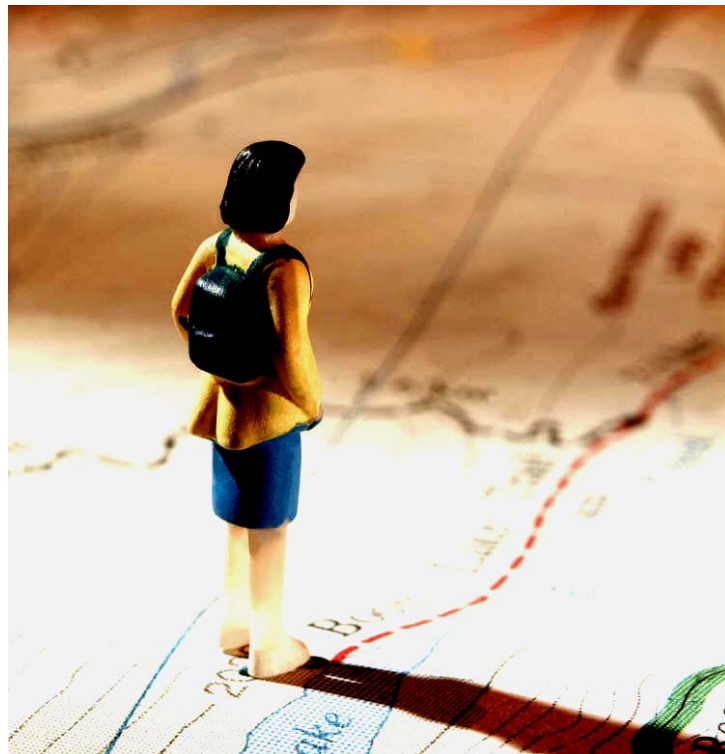


# Performance, Planning and Review (PPR)

Professional Staff



Human Resources Department  
*(Organisational Development)*

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## Introduction

Performance Planning and Review for Professional Staff (PPR-PS) involves staff and supervisors working together to identify, review and develop individual and group work performance in line with the University's goals.

PPR is about the mutual setting of goals and objectives, the constructive evaluation of performance, recognising achievements and identifying training and career development needs for Professional Staff. It is a mechanism by which the work activities and achievements of staff can be acknowledged formally and recognition given on a day-to-day basis.

By participating in PPR, staff will know what is expected of them so that they can channel their energy and time into activities and goals that are positive, constructive and motivating. Supervisors have a dual role: to participate as staff members in the PPR process, as well as to make PPR a positive and meaningful experience for staff that they supervise.

QUT's success depends on the contribution of staff to its aims and objectives. PPR contributes to this success through:

- improved staff performance, job satisfaction and motivation;
- enhanced skills through personal development plans;
- maximising staff potential and helping staff to meet their aspirations;
- improved communication within work units and the establishment of better links between individuals' contributions, group goals and the work of units;
- feedback from staff on how to continuously improve processes, functions and activities of the University.

The process also informs existing human resource processes such as incremental progression, confirmation of appointment, identification of developmental needs across the University and reclassification of positions.

This booklet provides information for Professional Staff undertaking PPR and provides additional guidance and resources for supervisors.

## Who is involved in PPR?

### Staff:

All Professional Staff classified at HEW Level 1 to 10 inclusive and employed on an ongoing or fixed-term basis for more than 12 months, must participate in PPR. This includes staff on probation and part-time staff. Staff who occupy a fixed-term position of less than 12 months or a casual position may also participate in PPR.

If a position is job-shared, there should be a separate performance plan for each person occupying the position, with equitable access for each person to training and development.

Staff are encouraged to take a leading role in their PPR, monitoring their performance, identifying obstacles and discussing with supervisors what action can be taken to overcome obstacles. They should seek clarification on work priorities, ask for feedback on performance and provide suggestions and ideas to assist the work area to achieve its goals.

### Supervisors:

Under the PPR policy a “supervisor” will normally be classified at HEW Level 6 or above or they may be an academic staff member. It is acknowledged, however that in some circumstances staff below HEW Level 6 undertake supervisor responsibilities. Where this occurs, staff should clarify their responsibilities relating to PPR with their own supervisor.

To assist with the PPR process, a principal supervisor should be identified for each staff member. The principal supervisor will be the person who facilitates the PPR discussion (this person usually has the authority to sign off on processes such as staff leave). In cases where a staff member undertakes a project or has tasks allocated to them by a number of supervisors, the principal supervisor liaises with the other supervisors when discussing the performance plan and seeks feedback from them on the staff member’s progress against the agreed objectives.



**New to supervision? See Effective Supervision on page 20**

### Heads of Organisational Units:

The responsibilities of the head of the organisational area with respect to PPR include:

