The Performance Planning and Review Conversation

for Professional Staff Managers

2017 edition

DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA
Worldly

What is the purpose of PPR?

GOALS

Align individual goals with University, work area and Team goals

EXPECTATIONS

Clarify what is expected of you

PERFORMANCE

Measure performance against set objectives

ACHIEVEMENTS

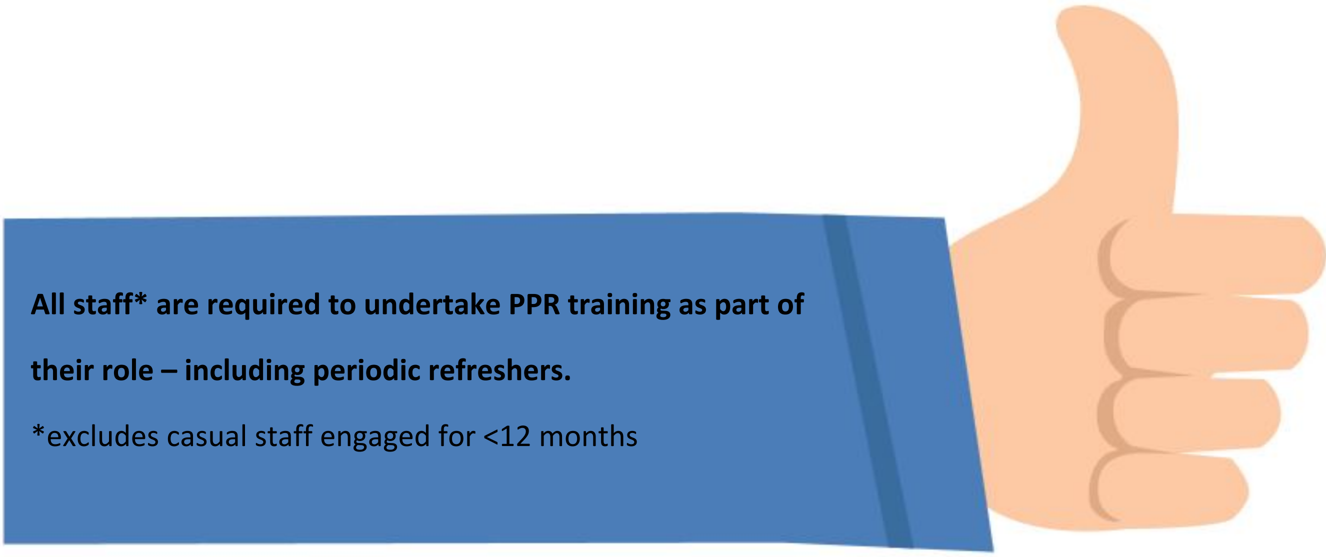
Recognise achievements and reward high performers

UNDERPERFORMANCE

Respond to areas of underperformance

BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS

Identify potential barriers and possible solutions



All staff* are required to undertake PPR training as part of their role – including periodic refreshers.

*excludes casual staff engaged for <12 months

Deakin PPR Resources

- PPR forms
- Library of sample Performance Objectives and Standards
- Reward and recognition option
- Sample objectives and measures

SEE: https://wiki.deakin.edu.au/display/staff/PPR+at+Deakin

Staff Development Program

The Staff Development Program offers a variety of training to Deakin staff. This training can form part of your development goals in your PPR. To find out more visit the Staff Development site

SEE: http://www.deakin.edu.au/students/career-education/staff-development-and-training

Stages of the PPR process

STAGE 1: Review the staff member's role/responsibilities, set performance objectives standards for the year ahead and identify staff development/ career development needs

