

The development dialogue

Learning without boundaries in Amsterdam

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1 Introduction

Esprit Scholen strives for limitless excellent education for all students. This ambition requires competent and motivated employees who are willing to give their best to the students every day and who constantly work on their self-development. Taking initiative and responsibility is a part of this, as is accountability for performance achieved.

In a changing world and in an environment in which students learn, employees are expected to keep themselves educated too. Skills should also be kept up to date following appointment. Qualified once does not always equal competent. The motto of the 'learning without boundaries' education manifesto provides room for the continuous development of employees. In order to grow professionally, employees must be given suitable opportunities. Learning and development requires attention. A system is required that facilitates mutual coordination between managers and employees and discussing the functioning, learning and development of employees in an open atmosphere. The development dialogue offers a form and framework to this end.

In the development dialogue, employees are given more responsibility for their personal development, and take control. There is a continuous dialogue between managers and employees. The development dialogue requires input not only from the manager, but also from colleagues and others in the work environment. By creating a valuable feedback culture, employees can help one another to get the best out of themselves.

The conversation model is primarily development-oriented. This approach is key. However, sometimes an assessment is required. The assessment-oriented approach can be used in these situations, concluding with an assessment interview.

Each of our schools has an individual educational profile, culture and working method and individual challenges. The framework that is provided by the development dialogue offers scope for differences in interpretation. The foundation is the same, but the feedback questionnaires, for example, can be adjusted per school. Moreover, each development interview will emphasise different aspects, geared to the career and life stage of the relevant employee. In this way, the development dialogue stays in line with the diversity that characterises our schools and employees.

The development dialogue is supported by a digital platform in which employees can collect and give feedback online. Conversation skills training is available for managers and employees, to learn how to have more effective development conversations.

The development dialogue is a translation of the right that an employee has (in accordance with the PO collective labour agreement) to regular discussions and task development. The importance of the development dialogue is embedded in the strategic HR policy of Esprit Scholen.

This memorandum further clarifies the development dialogue.

For reasons of readability, 'they/them' pronouns are used throughout the text. This should be understood to refer to people of any gender.

2 How the development dialogue works

The purpose of the development dialogue is to give employees appropriate professional attention. Doing so involves using the ability of employees to reflect on their work and task performance and to sharpen that reflection with the help of information from their work environment. Conducting conversations in a professional manner leads to:

- strengthening the functioning within the (school) organisation;
- naming and valuing talents and utilising capacity;
- optimisation of employees' motivation and development opportunities;
- increasing the results of the joint effort (synergy);
- maintaining and improving the quality of education/work.

The skills requirements are the starting point for all discussions in the development dialogue. The skills requirements for all employees are laid down in the Educational Professions Act and serve as a quality standard¹. The competence requirements for teachers were developed by the Beroepskwaliteit Leraren en onderwijspersoneel (SBL, the Foundation for Professional Quality of Teachers and Educational Staff)². The Nederlandse Schoolleiders Academie (NSA, Dutch School Leaders Academy) has developed the skills requirements for school leaders in primary education.

The development dialogue is based on the development-oriented approach, combined with the assessment-oriented approach. The development-oriented approach consists of at least one development interview per year. The manager and the employee discuss the employee's performance and development. The manager and the employee jointly decide on the frequency and duration of the interviews.

The assessment-based approach consists of three successive interviews: a development interview, progress interview and an assessment interview. The interviews are held with the manager, with a focus on the (interim) assessment of the employee. In the event of a positive assessment, the assessment-oriented approach can be concluded and the developmental approach can be initiated. If performance is unsatisfactory, an improvement process is started. Both approaches conclude interviews by making agreements that are recorded in writing.



Figure 1: The development-oriented and assessment-oriented approach of the development dialogue, shown schematically.

The digital file of the development dialogue has shared ownership for as long as the employee remains employed. In the event of internal mobility (transfer) within Esprit Scholen, the school management transfers the file to the relevant school management. In the event of leaving employment altogether, employees can take their file with them in PDF form.

¹ The BIO Act came into effect on 1 August 2006.