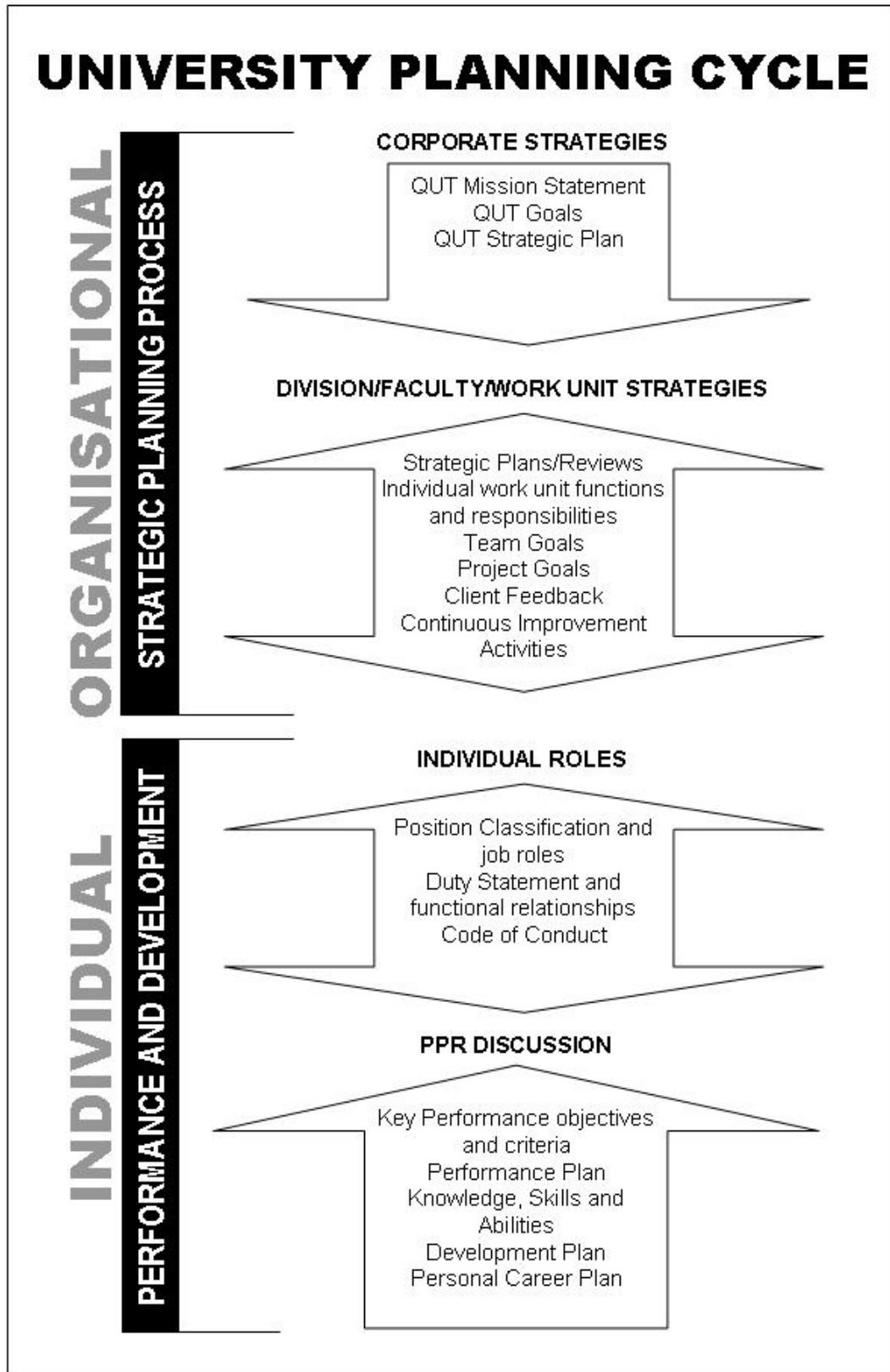
- ensuring that the organisational area’s goals and priorities are communicated to and understood by supervisors and staff;
- ensuring that the objectives determined by the staff member and supervisor are consistent with those of the organisational area;
- ensuring all parties are satisfied that the needs of the staff member and the organisational area have been addressed through the PPR process;
- approving recommendations arising from the PPR process;
- ensuring opportunities exist for staff and organisational areas to meet or exceed expectations;
- facilitating the early resolution of disputes or conflicts arising from the process;
- overseeing supervisors’ responsibilities with respect to the PPR process; and
- making resources available to support identified staff development activities.

### Human Resources Department:

The Human Resources Department is responsible for:

- providing support and advice to supervisors and staff;
- providing training in the PPR process for supervisors and staff;
- actioning relevant administrative outcomes related to the PPR process such as probation confirmation and reclassification;
- providing advice on the training and development activities identified in the plan;
- facilitating the resolution of conflict or disputes arising from the PPR process; and
- monitoring the overall effectiveness of the process.

Performance, Planning and Review (PPR) is a process which allows you and your supervisor to work together to enhance the skills you bring to QUT in line with the strategic direction of the university through appropriate professional development.



## The PPR Process

### Objectives of the process are to:

- Ensure strategic alignment with both individual and team performance objectives which are important to the success of the department and the University.
- Identify opportunities to improve and develop departmental systems, processes and practices (i.e. Continuous Improvement).
- Identify professional development opportunities.

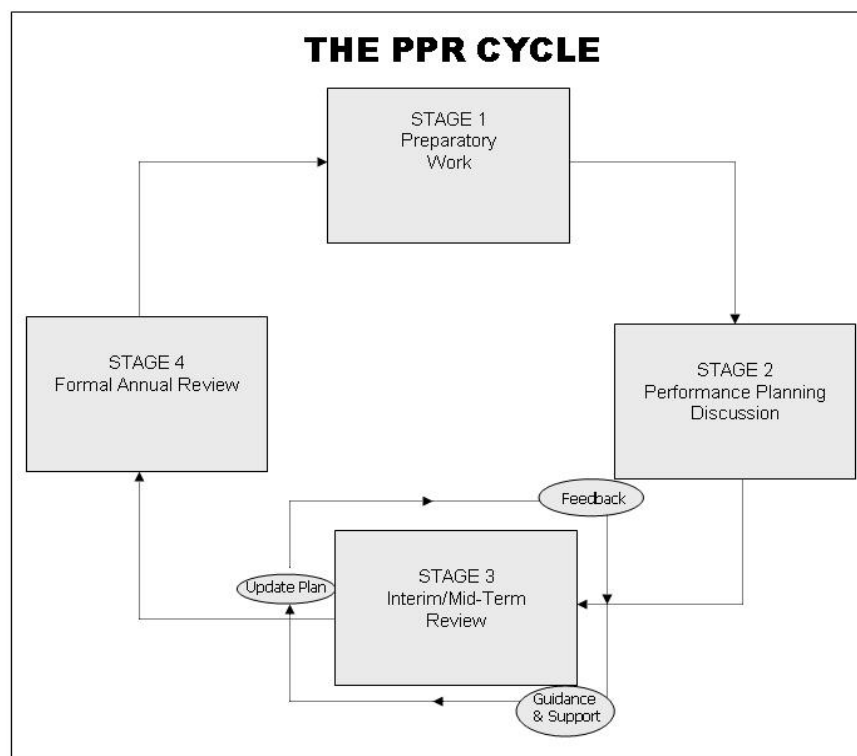
## The PPR Cycle

The PPR process consists of:

- setting objectives;
- outlining how you will achieve each objective;
- monitoring progress throughout the year and reviewing objectives if necessary; and
- assessing and reviewing the outcomes at the end of the cycle.

The performance plan and review is linked to your professional development to assist you to achieve your objectives and to plan for the future.

The PPR cycle consists of 4 stages to be completed over a 12 month\* period:



\* **NOTE:** If you are on probation, PPR must be completed prior to your appointment being confirmed. In some cases this can be as little as 3 months. Check with your supervisor or Human Resources Advisor if you are unsure of your probation period.

## Stage 1: Preparatory Work

Some preparation needs to be done by you and your supervisor prior to the performance planning discussion.

