

GUIDE FOR LINE MANAGERS OF FMDS TRAINEES

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1. PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF AN FMDS TRAINEE

a) PLACEMENT CONTRACT

Before the placement starts, the line manager and trainee will draw up a Placement Contract together, and forward this to the FMDS Training Manager. It will cover:

i) *Work to be delivered by the trainee.* The trainee should at this point be provided with a set of key work objectives against which their performance will be judged. These should be set using standard DWP HR guidance. The trainee key work objective will be one of the trainee's objectives. A copy of this can be found in Products & Guidance on the P&PC pages of the Group Finance Directorate intranet site.

Line managers should note that these objectives should be challenging. Trainees are on a high potential scheme, and a key element of their progress comes from experience, knowledge and skills gained through delivery of demanding work. Trainees should be given work that progresses in difficulty and challenge during the length of their placement, so that they are learning throughout the whole placement.

ii) *Experiences for logbook.* The trainee may have specific experience needs to meet their Institute requirements, which need to be built into the placement.

iii) *Developmental experiences.* The line manager, in discussion with the trainee, should identify whether there are any particular weaknesses that need to be addressed and structure work activities to address these where practical.

The line manager should also consider the developmental opportunities specific to their area that would be beneficial for individuals on a development scheme. Examples include, undertaking a project for a director, shadowing a consultant, observing a board meeting etc. In discussion with the trainee they should identify those that are particularly suitable for this individual, and include them in the individual's placement contract.

b) TRAINEE INDUCTION

Induction to the business unit and the placement are the responsibility of the line manager. The line manager will need to prepare an induction plan to cover this. This may require them to put in place an appropriate training regime to provide them with the skills to perform their duties effectively. The trainee can provide information on the training and experience that they have already had.

The first placement, which normally commences in September, is particularly important. Induction to the FMDS and the Department will be covered by the FMDS Training Manager. This takes place in a two stage induction process, with the first stage happening prior to a trainee joining their first placement. However, trainees on their first placement will still require additional support from their line manager as compared to more experienced trainees.

2. WHILE AN FMDS TRAINEE IS IN A PLACEMENT

a) TRAINEE DEVELOPMENT

Line managers play a vital role in trainee development. In addition to the responsibilities they have for all staff that work to them, they have a particular duty to ensure the trainee gains the experiences that will contribute towards their development on the scheme. It is important that line managers recognise trainees will, because of the need to attend college and to undertake development, be away from the business regularly. Over the course of a year trainees will have up to 12 days development, plus study leave.

At the start of a new placement the line manager should familiarise themselves with these commitments upon the trainees time and modify the initial trainee work plan if appropriate.

BALANCING WORK AND DEVELOPMENT

Trainee development is an integral part of the FMDS and a wide range of development opportunities are arranged by the Trainee Development Group [TDG]. Access to development opportunities is therefore important, but it is recognised there may be operational reasons why attendance at a particular event has to be refused.

Managers have the discretion to make such decisions, but it should be noted that if a trainee is throughout the period of their placement repeatedly refused the opportunity to attend development events, the placement may not be considered suitable for other trainees, and in extreme cases the trainee may need to be moved.

ROLE OF TRAINEE DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The FMDS Trainee Development Group [TDG] exists to organise a range of development opportunities for FMDS trainees that broaden the range of their experiences, offer opportunity to gain new insights and provide them with the range of new skills to fit them for roles they will perform in the future. The group organises network meetings where trainees may share their own experiences and learn from the experiences of others. Membership of the TDG is itself a development opportunity, and is thus rotated annually among trainees so that all benefit from this experience. Line managers of trainees who are members of the Trainee Development Group are asked to allow them to take an active part in the running of the group.

b) MENTORING

The mentor is there to help the trainee. They do not report back to the line manager or the FMDS Training Manager on the trainee's performance and development. Line managers should encourage trainees to make full use of their mentor and where appropriate allow the trainee to meet with their mentor as part of their official duties.

c) TRAINEE CONDUCT

Exemplary behaviour is expected from all trainees. It is unlikely that trainee conduct will give rise to concern, but in the event that it does line managers must follow departmental processes to address this. Any concerns should be made known to the FMDS Training Manager as soon as they become apparent.

d) TRAINEE TRAVEL & EXPENSES AUTHORISATION

Placement managers are responsible for authorising all travel and expenses claims submitted by trainees. Normal department rules regarding payment entitlement apply.

