

OVERVIEW DOCUMENT: UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA PDR

Development of Performance Development Review (PDR) has been in discussion for at least 5 years, and both AUQA and Employer of Choice responses have supported the desirability of such a program.

McPhee Andrewartha was appointed in 2004 to investigate and develop a University of Canberra PDR Program. In 2005 McPhee Andrewartha assisted a University PDR Steering Group in conducting a very successful pilot implementation of PDR in four Divisions. The final PDR policy and process has been developed from this successful pilot, in response to the extensive contributions of University staff, gained over the consultation and pilot implementation periods.

The recently released Federal Government HEWRR requirements stipulate a functioning, effective PDR, and part of these requirements is that there be a more explicit linkage between the PDR and how Universities address both high performance and low performance. These relationships have always existed, and were implicit in the PDR model piloted successfully in 2005, but the HEWRR requirements have necessitated that these be stated as part of the PDR policy. The Federal Government has tied compliance with this to significant Government funding of tertiary education. This new requirement accounts for most of the visible changes from the pilot PDR to the final PDR.

THE PDR PROCESS

A Definition of PDR

PDR is a continuous process in which managers, supervisors and staff work together towards agreed outcomes by defining work goals and standards, monitoring actual performance against these and ensuring that the best results are achieved for all participants: it is *not* a synonym for performance appraisal, nor is it simply completing an annual 'report card'.

A reasonable definition of 'performance' in this sense is 'effort applied over time to the achievement of meaningful outcomes'. We can therefore distinguish between *performance* and *activity*. Activity occurs all the time at work; much of it is productive, but not all. To know whether a particular activity is useful we must put it in the context of what the organisation needs to achieve through the activities of its staff. PDR is a process that helps members of staff to focus their activities and to translate them into meaningful and successful performance.

PDR is not necessarily a one-to-one process between a staff member and his or her supervisor. Teams may be involved in the process of establishing performance expectations. The important point is that every work area will need to establish the exact form of performance management that is appropriate for their area. The University of Canberra PDR allows for a high degree of tailoring to suit specific circumstances.

OBJECTIVES OF PDR

The primary objective of PDR is to enhance the capability of the University by developing each staff member's work performance to meet or exceed the requirements for their current position, or to prepare them for another position or a more senior role that they might wish to pursue.

The objectives of PDR are to:

- assist in the achievement of the goals and objectives of the University Division/School/ Unit
- foster the professional development and performance of each staff member, and to ensure their alignment with the needs of their work area and with the University's mission and strategic priorities
- assist staff members to develop and perform to their full potential
- provide constructive feedback about performance and progress
- recognise and reward high performing staff members for their achievements or contributions to the University
- enable individual staff members' performance problems to be identified and addressed at an early stage
- improve or enhance staff members' work performance through identification of professional development needs for their current position or career development needs for a future position.

The PDR process is aimed at facilitating a formal conversation between supervisors and their staff in order to have a shared understanding of work expectations. The focus of PDR is on the process of planning, discussing, recognising and reviewing the work performance of University staff in the context of School and Unit plans and objectives.

Consistent with the HEWRR requirements, the PDR process must involve the recognition and reward of high-performing individual staff, and the identification of staff requiring support to improve performance. The relevant PVC/Executive Director needs to be informed about those staff thus identified. While PDR will identify and address areas where improvement may be necessary, it is not the main mechanism for managing poor performance or disciplinary issues. The University has established a *related process* to assist in improving poor performance through a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), and also has an established procedure for addressing disciplinary issues, which is linked to the PDR process *but is not part of it*.

PRINCIPLES

PDR is based on the following principles:

- **Transparency:** a system that is understood and accepted by all participants
- **Trust:** a partnership between the staff member and their supervisor
- **Respect:** valuing the other's perspective, needs, position, and/or contribution
- **Participation:** constructive and collaborative management of performance issues
- **Monitoring:** a normal part of any supervisor's regular work
- **Communication:** timely, bias free, objective and candid interaction

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellors and Executive Directors are responsible for resourcing, implementing and monitoring PDR within the University and their respective Divisions.

The Director, Human Resources is responsible for overseeing PDR policy, procedures, guidelines, forms and supplementary resources, advice and consultancy, and for coordinating training.