### You should:

- Obtain and read relevant documents such as:
  - The QUT Blueprint, Division/Faculty Plans, work area strategic plans
  - The PPR-PS Policy
  - Your current position description



**Find the relevant strategic plans at the attached link:**

<http://www.frp.qut.edu.au/frptoolkit/corpplan/index.jsp>

**Read the PPR-PS Policy in the Manual of Policy & Procedures at the following link:**

[http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/B/B\\_09\\_01.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/B/B_09_01.jsp)

- Advise your supervisor of any changes required to your position description
- Complete a self-appraisal of how you believe you have performed your role and note any significant achievements/obstacles for discussion with your supervisor



**- Use the Self-Appraisal Questionnaire on page 14 to get started**

**- See Preparing for PPR Discussions on page 16 for further assistance**

### Your supervisor should:

- Give you at least two weeks notice that the PPR process will begin and advise a discussion date
- Ensure your position description and any reporting lines are up to date

## Stage 2: Performance Planning Discussion

The Performance Planning Discussion provides a forum to discuss with your supervisor your duties and responsibilities, to reach an understanding about current directions and how your position affects unit objectives. It is an opportunity to clarify position priorities for the year linked to organisational planning and the position responsibilities, and to discuss workload.

You and your supervisor are jointly responsible for developing agreed performance objectives and standards that accurately reflect the key accountabilities and goals for the review period and are consistent with the classification standards applying to your position.

In addition your supervisor is responsible for:

- Providing guidance in the development of the plan - getting started and breaking the objective/s down into manageable steps;
- Providing constructive feedback;
- Assisting in the identification of professional development needs;
- Ensuring that documentation of each stage of the process occurs and that it is kept confidential.

Your discussion must be documented to enable you and your supervisor to record your mutually agreed performance objectives and the progress that you have made towards achieving these throughout the cycle. A form has been developed to assist with this.

## The PPR Form Explained

The PPR form contains 3 major sections which contain a number of sub-sections:

1. The **Cover Sheet** (page 1)

The cover sheet outlines the purpose of PPR and gives a summary of the process.

Sub-sections on this page include:

- Staff Member Details and Timeframes
- Supervisor/Manager Details and Signatures
- Preparatory Work checklist for Stage 1 of the PPR-AS process

2. The **Performance and Development Plan** (page 2)

The performance plan:

Outlines priorities and clarifies expectations for your position

Should be strategically aligned with the University and annual unit operational plans

Should be completed by the end of the first month, at the commencement of the cycle

Provides a record of the discussion

States:

- What needs to be done and how it is going to be achieved
- Sources of feedback and evidence to support your achievement
- What professional development and resources are needed to help achieve your objectives

A career development plan section enables staff to outline future plans and development that they would like to help achieve these.

3. **The Review of Performance** (pages 3-5)

Performance is reviewed formally twice during the 12 month cycle. Firstly at 6 months, (no later than 8) called the Mid-Cycle Review, and then at 11 months for the Final Review. Details of achievements, changes and progress are made on the form. It is also an opportunity for you and your supervisor to sign indicating that you have participated in the process.

Supervisors are required to complete a Performance Assessment indicating whether the staff member's performance is rated exceptional, satisfactory or unsatisfactory and whether performance objectives have been met. Note that performance can still be rated satisfactory even if all objectives have not been met.

The last section of the form outlines administrative actions for the supervisor to follow at the end of the PPR-PS process.



The PPR form is available on the Human Resources website at:

<http://www.hrd.qut.edu.au/hrinfo/hrforms/professional.jsp#ppr>

## The PPR Form in Detail

### PAGE 2 – COLUMN 1

#### Performance Objectives – What & How?

- What is to be achieved?
- How it is to be achieved?
- How long will it take?

Objectives should be “**S M A R T**”:

- **Specific:** Clearly defined standards for performance and expected results.
- **Measurable:** Measurable results or observable behaviours.
- **Attainable:** Challenging, yet attainable.
- **Relevant to:**
  - University strategy, the organisational unit objectives;
  - Your position, its responsibilities and duties; and
  - You, your interests, talents and career goals.
- **Timely:** A timeframe for achieving the objective should be agreed upon.

#### Types of Objectives

- **Products:** a task to be performed or a product to be created.
- **Targets:** results (number, dollar frequency or percentage value).
- **Professional Standards:** general work activities or behaviours directed to how you perform your work.



See the attached List of Action Verbs on page 18 which may help you in writing your PPR objectives

### PAGE 2 – COLUMN 2

#### Feedback and Evidence

Determine the source and type of information to be used in the review to assess performance in reference to the performance measures.

**Who** - the manager/supervisor, co-workers, peers, staff, students, internal or external clients and/or self-appraisal; and

**What** - surveys, work diaries, reports, quality systems instruments or work products e.g. publications, spreadsheets, databases, etc.

Note: It is advised that both you and your supervisor make notes on performance throughout the year, as relying on memory alone can provide an inaccurate or incomplete picture. Attach any documentation that you have received to use as evidence that the objective has been achieved or which provide general feedback.

**PAGE 2 – COLUMN 3**

**Development Activities and Resources**

Here you can identify any resources, training and development or resources that will lead to the successful achievement of the objective. This section can be used to identify the training and development that you require to be able to meet the stated objective.

The most effective development should give you the opportunity to undertake new challenges. Development activities should be thought about in the broadest terms, for example on-the-job development, mentoring, sitting on or being a member of a committee, job shadowing, secondments, higher duties or coaching by another person who is skilled and experienced in a particular area.

**PAGE 2 – BOTTOM SECTION**

**Career/Development Plan**

Against the backdrop of the performance review, short and long term development needs are discussed, as well as future career aspirations and how your supervisor can assist you with professional development and career planning. You may wish to indicate to your supervisor that you wish to undertake some study and are seeking assistance via QUT’s Study Assistance Scheme. It is important that this discussion is recorded to assist the supervisor budget for any potential costs of study.



Information on Study Assistance is available on the Human Resources website at: <http://www.hrd.qut.edu.au/staff/benefits/study.jsp>

**Review Process**

**Stage 3: Mid-Cycle Review**

**PAGE 3**

The Mid-Cycle Review is held approximately 6 months into the cycle and no later than 8 months. It provides an opportunity to discuss and document your progress to date and any difficulties that you may have encountered. It is also an opportunity to reassess your Performance Objectives established in your initial Plan – whether the objectives need to be revised due to changes in direction or problems that have arisen. The introduction to this section has a number of reflective questions to help you to think about how you are progressing with achieving your objectives.

If progress is not on target, then necessary adjustments may be made to the plan to get things back on track and the question of development and resource needs are re-examined. The supervisor will tick the box which best describes your progress and your or your supervisor may attach additional comments to the form. You both sign the form to signify your participation in the assessment.