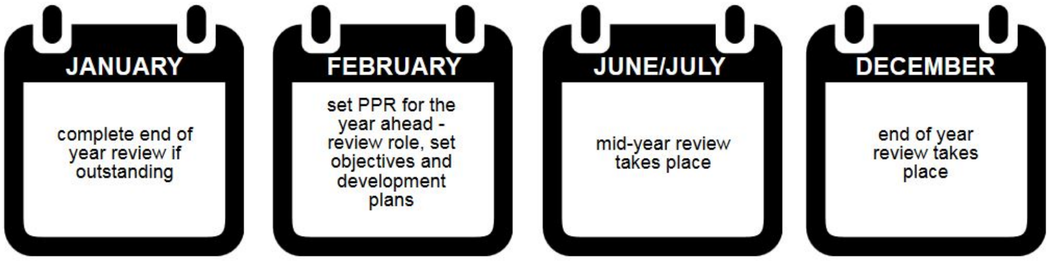
- Review the staff member's role/responsibilities:
  - Establish a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the position – the current position description outlines these
  - If required, the supervisor should arrange to update the position description
- Set performance objectives and standards for the year ahead:
  - Discuss and agree on objectives and standards
  - Identify performance objectives and standards for the year that reflect the key accountabilities and goals for the review period, and document them
  - Describe the outcomes you need to achieve
  - Standards may include qualitative or quantitative measures
  - Manager/ supervisor positions should include specific objectives to cover compliance (EEO, OHS, PPR, succession planning, risk management)
  - Will include a behavioural objective consistent with the Code of Conduct
  - Both parties to sign (on PAGE 3 of the PPR template on intranet)
- Identify staff development/ career development needs:
  - To assist the staff member to meet their agreed performance objectives
  - To address career development goals
  - Document identified needs and proposed goals and actions under **'My Development'** (on PAGE 2 of the PPR template)
- Complete **'My Obligations'** (on PAGES 2 and 3 of the PPR template on the intranet)

STAGE 2: Mid-year discussion to review progress against objectives

- Six month mid-point review – the staff member should be provided with feedback, support, direction and encouragement in relation to the achievement of objectives
- An opportunity to discuss work issues, workload, operations of School, Division or Area that affect performance
- The staff member and supervisor should meet at regular intervals to review performance, not simply twice a year

STAGE 3: End of year review to assess overall performance against objectives

- Jointly review, discuss and document actual performance against objectives and standards (see right hand column, **'End-of-Year-Performance'** on the PPR template)
- Rate performance against each objective
- The **'Factors Impacting Performance'** section should be completed if there have been significant incidents affecting/ influencing the staff member's job performance (on PAGE 4 of the PPR template)
- Complete the **'Overall Performance Rating'** (on PAGE 5 of the PPR template)
- Regular informal review between supervisor and staff member will ensure there are no surprises



Stages of the PPR process for Probation

The PPR process for probationary staff takes place over their probationary period:

Professional staff period is normally six months
Periods may vary for fixed-term appointments

STAGE 1: Set the staff member's roles/ responsibilities, set performance objectives and standards for the probationary period and identify staff development/ career development needs (within 1 week)

- Set the staff member's roles/ responsibilities:
    - The staff member should have a clear understanding of the role and the responsibilities of the position, as outlined in the position description
- Set performance objectives and standards for the probationary period:
    - Identify and document performance objectives and standards for the review period that reflect the key accountabilities and goals of the role
    - Discuss and agree on the objectives and standards
    - Describe the outcomes to be achieved by the staff member
    - Standards should indicate frequent reviews of performance to assist the supervisor to recommend confirmation or termination of appointment
    - The emphasis will be on the development of the staff member into the role
    - Both parties sign the document
- Identify staff development/ career development needs:
    - This section should be completed to assist the staff member to achieve a standard that leads to recommendation for confirmation of appointment
    - Document the staff member's identified needs and proposed goals and actions in the **'Development Action Plan'** section (on Form 2)

STAGE 2: Discussions to review progress against objectives

- The formal mid-point review occurs half-way through the probation period
- It is an opportunity to provide feedback, support, direction and encouragement in relation to achievement of objectives
- **Part B** of the document should be completed at this discussion

STAGE 3: Completion of probation – final review

- Regular informal reviews will ensure there are no surprises
- The final review:
    - Completed no later than two weeks before the end of the probation period
    - The final probation review column should be completed, taking into account the actual performance against objectives, and each objective should be rated
    - If relevant, complete the **'Critical Factors and Additional Achievements'** section of the form
    - Following agreement on the rating between the supervisor and staff member, the ratings assessment is then completed, and the form signed by both parties
    - Should the staff member decline to sign the form, the supervisor/reviewer includes his/her rating and makes a note to this effect
    - The **'Recommendation for Confirmation'** section should then be completed

