

# DTU Leadership Dialogue: Q&A

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## Why ...

### *Why is DTU choosing a dialogue-based approach to leadership evaluation?*

DTU is a university based on leadership. Therefore, we are continuously working to develop the quality of our leadership. In how we work with leadership evaluation, dialogue and reflection contribute to the actual process of supporting ongoing leadership development at DTU. We do so because, at its best, dialogue can release people's potential across gender, culture, and academic competences. This is why we call it the DTU Leadership Dialogue

### *Why focus on development?*

The purpose of the DTU Leadership Dialogue is to build organizational capacity for dialogue and collaboration. Therefore, the process is organized to focus on dialogue about input for strengthened leadership development and collaboration between manager and employees. This is a conscious addition to a conventional manager evaluation which is based on employees assessing the manager's performance according to predefined parameters.

### *Why focus on dialogue?*

DTU closely follows the developments within public leadership. Experience shows that greater focus on reflection and dialogue contributes to ongoing professionalization of leadership quality. Therefore, everyone at DTU is being invited to participate in the current dialogue about leadership, where the absence of measurement enables the dialogue to focus on the manager's and the employee's own experiences as well as their wishes for leadership development.

### *Why does DTU have both a well-being and a leadership dialogue?*

From 2020, DTU has decided that the organization will focus more on both well-being and leadership. Consequently, a structure is being established which will focus each year on well-being and leadership. The well-being dialogue focuses on working with our shared responsibility to ensure well-being, while the leadership dialogue focuses on dialogue about leadership and input to what can be increased and decreased in future leadership development.

### *Why is everyone being invited to a dialogue about leadership?*

DTU is the setting for a mutually binding working community largely based on dialogue in the organization. We have a long tradition of dialogue-based education and research. In recent years, this practice has become increasingly popular within the culture of cooperation and work, as dialogue—at its best—can release people's potential across gender, culture, and academic competences. DTU Leadership is confident that all employees will be happy to accept an invitation from their manager to a dialogue about leadership.

### *Why has the anonymous survey been discontinued?*

The anonymous survey is a snapshot of an organization's attitude to past experiences. The anonymized form makes the results difficult to utilize. Who was the respondent? How did he/she understand the questions? How has the response scale been interpreted? It can be difficult to interpret and even harder to translate into valuable leadership development.

NB: If you want to be anonymous due to abusive behaviour, go to DTU Inside to find the available contact options for enquiries, and what happens when you contact whom. For all the options, including a whistleblower scheme for anonymous registration, go to DTU Inside/HR/Working Environment/Offensive Behaviour

### *Why are all leadership dialogues facilitated?*

DTU wants to create processes that strengthen the opportunity to talk about our concerns – and also about things that can be difficult or sensitive to raise. It requires the courage and trust of managers and employees alike. Group HR is facilitating DTU Leadership Dialogue to ensure a consistent and constructive process across DTU's units.

## Who ...

### *Who is invited to a DTU Leadership Dialogue?*

All employees. This means that all managers are expected to invite their own employees to a DTU Leadership Dialogue, and that all managers will themselves be invited to a DTU Leadership Dialogue by their immediate manager (as an employee). The reason for this is that DTU is the setting for a mutually binding working community based largely on dialogue in the organization. The DTU management is confident that all leaders will invite their employees to a DTU Leadership Dialogue – and that all employees will be happy to accept an invitation from their manager to a dialogue about leadership.

### *Who is a manager at DTU?*

Basically, the organizational chart shows who is a manager and for whom. This organization is often reflected at DTU Inside, and also appears from DTU Employee.

Some units also work in an interdisciplinary matrix organization, have chosen not to delegate the full manager role, or work with a more informal organization with small groups. Regardless of the situation, the recommendation is that all units ensure transparency about the management hierarchy, as it makes it easier for managers and employees to navigate the organization.

In relation to carrying out the actual DTU Leadership Dialogue, the planning team (head of department, HR partner and vice chair of the Local Collaboration Committee (LSU)) will decide the framework for who (through their management role) invites whom to which leadership dialogues.

### *Who decides when we conduct DTU Leadership Dialogues in my unit?*

DTU Leadership Dialogues are held every two years, alternately with the DTU Well-being Dialogues. If there is a desire for more frequent DTU Leadership Dialogues, the head of department has, based on a dialogue with the vice chairman of the Local Cooperation Committee and the HR partner, a mandate to make such a decision.

