Valuable Conversations

First Produced:	20/09/2022	Authorisation:	Te Kāhui Manukura (TKM)
Current Version:	04/09/25		
Past Revisions:	20/09/22	Officer	Director – People & Culture (P&C)
Review Cycle:	3 years	Responsible:	
Applies From:	Immediately		

All policies on the Ara website are the current version. Please check date of this hard copy before proceeding.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

a To empower colleagues to partner with their line manager to establish role clarity, set performance goals, and support individual wellbeing.

b To ensure a positive colleague experience focused on recruiting, selecting, growing, and promoting Ara Institute of Canterbury's (Ara) internal talent wherever possible, by retaining capable, highly engaged colleagues who will continue to build a great place to work and study for themselves and the Ara community.

c To facilitate alignment of effort and focus to ensure Ara achieves its purpose of Transforming lives through education, strategic goals, and key performance indicators.

1.2 Scope and Application

This policy applies to all colleagues at Ara, except those employed on a casual basis. A disciplinary performance management conversation is not within the scope of this policy. Please refer to *CPP208 Resolving Employee Performance or Conduct Issues*.

1.3 Formal Delegations

Refer to the *Delegations Schedule*.

1.4 Definitions

a **Valuable Conversation:** A structured conversation between a colleague and their line manager in which they jointly explore the colleague's experience and actions, and then refine and agree performance, wellbeing, engagement, and development goals for the next period.

b **Line manager:** The person, usually a colleague's manager, with the delegation to hold the Valuable Conversation with the colleague.

c **Colleague:** An Ara employee, whose role, performance, wellbeing, engagement, capability, professional feedback, and professional development is being discussed and planned for.

d **My Thinking Sheet:** A recommended tool that can be customised by teams to support colleague to prepare for their Valuable Conversation by noting down what they would like to achieve in the next period and how they would like to work with their line manager to ensure success for themselves and their team.

e **The Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan :** Is a tool for documenting the colleague's values, wellbeing, engagement, performance and development goals and progress relating to these.

f **Performance Conversation:** A focused conversation on a performance issue where required standards are not being met. A Valuable Conversation is not intended to be used as a performance issue conversation. In such a situation refer to *CPP208 Resolving Employee Performance or Conduct Issues*.

g **Probation:** A probationary period will be indicated in the employment agreement. A probationary plan and report are developed to support the colleague through this period.

h **Delegate:** A suitably experienced and trained colleague that can fulfil the responsibility of conducting the Valuable Conversation and is well placed to support the growth and development of colleagues under the supervision of the line manager.

Related Ara Ltd Procedures (Waituhi, employee intranet) • Employment Agreements • Academic Promotion • Performance Recognition • CPP208a Staff Complaints about Staff Process • CPP208b Staff Complaints about Students Process	**Related Ara Ltd Policies** • CPP114 Information and Records Management • CPP204 Equal Employment Opportunities • CPP208 Resolving Employee Performance or Conduct Issues • CPP211 Code of Professional Practice • CPP213 Recruitment Selection and Appointment of Staff • CPP214 People and Culture Management • CPP217 Professional/Capability Development
Related Legislation or Other Documentation • NZQA Quality Assurance Framework • Privacy Act 2020	**Good Practice Guidelines** (Waituhi, employee intranet) Valuable Conversations tools and guides: • Leader & People Conversation Guides • Thinking Sheet tools • Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan
References	
Notes	

2 Principles

2.1 The Valuable Conversation is a partnership between colleagues and their line managers that prioritises the growth and development of all Ara colleagues.

2.2 Valuable Conversations build individual and organisational capability by enabling a colleague to self-evaluate their achievement against the goals (performance, wellbeing, engagement, and development) they have agreed with their line manager and consider what they may do differently to improve future outcomes. Through coaching conversations, line managers and colleagues can reflect upon, identify, and address any factors that may impact how well the colleague performs. They are then able to agree approaches to overcome challenges to ensure optimal performance, wellbeing, engagement, and capability.

2.3 All line managers are accountable for providing culturally appropriate opportunities for colleagues to engage in Valuable Conversations and to provide opportunities for colleagues to grow and to contribute effectively to strategic and departmental priorities.

