

Finance and Resources Committee 11 September 2012

Review of Partner Appraisal

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The Partners department recently undertook an evaluation of the current partner appraisal process. The purpose of this report is to inform the committee of the results of the evaluation exercise and of the recommendations and planned actions that are to be taken forward.

Decision

This paper is for information only. No decision is required.

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Partner Appraisal Evaluation Report

Date of paper

31 August 2012

Partner Appraisal Evaluation Report

A. Introduction

The peer/self-appraisal process is currently conducted for Panel Members, Panel Chairs, Visitors and Registration Assessors.

Partners are scheduled for appraisal at random depending on eligibility and the work they are booked to complete. We aim to appraise Partners every two years and to meet monthly targets for Panel Members (8) and Registration Assessors (10) set by the committee. .

Frequent, informal criticisms of the appraisal process from partners combined with the fact that the current system has been in place since 2007 prompted the need to carry out this evaluation and review.

B. Review methodology

Feedback and information was gathered from four different sources as follows;

1. PARTNERS

All Partners who have been appraised since 1 April 2010 were invited to complete an evaluation survey for all roles that they have been appraised in. The decision was taken to keep the survey generic to reflect the fact that the principles of the appraisal process are the same across all roles. There were 17 questions in the questionnaire, and results are set out in section C of this report.

2. REGULATORS

Research was undertaken with other regulators to ascertain their current arrangements for appraisal and to explore the benefits and limitations of other methods.

3. INTERNAL

Feedback was also gathered internally from Partner user departments who were given the opportunity to feedback on future options. Initial meetings were held with department managers to discuss the results of the feedback from the partner survey, recommendations distributed for comments and final meetings held to discuss the recommendations in more detail.

4. PANEL CHAIRS

A group discussion took place with Panel Chairs at the refresher training day. Panel Chairs take part in appraisal more than any other type of Partner as they regularly contribute to the appraisal of panel members.

C. Analysis of Partner Survey Results

333 Partners were invited to complete the survey which comprised of an on-line questionnaire. 203 responses were received. The majority of respondents (73%) have been Partners for 3 years or more. The majority of respondents were Registration Assessors (40%) closely followed by Panel Members (32.5%) then Visitors (19.5%). 8% of respondents were Panel Chairs and this is representative of the number of Partners who have been engaged in each role from April 2010 – present.

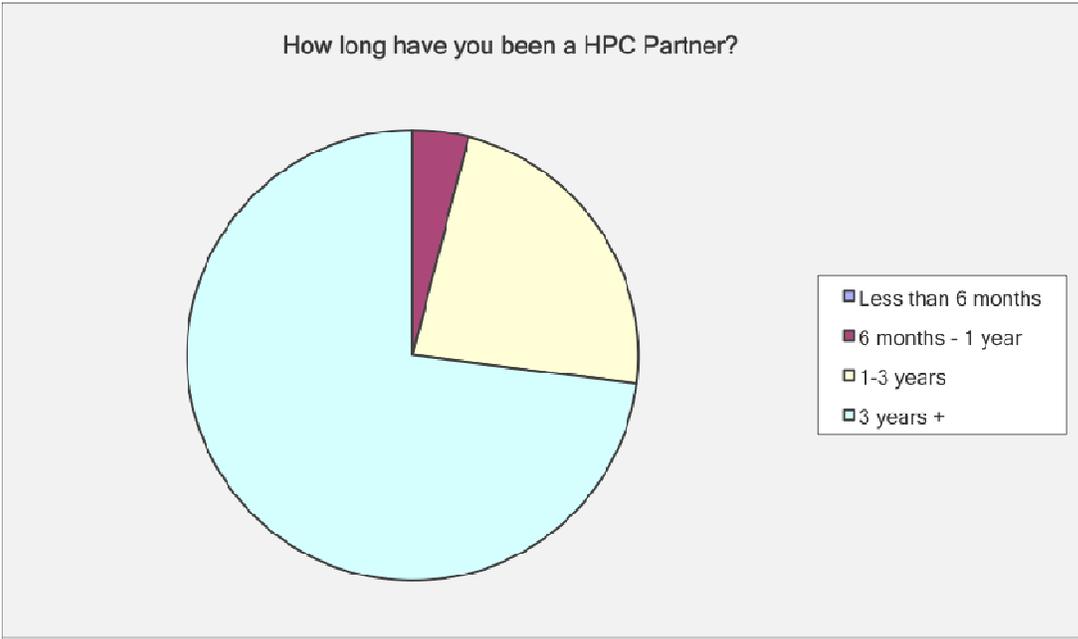
70.5% of respondents had been in the role for which they were completing the survey for 3 or more years.

Results were analysed firstly for all survey participants, and where ten split by Partners role.

