

More about Direct line management

More regarding questions concerning direct line management

Questions about direct line management are raised because it is direct line management who is responsible for ensuring that daily work is carried out in a safe and healthy way for the benefit of employees' well-being.

Often, the daily management function is not concentrated in one person. At SDU for instance, we have heads of research, coordinators and others, who are responsible for managing academic tasks while formal employee management rests with the head of department, head of division, head of section, etc. Therefore, it will not always be the same person who both ensures that the unit evolves in the right direction and also personally gets involved in any personal problems the individual employee might have.

As such, it is not the individual manager who is evaluated but rather the way management is practised in regard to the individual employee and the group and community. It is not relevant whether the employees like their manager but whether they receive a satisfactory quality of the performed management.

It is the employees' evaluation which is expressed in results from the questionnaire-based survey. In their format, the workplace assessment and the well-being survey are only an overall screening of the quality of the performed management. If the results show that there are particular challenges in this area, it will be necessary (in the same way as for instance in relation to unhappiness with indoor climate) to initiate qualitative surveys of expectations, the performed management and the gap that might exist between them.

Follow up on the results of questions regarding direct line management can be divided into two parts:

- One follow up must be carried out through a dialogue between management and employees. This follow up must take place in a collaboration based on trust. In this regard, it can be a challenge to carry out a constructive dialogue or be responsible for running meetings when management becomes a party in the case. In this situation, it should perhaps be considered letting a process consultant assist the unit in a constructive way.
- The other follow up must be carried out in the unit's management group as management's self-evaluation. The responsibility for ensuring that management is performed in a satisfactory way rests with the head of the unit, who must, in collaboration with his/her management team, relate to how the overall management pool is translated in an appropriate way, and if there is any need for auto development within the management group or with the individual manager.

Further considerations regarding management

The steering committee emphasizes that it is direct line management that is assessment as an expression of well-being rather than an assessment of top management, which the employee might have an opinion about, but which is not naturally part of a workplace assessment and well-being survey

The well-being survey is often mixed with a management assessment. It has been omitted for this survey. As it is right now, it isn't possible to define who is the direct line manager:

- Management is very diverse across the university and particularly in regard to the manager level “direct line manager”: Terminology varies (secretariat director, head of research, IT-manager, planning manager, etc.). Listing the manager titles in the common workplace assessment and well-being survey will create confusion and cause incorrect registration.
- The “direct line management-task” is not always carried out by the same person: In many places, the responsibilities as “direct line manager” are divided between several people. While 1 person is responsible for personnel management, another person is responsible for the distribution of coordination of tasks, as can be seen with some coordinators and heads of research.
- If the respondent is allowed to identify the direct line manager, we will get an incomplete assessment of the individual manager: A typical scenario at an institute could for instance be as follows: 10 employees evaluate the head of department, 20 employees evaluate the secretariat director, and 70 employees evaluate a number of heads of research. In this way, the head of department is only evaluated by 10 % of his/her employees and only in the capacity as “direct line manager”, not as ahead of department. It is very difficult to get anything useful out of such results.
- We risk not being able to reproduce the answers in order to ensure anonymity: When we combine responses with information about gender, job position, or other, it will be possible to identify some responses by combining different graphs. Also, for many direct line managers we will end up below the critical number of 5 responses.
- We cannot present the results directly for employees: When we evaluate named managers or named management functions, we cannot make results available for employees. Evaluation of an identifiable manager requires that the results are made available for the manager, who needs to have the opportunity to express his/her comments.