Staff Networks Guidance
(Version 2.0)

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1. Summary and purpose

Staff networks at the University of Plymouth form a core part of our commitment to promote an inclusive environment and diverse community, and are referenced as actions within our Equality Scheme and Athena SWAN action plans.

Under the Equality Act (2010), the University has a legal obligation to ensure our services and policies do not have the effect of putting those who share a certain protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. Staff Networks help us to achieve this legal obligation by providing a safe space for support as well as acting as critical friends and experts for feedback on policy and process changes

Our current staff networks are:
- LGBT+ Staff Forum
- Staff with Disabilities Network
- Menopause Support Network
- University of Plymouth Women's Network
- Carers and Parents Network
- Grief and Bereavement Network

Staff Networks also provide visible promotion of the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and help to hold the University to account in its practices to ensure the impact on minoritised and oft-discriminated against groups is taken into account.

In addition to the benefits of having networks, participating in and running a network and network events may provide opportunities for individuals to development essential organisational and communication skills, and should be included within PDR discussions.

This document aims to provide line managers and employees guidance in how to balance involvement within staff networks alongside their paid employment at the University of Plymouth. This document also provides guidance on how to recognise staff network achievement within the PDR process. Staff networks are strongly encouraged and supported by the University and they are a valuable resource in ensuring the University retains a diverse and highly-skilled workforce.

To ensure the success of networks in promoting an inclusive culture, managers should be supportive of their staff participating in staff networks and employees are encouraged to work with their manager to ensure any time commitments are achievable in relation to existing individual and departmental commitments.

This guidance has been developed to provide advice for managers and employees in establishing a sustainable balance in workload.

2. Working time guidance

Similar to staff involvement in trade union activities, staff involved in staff networks should be given reasonable time to engage and work within their networks; they are integral to University business.

2.1 Network Chairs/Co-chairs

2.1.1 Network chairs and co-chairs should be allocated a **minimum of 15 hours** per year by their manager to complete staff networks duties

2.1.2 Staff members are expected to have engaged with their manager in deciding how best to utilise these hours

2.1.3 Staff members should speak with their manager before taking on a leadership role within a staff network and managers are expected to work with the member of staff to decide on the amount of hours allocated

2.1.4 Managers should consider staff network commitments when planning workloads

2.1.5 If a member of staff is a chair/co-chair or more than one staff network then it is at the discretion of the manager on how many additional hours on top of the minimum of 15 are allocated

2.2 Staff Network Members

2.2.1 Staff members should be allocated **a minimum of 8 hours** per year by their manager to complete staff networks duties

2.2.2 Staff members are expected to have engaged with their manager in deciding how best to utilise these hours

2.2.3 Managers should consider staff network commitments when planning workloads

2.2.4 If a member of staff is member of more than one staff network then it is at the discretion of the manager on how many additional hours on top of the minimum of 8 are allocated

2.3. Guidance Restrictions

2.3.1 Staff network meetings and events should take place within core working hours

2.3.2 Social events for staff networks are strongly encouraged, however these cannot count toward the 8/15 hour minimum working time allowance unless agreed at the manager's discretion

2.3.3 In all cases of involvement within staff networks, it is expected that staff and their managers have an open, honest conversation about network involvement.

2.3.4 It should be the position of the manager to encourage involvement in staff network activities; they cannot stop a staff member from being involved in a staff network.

3. PDR Guidance

3.1 Involvement in staff networks must be recognised within the PDR process as offering significant contribution to the University *(see Fig. 1 - PDR guidance table for suitable objectives).*

3.2 The employee must provide detailed evidence to support this within their PDR

3.3 Depending on the evidence supplied, or their role within the staff network, it could fall under personal development objectives.

Staff Network Chair/Co-chair	Staff Network Member
Professional Services Staff This could be included under PDR objectives for professional services staff: • Institutional Sustainability • One Team • Quality • Leadership, management and engagement	**Professional Services Staff** This could be included under PDR objectives for professional services staff: • Institutional Sustainability • One Team • Quality
Academic/Research Staff This could be included under PDR objectives for academic/research staff: • External engagement/enterprise • Leadership, management and engagement	**Academic/Research Staff** This could be included under PDR objectives for academic/research staff: • External engagement/enterprise

Fig. 1 - PDR Guidance Table

4. Further advice

You can contact either the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team for further advice and information at any time:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Website: www.plymouth.ac.uk/equality
Email: equality@plymouth.ac.uk
Twitter: @PlymUniEquality

5. Document Governance

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