



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**NEWCASTLE**  
AUSTRALIA

# STAFF ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

for managers and supervisors

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# Introduction

An engaged workforce is vital to the success of UON and managers and supervisors have a critical role to play. This guide aims to support managers and supervisors in their engagement efforts, such that the organisation can achieve its goal of having a workforce that is informed, engaged and driven to achieve the 2025 Vision.

## What is engagement?

At UON, we see employee engagement as a two-way interaction between the employee and the organisation, led by the organisation.

## Why engagement matters

By engaging our people effectively, we aim to create employees who

- feel valuable and valued in their role
- feel connected to the organisation, its vision and advocate on its behalf
- collectively create a healthy workplace culture
- are willing to go the 'extra mile' in their work.

In return, we will see benefits to productivity, innovation and reputation.

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# Drivers of employee engagement

There are four key drivers of employee engagement

- **A compelling strategic vision** – articulated by leaders, defining what the organisation's purpose is, where it is going, how it is getting there, and what the role of each individual employee is within that vision.
- **Engaging line managers** – are central to the culture of an organisation. Engaging line managers provide clarity of expectations, frequent and specific feedback about the job being done, ensure work is well-designed and that appropriate tools and methods are employed
- **Employee voice** - where employees views are both sought out and listened to, and employees feel that their opinions count and are valued.
- **Integrity** - or consistency between espoused values and actual behaviour.

Excerpt from 2009 Macleod/Clarke Report to the UK Government *Engaging for Success: enhancing performance through employee engagement*

## ***Links:***

[NeW Futures Strategic Plan 2016-25](#)

[A culture for NeW Futures](#)

[Staff input](#)

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# Leading a culture for NeW Futures

Managers and supervisors play a crucial role in the evolution of our workplace culture –by exhibiting, encouraging, recognising and rewarding the desired behaviours. Equally, managers and supervisors have a responsibility to ‘call out’ behaviour that goes against the cultural expectations of the organisation.

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<b>EXHIBIT</b>	Ask questions and seek input Try new ways Cultivate networks Listen	Create opportunities for working together across teams/units/schools/faculties	Share your success <i>and</i> failure Put forward your team’s ideas ‘up the chain’ Ask your team for feedback Be risk aware, not risk averse
<b>ENCOURAGE</b>	Allow time to pursue new ideas Provide forum for staff to share new ideas Invite staff to meetings that will provide useful insights for their work	Share your team’s work with others and invite participation Include collaborative effort in PRD goals	Empower your staff to make informed decisions Ensure staff know you ‘have their back’
<b>RECOGNISE</b>	Make time for coffee to hear ideas Invite staff to share their learnings with team	Affirm through PRD Provide opportunities for staff to share their knowledge/experience	Have ‘well done’ conversations in front of colleagues Celebrations and commiserations (acknowledge effort) Share stories via UON communications channels
<b>REWARD</b>	Allow new ideas to be actioned	Support staff to get out and about	Nominate for awards

**Link:** [www.newcastle.edu.au/create-the-future](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/create-the-future)

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# Communication is king

Good communication is the single-most important tool for engaging staff. For many staff, a manager or supervisor is the primary communication channel. As such, you play a key role in shaping their opinion of the company and vice versa.

## Know the purpose

You should always be clear about why you are communicating and what the organisational goal is.

Are we communicating to build pride or recognise achievement? Do we want to change behaviour? Are we trying to encourage collaboration?

If the purpose isn't clear to you, it won't be clear to others. Seek clarity.

## More than words

Whether we recognise it or not, we communicate in everything we do – the words we choose, body language, management style and practices.

Think about the sub-text and don't let it drown out the most important message.

## Feed back

In terms of workforce communication, you are the ears on the ground. You can provide critical insight into

- the nuances our workforce as an audience
- how issues are playing out in the workplace
- how informed people are
- the effectiveness of communication channels
- interests and frustrations in staff engagement

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# The basics

There are a few basic principles to remember when considering how best to communicate with your staff.