² <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/werken-in-het-onderwijs/bekwaamheidseisen-leraren>

3 The development-oriented approach

3.1 The development interview

A development interview is an 'in-depth conversation' between an employee and their manager. The employee is in charge of their professional and personal development. The employee formulates their goals and any associated challenges and asks for feedback from those around them in order to continue their development. The purpose of this development interview is to gain insight into and an overview of the employee's skills, talents and points for development, seen from the perspective of the employee, the manager and the employee's environment.

To facilitate the dialogue, it is important that the employee formulates development points in advance to commit to a development that they would like to achieve. The employee reflects on their own performance and can choose several people for the development interview with whom they work closely and ask them for feedback. They can also use student surveys and achievements, the results of peer reviews and experiences of colleagues or external parties. The information collected from various sources forms an important part of the input for the development interview with the manager. The employee prepares for the interview, draws up a meeting agenda and shares it with the manager. Afterwards, the employee writes the report and shares it with the manager.

The manager acts as a coach and primarily asks the employee questions, for example, about their contribution to the school objectives, the interpretation of the role, professionalism, the employee's well-being and the utilisation of their qualities. The manager also expresses expectations about the performance and development direction, provides feedback and feedforward and enters into a dialogue with the employee. In this way, the manager helps the employee visualise or initiate development. The manager and the employee jointly decide on the frequency of development interviews. The employee is responsible for digital reporting. The manager may add to the report (digitally).

It may happen that an employee has not been able to develop sufficiently within the role. If the employee becomes aware that their growth is unsatisfactory, they can make a proposal to start the desired development. The manager adopts a coaching role and guides and encourages the employee's development.

If the employee's performance is unsatisfactory and they do not want to improve or develop, the manager takes the initiative and starts the assessment-oriented approach. See also figure 2.

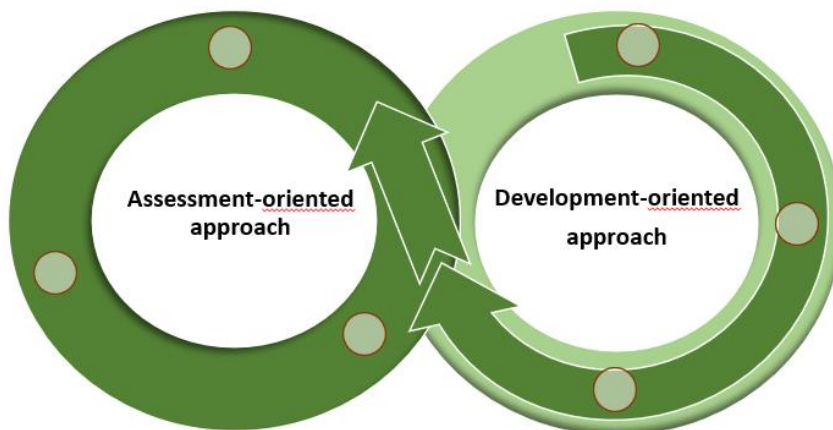


Figure 2: Schematic overview of a development-oriented approach to an assessment-oriented approach.

4 The assessment-oriented approach

The assessment-oriented approach focuses on assessing the employee's activities. It is particularly important here what a person contributes to the organisation. The assessment-based approach is initiated if one of the following reasons applies.

- For a temporary appointment; all employees with a temporary appointment. At the end of the temporary appointment, the employee will be informed about an extension, permanent appointment or termination of the temporary employment.
- In the case of a change in role.
- If the employee wishes to be assessed; an employee who has been going through the development-oriented approach for a longer period of time may request a performance assessment.
- When awarding an additional salary increase.
- In the event of unsatisfactory performance. A manager can unilaterally start an assessment-oriented approach of the development dialogue for an employee if doubt has arisen about whether the employee meets the requirements set for the role.

The development dialogue in the assessment-based approach consists of three successive interviews.

- The development interview
- The progress interview
- The assessment interview

Similar to the development-oriented approach, the conversation model is aimed at the continuous development of the employees and the (school) organisation. Attention to the professional development of employees in relation to (school or organisational) development is key.