2.4 Valuable Conversations are to occur in a respectful and constructive manner with colleagues and line managers collaborating to design a *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan*

that empowers the colleague to successfully deliver the outcomes required for their role and to build their capability for the future.

2.5 Valuable Conversations are not designed to manage performance issues. Ara has a separate process for this (refer *CPP208 Resolving Employee Performance and Conduct Issues*). Performance issues will be raised as they occur.

3 Associated procedures for Ara Corporate Policy on: Valuable Conversations

Contents:

3.1 Overview
3.2 Who is the Valuable Conversation with?
3.3 Role of the Line Manager
3.4 Role of the Colleague
3.5 Role of P&C
3.6 Capability Support
3.7 Relationship between Valuable Conversations and Performance Management
3.8 Relationship between Valuable Conversations and Probation
3.9 Relationship between Valuable Conversations and Progression/Promotion/Performance Recognition
3.10 Recording of Valuable Conversations

3.1 Overview

a Colleagues who are expected to participate in a Valuable Conversation are –

i All tenured (permanent) employees (including permanent part time).

ii Limited tenured (Fixed term of 12 months or more - full-time, part-time, proportional) employees.

b It is expected that permanent full-time colleagues will participate in **three (3)** Valuable Conversations with their line manager, or delegate, annually. For other colleagues, the number of Valuable Conversations will be reduced according to role proportion, employment contract and context.

c Scheduling time for a Valuable Conversation is the shared responsibility of the line manager and colleague.

d For new colleagues, their first Valuable Conversation will occur at the completion of their 90-day induction.

e The colleague is strongly encouraged to complete a Valuable Conversation Thinking Sheet and share this with their line manager prior to the Valuable Conversation to aid line manager preparation.

f The colleague and their line manager will jointly discuss the Valuable Conversation Thinking Sheet, or other culturally appropriate tool, and use this to generate a conversation that results in an agreed upon *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan* for the next period.

g If there is disagreement on goals and/or feedback, the relevant P&C Business Partner will be engaged to facilitate a pathway to agreement being reached.

3.2 Who is the Valuable Conversation with?

a In the normal course of events colleagues will have Valuable Conversations with their line manager, however in some cases the line manager may delegate this responsibility to a suitably experienced and trained delegate (e.g., Principal or Senior Academic Staff Member, or team line manager). Where this is to be the case, this will be approved with the line manager's line manager and the P&C Business Partner.

b Where a colleague reports to more than one person, all parties will mutually agree on who and how to conduct Valuable Conversations in the most effective way.

c Line managers must notify their line manager if they are scheduled to have a Valuable Conversation with a close family member or friend and declare any other conflict of interest. The line manager will determine if this is appropriate and may put in place checks and balances to ensure the Valuable Conversation is fair and appropriate.

d Ara is committed to upholding professional standards. Colleagues are expected to maintain professional working relationships that supersede "personality conflicts". Personality conflict, therefore, is not automatically a sufficient reason for an alternative individual to conduct a Valuable Conversation. The division Director will not unreasonably refuse an appropriate alternative when a defensible reason for the change is presented.

3.3 Role of the Line Manager

a The line manager has responsibility of –

i Creating a high-performance culture within their team where efforts are aligned to strategic and department goals, and each colleague has opportunities for growth and development.

ii Creating a team environment where Valuable Conversations are valued and prioritised so that all colleagues feel good and function well at work.

iii Providing a psychologically safe, mana enhancing environment to enable open and honest conversations and feedback to determine what is working well and identify areas for improvement.

iv Co-designing a relevant, implementable, and achievable Growth and Performance Plan that supports and encourages colleagues to take responsibility for their performance, wellbeing, engagement, and capability development.

v Supporting ongoing personal and professional development.

vi Providing ongoing recognition and feedback in a constructive manner to encourage high standards of performance and achievement.

vii Establishing and maintaining team protocols and expectations around completing and recording Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan s as a result of a Valuable Conversation with colleagues.

viii Establish mechanisms to monitor the regular occurrence and that the experience for colleagues meets the principles of Valuable Conversations.