## Start by listening

Being a good listener is the first step to becoming an effective communicator. It creates trust and understanding.

## Have a plan – why, what, who and how

Be clear about the purpose, the outcomes you are seeking to achieve, who you need to communicate with and the ways in which you will reach them. Refer back regularly to stay on track.

## Importance of in-person communication

In the information rich world we live in, face-to-face communication is more important than ever. But be smart...

- take the time but don't waste time
- have a clear purpose
- be selective about who attends

## Mix it up

Using a combination of communication modes is likely to be the most successful in engaging employees. Take suggestions and try new ways to keep it fresh.

## The overload trap

One of the great challenges in an organisation as large and complex as the University is treading the fine line between keeping people informed and information overload.

Openness and transparency are important, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be mindful and selective about who you invite to meetings or who you copy emails to.

Be clear about the purpose of your communication. Return to it often to make sure your actions are helping you work toward the end-goal.

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# Be clear about what is expected and nurture growth

UON prides itself on attracting and recruiting great people to join our diverse workforce.

Communicating with staff around your expectations, their performance and their contribution to the greater organisational purpose and strategic direction is a great way to build engagement.

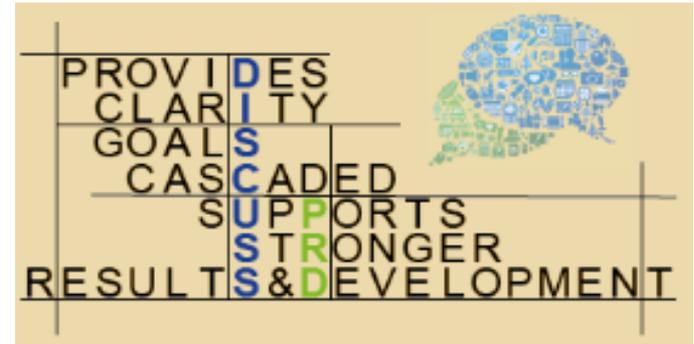
There is no single way to do this – each manager/supervisor will have their own style. Whether your approach is formal or informal, remember its all about the conversation.

UON has a well-developed system designed to ensure our staff are clear about their role and expectations and are supported to perform at their best.

**Providing opportunities for staff to develop and progress in their careers will help achieve high levels of employee engagement.**

The 70:20:10 model of learning espouses that learning is most effective when supported through a combination of on-the-job experience, exposure to others and formal education.

If we find ways to nurture growth we will reap the rewards of a workforce willing to go above-and-beyond.



**Link:** [UON Performance Review and Development](#)

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# Don't let great work go unnoticed

At UON, we encourage creative and thoughtful ways to identify, recognise and reward staff achievements.

Reward and recognition can take many different shapes and sizes. Timely praise and thanks can go a long way.

Whether you chose a formal or informal reward and recognition, you should:

1. recognise and reward significant outstanding performance and innovation which supports the achievement of the University's strategic objectives
2. recognise those who live our cultural behaviours
3. recognise leadership behaviours aligned to the UON Leadership Framework
4. provide timely recognition and meaningful rewards for individual and team achievement
5. engage and motivate high performing staff
6. provide fair, consistent and transparent rewards and recognition

## ***Links:***

[UON Reward and Recognition Guideline](#)

[UON Staff Awards](#)

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# Involve your staff

We all want to be involved or have a say in the decisions that affect us.

When we facilitate an authentic involvement in decision-making, we demonstrate transparency which in turn builds trust. Seeking opinions from across the organisation can also help break down hierarchies and silos that impede collaboration and organisation-wide engagement.

Managers and supervisors have an important role to play supporting the inclusion of staff in both local and organisation-wide decision making. With your support we can build a culture of inclusion and consultation across the organisation.

To build engagement:

- share your knowledge and insights
- listen to your team
- encourage participation and ideas
- look for ways to gather feedback
- empower your staff
- represent your team's interest and concerns and let them know when you do
- manage expectations

***Link:*** [Staff input](#)

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