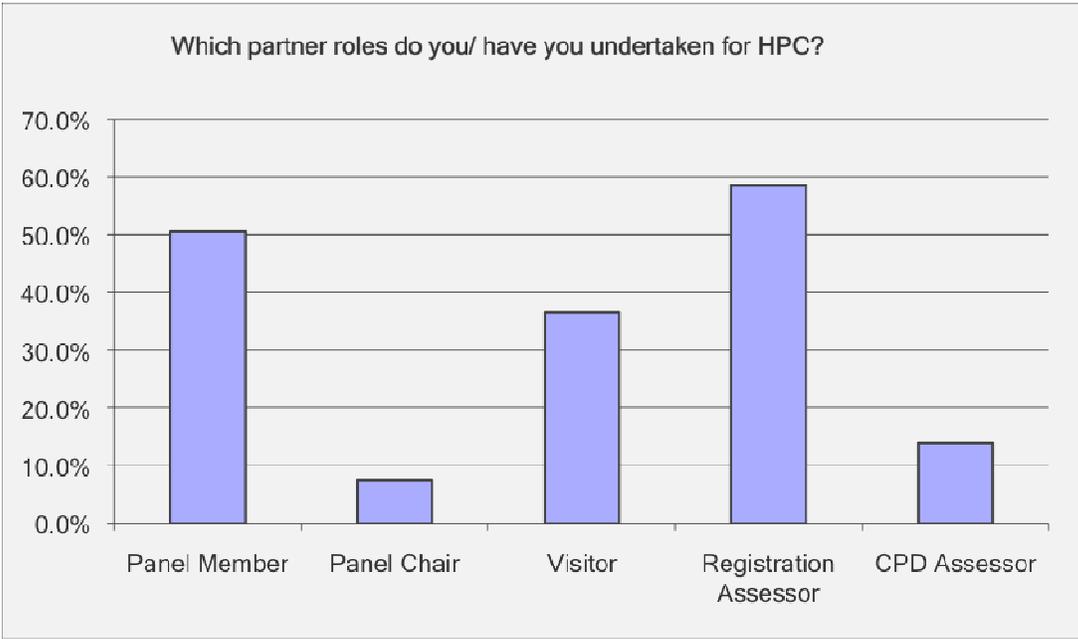
Results for all participants

Question 1: How long have you been a HCPC Partner?

Less than 6 months	0%
6 months – 1 year	4%
1 – 3 years	23%
3 years+	73%

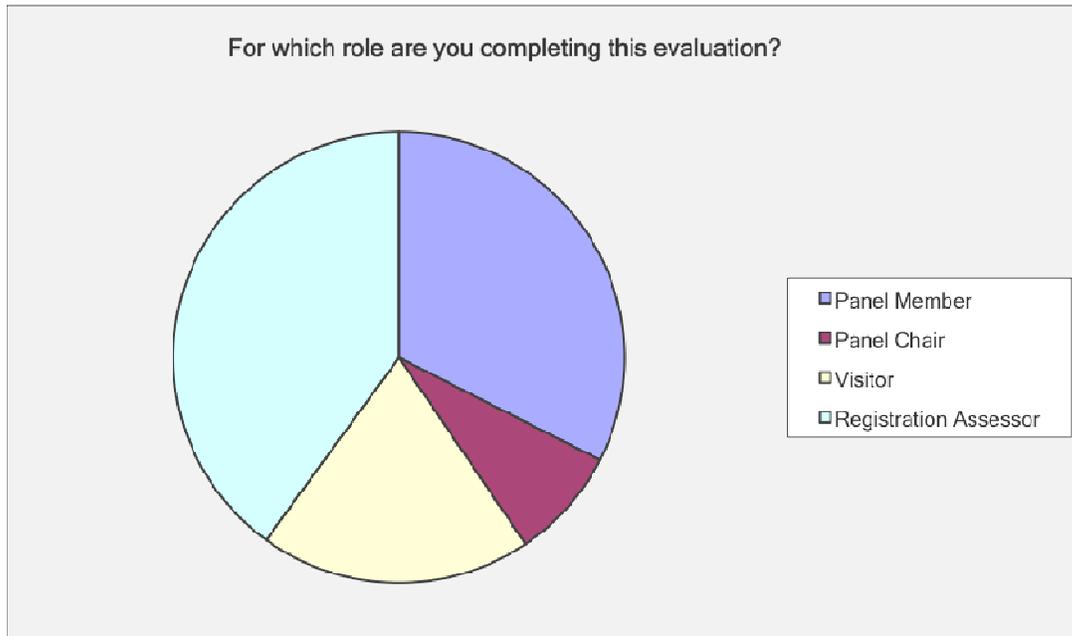


Question 2: Which partner roles do you/ have you undertaken for HCPC?