Both the DTU Well-being and Leadership Dialogues are designed to support a culture where well-being and leadership are discussed continuously. Therefore, the cooperation and occupational health and safety representatives can request a DTU Leadership Dialogue if, for example, there are grounds for concern, or if there is a desire to benefit from the process more often than every other year.

### *Who knows the results of the DTU Leadership Dialogues?*

There is never a single result or conclusion that creates a momentary snapshot of the situation. Our experience from the DTU Well-being Dialogues indicates there are more and more reasons for having a dialogue about well-being and leadership. The reasons for holding dialogues are related to developing a safe and trusting dialogue culture, where we regularly discuss, for example, how we feel, and how we experience leadership and its conduct.

## How ... are any uncertainties handled?

### *How can I respond anonymously?*

You can't, but you will become part of a process in which both employees and managers engage in training to talk more together about how they each experience and prioritize in relation to leadership.

### *How can I talk about problems which are difficult to discuss?*

Dialogue requires practice, and is not necessarily easy. Like the previous leadership evaluation, it is still necessary to talk openly about current issues in order to initiate remedial action. The DTU Leadership Dialogue is designed so that employees talk to each other without their manager being present, and then for them to communicate inputs to their manager together.

### *What do I do if I don't wish to talk out loud about what I've been experiencing?*

A leadership dialogue will always be preceded by one or more planning meetings. Such meetings are attended by the head of department, the vice chairman of the Local Cooperation Committee and the HR partner. If you're worried that you won't feel happy talking about what you're experiencing, you can contact someone from the planning group to discuss your concerns. You can also decide to contact your local union representative, occupational health and safety representative or occupational health and safety coordinator depending on who you feel confident talking to.

### *How is offensive behaviour registered?*

We do not accept offensive behaviour at DTU. At DTU Inside, you can find out about all the various contact options which are available for enquiries, and what happens when you contact whom. DTU also has a whistleblower scheme for anonymous registration. You will find all the options including the whistleblower scheme at DTU Inside/ HR/Working Environment/Offensive Behaviour

### *What is the union representative's role regarding enquiries from employees who feel anxious?*

The union representative is somebody you can talk to and who can help shed light on a problem that you are experiencing. Your union representative can also tell you about who you can speak with at DTU if you feel uncomfortable in your working environment. The union representative is also able to use an enquiry as a reason for putting a general concern on the agenda, for example at a Local Cooperation Committee meeting.

### *How is due diligence ensured?*

A dialogue-based approach to well-being and leadership requires a well-functioning cooperation and working environment organization. The close cooperation between leadership and staff means that in situations where there is uncertainty about the cooperation and leadership culture, it is handled by means of ongoing dialogue with the involvement of the relevant people. Addressing inappropriate leadership behaviour must always be prompt and must never be postponed on the pretext of awaiting an annual well-being or leadership dialogue.

## How ... does planning take place?

### *How does the Local Cooperation Committee act as part of the process?*

The Local Cooperation Committee is responsible for regularly putting both leadership and well-being on the agenda. The Local Cooperation Committee is also able to suggest that leadership dialogues are held more frequently based on the number of enquiries.

### *How does one prepare for a DTU Leadership Dialogue?*

Prior to a leadership dialogue, there are always one or more planning meetings between the head of department, the vice chairman of the Local Cooperation Committee, and the HR partner. The meeting provides an opportunity to voice any concerns. This might be enquiries from employees who are uncomfortable with their manager, employee groups who are experiencing performance challenges, or managers about whom there is already a degree of uncertainty.

### *How are situations handled when there are concerns about the quality of the leadership?*

If there is any uncertainty about the quality of the leadership, it is necessary to decide in each particular situation what the right process is in the circumstances. The head of department, the vice chairman of the Local Cooperation Committee and the HR partner are responsible for organizing a suitable leadership dialogue. In some situations, it might involve postponing the DTU Leadership Dialogue while a case is handled in the leadership chain. In other situations, it might be a question of discussing who—in addition to the parties involved—participates in the DTU Leadership Dialogue because their presence will strengthen the psychological sense of security.

### *How does DTU work with inappropriate leadership?*

One of the strengths of taking a dialogue-based approach is that it provides more reasons for dialogue about leadership.

In situations where there is some uncertainty about inappropriate leadership behaviour, it is essential to act promptly. The dialogue can shed light on the problem, and sometimes help to de-escalate a potential conflict. Addressing a lack of well-being or inappropriate leadership behaviour must always be prompt and must never be postponed on the pretext of awaiting an annual well-being or leadership dialogue.