See the Reflective Questions for Review Discussions on page 21 for further help with how to approach the mid-term discussion

## Stage 4: Final Review

### PAGE 4 AND 5

At the end of the review cycle (usually 11 months after the initial Performance Plan was agreed) you and your supervisor should undertake the Final Review to evaluate your performance over the cycle. At this meeting you discuss in detail the results achieved against the agreed performance objectives, identify any obstacles faced, and progress towards any professional development you may have undertaken during the cycle. You may also identify those objectives that need to be carried over to the next cycle.

The discussion of performance is used to develop plans for the improvement of work systems, processes and practices and opportunities for professional and career development.

The PPR form should record details of the Final Review, including special achievements and outstanding performance. As with the Mid-Term Review your supervisor will tick the box which best describes your performance and you or your supervisor may attach additional comments to the form. You both sign the form to signify your participation in the assessment.

### Resolving Disagreement

Where you and your supervisor have differences of opinion about the Performance Plan or Review every attempt should be made to determine objectives or standards acceptable to each party. If agreement cannot be reached your supervisor should ensure that the appropriate particulars and details of your concerns are noted in the Performance Plan.



**For more help with performance problems and staff development, see:**

**- Dealing with a Problem on page 29**

**- Overcoming Performance Obstacles on page 30- Assessing Development Needs on page 31**

### Hints for reviewing Performance Objectives

- Evaluate whether the performance objectives have been achieved against the standards set in the Performance Plan
- Identify what has worked well and any areas for development i.e. things you would do differently in the future. Develop action plans for the improvement of work systems, practices or future projects.
- Evaluate general performance, separate to the specific objectives. Evaluation should be a reflection on the position description responsibilities and duties. Feedback should be constructive - focussed on solutions, on opportunities for improvement and should acknowledge successes.
- Identify further opportunities for professional and career development.

### The end of the PPR Process

The following administrative action occurs after the Final Review and signifies the end of the PPR process for the period:

- Your supervisor sends the PPR form to the head of your organisational area for confirmation
- A copy of the completed form is given to you for your reference – you may wish to use it to support an application for promotion or development opportunities within the university
- The original of the completed form is sent to the Human Resources Department to update your staff record
- A new PPR process commences for the next 12 months

## Feedback

Feedback is an important part of the PPR process and should not only occur during the formal stages i.e. interim and annual reviews. Your supervisor should provide constructive and regular feedback on your performance throughout the year. While a formal system is not necessary, the PPR process provides a framework for this feedback to occur. Everyone has the capacity for giving useful feedback and some people use it more effectively than others.

Feedback should intend to be helpful and change behaviour. Constructive feedback includes acknowledging strengths and achievements and identifying areas and strategies to improve on current performance. There is no point in asking others to give you feedback unless you are prepared to be open to it and to consider comments which differ from your own perceptions. As a receiver:

- Listen to the feedback. Try to understand the other person's perspective.
- Don't reject feedback immediately. Give the feedback serious consideration and weigh up the consequences of change or not changing.
- Take note of any questions or disagreements.
- Restate what you think you hear. Ask questions to clarify and restate again.
- Ask for specific examples.
- Acknowledge valid points.
- Take time to understand and sort out what you have heard.
- Gather more information from other sources and/or by observing your own behaviour and reactions to it.
- When appropriate modify your behaviour and evaluate the outcome.

## Personal and Result Oriented Feedback

Sometimes it is more appropriate in both receiving and providing feedback to focus on the impact that a person's actions or words are having on you. Some examples of this approach are:

- When you.....(action)
- I feel...../The results or consequences are.....(impact)
- I'd prefer...../What would be more effective.....(alternative action)
- This would mean.....(results of alternative action)
- And the improved results or consequences would be .....(results of alternative action).

## More Feedback Tips:

When you are receiving feedback; try the following:

Understand what was said:

- Listen
- Remain silent
- Ask for clarification
- Paraphrase your understanding of the feedback

Be open rather than defensive:

- Adopt a "I want to learn about myself" attitude
- Avoid explaining your behaviour
- Try to see the feedback from the other person's point of view

Separate yourself from your behaviour:

- Remember that the feedback is how your behaviour affects the other person and that you can choose whether to change or to modify the behaviour

Check to see if the feedback "fits" by asking yourself:

- Does it make sense?
- Does it agree with what I know about myself?
- Does it agree with what others have said in the past?

Take action

- If the description fits, then you can decide whether or how you want to change.



**For more help on Feedback, see:**

- **Giving and Receiving Feedback on page 23**
- **Communication and Assertion Skills on page 26**

**Staff Self-Appraisal Questionnaire**

**1** What do you see as the overall purpose of your role? (How does your role contribute to the University?)

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**2** How do you see your role developing in the future? (What activities do you feel you could be performing in your role?)

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**3** What do you like most and least about your role?

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**4** What aspects of your role do you find most difficult and why?

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**5** What skills or knowledge do you use to perform your role? Do you have skills that are not being utilised in the role?

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**6** What skills or knowledge do you need to develop to perform better in your role?

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**7** What type of development activities do you feel are the most beneficial to you?

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**Continued over page >**

**8** What suggestions do you have for improving:

- Your working conditions and/or physical environment?
- Your relationships with colleagues?
- Your equipment/resources/work processes?
- Your ability to handle the workload?

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**9** What could your supervisor do to assist you? What support would you like to get from them?

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**10** What other matters would you like to discuss with your supervisor?

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## Preparing for PPR Discussions

Whether you are a staff member or supervisor, taking the time to prepare for PPR discussions will ensure that discussions are productive, focussed and address key issues.

### Guidelines for Staff

#### Before your initial PPR Discussion

- Study the PPR form so that you are familiar with the content and understand the topics that your planning discussion will focus on
- Spend some time becoming familiar with the various documents and plans that impact on your work
- Give some thought to your work priorities for the coming 12 months and how you may measure your progress and obtain feedback. Remember to limit priorities to a manageable number
- Give some thought to your plans for applying for Study Assistance, long service leave, PDP and promotion
- Consider the solutions to overcome obstacles hindering your work
- If you are concerned about discussions with your supervisor, prepare for the meeting and discuss your approach with a friend or colleague beforehand
- Refer to the communication and assertion techniques

#### During the PPR Discussion

- Expect and accept frank and constructive feedback on your performance; this should be a candid discussion. Be open about providing constructive feedback to your supervisor.
- Use the opportunity to discuss changes in your work area which may impact on your role.

#### During the PPR-PS Cycle

- Ensure you discuss obstacles which hinder your performance as they arise - do not wait until your next review meeting.