Costs to be met by the FMDS:

- trainee education and development, including travel and subsistence where appropriate
- institute subscriptions, open learning materials, revision courses and exam entry fees.

Where a line manager is unsure whether a particular cost should be charged to the FMDS they should contact the FMDS Training Manager for advice.

Costs to be met by the placement cost centre:

- travel and/or other costs, which arise as a consequence of the trainee's business activities (e.g. attendance at a divisional conference or travel to different location on behalf of the business)
- the cost of providing any training outside that provided through the TDG, (e.g. a business critical IT skill)
- any overtime incurred for the business

TRAVEL TIME

Trainees may claim payment for travel time arising from membership of the FMDS where departmental criteria for payment are met. Where such claims are made, the line manager should identify the reason for the claim before authorising payment.

e) TRAINEE LEAVE

SPECIAL LEAVE FOR STUDY

Trainees are allocated a set number of day's special leave with pay at the commencement of their membership of the FMDS to cover their studies. This allocation is to cover all education requirements, college attendance, revision courses and examination days. Trainees maintain a record of the number of day's special leave taken for these purposes, which the line manager must authorise, in addition to recording special leave actually taken on RM.

Only the FMDS Training Manager may authorise the award of additional special leave with pay for reasons directly connected with membership of the FMDS. Any such awards are very rare, and will be clearly noted on the trainee's special leave record.

(The line manager should apply the existing departmental guidance, when considering special leave requests made by trainees for reasons unconnected with membership of the FMDS.)

ANNUAL LEAVE

Responsibility for authorising a trainee's annual leave while in a placement rests with the line manager. At the start of their placement, trainees may request a block of annual leave to supplement their study leave in the weeks prior to examinations. If operationally practical, managers are asked to accede to such requests. Such requests should, however, be considered using the same criteria as applied to all other officers in the placement area.

SICK LEAVE

Line managers are responsible for compliance with the Departmental Attendance Management plan in respect of FMDS trainees. They will record trainee sick leave on RM and take appropriate action where attendance management trigger points are reached. They are also responsible for the performance of all duties arising from the implementation of departmental sick absence management processes should this be necessary.

Whenever a trainee is absent because of sickness for more than one week the FMDS Training Manager should be advised. Additionally they must be informed if any of the sickness absence trigger points are reached.

FLEXI LEAVE

Trainees may request to be allowed to work up flexi credits above those normally permitted, to enable them to take a block of flexi leave in the period leading up to exams. If the request is reasonable, and it is operationally practical, then managers are requested to approve such an arrangement.

3. WHEN AN FMDS TRAINEE LEAVES A PLACEMENT

PLACEMENTS CONTRACT

At the end of the placement the line manager and trainee meet to:

- review the contract
 - to establish whether the objectives have been met
 - evaluate the success of the placement and how it can be developed[Note: copy of the contract review is sent to the FMDS training manager.]
- identify any additions for the trainee's personal development plan
- sign off the trainee's special leave record as up to date
- sign off / approve the trainee's evidence from this placement in the record of practical experience / logbook.
- review the trainee's performance and document the discussion in two reports:
 - the performance in the current grade, recorded in a change of job or end of year appraisal form. The normal PDS form is used.
 - the potential of the trainee as assessed by measuring performance against SEO competencies. This is recorded in the trainee potential report.
- undertake the change manager process on the RM system

ASSESSING TRAINEE POTENTIAL

It is a condition of continuing membership of the FMDS that trainees display the potential to progress rapidly. They are expected to show the potential to develop the competency levels required of this grade during the early part of their training.

At the end of each placement within DWP the line manager will assess potential and provide a narrative outline of the skills to be developed, or developed further, to achieve the SEO standard (for EO and HEO trainees). Performance should be rated from level 1 to 3 in all DWP SEO competencies with ratings based on the level of performance actually achieved. Either the officer completing or countersigning the report must be a qualified accountant.