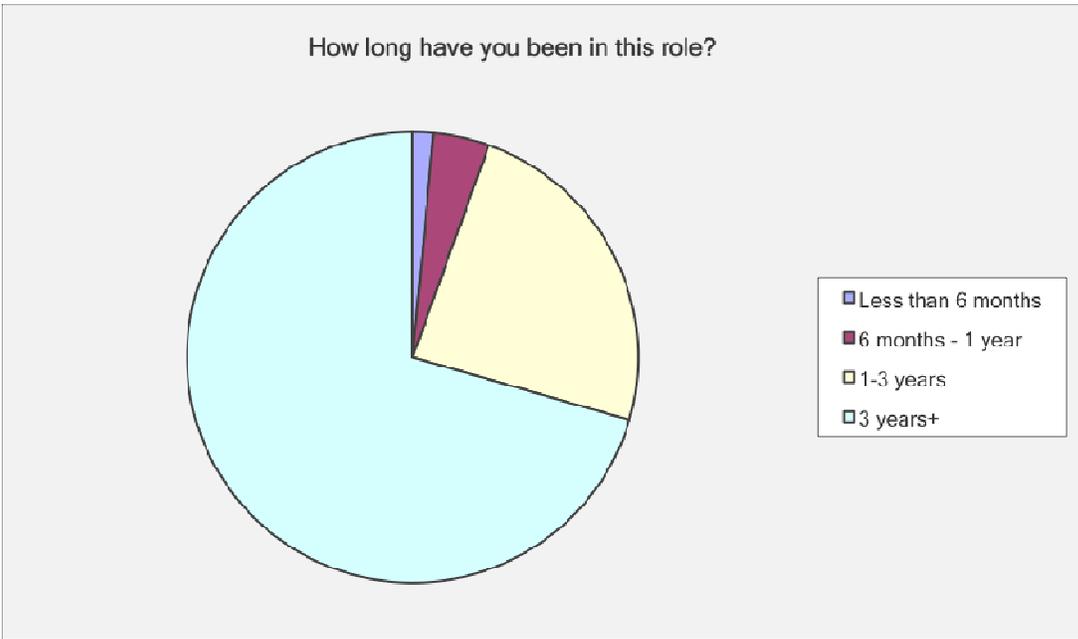
Question 3: For which role are you completing this evaluation?

Panel Member	32.5%
Panel Chair	8%
Visitor	19.5%
Registration Assessor	40%



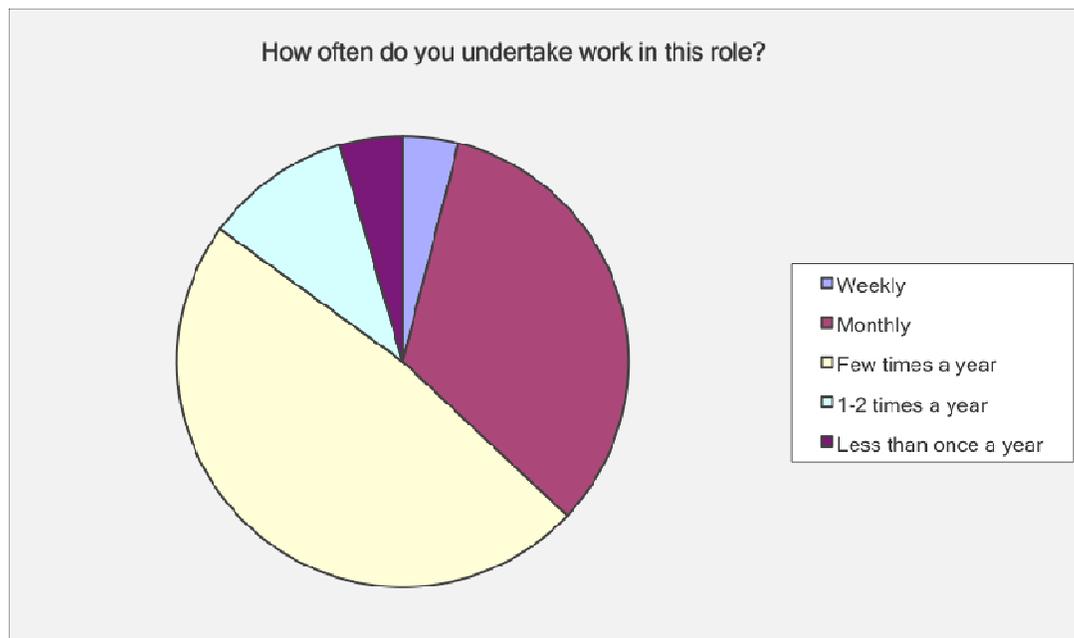
Question 4: How long have you been in this role?

Less than 6 months	1.5%
6 months – 1 year	4%
1 – 3 years	24%
3 years+	70.5%



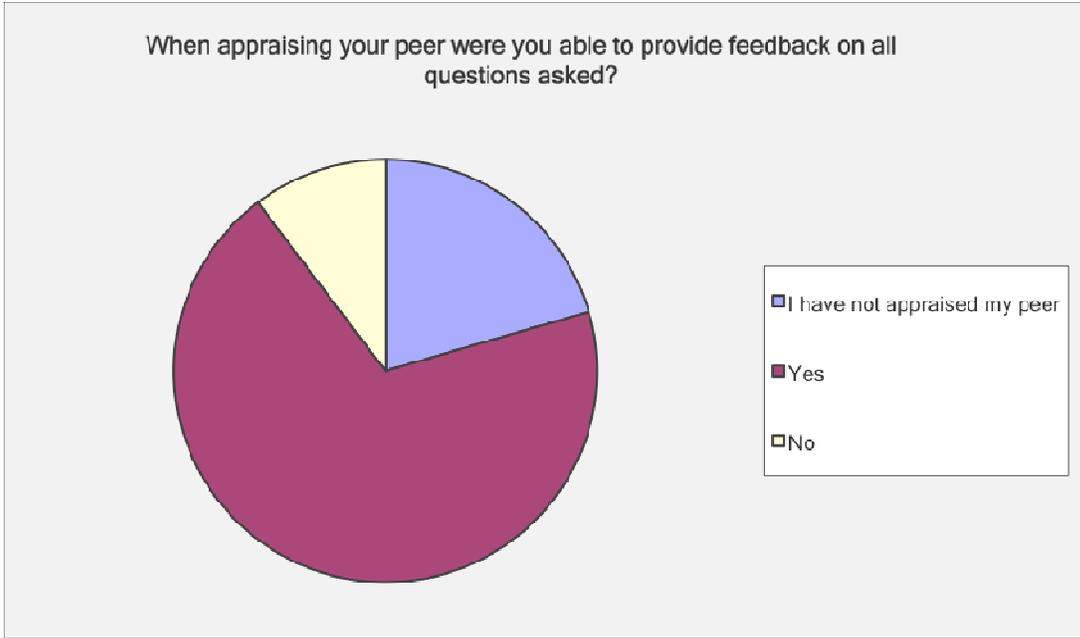
Question 5: How often do you undertake work in this role?

