

This review process shall be implemented from the 1st of July 2014 for the new HoDs starting on this date. In discussion with the Deans, transitional arrangements relating to current HoDs and when, if any formative review shall be conducted, shall be determined. Summative reviews will take place.

**Written: Director, HR**

**Consultation and input from Deans: August 2012**

**Consultation and input from HOD Forum: October 2012 and October 2013**

**Last updated: November 2013**

**Implemented: January 2014**

1. Where the HoD is also the Dean, the review will be conducted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs or his/her designate. Where the document refers to the Dean, it is understood to also refer to the DVC: Academic and Student Affairs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Misconduct refers to the failure to abide by the acceptable institutional rules of conduct and to discharge one’s duties faithfully and diligently. For more detail of behaviour that could be construed as misconduct, please refer to the Staff Disciplinary Code and Procedure [↑](#footnote-ref-2)