Introduction

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it" - William Arthur Ward

We all like to feel appreciated but how often do we take the time to say thank you and praise a colleague for a job well done? Recognition and appreciation are vital: they create a positive working environment, motivate people, make them feel valued, help them to see the purpose and importance of their work, and improve performance by reinforcing positive behaviours and embedding values.

The University's 2019 Staff Survey highlighted the need for all of us to get better at recognising and appreciating the work of our colleagues. We all know how important it is, but it can sometimes be hard to think of ways for us as individuals and for our institutions to say thank you in a sincere and heartfelt way and to embed appreciation in to our institutional culture.

The University operates a number of formal contribution reward and progression schemes for different staff categories. More details about these can be found by visiting the Reward Schemes page on the HR website. The Professional Services Recognition Scheme aims to recognise, highlight and celebrate the very best work across all professional service areas but this is only an annual event. It covers the whole professional services community (approximately 6,000 staff) so is highly competitive. Relatively informal, local recognition award schemes, run at a department level on a more regular basis, can be a great way to ensure that colleagues feel that their work is recognised and appreciated.
What to consider when setting up a recognition scheme

Each institution is different and has its own unique structure and culture so it is likely that you will want to make local adjustments to this recommended process – this is absolutely fine. The checklist and template documents provided below are designed to help you plan your own scheme in a simple light touch way, and to avoid institutions reinventing the wheel.

1. **What will the award categories be?**
   Consider what particular skills or behaviours the department wishes to recognise and encourage. These will form the basis of your award categories. These may relate to your Department’s vision, values or strategic objectives (or to the [Professional Services values](#)). Alternatively, you may prefer to use the award categories we have suggested at Appendix 1 below, or to use these as a basis to create your own local version.

2. **How frequently do you wish to make awards?**
   This may depend on the size of the department and the anticipated levels of engagement. You may want to make awards monthly, termly or annually. If you are going to do it monthly, you will need a light touch and easy to administer system. If you only give awards occasionally, you may not be able to use the scheme to recognise good work at the point at which it happens (recognition is most effective when it is timely).

3. **How will the nominations be reviewed and the winners agreed?**
   There are a number of possibilities for this. Nominations could be reviewed by the department’s Senior Leadership team. This may be important if they wish to have some influence over the type of work and behaviours that are recognised, or to promote a particular vision or set of values or behaviours. Alternatively, a committee could be set up drawn from colleagues from different areas in the department. This may have the advantage of being more inclusive. The other option is to use an existing committee that you already have in place and ask them to take on this responsibility, for example, a staff well being or E&D committee. A hybrid version could be that a small awards committee puts forward a shortlist to the Senior Leadership or Head of Department, who make the final decision.

4. **Will there be a prize for award winners?**
   This will depend on your department’s budget for this type of activity. If there is some budget available, you could consider a small prize like a voucher, or a donation to a charity of the winner’s choice, but remember that there may be multiple winners, or team winners. If you want to keep it simple or there is no budget, most staff will be delighted with the recognition and a certificate. If you would like an ourcambridge ‘values’ mouse that can be passed around from winner to winner, please contact ourcambridge@admin.cam.ac.uk and we will arrange for one to be sent to you. Alternatively, you could order some department branded mugs, pens, bags or sweets from one of the University’s approved suppliers ([Allwags](#) or [Get yourself noticed](#)).

5. **How will the awards be announced?**
   This can be done via a simple email, or in a department newsletter if there is one. Alternatively, it can be used as a focus to bring staff together for a coffee morning or lunch, or announced at an ‘all department’ meeting.
Checklist for local recognition scheme