A copy of the form to be completed to assess potential is attached for information at Appendix 1. Completed reports should be sent to the FMDS Training Manager within two weeks of the end of the placement.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

FMDS THROUGH GRADING

Trainees join the FMDS at Executive Officer grade, unless they were already members of the civil service in a higher grade. Once they have successfully completed two year's membership of the scheme and have reached a pre-defined point in their studies they can apply to be through graded to the HEO grade. The through grading process requires the trainee to evidence their performance and their potential, and requires input from the line manager.

Separate, detailed guidance on the through-grading process is issued to line managers as each exercise gets underway, but it is important that line managers are familiar with the through-grading process and the part they play in this. A copy of a through-grading report is attached to this guidance for that purpose at Appendix 2.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

ANNUAL PDS REPORT

Trainee's annual Performance and Development System (PDS) appraisal reports should, in all normal circumstances, be completed by the line manager of the placement area they are in at the end of the annual reporting cycle. The box marking should take account of the performance recorded in previous placements that year. The trainee should be included within the staff in the operational area whose performance should fall within the guided distribution curve. The line manager is responsible for entering the relevant marking on RM.

TRAINEE KEY WORK OBJECTIVE

All FMDS trainees have a specific trainee Key Work Objective. The trainee submits evidence of their performance in relation to this objective to the FMDS Training Manager at the end of each reporting year. This officer determines whether the objective has been Exceeded, Met, Partly Met or Not Met in the light of evidence provided to them. This decision is fed back to the trainee and to the line manager, together with details of the evidence they have considered, for incorporation into the trainee's annual PDS report. When awarding an overall performance marking line managers should have due regard to the rating awarded in respect of this objective.

TRAINEES IN EXTERNAL PLACEMENTS (i.e. placements outside DWP)

If, at the end of the reporting year a trainee is in an external placement, responsibility for completion of the annual PDS form will fall to the line manager in the preceding placement and the trainee should be counted as being within that operational area.

Although managers of trainees in external placements are requested to provide feedback to inform the completion of the annual PDS form and are provided with appropriate guidance to enable them to do so, they are not responsible for the determining the annual performance marking. This remains with DWP line managers.

To aid line managers responsible for completing the annual PDS report where a trainee is an external placement, such placements that cross the end of the annual reporting cycle commence in January. Thus a maximum of only 3 months will have elapsed since the line manager directly managed the trainee.

It will be identified during the rotation process that the trainee may next take up an external placement and where this happens the FMDS Training Manager will advise the current line manager that they will be required to complete the trainee's annual PDS report. This will enable the line manager and trainee to discuss end of year reporting arrangements when the end of placement report is completed.

In these circumstances responsibility for entering the relevant marking on RM by the due date will fall to the FMDS Training Manager who should be advised of the marking as soon as possible.

TERMINATION OF FMDS MEMBERSHIP

Some trainees decide to resign from the FMDS, and some fail to pass examinations at the required rate. These trainees are removed from the scheme. Such action has little direct impact upon line managers, as the trainee will usually remain in the placement until the previously agreed end date is reached. Line managers may request early termination of the placement, and should consult the FMDS Training Manager if they wish to do this. The FMDS Training Manager will undertake all management action arising from the departmental workforce management processes.

Where application of workforce management processes is appropriate line managers may be asked to confirm that they would be able to offer the trainee meaningful work on an on-going basis (i.e. past the normal placement end date) until a permanent posting is found for the individual. From this point on it must be recognised the individual may leave at relatively short notice and that they must be given time to apply for vacancies notified to them and attend interviews where appropriate. During the whole of this period the FMDS will continue to meet salary costs and hold headcount provision.

If the removal from the scheme is also associated with removal from the Department, the FMDS Training Manager will initiate this action.

REMOVAL FROM DWP

A trainee may decide to resign from DWP. In all cases line managers who are advised of a trainee's intention to leave DWP should send a copy of the letter of resignation letter to the FMDS Training Manager. The line manager is responsible for all end of employment action, including action to be taken on RM and submitting relevant information to the Employee Service Centre.

Where a trainee is being removed from the Department at the decision of the FMDS, then the FMDS Training Manager will undertake the appropriate action to initiate and manage this process.

Although efforts will be made, it might not be possible to immediately provide another trainee to replace the officer leaving the department. Most placements are of six months duration, and rotation generally takes place in winter and summer.