### Guidelines for Supervisors

As a supervisor, your preparation will be centred around three elements:

- physical arrangements
- preparing the staff member
- preparing yourself.

#### 1. Physical arrangements

It is important to consider physical and administrative arrangements to ensure that discussion is relaxed and proceeds smoothly and effectively.

#### Important considerations include:

- Timing: Set a date and time for the meeting that is convenient for you and the staff member. Schedule free time after the meeting to attend to actions or to help accommodate the meeting running over time.
- Number of interviews: Ensure you devote sufficient time preparing, conducting and following-up from meetings. Be conscious of scheduling too many meetings at once (eg. limit yourself to two interviews a week).
- Location: Select an appropriate location for the interview where the staff member will feel at ease. In some cases, a meeting room may be more appropriate than your office.
- Interruptions: Ensure the meeting is free from interruptions.

## 2. Preparing the staff member

Before the meeting prepare the staff member by:

- confirming the meeting date, time and location, giving at least 2 weeks notice
- agreeing on support material to be brought to the meeting, such as strategic plans, duty statements etc
- reminding the staff member to prepare themselves; draft some objectives and send you a copy in advance of the meeting

## 3. Preparing yourself

- Ensure you have all the necessary support material for the meeting, including a copy of the staff member's draft objectives
- Consider:
  - the changing nature and priorities of the staff member's role, conditions and work environment
  - resources needed for the staff member to achieve the objectives and what you can realistically offer
  - the range of possible training and development activities
  - the structure of the interview, your opening remarks, the questions you want to ask and important points to raise
  - the type of questions the staff member may have.

You will need to:

- collate your notes/records on the staff member's achievements and activities
- assess progress against the achievement of agreed goals
- consider possible causes, solutions or actions to be taken if a staff member's progress appears to not meet the agreed standards
- rehearse any personally 'difficult' communications
- ensure that all support material is at hand.

Use review discussions to speak openly and freely about work flows and the operations of the work unit. Ensure that staff do not use this meeting as an opportunity to criticise other colleagues personally.

## List of Action Verbs

The following commonly used verbs may assist you in writing your PPR objectives:

Acquire	Get or gain object or ability.
Adapt	Suit or fit by modification.
Advise	Recommend a course of action; counsel; give advice to (not simply to tell or inform)
Analyse	Study the factors of a situation or problem in detail in order to determine the solution or outcome
Anticipate	Foresee events, trends, consequences or problems
Apply	To put to practical use, employ, to put in an application or request; to devote with diligence
Appraise	Assess the worth, value or quantity; make a valuation
Arrange	Make preparation for an event; put in proper order
Assess	Estimate the value, amount, correctness, evaluate
Assist	Lend aid, help; give support to
Audit	Examine officially with intent to verify
Authorise	Approve; empower through vested authority
Budget	Plan expenditures
Calculate	Make a mathematical computation
Check	Verify, compare with source
Circulate	Pass into hands of readers
Collaborate	Work with and act jointly with others
Communicate	Impart a verbal or written message, transmit information
Compile	Collect (information); compose out of materials from other documents
Conduct	Carry on; have the direction of; direct the execution of
Consider	Think carefully about; take into action
Control	Exercise directing, guiding or restraining power over; check or regulate; keep within limits
Contribute	Supply ideas or opinions etc.; to give support; write for publication
Co-ordinate	Bring into common action; harmonise; integrate
Counsel	Advise; consult with
Define	State precisely the meaning; describe the nature of something; determine the boundary or extent of something
Delegate	Commission another to perform tasks or duties which may carry specific degrees of accountability and authority
Demonstrate	Illustrate and explain, especially with examples; show; prove
Design	Conceive, create and execute according to plan
Determine	Fix conclusively or authoritatively; decide; order; come to a decision concerning, as a result of investigation, reason etc.; settle; give a definite direction or impetus to
Develop	Evolve, promote or make active a plan, program or course of action, usually without benefit of prior conclusion or determination
Devise	Form in the mind by new combinations or applications of ideas or principles; invent
Disseminate	Spread information or ideas (usually to a diffused or widespread audience)
Document	Record or report in detail
Encourage	Inspire with spirit, hope; give help or patronage to
Ensure	Make certain of
Establish	Set up; institute; place on a firm basis
Estimate	Forecast future requirements
Evaluate	Appraise; consider value of
Examine	Investigate; scrutinise; subject to enquire or inspection; test by an appropriate method
Facilitate	Make easy or less difficult (usually by doing something in advance the accomplishment of an act)
File	Arrange in a methodical manner
Forecast	Predict or calculate in advance; to serve as an early indication of something
Formulate	Develop or devise a statement of policy or procedures, produce a statement of procedure
Gather	Collect; accumulate and place in order
Generate	Bring into existence; originate by a vital process
Identify	Establish the identity of; associate with some interest
Implement	Carry out; perform acts essential to the execution of a plan or program; give effect to

Indicate	Point out or show, state briefly
Initiate	Originate; introduce in the first instance; cause or bring to pass by original act as in originating a plan, policy or procedure
Instigate	Bring about, urge on
Instruct	Teach; train; direct on the basis of law or technology
Investigate	Observe or study by close examination and systematic inquiry
Liaise	Maintain contact with; act as intermediary between parties
Maintain	Keep possession of; hold or keep in any condition; keep up to date or current; maintain records
Manage	To carry out the task of ensuring that a number of diverse activities are performed in such a way that a defined objectives is achieved – especially the task of creating and maintaining conditions in which desired objectives are achieved by the combined efforts of a group of people
Modify	Make less extreme; limit or restrict the meaning of; or make minor changes in
Negotiate	Confer with others with a view to reaching agreement
Operate	Conduct or perform an activity
Organise	Form into a structured whole; co-ordinate; arrange methodically
Oversee	Take charge of
Participate	Take part in
Perform	Carry out or execute some action; to carry out to the finish, accomplish
Plan	Prepare a scheme or method for obtaining an objective
Process	Subject to some special treatment; handle in accordance with a prescribed procedure, as in processing work or requisition
Produce	Grow; make, bear, yield something; offer to view or notice, exhibit
Promote	Advance to a higher level or position
Provide	Supply for use; furnish; take precautionary measures in view of possible need
Publish	Produce and issue printed matter for distribution; announce formally or in public
Recommend	Advise or counsel a course of action; offer or suggest for adoption a course of action
Reconcile	Adjust; restore to harmony; make congruous
Record	Register; set down in writing
Regulate	Adjust, control so that it operate correctly; bring into conformity
Represent	Act in the place of or for
Resolve	Decide or determine firmly; find an answer or solution to a problem
Respond	Make an answer; show favourable reaction
Review	Go over or examine deliberately or critically (usually with a view to approval or dissent)
Schedule	Plan to occur at a certain time
Supervise	Oversee for direction; inspect with authority; guide and instruct with immediate responsibility for purpose of performance; lead
Train	Teach, demonstrate, or guide others in order to bring up to a predetermined standard
Undertake	Contract or commit oneself to do something