Weekly	4%
Monthly	33%
Few times a year	48%
1-2 times a year	10.5%
Less than once a year	4.5%



Question 6: When appraising your peer were you able to provide feedback on all questions asked?

Yes	69.2%
No	10.3%
I have not appraised my peer	20.5%



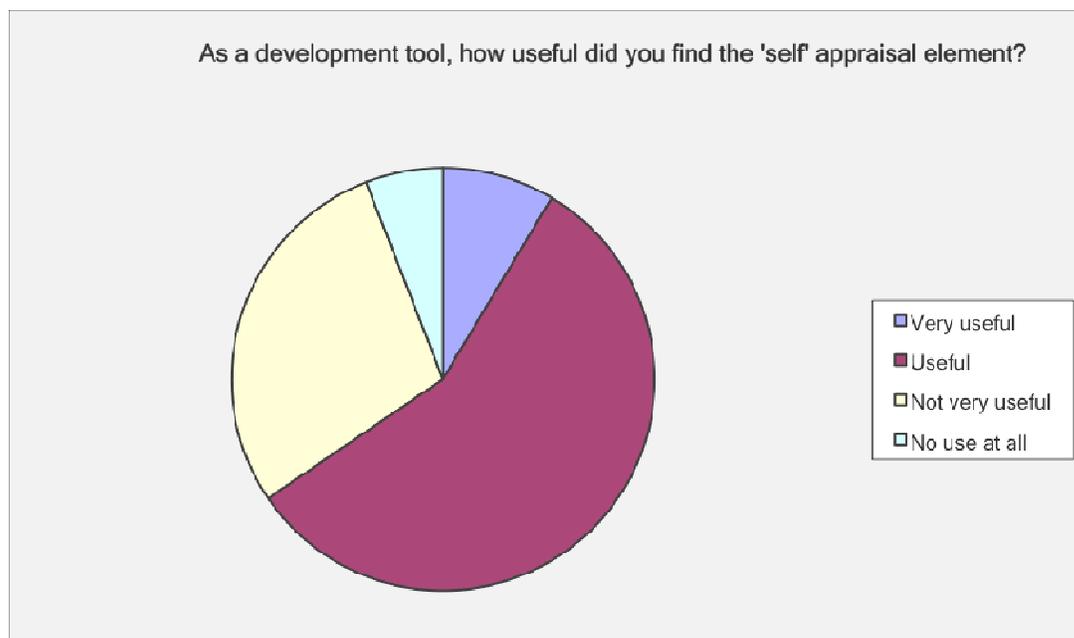
Question 7: Areas that could not be assessed and why?

Responses under following categories split by department:

Fitness to Practise	Education	Registrations	Non department specific
Criteria not covered in hearing (5)	Criteria not relevant to Annual Monitoring Day (4)	Criteria not arose in assessment eg. Test of competence, period of adaptation. (3)	Completed only Self-appraisal (1)
All criteria difficult to assess in 1 hearing (1)		Questions inappropriate for email assessment (1)	Could not assess areas of conflict as didn't arise (2)
Criteria not relevant to Lay Panel Member (1)			

Question 8: As a development tool, how useful did you find the 'self' appraisal element?