This list is indicative only. It may need adapting and amending once you have agreed how your department’s scheme will work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Tick when done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Consider questions 1-5 above. Once you have decided on these things, draw up a brief proposal for how your scheme will work (which includes the award categories, nomination process, and prize if any) and seek approval for this from your senior leadership team, or equivalent decision making body for your department.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Draw up a timetable for the year of nomination dates, and dates when awards will be announced.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. You may wish to use the proposal as a basis to create a simple webpage outlining the new scheme and nomination process, with deadlines for nominations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Create a nomination form. We suggest using Microsoft forms for this and have created a template for you to adapt here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Email colleagues to announce the new scheme and to encourage them to nominate colleagues, providing the link to the nomination form. A template email is provided at Appendix B below which can be adapted for local purposes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Monitor the response rate and send out reminders near to the deadline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. After the deadline has passed, collate all of the nominations in to an excel spreadsheet (this can done very easily in MSForms) and send them to the Award committee/panel for review. If there are a large number of nominations, you may wish to ask the committee to score them using a scale of 1-10 against the award criteria and to submit their scores to you in advance of meeting, These can then be collated to create a ranking. This will make the process fairer and more transparent and will make it quicker and easier to decide on the winner at the meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. If you will be giving prizes, make sure they have been ordered. Print the certicates (a template can be found here.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Make arrangements for the winners to be announced, see above re options for this (email, newsletter, coffee morning etc). If you have a webpage for the awards, the names of winners can be recorded here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A: Suggested award categories

1. **Collaboration and generating a sense of shared purpose**

   Nominations should describe how this person (or team) has/have worked collaboratively with others, or across disciplinary or departmental borders, eliminating silo working, to get something done.

2. **Efficiency, effectiveness and innovation**

   Nominations should recognise an individual (or team) who has/have done something to improve or simplify a system or process, making it more efficient, by reducing waste and removing internal barriers.

3. **Flexibility, agility and resilience**

   Nominations should recognise an individual (or team) who has/have responded promptly and been particularly flexible or adaptable in order to solve an unexpected problem, showing resilience and agility.

4. **Creating an inclusive community, built on trust and mutual respect**

   Nominations should describe how the person has created open and honest relationships by showing a high level of respect for, and trust in others. They have treated others with fairness and kindness ensuring everyone’s voice is heard and creating an environment where all feel empowered.

5. **Unsung hero**

   Nominations should be made to recognise individuals who have quietly gone about their daily work and might otherwise go unnoticed, but who make a real difference. These individuals have just ‘got on with it’ and would usually describe their own personal contribution modestly.
APPENDIX B: Template email to announce scheme and request nominations

Dear colleagues,

As we all continue to work remotely, the [Senior Management Team] continue to be impressed and encouraged by your commitment, not only to one another but as a team.

With this in mind, we are delighted to announce the launch of our new local recognition scheme which is designed to ensure that we regularly take time to recognise the outstanding performance and achievement of our colleagues across [insert department].

Everyone in the department is eligible to be nominated for an award (all staff, academic, research and professional services). Everyone is invited to nominate their colleagues for these awards and we invite and encourage submissions from all areas of the department.

**Award categories**

1. **Collaboration and generating a sense of shared purpose**
   
   *Nominations should describe how this person (or team) has/have worked collaboratively with others, or across disciplinary or departmental borders, eliminating silo working, to get something done.*

2. **Efficiency and effectiveness**

   *Nominations should recognise an individual (or team) who has/have done something to improve or simplify a system or process, making it more efficient, by reducing waste and removing internal barriers.*

3. **Flexibility, agility and resilience**

   *Nominations should recognise an individual (or team) who has/have responded promptly and been particularly flexible or adaptable in order to solve an unexpected problem, showing resilience and agility.*

4. **Creating an inclusive community, built on trust and mutual respect**

   *Nominations should describe how the person has created open and honest relationships by showing a high level of respect for, and trust in others. They have treated others with fairness and kindness ensuring everyone’s voice is heard and creating an environment where all feel empowered.*

5. **Unsung hero**

   *Nominations should be made to recognise individuals who have quietly gone about their daily work and might otherwise go unnoticed, but who make a real difference. These individuals have just ‘got on with it’ and would usually describe their own personal contribution modestly.*

**How to submit a nomination**

Don’t be shy and think about everyone, not just your immediate team, perhaps someone who has impressed you or who you think should be recognised during this very challenging time.