## Effective Supervision: Guidelines for Supervisors

Effective leaders create an environment which enhances staff performance by:

- removing barriers to exceptional work
- being credible and honest
- helping staff to learn
- managing efficiently
- being accountable
- looking ahead - being strategic
- bringing in new ideas
- recognising and rewarding performance
- dealing with performance issues
- listening to people

Effective supervisors:

- get the job done and solve problems in ways that build trust in the workplace
- demonstrate firm and consistent concern for excellence coupled with a willingness to listen and get others involved
- communicate respect for the people who work for and with them
- appreciate that people have a powerful need to save face
- treat people as if they intend to do well

Supervisors should:

- translate organisational goals into individual work objectives or requirements
- communicate their expectations regarding staff performance
- provide feedback to staff on their performance
- coach and mentor staff members on how to achieve work objectives
- understand the staff member's relative strengths and weaknesses
- determine a strategy for improving work performance in collaboration with staff

Staff members should get the answers to:

- what am I expected to do?
- how well am I going?
- what are my perceived strengths and weaknesses?
- how can I improve my performance to achieve my career and work objectives?
- how can I make a contribution to the work of the School/Centre/Institute?

The University should:

- provide staff with a clear understanding of what is expected of them
- establish direction by setting objectives and priorities
- monitor results and respond to problems in a timely manner
- provide appropriate resources to support the objectives of the university

## Reflective Questions for Review Discussions

Prior to holding the interim or end of year review, staff and supervisors may like to consider the following reflective questions:

**1** What are my work objectives?

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**2** What are my development objectives?

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**3** What work objectives did I achieve/not achieve?

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**4** What development objectives did I achieve/not achieve?

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**5** How can my supervisor assist me to meet these objectives?

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**6** Were there any anticipated problems or resource issues in trying to meet my objectives?

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**7** What progress has been made towards my work/development objectives?

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**Continued over page >**

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**8** What is still underway or not yet commenced?

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**9** Have my area's goals/directions changed? How does this impact on meeting my objectives?

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**10** Any further comments from self/supervisor in regard to achieving objectives or general performance

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## Giving and Receiving Feedback: Guidelines for Supervisors and Staff

Feedback is one of the most crucial aspects of PPR, and one of the most contentious. It takes time, thought and confidence from both supervisor and staff to work effectively.

Feedback assists individuals to identify what they are doing well and whether there are aspects of their performance that could be improved.

Feedback, even where it involves communicating unfavourable information, should be directed toward helping individuals understand where they are at in terms of performance and development.

Both staff and supervisors should be open to providing and receiving feedback on a regular basis.

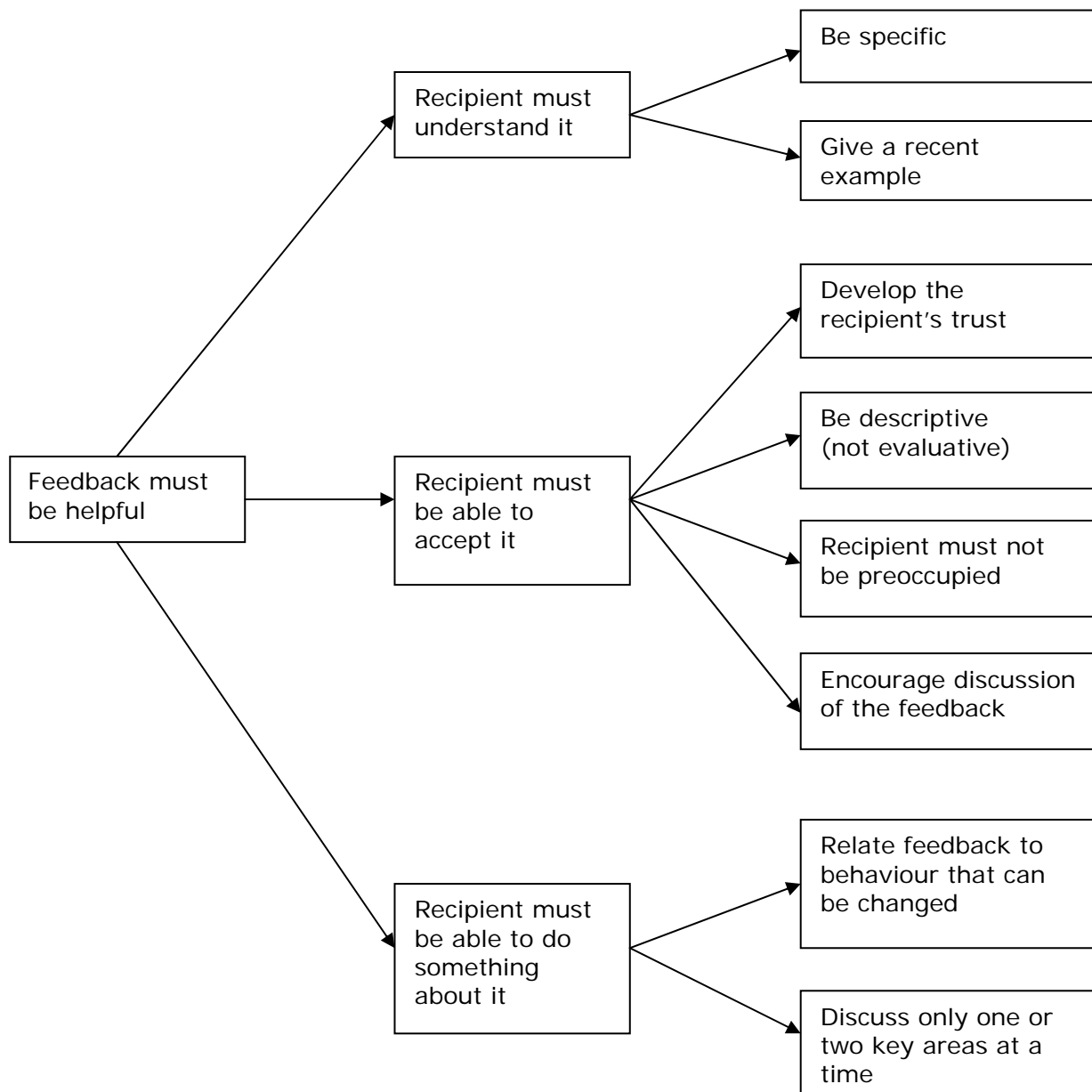
### **If used effectively, feedback helps to:**

- identify and solve problems
- increase morale and job satisfaction
- consolidate teamwork
- recognise the contribution of individuals
- open communication channels and assist decision-making.