Very useful	8.6%
Useful	56.8%
Not very useful	28.6%
No use at all	5.9%

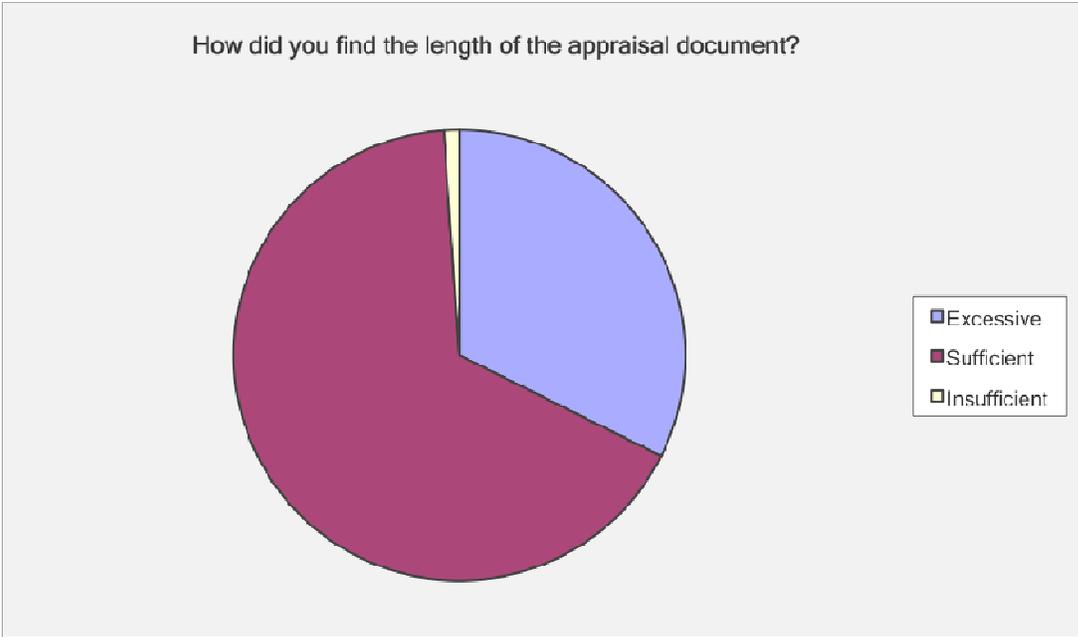


Question 9: As a development tool, how helpful did you find the 'peer' appraisal tool?

Very useful	9.2%
Useful	57.3%
Not very useful	23.8%
No use at all	9.7%

Question 10: How did you find the length of the appraisal document?

Excessive	32.4%
Sufficient	66.5%
Insufficient	1.1%

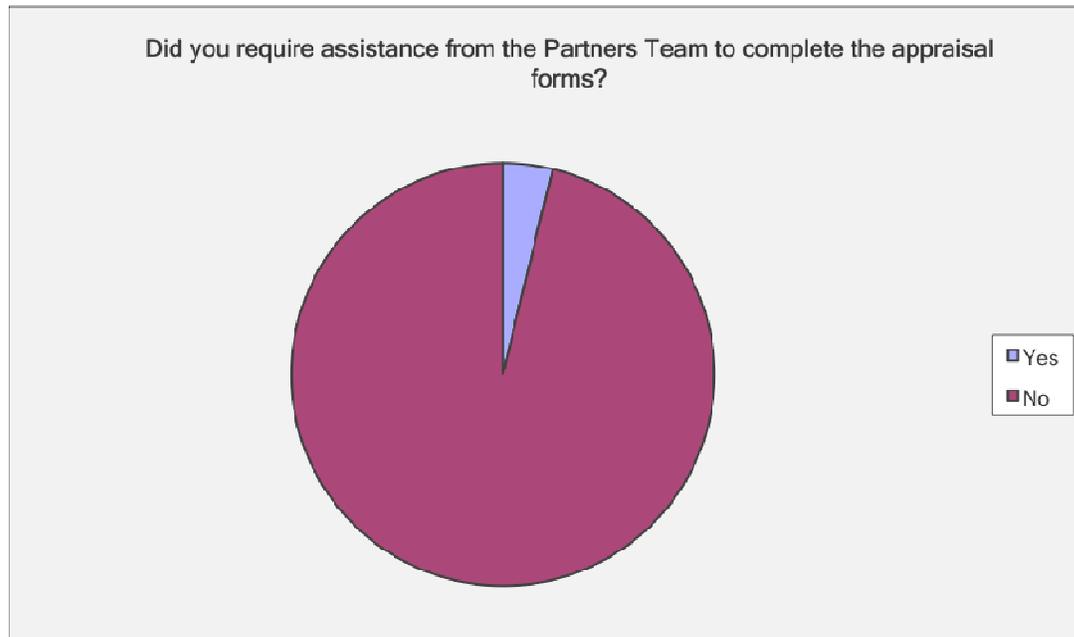


Question 11: Please rank each component of the appraisal process.

Answer Options	Excellent	% of respondents	Good	% of respondents	Satisfactory	% of respondents	Unsatisfactory	% of respondents
Assessment Criteria	14	9%	77	48%	61	38%	10	6%
Peer Appraisal tool	13	9%	49	34%	60	42%	22	15%
Self Appraisal tool	15	10%	59	38%	63	40%	19	12%
Quality of Feedback	16	10%	62	38%	60	36%	27	16%

Question 12: Did you require assistance from the Partners Team to complete the appraisal forms?

