

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Conversation Guide

**Equity, diversity and inclusion are key considerations when discussing development goals, performance and career opportunities. Here are some tips to help you prepare.**

### Shared responsibility – employees and conversation leaders

#### *Preparing for a conversation*

It helps when employees and conversation leaders are aware of their personal **unconscious knowledge and biases**, before they have a conversation with each other about performance and potential.

As we go about our work and personal lives, our brains store part of what we learn in long-term memory. This forms our '**unconscious knowledge**', which makes up a major part of our everyday thought processes. This knowledge that we accumulate over our lifetime, making it hard to change, is what forms our **unconscious biases**. These biases have the potential to influence our attitudes, which can affect how we respond to situations and how we relate to those around us.

Unconscious knowledge often doesn't reflect the available information, which can lead us to make inaccurate judgements about people, problems and situations. By learning more about the basis of our judgements, our unconscious knowledge, how to identify bias hotspots, and strategies to mitigate bias, we can become more attuned to unconscious bias at play, and be better equipped to minimise its impacts.

#### *During the conversation*

**Minimise potential for unconscious knowledge and bias** to negatively impact your perceptions by:

- ✓ **Managing the situation.** Each person should have the same opportunity to discuss their development and performance, so structure meetings and adopt a consistent agenda.\*
- ✓ **Slowing down your thinking.** Listen, take notes and reflect on what your conversation leader / employee tells you. Gather more information, for example ask questions, and consider any relevant analytical tools that may help with your reflection about your performance / with your decision-making.\*
- ✓ **Considering counter positions.** For example ask counterfactual questions such as: "*Why might this person be ready for promotion*" or "*How could my conversation leader's feedback help me improve my performance*"? Challenge your assumptions and stereotypes. Provide / ask for different examples. Play devil's advocate. Consider their decision from different perspectives.\*

UNSW has licensed access to the **Cognicity® Unconscious Knowledge and Bias Solution™**, an online learning experience and practical toolkit where you can learn about your unconscious knowledge and biases and discover strategies to minimise their impact on your decision-making. For access: [click here](#).

### Employees' responsibilities

In the same way that unconscious knowledge and unconscious bias impacts your judgments about others, it may also impact how you see yourself.

Therefore when you are thinking about **your potential** and your aspirations for the year ahead:

- ✓ Ask yourself, "*What are my future goals, career interests and aspirations*"? However don't stop there! Challenge yourself and any **self-limiting beliefs**. For example, sometimes we may unconsciously internalise the expectations of our friends, family, peers and society. Ensure you understand what *you* want, so you can explore potential strategies to achieve this with your conversation leader.

When you are reflecting on **your performance**:

- ✓ A performance conversation is an opportunity to focus your conversation leader's attention on your work and achievements. While you are preparing for this conversation, overcome any '**availability bias**' by reviewing *all* of your work and achievements throughout the year. Consider what you are most proud of, what you think you did well, and share these reflections with your conversation leader.
- ✓ Consider how you have displayed **the UNSW behaviours**: demonstrates excellence, drives innovation, builds collaboration, values diversity and displays respect.
- ✓ Consider your achievement and opportunities to develop **relative to the opportunity** you have. Ask your conversation leader to do the same.

Unconscious knowledge can influence our **communication preferences**. Think about how your conversation leader conveys and processes information. Are their communication preferences different to your preferences? Are there ways you can adjust your communication style to help your conversation leader more easily understand the information you are trying to convey? If you are unsure of their preferences, ask them. For example:

- ✓ If your conversation leader prefers communications to **be to the point**, convey key points early in your conversation with them. Keep written communications brief, for example one bullet point per message.
- ✓ If your conversation leader prefers **details or evidence**, reflect upon the details or evidence that supports each of your key points and convey them in your performance conversation.
- ✓ If your conversation leader likes to **reflect** upon information, consider providing a written summary of your key points in advance or after the conversation, and/or organising a follow up conversation.

### Conversation leaders' responsibilities

**Avoid assumptions.** An employee's career and development aspirations, desire for flexibility, or need to take leave should not be assumed because of their gender, carer status, or disability, for example. Instead discuss options and how to access more information with every employee.

**Set up development and performance conversations for success.** Demonstrate that you value your employee's contribution by:

- ✓ Organising a **time for the conversation** that falls within their usual work hours / days. Ensure you also allow sufficient time to have a proper conversation; don't rush it.
- ✓ Thinking about the best **place** to have the conversation. For example, book a meeting room or go for a coffee if there is not an obvious private space where you can have a conversation with your employee.
- ✓ Being familiar with UNSW's [key equity, diversity and inclusion policies and initiatives](#).
- ✓ Considering how the employee has exhibited the **UNSW behaviours**: demonstrates excellence, drives innovation, builds collaboration, values diversity and displays respect.
- ✓ Overcoming any '**availability bias**' by reflecting upon *all* of your employee's work and achievements throughout the year. Do not rely on the information that is easiest to recall.
- ✓ Allocating work fairly throughout the year and reviewing the employee's achievements **relative to the opportunity** they had. Circumstances where the principle of 'relative to opportunity' may be relevant:
  - Carer responsibilities for children, elderly parents or ill family members
  - Ill health, disability or medical conditions whether temporary, episodic or permanent
  - Career interruptions related to parental leave, working in a different field or late entry to academia
  - Part-time or flexible working arrangements
  - Domestic and family violence

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- ✓ If your employee prefers communications to **be to the point**, convey key points early in your conversation with them. Keep written communications brief, for example one bullet point per message.
- ✓ If your employee prefers **details or evidence**, reflect upon the details or evidence that supports each of your key points and convey them in the performance conversation.
- ✓ If your employee likes to **reflect** upon information given to them, consider providing a written summary of your key points in advance or after the conversation, and/or organising a follow up conversation.