It is important to spend time fostering a work culture where feedback is accepted as a normal part of work activities. Staff should feel comfortable in expressing their opinions and feelings in a non-threatening and respectful manner.

## GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

Effective feedback is fundamental to the PPR process. All staff have a right to receive feedback about their performance and to discuss performance issues with their supervisors. Feedback should be mindful of people's feelings and always be constructive.



## GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback provides everyone with the information they need for learning and sound decision-making.

### Top ten reasons for rejecting feedback

10. My job makes me act that way; I'm really not like that.
9. This was just a bad time to do this.
8. All my strengths are right, but my weaknesses aren't.
7. Someone really has it in for me.
6. I used to be that way, but I've changed recently.
5. Nobody understands what I am going through.
4. This must be someone else's report.
3. My raters didn't understand the questions.
2. They're just jealous of my success.
1. It is all accurate, but I just don't care!

It is just as important to feel comfortable asking for and receiving feedback as it is to give.

### Understanding feedback

- Feedback is not the complete truth. Feedback is a snapshot.
- Feedback is data.
- You are the expert about you - context matters.
- Two mistakes in receiving feedback: agreeing or disagreeing too quickly.

### To receive feedback:

- be receptive and open to it
- encourage regular feedback by both formal and informal methods
- accept the opinions of others and be open to change
- do not take it personally
- listen to what is being said (don't reject)
- do not be embarrassed about receiving feedback
- use it constructively to improve performance.

"Criticism is hard to take, especially from a friend, a family member, or a total stranger."

- Franklin P. Jones

## Communication and Assertion Skills: Guidelines for Supervisors and Staff

This resource has been designed to develop the communication and assertion skills of staff and supervisors in preparation for the process.

Effective communication is a two-way process. This is especially important in discussions which seek to explore ideas, feelings, aspirations and views on work and performance. Thus, for staff and supervisors, listening and providing feedback are just as important as speaking clearly and asking questions. The objective of all communication should be an effective exchange of understanding.

Effective communication relies on three key skills:

1. questioning skills
2. listening skills
3. assertion skills.

### 1. Questioning skills

There are two main types of questions: open questions, which are designed to open a conversation; and closed questions, which are used to summarise or confirm what the other person is saying.

#### Open questions

The aim of open questions is to extract information from the recipient. They usually begins with what? who?, why?, when?. They can be softened with phrases like 'Think about...and 'Tell me about...' Open questions cannot be responded to with a yes or no answer.

Examples of open questions include:

- What especially pleased you in the customer feedback comments this year?
- Which teams have you most enjoyed working with this year?
- What are your plans for study in the next couple of years?

#### Closed questions

Closed questions are used when you want a yes or no answer or a specific piece of information. They are best used to summarise what the other person has said, or to check your understanding of it. Too many closed questions prevent a meaningful dialogue occurring.

Examples of closed questions include:

- Are you pleased with your customer feedback comments?
- Do you want to explore further study next year?
- Can I help you?

#### Each of the previous closed questions can be converted into an open question:

- Have you any ideas about improving staff feedback response?
- How could you manage study commitments next year?
- How can I help?

#### Probing questions

A third type of question can be used to follow up on matters that have already been raised and to obtain more detail. Probing questions are designed to link a discussion on a particular topic, to get to the crux of the matter or to clarify information.

Examples of probing questions include:

- Could you tell me more about ...?
- What do you mean when you say ... ?
- What effect has that had on ...?

## 2. Listening skills

Listening effectively is a subtle skill. Sometimes people don't hear what is being said; they only hear a part and ignore the rest, or they hear a phrase or word that they focus on and the rest of what is said is distorted or perhaps not heard at all.

We also 'listen' through our own psychological 'filters' or mind sets, which can lead to assumptions about what is meant rather than what is actually said.

Listening - because it appears to be a passive activity - is a difficult skill to teach and learn. It involves concentration and a conscious effort to understand what is said and what is not said.

### There are three common mistakes in asking questions:

1. Asking too many questions at a time, leaving the other person confused about what you really want to know or which question to answer first.
2. Suggesting answers in the question, thereby encouraging the other person to choose one of your possible responses rather than provide their own answer.
3. Continuing to talk after a question has been asked. In this case the other person cannot respond and you cannot listen to the answer if you are talking over it.

### Active listening techniques

- Look interested. Show encouragement through your body language by facing the speaker; keeping eye contact (but not staring), leaning forward slightly, and maintaining an open and receptive posture.
- Do not interrupt or try to impose your views whilst the other person is talking.
- Try to stay objective. Avoid making quick judgements or assumptions.
- Inquire with questions to gain an understanding of what is being said.
- Test your understanding by paraphrasing or summarising.
- Examples of paraphrasing include:
  - What you seem to be saying is ...
  - What I think we've talked about and seem to be agreed on is ...
- By paraphrasing you are also giving the other person an opportunity to clarify their message.
- Use pauses to encourage a response. Many people continue talking to avoid awkward silences; however this can rapidly become a one-way conversation. Pauses allow people to think about ideas or suggestions, or gather their thoughts or composure.
- Be aware of non-verbal behaviour. Remember that what is being said is only part of the message. The tone, body language and the pace of the conversation all contribute to the message.
- Be aware of cultural differences.

The listening process involves looking for visual cues about what the other person is thinking or feeling. It is just as important to be aware of your own body language as this will impact on how the other person responds to you.

## 3. Assertion skills

Being assertive isn't about being domineering or pushy. It is about acknowledging your rights as an individual and the rights of other people. When required, an assertive person can stand up for their rights, disagree, and present alternative points of view without being intimidated or putting other people down.

### Techniques for acting assertively

- State how you feel.
- State the tangible effect of the behaviour on you. 'I feel ... because you seem ...'
- Avoid exaggerated words such as always, never, all the time, every time. These tend to elicit defensive responses in others. For example: 'You're always late -when the person has been late only three times in two years.'
- State the tangible effect of the behaviour on you. 'I feel ... because you seem ...'

- Offer an alternative acceptable behaviour. Example: 'I feel frustrated when I don't receive feedback from you on my performance because I do not know whether or not I am doing a good job. I would like you to give me specific feedback on my performance at our regular meetings.'