Yes	3.8%
No	96.2%

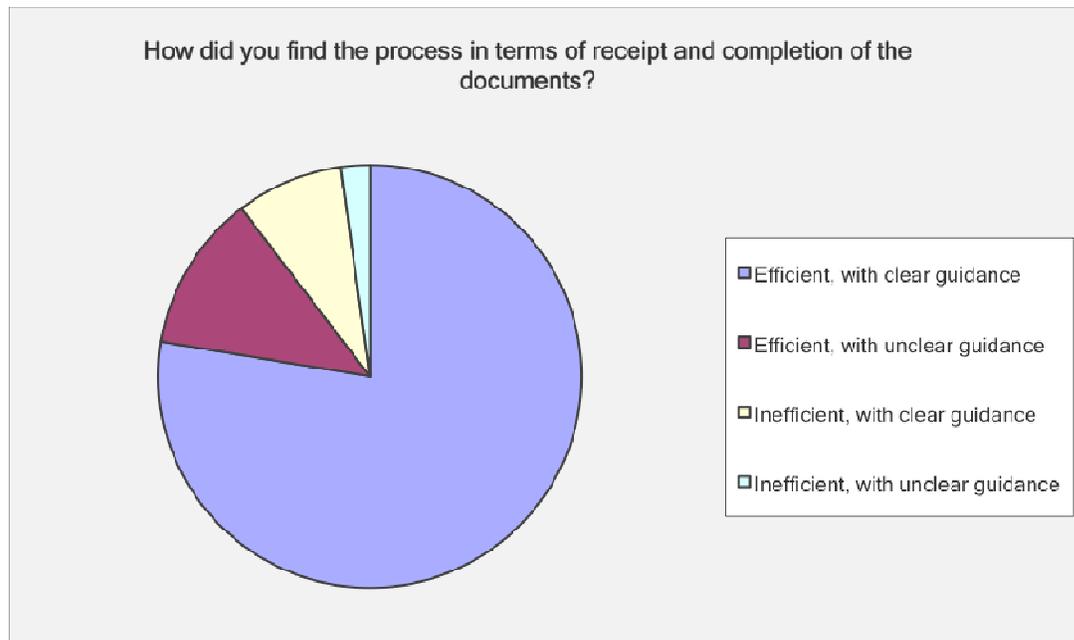


Question 13: If yes, how helpful was the support that you received?

Very Helpful	36.4%
Helpful	27.3%
Not helpful	9.1%
No help at all	27.3%

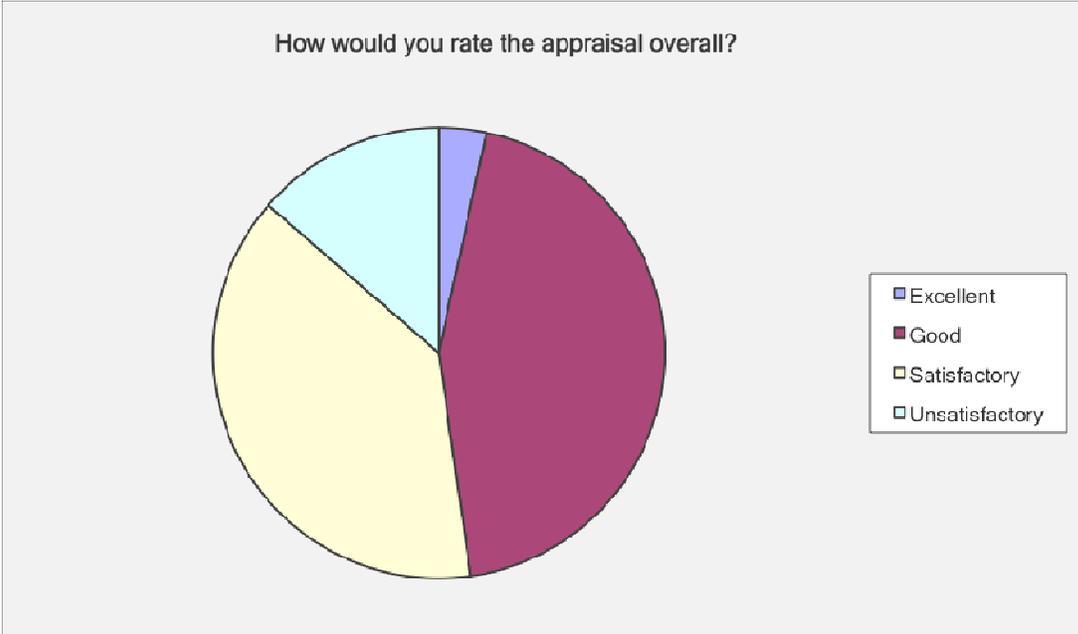
Question 14: How did you find the process in terms of receipt and completion of the documents?

Efficient with clear guidance	77.7%
Efficient with unclear guidance	12%
Inefficient with clear guidance	8.2%
Inefficient with unclear guidance	2.2%



Question 15: How would you rate the appraisal overall?

Excellent	3.4%
Good	44.3%
Satisfactory	38.6%
Unsatisfactory	13.6%



Question 16: How do you think we can we improve Partner Appraisal for the future?

176 text responses fell into the following categories:

Category	Responses	% of respondents
Admin Issue	22	12%
Positive/ No changes required	25	14%
Structure Issue	56	32%
Settings Issue	30	17%
Other recommendations	26	15%
Miscellaneous Negative	2	1%
N/A, No comment	15	9%

The tables below give details on some of the more frequently occurring comments under each theme.

Admin Issue	22	
Clearer paperwork	10	5.7%
More timely feedback	7	3.9%
Comprehensive guidance	5	2.8%

Structure Issue	56	
Ratings scale not appropriate for all questions	4	2.2%
Reduce Questions	22	12.5%
Have more specific criteria	5	2.8%
Remove repetition	10	5.7%

Settings Issue	30	
Feedback from HCPC employees	9	5.1%
Difficult to judge performance based on specific piece of work as situations covered in documents may not arise.	8	4.5%
Longer 'settling in' period	2	1.1%
Difficult to give negative feedback, given the working relationship.	5	2.8%

Other Recommendations	26	
More free text areas on elements of good practise or areas for improvement	2	1.1%
Feedback from HCPC	2	1.1%
Face to Face discussion/Personal Interview	9	5.1%
Provide appraisal training	4	2.2%

Positive/ No changes required

25 respondents commented that the current process was sufficient and works well.