3.4 Role of the Colleague

a The colleague has responsibility of –

i Creating a high-performance culture within their team where efforts are aligned to strategic and department goals, and each colleague has opportunities for growth and development.

ii Considering how they want to achieve or exceed their expectations at Ara.

iii Partnering with their line manager to set aside time for regular Valuable Conversations.

iv Preparing for their Valuable Conversation using the My Thinking Sheet or another

culturally appropriate tool, to consider what they need to do to feel good and function well at work. This includes how they can positively contribute to and benefit from the teams' engagement and wellbeing and how they can work with their line manager to enable the achievement of their goals.

v Participating openly and willingly in Valuable Conversations.

vi Clarifying expectations if they are unclear - this includes preparing for the Valuable Conversation by updating themselves about Ara Strategic Focus Areas and Priorities, the Framework for Māori Achievement, departmental priorities, team plans, individual role expectations.

vii Participating in documenting goals in the Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan.

viii Committing to taking action to achieve their Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan goals and reviewing these regularly. Where achievement of the goals is not possible, communicating this early to their line manager.

ix Informing their line manager early if things are not going well and not waiting for a Valuable Conversation to raise concerns. Also, assisting in the identification of, and as far as possible, removal of barriers to good performance.

x Contacting P&C Business Partner for support if the above isn't realising results.

3.5 Role of P&C Division

a The provision, development and updating of the Valuable Conversation approach and related templates and guidelines. (See Waituhi, employee intranet)

b Providing development opportunities for line managers and colleagues in the Valuable Conversation approach, including how to conduct a conversation in a culturally appropriate way.

c Providing support and coaching for line managers to enable them to engage in Valuable Conversations using a coaching approach.

d Along with the Business Partners, be the contact point for colleagues who have been unsuccessful in engaging with their line manager in Valuable Conversations.

e Providing support and coaching for line managers who have been unable to engage reluctant colleagues in the Valuable Conversations process.

3.6 Capability Support

a P&C are responsible for providing training and support on Ara processes and practice for effective Valuable Conversations. This training includes specific support to enable line managers to implement culturally appropriate approaches.

b P&C are responsible for providing resources and tools to support effective Valuable Conversations that meet the needs of our diverse workforce.

c Colleagues/line managers should contact P&C if they require Valuable Conversation support, training or coaching.

3.7 Relationship Between Valuable Conversation and Performance Management

a The Valuable Conversation approach is one opportunity to establish, review and discuss performance including goals and development plans. These discussions can include a colleague's performance, areas for growth, barriers to success and the individual's contribution to the department/Ara's focus areas and priorities.

b Valuable Conversations are not designed to manage poor performance or performance issues. Ara has another process for this (Refer *CPP208 Resolving Employee Performance and Conduct Issues* policy). Performance issues are to be raised as they occur.

3.8 Relationship Between Valuable Conversations and Probation

a Depending upon a colleague's contractual circumstances, probation reviews are scheduled for 6, 12 and 24 months. Valuable Conversations may occur up to three times per year. The line manager and the colleague will discuss and agree the best approach to both processes and may consider combining these discussions to enable the effective completion of the *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan* and *Probation Report*.

b Information from the *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan* may inform the completion of parts of the *Probation Report*.

3.9 Relationship between Valuable Conversations and Progression/ Promotion/Performance Recognition

a Valuable Conversations provide the opportunity to discuss and plan for progression, promotion, and performance recognition. Line managers and colleagues' partner agree on a long-term development plan to be ready for these steps, and the performance and development goals, and review of these provide evidence that can be used as part of the applications.

b Further information on these processes is available on Waituhi (employee intranet) –

i People and Employment/Help me With/Recognition, Promotion and Progression

3.10 Recording of Valuable Conversation

a The *My Thinking Sheet* tool is a preparation tool for the Valuable Conversation. This is intended to be viewed by the colleague and their Line manager as a key input to the *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan* . The *My Thinking Sheet* tool is to be retained by the colleague.

b The *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan* including performance, wellbeing, development, and engagement goals are Ara's official record of the Valuable Conversation. These will be saved in a digital location that the line manager, delegate (if involved) and colleague can access.

c Records of Valuable Conversations may be viewed by the line manager's line manager and by the P&C Business Partner.

d When a change in line manager occurs, the *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan* is to be made available to the new line manager.

e Information contained in the *Valuable Conversation* / *Valuable Conversation Professional Development Plan* documents will not be disclosed to external parties. Any concerns pertaining to this requirement should be directed to the Ara Privacy Officer, privacy@ara.ac.nz.