However, this discussion model is also aimed at being able to make decisions that have consequences for the legal position. For example, a positive assessment may lead to a promotion or a permanent role. A negative assessment triggers an improvement process.

After an assessment, depending on the situation, it is possible to switch to the development-oriented approach.

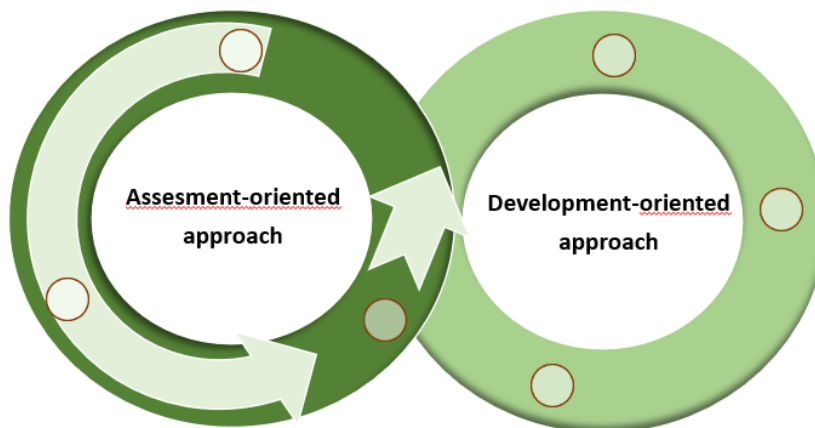


Figure 3: Schematic overview of an assessment-oriented approach to a development-oriented approach.

4.1 The development interview

The development interview is detailed in Chapter 3.1 and is also the point of departure for the assessment-oriented approach.

4.2 The progress interview

The purpose of the progress interview is an interim evaluation of whether the desired development has been achieved or whether adjustments or fine-tuning are necessary. This interview aims to discuss what is going well, any possible obstacles and what can be done to encourage development. At the request of the employee or manager, multiple progress interviews may be conducted.

The employee can choose several people (such as students, colleagues or others with whom they work closely) to ask for feedback on their development once or several times per year (digitally). In this way, the employee can determine the progress of their development.

To prepare for this interview, the employee can use the topics for discussion as included in Appendix 3.

4.3 The assessment interview

The purpose of the assessment interview is for the manager to form an opinion on the employee's. Assessments have a decision-making nature. It is a formal point at which to express appreciation and lay a solid foundation for further professional development. The employee looks back on the past year and can provide collected feedback from multiple perspectives to the manager in advance by way of input. The manager can obtain insight into the competences and different skills of the employee from various sources (for example, experiences from colleagues or external parties, student surveys, the numbers provided and the results of peer reviews), give their assessment and enter into a dialogue with the employee. The result is a joint reflection that forms the point of departure for further development.

Sometimes an employee's performance is unsatisfactory, which results in a negative assessment. The employee is then given the opportunity to improve their performance. A mandatory improvement process is then started. In this process, it is important to create clarity about the desired improvement and what is required to improve functioning.

The assessment generally covers a period of one year. In exceptional circumstances, the manager may determine a different time frame, but not shorter than six months or longer than two years.

The procedure during the assessment is as follows:

- The manager sends an agenda for the meeting well in advance. The agenda should list the topics that will be discussed during the interview.
- The employee reads through the agenda, decides which other topics they would like to discuss and makes suggestions.
- The (digital) assessment form is used to conduct the assessment interview. The manager is responsible for the report. The immediate manager draws up the assessment and discusses it with the employee. If desired, the employee may be assisted by a third party during the interview. The manager is responsible for the report.
- Employees are always given the opportunity to express their opinion about the assessment. This opinion is added to the completed assessment form.

If the immediate manager is unable to do so, the next higher manager takes their place. To draw up the assessment, the manager may obtain information from other parties who are in a position to provide input on the employee's performance. The names of these parties are mentioned on the (digital) interview form.

The discussion topics for an assessment interview have been added to the appendix.

