

Dear Members and Colleagues,

This is just a brief note to say best of luck with the marking season to those of you who are embarking upon it. We all know that it is a challenging time of the semester and one that can be wearing on even the most positive of attitudes.

Our thoughts also go with you as we begin this inaugural round of the new staff appraisal process. We have already received a measure of feedback from appraisees anxious about the language used in the behavioural descriptors, or confused about what it might mean to 'lead self'. Feedback has also come from appraisers who feel uneasy about having to submit their colleagues to performance evaluations using this language, often when they know little of their teaching or research field, and sometimes even when they have never met the appraisee before.

However, you may have a different impression. You may find the appraisal process a positive and empowering experience, a chance to find out about the great work your colleagues are doing or to get feedback from a mentor about your achievements. Whatever the case, get in touch and let us know how you are finding the new appraisal system. UWA ASA is the voice of academics on campus and we can't represent your views if we don't know what they are.

However, in all seriousness, do be aware that the behavioural expectations of staff encoded in the staff appraisal process discourage "not fully participating in the staff appraisal process", "complaining rather than taking action" and "reacting in a negative way to change and uncertainty". So, try to remain positive about the fact that you may be evaluated by, or be compelled to evaluate, someone outside your discipline, who has never met you, and knows little to nothing about your work.

And lastly, something to think about that came up at our forum on "Students as Customers" a couple of weeks ago. The University of Western Australia Act of 1911 states that the University consists of a Senate, Convocation, Staff and Students. Up until very recently when people spoke of the University this is what they were referring to—staff, students, alumni and Senate. Lately, the assumption is that 'University' refers to the executive managers. We urge you not to adopt this language. How we speak of things shapes how we think of them and vice versa. It is very important, for the sake of the staff, students and alumni, that when we use the term "University" we mean the very people without whom the institution would not exist.

Best regards,

Nin Kirkham, President | UWA ASA