Annual Performance Assessment

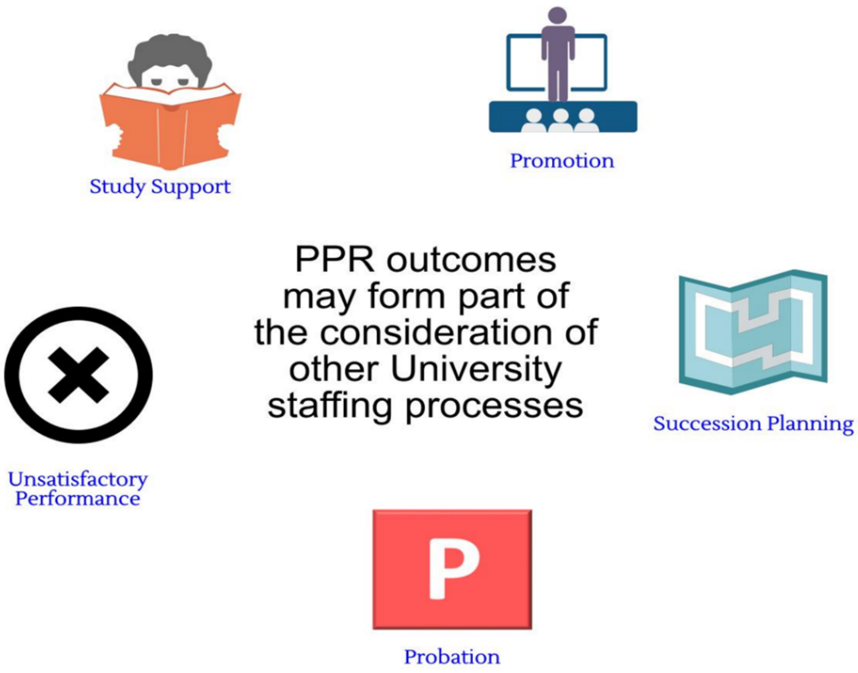
The PPR assessment rating scale

Very Good (VG)
Overall demonstration of performance is to at least a very good standard and often exceeds expectations.

Good (G)
Overall demonstration of performance is to a good standard and consistently meets expectations.

Development Required (DR)
Overall demonstration of performance is not to an acceptable standard, and does not consistently meet expectations.

Links with other processes



Performance Reward and Recognition

To recognise and reward performance of consistently high standards, managers may use reward and recognition procedures such as:

- Accelerated salary increment
- Achievement awards
- Performance bonus
- Personal classification
- Salaries and allowances
- Vice-Chancellor's Professional Development Award
- Academic Study Leave

The University's Reward and Recognition policy is available in The Guide.

Accelerated salary increment

Single Increment

Performed duties in a highly satisfactory manner, minimum overall rating of 'very good', has not received an accelerated salary increment in the past 12 months

Multiple Increments – up to three additional salary increments (Head/Director)

Performed duties in an exceptional manner, overall rating of 'very good', has not received an accelerated salary increment in the past 12 months.

Achievement Awards

Staff member/ manager can nominate a group of staff, or an individual staff member, whom they believe has performed work beyond that required or expected of them. The procedure:

- Nominate using a standard form developed locally
- Achievement Award criteria: results, process, teamwork, revenue growth
- Award – certificate or token of appreciation ($25-$100 per person or $250 per team), formal presentation

Performance Bonus

Eligibility:

- Bonus of up to 5% of the current salary level may be payable to Professional staff
- Bonuses are contingent annually upon overall improved organisational performance and availability of funds in each budget centre and the University
- Pro Vice-Chancellors (PVCs) and Directors must have sufficient budget to cover possible bonus payments

Approval process:

- PVC/ Director recommends a bonus for staff who have exceeded performance objectives set, to the Executive Director HRD
- Most bonus payments will be in the 1-3% range, with no more than 20% being in the 4-5% range
- Executive Director HRD reviews the recommendation for bonus and recommends to the relevant member of the Executive or the Vice-Chancellor whether a bonus payment should be made
- New staff must be employed for at least six months to be eligible for a bonus
- No bonus is payable if the staff member leaves before the end of the cycle

Personal Classification

- Professional staff HEW levels 1-6, who have been on the top increment of the present classification for at least twelve months are eligible
- As part of the PPR discussions supervisor and staff member identify the development and work experience required to move to the higher level
- Used to recognise outstanding performance and skill development in current position
- Links two classification levels to form an extended pay structure
- After completion of any required development period (usually six months), a staff member may apply to the Pro Vice-Chancellor or Director for a personal classification
- Formal interview to confirm the staff member meets the requirements of the higher classification

What happens next?