5 Objection procedure

The employee must submit a reasoned objection to the Director/Principal. The Director/Principal checks whether the decision has been reasonably made and hears both the employee and the direct manager in that context. The employee is invited for an interview, for which they may be assisted if desired. If the objection is upheld, the Director/Principal annuls the decision and takes a new decision instead.

If the objection is declared inadmissible or unfounded, the employee may decide to submit an objection to the Executive Board. The Executive Board forwards the notice of objection, accompanied by any documents relating to the assessment, to the objections committee within fourteen days of receipt. The Executive Board decides on the notice of objection within fourteen days of receipt of the objections committee's advice.

The decision taken by the Executive Board is sent to the employee and the formal assessor within two weeks, stating the reasons. The decision(s) taken by the Executive Board and any related documents are kept in the personnel file.

5.1 Objections Committee

The objections committee consists of a chairperson, who is also a member, and two members: one member, who is not a member of the board, is appointed on the recommendation of or by the board; one member is appointed on the recommendation of the staff of the (C)PC; the chairperson is appointed based on the recommendation of the two members.

The members are appointed by or on behalf of the Executive Board for a period of two years and are eligible for reappointment. If no nomination for a new two-year term has been made two months prior to the expiration of the term of appointment, the appointment is deemed to have been continued for an equal period.

The objections committee gives the employee, the formal assessor and anyone whom it deems necessary in the interest of the case the opportunity to be heard. The employee may be assisted by a third party. No later than three weeks after the hearing, the objections committee issues written advice to the director.

In cases for which these regulations do not provide, the Director decides whether the Executive Board has heard both discussion partners.

6 Attachments

Sample interview agenda and questions

Development interview

Agenda

1. Retrospective
2. Looking forward
3. Feedback and reflection
Review of completed instruments: student evaluation, observation tool, flash visits, (360-degree) feedback, evaluations
4. Development, education and guidance needs
5. Well-being
Work/private life, absenteeism, working conditions, social functioning within the team.
6. Agreements for the coming period

Questions from the employee:

- What agreements were made in the previous interview?
- How did I handle these agreements?
- How can I get the best out of myself in this role? What do I need to achieve that?
- Have I asked colleagues for feedback? Or what type of feedback have I asked my colleagues for?
- How do I keep my knowledge up to date? Or what have I done to keep my knowledge up to date?
- What is my contribution to the (school) goals?
- What do I need to be able to make that contribution or to be optimally deployable?
- Have I requested or followed intervention, education, etc.?
- Where do I want to be 5 years from now?

Questions from the manager:

- What do you need to be able to work in pleasant conditions?
- What are you proud of? And how can that be leveraged more optimally?
- What is challenging for you?
- What is your main driver in your work?
- How will you give substance to the (new) direction of the (school) organisation?
- What will you contribute to the (school) goals?
- How are you going to go about it?
- How are you planning to anticipate the changes in your work?
- What are your strengths and how or where can you put them to good use?

Progress interview

Agenda

1. Progress on agreements
2. Looking forward
3. Feedback and reflection
4. Well-being
5. Agreements

Questions from the employee:

- How is my development progressing?
- Am I managing to achieve my goals?
- What works, what doesn't work, and why?
- Are there any problems that I cannot solve myself, and who or what do I need to solve them?
- How is the collaboration with others going?
- Do I ask for targeted feedback?
- Agreements for the near future?

Questions from the manager:

- What are you satisfied about and what are you less satisfied with?
- How do you experience working with me as a manager? Do you feel I support you sufficiently? Do you have any points for improvement for me?
- What contribution do you make to the team? How is the collaboration with your colleagues?
- Are there certain activities that are not going well? Why is that?
- What would help you function even better? In which areas would you like to improve yourself?
- Are you interested in further training?

Assessment interview

The assessment form is the agenda for the assessment interview

Agenda

1. Result agreements
2. Professional development
3. Working together
4. Overall assessment
5. Agreements

Questions from the manager:

- How is the progress on the result agreements?
- Which goals have been achieved and which have not? What (personal) circumstances have played a role in this?
- Which competencies, knowledge or skills have you developed?
- How was this development achieved?
- How can you further develop/improve yourself?