**Other assertive statements**

Where someone criticises your work:

*'What is it about the way I chaired the meeting that you don't like?'*

In response to someone who is unwilling to discuss new ideas:

*'What I hear you saying is all the reasons why it won't work. I'd like to explore a few alternatives. What else would work?'*

When someone says something you don't agree with:

*'That's OK, but I have a different perspective.'*

When you are trying to involve someone in problem solving:

*'How would you go about solving the problem?'*

In response to information that has been withheld previously:

*'It seems that I haven't been fully informed?'*

When someone is unhappy with a decision:

*'I want to explain my reasons for ...'*

When discussing a problem with a person's performance:

*'I understand your feelings and I'm interested in discussing with you what I am unhappy about and the results I expect.'*

In response to someone who has closed themselves off to discussion:

*'I feel frustrated that we're unable to work this out or discuss it.'*

In response to someone who avoids giving specific feedback about your performance:

*'I accept your right to have a perspective on my behaviour, but I have a different perspective. I'd appreciate some specific examples of what you're referring to.'*

In response to an observation that you agree with:

*'I agree I didn't like the way I did that either. I'd like to improve and would appreciate suggestions you might have to improve my performance.'*

## Dealing with a Problem: Guidelines for Supervisors and Staff

At times during the process either the supervisor or the staff member will want to deal with a difficult issue.

It is easy to make judgements about performance problems without first considering all the facts or circumstances that may be impacting on the staff member. Whatever the cause, the matter should be addressed quickly and constructively.

- What is the problem?
- What is causing it?
- What would solve the problem?

**If you perceive a problem with performance, use the following questions and table on the next page to help identify the probable causes and what actions could be taken to overcome problems quickly.**

- Firstly describe the problem in behavioural terms. What precisely is the staff member doing, or not doing which appears to be adversely influencing their performance?
- Discuss what reasons there might be for the performance problem (see column 1 in table on next page).
- Listen to the other person's point of view or account of the problem.
- Discuss what actions can be taken to improve the situation [see column 2 in table on next page].
- Work together to select the most appropriate solution.
- Consider whether the solution is worthwhile in cost/benefit terms. If so - implement it, if not, work through the checklist again to come to a mutually agreeable solution.
- Summarise exactly what is to happen next.

**NOTE:** The table on the next page is not exhaustive. Staff and supervisors are encouraged to develop other innovative methods of overcoming obstacles.

Failing to deal with a problem is not doing anyone a favour.

## Overcoming Performance Obstacles

	<b>Possible Reasons for Performance Problems</b>	<b>Possible Solutions</b>
<b>Goal clarity</b>	Is the staff member fully aware of the job requirements?	Give guidance concerning expected goals and standards. Set clear targets.
<b>Ability</b>	Does the staff member have the capacity to do the job well?	Revisit the performance plan. Consider opportunities for training and development activities.
<b>Task difficulty</b>	Does the staff member find the task too demanding?	Simplify the task, reduce the workload, reduce time pressures, consider the task in the context of other work pressures.
<b>Task overload</b>	Is the staff member having to juggle too many activities at once?	Was the performance plan too ambitious? Do other factors - such as study commitments or illness - need to be taken into account?
<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>	Does the staff member find the task rewarding in itself?	Redesign the job to match the staff member's professional interests or aspirations.
<b>Extrinsic motivation</b>	Is good performance being rewarded?	Arrange positive consequences for good performance. Too often there is no clear differentiation between the consequences for good or bad performance.
<b>Feedback</b>	Does the staff member receive adequate feedback about their performance? (i.e. feedback which is clear, accurate, objective and aimed at arriving at solutions to any existing problems)	Provide or arrange feedback. Encourage the staff member to seek feedback on performance from other sources such as clients.
<b>Resources</b>	Does the staff member have adequate resources (quality, number) to perform the task to the standard expected?	Provide staff, equipment and other resources as appropriate or modify the task or standard expected.
<b>Working conditions</b>	Do working conditions, physical or social, interfere with performance?	Undertake an audit of the physical environment and address problems in appropriate ways.
<b>Problems with colleagues</b>	Does the staff member appear to avoid colleagues?	Deal with conflict early. Ensure that problems are not related to harassment. Seek assistance from the Equity Section or the Human Resources Department if required.

## Addressing Development Needs

### Is Development the Right Solution?

#### Identifying Performance Gaps

A performance gap is the difference between what a person 'should be able to do' and what they 'can actually do'. Performance gaps can often be isolated to specific functions and tasks in an individual's current job. They may also emerge after considering the individual's ability to perform in a different or future job.

#### Performance Gaps can be identified in a number of ways:

- Day to day observation/assessment by self/others
- Job/task analysis
- Goal setting/action planning
- Performance/productivity reviews
- Client feedback
- Problem solving outcomes

#### If there is a deficiency in performance, is it always a training matter?

Here are some possible alternative solutions:

- Role Clarification
- Job Redesign
- Process improvements
- New/improved systems and processes
- Improved communications
- Enhanced teamwork
- Knowledge of consequences
- More effective delegations
- Multi-skilling
- Improved materials/equipment
- Better planning
- Development of quality standards
- Clarification of expectations
- Redeployment

Refer to the diagram on the next page to help you determine if it really is a training matter.

#### If it is a training matter, what are some development options?

- Job enrichment – assign short term project
- Job expansion
- Continuous improvement – quality, standards, customer service
- Delegate – assign temporary task responsibility, proxy at meeting
- Identify & use strengths – organisational, social, IT
- Conference / PDP / SAS participation
- Secondment
- Job rotation – within section
- Job exchange – with other sections, organisations
- Training – multi-skilling, on-the-job, HR programs, internal/external
- Job Shadowing

Things to consider when choosing the right development option:

- What is the individual's preferred learning style or development option?
- What are the desired behaviours or learning outcomes you and the individual want to achieve?
- Have you discussed the development need and how the training will benefit the individual and the team?
- What immediate workplace application opportunities will be available to the individual after the training?
- Is now the right time for the person to undertake the training opportunity?

(Source: Australian Institute of Professional Facilitators)

## *IS IT REALLY A TRAINING ISSUE ?*



A.J. Rosnizowski,  
*Designing Instructional Systems, 1981*

***Purposeful inventions to help restore required performance:***

- **Direction**
  - Vision, Goals, Objectives
- **Expectations**
  - Performance Measures & Expected Behaviours
- **Guidance**
  - Feedback & Appropriate incentives
- **Resources**
  - Training, Coaching and support
  - Materials and equipment

**Written by: Kerry Brocks**  
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