The responsibility of the individual staff member is to:

- freely discuss their work and its progress, including any difficulties
- seek to clarify expectations if necessary
- ask for help, training or resources where needed
- be open to discussion of any feedback in a non-defensive way
- identify issues which could impact on performance in future
- provide feedback to their supervisor.

The responsibility of the supervisor is to:

- be well informed of the staff member's progress through observing actions and outcomes
- listen to the staff member's comments and openly discuss them with the staff member
- ask questions to clarify performance levels and achievement of objectives
- provide and openly discuss feedback
- be open to both positive and negative feedback from the staff member
- be prepared to alter plans or individual objectives if circumstances require.
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PARTICIPATION

All staff members of the University of Canberra will participate in PDR.

Each staff member will have a nominated supervisor for the purposes of PDR.

Where a mentor has been assigned to an individual staff member, the mentor may, at the invitation of the employee and with the agreement of the supervisor, participate in the PDR process.

THE PDR CYCLE

The basis of the PDR model is an annual discussion between a staff member and their supervisor. The discussion has two parts:

- A first meeting that will focus on an agreed understanding of goals, expectations and aspirations for the following 12 months.
- A second meeting that reviews the accomplishments and difficulties of the year and identifies completed goals, goals to continue and new areas to be developed.

The purposes of these meetings are to plan staff activity, to agree performance expectations and to review and reflect on achievements. PDR does not replace normal supervisory responsibility for regular monitoring, communication and contact between staff and their supervisors. During the review period informal discussions are needed to ensure that agreed objectives remain appropriate and feedback on performance is exchanged.

The PDR discussions give staff members and their supervisors an opportunity to:

- review the staff member's duty statement/responsibilities
- set performance objectives and develop a plan to achieve the performance objectives
- discuss professional development objectives and where appropriate develop a plan to achieve the professional development objectives
- identify levels of high performance that could be considered for reward.

THE PAPERWORK

A generic template is provided to guide the supervisor and the staff member through the process. The template is provided as a guide to assist the process and to give a flexible way to record the PDR discussions between staff members and their supervisors. The template is not prescriptive; it may be modified to suit local work place or individual needs. While it is important to complete the paperwork to record what has been agreed during the discussions, the major focus is on the constructive discussion between the staff member and the supervisor, rather than simply completing the paperwork.

The template has a number of general areas of focus. The decision about which of the key areas are to be the focus in any PDR cycle will arise from the discussion between the staff member and the supervisor and will vary according to individual roles and areas of activity.

Access to an employee's PDR documents will be limited to the employee, the employee's supervisor, the employee's Pro Vice-Chancellor/Executive Director, and the employee's Head of School/Director.

INFORMATION ABOUT PDR

The Human Resources website has further information on the PDR process, including the necessary forms. For documentation and training available to staff and supervisors in using the process see:

<https://guard.canberra.edu.au/cocoon/policydb/browseCategory?CategoryId=33>.

COMPLAINTS

A staff member who has been personally affected and feel aggrieved by a decision or process under this policy may seek redress under the *University of Canberra Enterprise Agreement 2004–2006*, clause 8.

IDENTIFYING AND REWARDING HIGH PERFORMING INDIVIDUAL STAFF

The HEWRR requirements stipulate that provisions for identifying and rewarding high performance are explicitly described in relation to the PDR process.

The required standard for high performance is that the staff member has fully met all expectations, targets and performance indicators that were agreed at the commencement of the PDR cycle and has far exceeded most of them.

Consistency in high performance assessments across the University is necessary for purposes of equity. A supervisor who considers that a staff member has demonstrated high performance will discuss recognition or reward with their Head of School/Director or Pro Vice-Chancellor/Executive Director as appropriate. The Vice-Chancellor's awards and other forms of acknowledgement are in place. Separate to this the VCAC will determine options for reward and recognition during 2006.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

The HEWRR requirements stipulate that provisions for managing poor performance and for performance improvement are explicitly described in relation to the PDR process.

Normally the regular monitoring and feedback that occurs throughout the PDR cycle will ensure that the staff member will fully meet all of the agreed performance expectations. Supporting staff in continuous performance improvement is part of the standard role of any supervisor.