At the end of the review the original document is kept at the local level. Keep a signed copy for future reference.

The performance bonus spreadsheet for Professional staff is completed to cover all staff, even if they do not qualify for a bonus, and returned to HR.

At the end of the review period, the process begins again. In the next review period transfer ongoing work, incomplete projects or new development actions to the new PPR.

PPR review checklist

- ✓ Gather all required information: e.g. previous PPR review notes, other notes, client feedback etc.
- ✓ Make detailed notes against each performance objective and, based on your notes and other data, consider the level of achievement of that objective (i.e. not achieved, achieved or exceeded)
- ✓ Identify any significant **'Critical Factors'** that have adversely affected performance
- ✓ Note **'Additional Achievements'** and contributions to the work unit since the last review meeting
- ✓ Review the **'Development Action Plan'** and note training and development undertaken in the past year and application in the workplace
- ✓ Consider the skills, talents, abilities and/ or strengths brought to the role
- ✓ Highlight areas where the support and/ or training may be needed
- ✓ Reflect on changes with regard to career aspirations, qualifications, skill level etc. (use where appropriate)
- ✓ Note other areas for discussion and feedback

Essential elements of an effective PPR meeting

- Thorough preparation by both the staff member and supervisor/ reviewer
- A confidential and supportive environment with open communication and two-way, balanced feedback
- Detailed, evidence-based discussion of performance against performance objectives and standards
- No surprises

Model for Active Listening

ATTENDING **FOLLOWING** **REFLECTING**

Your physical attention, which includes body language

Responses you make that encourage the speaker

Paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, comments and checking for understanding

Active listening skills include:

- Physically attending
- Asking open questions to start off the conversation
- Using non-intrusive responses to encourage continuing
- Using restatement to encourage exploration of the issue and to check the accuracy of understanding
- Acknowledging the reality of any emotional issues involved
- Using focusing questions to clarify particular issues
- Finishing with a summary restatement to ensure mutual understanding

Tips for Giving and Receiving Feedback

It is important to give feedback in a way that has most impact on the person with whom you are trying to communicate. The following are some hints to help you give and/ or receive feedback more effectively:

1. **Focus feedback on the behaviour rather than the person**
   It is important to refer to the actual behaviour that the person is exhibiting rather than the qualities you believe they have. For example, it is more effective to comment that the person is coming consistently late to work or meetings rather than saying that that are unreliable or irresponsible. When we talk in terms of personality traits it implies qualities that are difficult, if not impossible, to change. It can also appear more judgemental than describing the behaviour. Focusing on behaviour implies that it is something related to a specific situation that might be changed. It is less threatening to a person to hear comments about his/ her behaviour than about personal traits.

2. **Focus feedback on observation rather than inferences**
   Observations refer to what we can see or hear in the behaviour of another person, while inferences refer to interpretations and conclusions that we make from what we see or hear. Inferences can also contaminate our observations, thus clouding feedback for another person.

3. **Focus feedback on description rather than judgement**
   Describing a situation is a process for reporting what occurred, which allows for the possibility that the data may be flawed. Judgement takes it a step further and evaluates the behaviour in terms of good or bad, right or wrong. Judgements also arise out of a personal frame of reference or values, whereas description is a more neutral reporting.

4. **Focus feedback on descriptions that are in terms of “more or less” rather than in terms of “either-or”**
   The more-or-less terminology implies a continuum on which any behaviour may fall, stressing quantity, which is objective and meaningful rather than quality, which is subjective and judgemental.

5. **Focus on giving feedback as immediately as possible**
   The lapsing time often distorts our perception of events, so give feedback as soon as possible after the behaviour has occurred. It is also more immediate and meaningful for the recipient.

6. **Focus feedback on the sharing of ideas and information rather than on giving advice or coming up with the solution**
   By sharing ideas and information we leave people free to decide for themselves how to use the ideas and information. When we give advice we tell the person what to do, and therefore take away their freedom to determine for themselves what the most appropriate course of action is. The person is also more likely to be committed to the decision or course of action if they have been involved in the decision.