Question 17: What do you think could be the most effective method to appraise Partners?

There were 176 text responses to this question

Category	Responses	% of respondents
Current method	59	33%
Current method modified	5	3%
Verbal	24	13%
Inclusion of feedback from HCPC employees	17	10%

Other methods	51	29%
Peer appraisal only	4	2%
No suggestion	19	11%

Verbal Methods	24	
1:1 (peer to peer)/ Personal Interview	18	10%
Group Discussion	4	2.2%

Other methods	51	
Review performance over more than 1 event	9	5%
Post 'event' feedback	3	1.7%
Current process followed by de-brief telephone call with Partner Manager	2	1.1%
Specific area to feedback elements of good practise or otherwise	8	4.5%
Informal method to report peer concerns	6	3.4%
Online Tool	3	1.7%
Appraisal to be conducted by a 3 rd party observer.	3	1.7%

Question 18: Is there anything you would like to add?

The main themes in answer to this question were already identified in earlier questions, and included references to feedback from HCPC Employees, the use of metrics, time issues.

Additional themes:

Category	Number	% of respondents
No	116	66%
Values the appraisal process	9	5%
Process has limited feedback or fails to highlight points of good practise or issues	11	6%
Potential Conflicts of Interest in small professions	3	2%
Combine appraisal & self-assessment renewals	1	1%
Feedback to Partners on work from HCPC. E.g. Quality of decisions, efficiencies number of appeals, outcomes of appeals.	3	2%

Additional feedback

Throughout the survey there were a small number of general issues raised around the administration process such as non-receipt of feedback, quality of feedback, timeliness of receiving feedback once an appraisal has taken place.

However, this survey was issued to all of those who have been appraised since April 2010 and we have already taken steps to streamline the existing process in the last 12 months. Whilst we will review the admin processes along with the rest of the process, currently we are confident that the steps already taken to improve collection of feedback are sufficient.

Historically, there has been an issue with Partners returning the forms by the deadline. However, a robust chasing system has reduced the impact of this issue.

Main survey themes for all participants

There are some differences between the findings when broken down by Partner role, which are discussed in the next section. However there are key themes that occur across all Partner roles. There is recognition that the current process is fit for purpose, as in question 11 over 80% of Partners rated the overall scheme as good or satisfactory. Some issues need to be addressed, particularly around the structure and length of the appraisal document and the need to streamline the assessment criteria. These issues were the most commonly occurring suggested improvements under question 16 – ‘Structure issues’.

The findings also indicate that the specific events at which Partners are appraised need to be reviewed, and that the forms should be developed with a range of Partner activities in mind rather than focusing on one type, for example, final hearings or visits. These issues were identified in questions 16 as ‘Settings issues’.

There was some support, although not a majority to include feedback from HCPC employees in the appraisal process (10% of overall respondents) and to incorporate 1:1 feedback or group discussions. (13%).

ii. Survey findings split by Partner role

Panel Members/ Chair

In the main, panel members and panel chairs find both peer and self-appraisal useful as a development tool and the majority rated each aspect of the process either good or satisfactory.

However, there is room for improvement. 71 respondents made suggestions on how the appraisal process could be improved for the future. Suggestions focussed on shortening the appraisal forms (38% Panel Chairs, 12% Panel Members), removing repetition between questions (7%) and making the guidance and assessment criteria more specific (15%). Comments were also made around the suitability of some types of hearings for conducting appraisals.

Some Partners (10%) felt that certain types of hearing were too limited in scope to be appropriate for appraisals as the full set of skills required of a panel member or chair could not be appraised. Originally appraisals were only conducted in final hearings but this was broadened recently to include other types of hearings to

ensure that sufficient numbers of panel members could be appraised within a reasonable timeframe. This feedback on suitable types of hearing will be taken into account when reviewing both the setting and the appraisal criteria for panel members and chairs,

When asked what appraisal methods would be the best for appraising Partners, 36% of respondents favoured the current process or had no suggestions. There were no strong themes among those who did make suggestions. Suggestions included external observation from a 3rd party (4) and a number of respondents (13) commented that some form of 1:1 discussion would be appropriate.

In addition to the survey, the partner manager ran a session at the panel chair refresher training to discuss the findings of the survey and to gather any additional feedback. 18 panel chairs attended and their feedback mirrored the findings from the survey.

Visitors

33 visitors made suggestions as to how the appraisal process could be improved for the future. 11 of these comments related to the structure of the appraisal forms, in particular the length of the appraisal forms and the repetition of questions within the forms.

10 visitors indicated that they would value the input of HCPC staff in the appraisal process whilst 4 recommended 1:1 time between visitors to discuss appraisal as an appropriate method.

Registration Assessors

As with other roles, an issue was identified around the structure and length of the appraisal forms. 12 of 74 respondents commented on this when asked how the appraisal system could be improved for the future. For the same question 8 respondents commented that conducting an appraisal on the last application only is difficult and the scope should be widened. 29 of 74 respondents said they thought that the current process was the best way to appraise Partners whilst 6 recommended the inclusion of HCPC employees in the process. 10 respondents suggested the inclusion of some form of verbal 1:1 or group discussion to form part of the appraisal. 7 people favoured the introduction of some form of metrics in the appraisal process such as looking at data around the number of appraisals scheduled, returned on time and the number of successful appeals.