If a supervisor believes that the staff member is not meeting agreed performance expectations, they should discuss with the staff member the specific areas requiring improvement, and agree a plan of action and period of time to improve the performance (a Performance Improvement Plan). Ongoing coaching and constructive feedback is then provided as part of the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to support the staff member in achieving the performance improvement required. This may occur at any stage of the PDR cycle.

The staff member and supervisor will jointly review the results on completion of the improvement period. If the agreed improvement is achieved, the supervisor/manager will inform the staff member both verbally and in writing.

If the staff member fails to meet the agreed PIP expectations to a significant degree, and outcomes have been identified as unsatisfactory, then the supervisor/manager will follow the process set out in the Unsatisfactory Performance provisions of the *University of Canberra Enterprise Agreement 2004–2006*:

<http://www.canberra.edu.au/hr/conditions/ea-04-06.rtf>.

The relevant clauses are:

- for academic staff—clause 63
- for general staff—sub-clause 49.

This step is undertaken in consultation with a representative of the Director Human Resources.

GUIDE TO USING THE PDR TEMPLATE

The PDR template is provided as a guide to assist the process and to give a flexible way to record the PDR discussions between staff members and their supervisors. The template is not prescriptive; it may be modified to suit local work place or individual needs.

The PDR template has a number of general areas of focus. Each area should be seen as equal in importance regardless of sequence. It is not necessary to complete all areas. The decision about which of the key areas are to be the focus in any PDR cycle will arise from the discussion between the staff member and the supervisor and will vary according to individual roles and areas of activity.

THE AREAS OF FOCUS FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

The following parallel the academic promotional categories:

- Research—may relate to research work, grants, grant applications and publications
- Teaching—may relate to lecturing, tutoring or supervision of postgraduate students
- Administration—may relate to management, coordination of courses or other school responsibilities
- Community service—may relate to contributions to or involvement in the University or the broader community or to contributions to the profession

The following relate to other needs and contributions:

- Team relationships—may relate to working with colleagues within the school or other groups or committees
- Career and Professional Development—may relate to longer term goals and aspirations
- Other—may relate to longer term career aspirations and goals.

THE AREAS OF FOCUS FOR GENERAL STAFF

- Functional area—may relate to a specific area of work, such as finance, admissions, student services, school/unit administration, property services
- Customer service—may relate to interactions with students, other staff as customers, or people external to the University
- Team relationships—may relate to working with colleagues within the school/unit, department or other groups or committees
- Career and Professional Development—may relate to longer term goals and aspirations
- Other—may relate to longer term career aspirations and goals.

THE AREAS OF FOCUS FOR ELICOS STAFF

- Teaching—may relate to English language teaching, tutoring or supervision of students
- Administration—may relate to management, coordination of courses or other school responsibilities
- Customer service—may relate to interactions with students, other staff as customers, or people external to the University
- Team relationships—may relate to working with colleagues within the school/unit, department or other groups or committees
- Career and Professional Development—may relate to longer term goals and aspirations
- Other—may relate to longer term career aspirations and goals.

POINTERS AND QUESTIONS

Each area of focus has a number of pointers or questions that may assist your discussions and provide a space for you to record those discussions. These include:

- *What are you going to achieve?* In this section you may choose a goal related to a new program or your duty statement or job description may be a guide.
- *How will you know you have achieved it?* You may wish to include in here not only a method of assessment but also a timeline.
- *What support do you need?* Are there others who are also contributing in some way? Is there a particular resource vital to achieving your goal?
- *What development do you need?* Is there an area of knowledge that you need or a skill that needs to be learned or improved?
- *Links to University/school/unit plan.* As unit/school and indeed University plans develop and change it is useful to articulate where your goals fit with and match those wider goals.

There is a key area labelled 'other'. It is in here that you could write about an important area not covered under the preceding headings or where you could also include a record of discussion about aspirations. It may be useful to record longer term plans looking five to ten years ahead.

There is space under each area to write a joint shared understanding or agreement arising from the discussion notes. There is also a space for the end of cycle review meeting comments for each area considered.

The process is strictly confidential. Electronic versions should be password protected and hard copies should be stored under lock and key.