7. **Focus feedback on its value to the recipient**
   The feedback provided should be geared towards helping the recipient, rather than being used as an opportunity for the person giving the feedback to vent their own frustrations. Help and feedback need to be provided and heard as an offer, not an imposition.

8. **Don’t overload the recipient with too much information**
   To overload the person with feedback is to reduce the possibility that they may use what they receive effectively. It can also minimise the importance of the issues that are being raised.

9. **Focus on giving feedback at the appropriate time**
   It is important to be sensitive to the most appropriate time and place to provide feed-back, as it can involve emotional reactions. The old adage “praise in public, counsel in private” is also useful to remember.

10. Focus on what is said rather than why it is said

Don't make assumptions about the motives of the person giving the feedback. It may distract you from the important message they may be trying to give you.

(Adapted from Lehner, G., 1975, Professor of Psychology, University of California, University Associates Publishers, Inc)

Managing challenging conversations

Quiet/ disengaged staff member
Issues – staff member does not want to contribute ideas or get involved in the conversation.
Tactics:

- Provide some positive feedback at the start of the conversation.
- Ask open questions to encourage the person to think.
- Remind them of the commitments made to meet standards or expectations as part of their employment contract.
- Provide them with options. When they choose an option ask them why they have chosen that one.
- Allow, and be comfortable with, silence. It is possible the person just needs time to think about their responses.
- Challenge their behaviour. Be prepared to talk about how their silence is making you feel. It may be necessary to focus on the relationship for a while before re-focusing on the performance issues.
- Acknowledge this can be an uncomfortable situation and explain that these conversations are a necessary part of the employment arrangement

Argumentative/ oppositional staff member
Issues – staff member disagrees with your point of view and may use emotive language to get their point across.
Tactics:

- Listen attentively to the person's point of view
- Ask open questions so you fully understand why they think that way
- Probe for evidence they have for their point of view
- Demonstrate that you understand why they might hold their point of view by re-stating their views in your own words (summarising, empathy)
- Provide the evidence you have for coming to your point of view.
- Get them to acknowledge the validity of your evidence.
- Try to resolve any contradictions in the evidence.
- If necessary, review the criteria used to establish the performance standards.

Staff member with unrealistic expectations
Issues – staff member may have an unrealistic view of the recognition their performance deserves, or sets goals either too high or too low for the standard required.
Tactics:

- As you are dealing with a difference of opinion that needs to be resolved, use a very similar approach to an argumentative/oppositional staff member
- If the person is expecting a higher rating than is warranted, be prepared to state clearly why the performance does not meet the criteria
- Go through the realities and standards of the rating and remuneration system
- Don't make promises or suggest commitments you will not be able to keep
- It might help to use examples of performance that would meet the standard and explain how these differ from the person's evidence
- Avoid comparing the person with other people in the team. This can breach confidentiality, is likely to be challenged and can create resentment and division. Always use hypothetical examples for comparison.
- Explore their career goals and help them to design a development program that will help them achieve their goals over the longer term

General Advice

Many factors will contribute to how helpful or constructive someone might be in a performance conversation. Managers/supervisors play a major part in setting the mood of that conversation by how well they prepare, how they help the staff member to prepare, their positive attitude going into the meeting and their fair and professional conduct during the conversation.

When the consequences are important there is a good chance that emotions will be involved. Managers need to monitor how the emotional dynamic is affecting the conversation, for both people involved in the conversation.

Emotions must be managed well in order to explore any differences of opinion in a rational way. If either party is not able to manage their emotions well you should consider taking time out in order to reflect and review the situation before trying again.