D. Appraisal at other regulators

GMC

The GMC currently have an online system whereby all members of a panel provide feedback on each other on 4 key areas which they are required to rate and comment on. This occurs at the end of every GMC event. For example, a hearing or visit and also includes feedback from GMC employees.

For Visitors, feedback is completed post visit and feedback is supplied by all visitors, the team leader and the GMC employee assigned to the visit. Feedback is in the form of a structured questionnaire relating to the objectives of each role and the whole visiting team provide feedback on each other.

The GMC are seeking to move to a system that incorporates feedback from various sources to link to revalidation

NMC – Panel Members

The NMC recently introduced a 'post panel feedback' system as a means of appraising panel members. This replaced an admin intensive system involving personal interviews. The new system sees all members of a panel; including NMC employees completing a document to peer appraise the panel members and chair after each hearing. The NMC have a purpose built system that encompasses online submission and a data reporting function for ease of analysing the data.

GDC – Statutory Committee Members (Panel Members)

The GDC have devised a single competency framework that underpins all assessments associated with the role including recruitment, personal development and performance management. Members are expected to identify their own training needs, complete a team review form as a panel post hearing, seek a review from their peers twice a year and self-review annually. They also discuss their performance with a designated GDC employee every 1-2 years. The GDC also operates a buddy scheme for new members where more experienced members observe performance of the first 2 hearings and provide informal feedback. All members are expected to keep a personal development record of the completed forms.

E, Discussions with departments

After reviewing the survey findings, meetings were held with the Registration, Fitness to Practise, and Education departments to gain their input on possible changes.

Departments were broadly in agreement with the findings of the Partner survey, i.e. that the HCPC should continue with the current system of peer and self-appraisal subject to review of the criteria, events at which appraisal should take place and review of all associated documents including simplification of the forms.

Departments agreed that the main themes that arose from the survey should be addressed, including long cumbersome forms, repetition in questions and a review of the assessment criteria whilst also maintaining an appraisal system that encourages peer feedback and remains cost effective.

When asked if departments felt that the appraisal process picked up performance issues, the Education and Registration departments agree that this is not usually identified through the appraisal process but commented that concerns around Registration Assessors and Visitors are infrequent and can be easily identified and escalated where appropriate. Fitness to Practise is in favour of retaining peer and self-appraisal, but felt that occasional poor performance may not always be identified through appraisals.

In the survey only 10% of Partners suggested that it might be useful to have input from HCPC employees into appraisal. However this is a practice used by other regulators so the views of departments were sought on this issue, as set out below.

Registrations: Due to the nature of the way that Registration Assessor work is completed, it was felt that it would be procedurally very difficult for employees to be able to appraise Registration Assessors. However, the department agrees that part of the appraisal could encompass the tracking of metrics such as meeting deadlines and the number of appeals.

Fitness to Practise: The department is in favour of enabling HCPC employees to have more of an opportunity to comment on the performance of Partners in a structured manner and to give feedback. However, the favoured method is not through the appraisal system but through a mechanism to enable Hearings Officers to provide informal feedback to their managers, which could be fed back to the partner informally or preferably used as training points for all training sessions.

The **Education** Department had significant concerns about involving HCPC Education Officers in appraisal as this might lead to a blurring of lines of responsibility between the Executive and Partners.

Given the lack of support from departments for employee input into appraisal, and the relatively low level of demand from Partners, it is not recommended that this change is pursued at this stage.

F. Recommendations

The Partner Manager will now carry out a complete review of all of the peer and self-appraisal forms that are currently in use and will seek to simplify the documents, remove repetition and provide the opportunity for meaningful assessment against set competences. This will commence in September 2012 with the aim of rolling out the new process by January 2013.

The appraisal frameworks will build upon work completed for the recruitment process to ensure that competences are measurable. The principle will be that the same set of competences used in recruitment will be used in appraisal, which will give consistency on the criteria that Partners are assessed against throughout their time as a Partner.

In question 18, 18% of respondents who made comments said that the current appraisal process has limitations for giving negative feedback or identifying poor performance. This was also highlighted by panel chairs at the refresher training and in discussions with departments. To address this issue, a mechanism to flag concerns about Partners informally and on an ad hoc basis will also be developed. This feedback will then be given to the partner with the opportunity to respond and discuss training needs where necessary. This will remedy the current gap between the appraisal process and partner complaints procedure for dealing with minor issues.

CPD Assessors

CPD assessors are currently not appraised. The Registration Department are in favour of introducing appraisal for CPD Assessors to bring them in line with other partners. CPD assessors would have the same process as registration assessors, built around the competencies as outlined in the role brief. Appraisals will take place at CPD Assessor days.

Summary of recommendations

- Review appraisal forms for all roles
- Review appraisal criteria
- Review the appraisal guidance
- Develop a mechanism to raise informal concerns about Partners and deliver constructive feedback
- Develop appraisal criteria and documentation for CPD Assessors
- Review events at which appraisals are conducted
- Roll out updated process by January 2013.