## How ... are dialogues conducted?

### *How are DTU Leadership Dialogues conducted?*

All units have to conduct DTU Leadership Dialogues. Each unit can decide for itself how and when they want to hold the leadership dialogue. At DTU Inside, the concept, process, and support tools are described.

### *How does it take place?*

The DTU Leadership Dialogue is designed to build organizational capacity for dialogue and collaboration. Consequently, it is natural to conduct as many leadership dialogues as there are managers. The large number of groups that need facilitating can be a significant task for the HR partner. This means that some units extend the process over a longer period of time than others.

### *How can I obtain help with starting the dialogue, and what shall we talk about?*

Your choice of dialogue card helps to determine a framework for what to talk about. The dialogue cards reflect the DTU Leadership Role, and can be found at DTU Inside/leadership/DTU Leadership Dialogue/Dialogue Card.

### *How do the three steps in the DTU Leadership Dialogue relate to one another?*

DTU Leadership Dialogues are structured around three steps. In step one, the manager participates. The manager decides on the framework for the discussion, and invites the employee for a dialogue about his or her own leadership development. The manager does not participate in step two. In step two, the employees have a dialogue about their own experiences with the manager and gather input for leadership development. In step three, the manager participates again. The employees have a dialogue about what they have discussed. The manager listens, and invites dialogue on how to strengthen the cooperation. HR facilitates all three steps.

### *How are DTU Leadership Dialogues conducted when there are lots of small groups?*

DTU Leadership Dialogue is designed so that the process can be scaled to the number of employees reporting to the manager. DTU Leadership Dialogue does not require a minimum number of employees to be present. This means that it makes sense to conduct as many leadership dialogues as there are managers.

### *How are DTU Leadership Dialogues conducted when a manager has a large group of direct reports?*

If a manager has up to 15 direct reports, it is recommended that the leadership dialogues are conducted as described in the concept; however, consider organizing step two so that employees are divided into two groups (which the HR partner moves between).

If a manager has more than 15 direct reports, Corporate HR recommends that several independent DTU Leadership Dialogues are held. This places other demands on the employee group with regard to recaps and cohesion. The planning team decides which solution is most suitable for the actual situation. The recommendation for increasing the numbers of leadership dialogues is about ensuring that there is trust in the group and the time and space needed for everyone to have their say.

### *How can I evaluate my immediate manager?*

You are able to evaluate your manager in the DTU Leadership Dialogues. These take place at least every second year. The evaluation is dialogue-based, and focuses on input for leadership development and strengthened forward-looking cooperation.

### *How can I evaluate top management?*

DTU Leadership Dialogues focus on strengthening dialogue about leadership between employees and managers. This means that managers who report to senior management are invited to a leadership dialogue with a view to evaluating their immediate manager, and so on down through the management hierarchy. All employees therefore receive an invitation to a DTU Leadership Dialogue from their immediate manager. As the number of management levels varies from unit to unit, it is only natural that employees find they are invited to attend a DTU Leadership Dialogue at different times.

## How ... to ensure the next step

### *How does the manager's manager know what kind of input the employees have for the manager?*

One to two weeks after a DTU Leadership Dialogue, the manager invites his or her own immediate manager for a follow-up talk. The agenda is leadership development, and the focus is on what the employees wanted their manager to prioritize/deprioritize, as well as how the manager's manager can support the manager's future leadership development. Both the manager's manager and the manager are welcome to contact the unit's HR partner for help/feedback.

### *How am I—as an employee—involved in the subsequent steps?*

Six to eight weeks after a DTU Leadership Dialogue, the manager invites all employees to a joint meeting. At the meeting, the manager thanks everyone for their input, and provides a status on areas that he or she will prioritize/deprioritize in future, and discuss how to strengthen cooperation with employees. The manager is welcome to contact the unit's HR partner for help with facilitation.

### *How is the Local Cooperation Committee involved in the next steps?*

At the next Local Cooperation Committee meeting following a DTU Leadership Dialogue, the learning points from the process are discussed, focusing on the role of the Local Cooperation Committee and the possibility of contributing to strengthened collaboration, as well as which learning points can be taken to the next DTU Leadership Dialogue. The head of department is welcome to contact the unit's HR partner for help in thematizing what has dominated the DTU Leadership Dialogues.