Suggestions for specific situations

WHEN THE STAFF MEMBER…	APPROACHES TO TRY
Is underperforming	▪ Deal with it quickly ▪ Think about whether they know or whether it will be a surprise ▪ Get them to talk about it ▪ Coach them to solve ▪ Be clear about the consequences of poor performance
Agrees too quickly	▪ Recognise this may be a tactic to avoid the problem and forestall discussion or criticism ▪ Make sure they understand the problem and consequences ▪ Identify where agreement is sincere ▪ Emphasise steps for improvement ▪ Establish a follow-up process
Has lots of reasons for their action/s	Discuss the reasons: ▪ Are they legitimate? If so, what should be tried now? ▪ If not legitimate, use questioning to encourage them to think it through ▪ If no progress, explain why they are not legitimate reasons
Blames others	▪ Be careful! You don't want to discuss others' performance with this staff member, but you don't want to be unfair ▪ Acknowledge, and indicate you will be holding separate discussions with others involved ▪ Here we are talking about your performance – return to the situation ▪ Focus on their responsibility
Agrees with your data or perception, but doesn't believe it is a problem	Discussion consequences: ▪ First try asking: what do you think the consequences of this are? ▪ If no progress, describe the consequences ▪ Share others' perceptions of the problem with them
Accepts feedback, agrees they need to change and doesn't do anything	▪ Set clear goals and expectations when setting action plans to follow the discussion ▪ Write them down and follow-up ▪ If lack of action persists, endeavour to work out why they are resisting – you will need to see their world to influence their behaviour
Doesn't feel they can change	▪ Listen ▪ Work together to help them develop strategies to address their issues ▪ Ask them what help they need from you ▪ Provide positive feedback on their efforts in the future
Does not agree with the performance rating and declines to sign Form 3	▪ If an open discussion cannot resolve the underlying issues, the reviewer should note the form to this effect ▪ Should a staff member not agree with the assessment of actual performance and/ or the performance assessment rating of the supervisor, he/ she may seek a review by the manager of the supervisor or by the Head of Human Resources ▪ Focus on developmental aspects
Has a personal problem and wants help/ to discuss it	▪ Listen – let them talk ▪ Use questioning and reflecting to help them work it through ▪ Don't tell them what to do (or even suggest) ▪ Help them explore alternatives ▪ Offer empathy/ understanding, rather than sympathy ▪ Respect confidentiality

	▪ Don't rush into time off – this may be appropriate or may not be – discuss but don't push ▪ If appropriate, refer to a counselling service
Wants to improve	▪ Mutually develop an action plan with realistic goals ▪ Help the staff member identify sources of self-development ▪ Agree on what help they need from you and what you will provide ▪ Establish a follow-up schedule ▪ Reinforce successes ▪ Coach where improvement is needed
Is a good high performer who has been in the role for a long time	▪ Don't take loyalty or performance for granted ▪ Try to identify new challenges – try to discuss something new each time ▪ Explore more ways – if appropriate – to use their skills
Is an outstanding performer	▪ Focus on development – mutually develop a plan to get them to their next step ▪ Introduce new challenges and responsibilities ▪ Don't promise what you can't deliver

Summary

Preparation:
- Undertake your preparation for the conversation
- Have the required information available concerning results
- Have the staff member complete the relevant sections of the PPR Forms before the meeting

Follow process steps:
- Follow the steps for the Annual Review meeting (see 'Key Steps' of the PPR Forms)
- Put the staff member at ease: - consider how experienced you and the staff member are in the process
- Don't rush the conversation - if necessary break into smaller steps.

General:
- Clarify purpose of the review
- Discuss one issue at a time
- Focus discussion on key areas relevant to Performance Objectives
- Be honest about specific areas for improvement
- Describe how individual performance impacts upon other staff, the Division and University
- Give feedback that is manageable and achievable

Listening:
- Clarify purpose of the review
- Discuss one issue at a time
- Focus discussion on key areas relevant to Performance Objectives
- Be honest about specific areas for improvement
- Describe how individual performance impacts upon other staff, the Division and University
- Give feedback that is manageable and achievable

Encouraging:
- Encourage staff member to accept ownership by identifying initiatives and solutions
- Focus on results which are realistic, attainable and achievable

Confirm action steps:
- Identify areas needing assistance and support
- Agree on action to be taken by supervisor and staff member
- Agree on follow up date for action

Finally:
- Ensure that by the end of the review meeting, the staff member has a clear understanding of their performance during the review period
- Offer encouragement and praise for doing a good job
- Conclude with positive feedback on talents, abilities and contributions

Suggested timelines summary

WHEN	WHAT
January	Complete previous end of year reviews (if outstanding)
February	Set PPR for the year ahead – stage 1 review role, set objectives and development plans
June/July	Mid-year review takes place
December	End-of-year review takes place