VPS Performance and Development Guidance

Overview

The purpose of the Victorian Public Service (VPS) Performance and Development Guidance (the Guide) is to provide methods and tips on how to get the most out of the Performance and Development Plan (PDP) process.

The Guide complements the Department's *Performance and Development - Public Service policy* and the *Remuneration in the Public Service Guide* which establish all policy in relation to VPS Performance and Development at the Department. This Guide does not create any new policy or obligations beyond what is provided for in the above policy documents.

The Department's PDP process provides an opportunity for you to work with your reviewer to plan and document your performance and development including:

- how your work contributes to the achievement of broader organisational goals
- the key activities/accountabilities and outcomes of your role to be achieved during the PDP cycle
- agreed progression criteria to be achieved during the PDP cycle
- the behaviours in the DET Values needed for success and
- individual learning and development goals (including career aspirations) and how these will be achieved.

For information on the Department's Performance and Development policy and salary progression and other resources please see the Performance and Development in the Public Service page on HRWeb.

The 'PDP Guidance for Reviewers: Additional Notes' section of this document provides guidance for reviewers focusing on effective performance discussions. Constructive performance discussions are central to ensuring the PDP process adds value to the Department, your team and the individual.

Use the following links to move quickly to the required section in this document

- Performance and Development Cycle
- Responsibilities
- Stage 1: Setting Expectations
- Stage 2: Performance Discussion and Mid-Cycle Review
- Stage 3: Performance Discussions and End-of-Cycle Review
- PDP Guidance for Reviewers: Additional Notes

Performance and Development Cycle
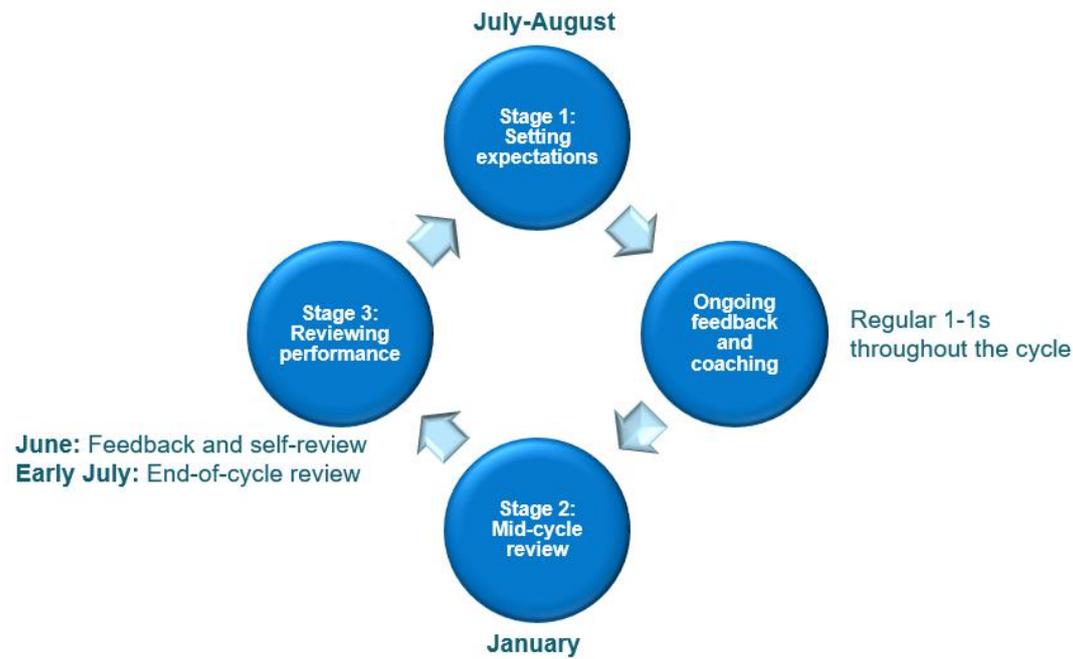
Responsibilities

Your Responsibilities

PDPs are a valuable tool to support you in your performance and development. You and your reviewer should work collaboratively but it is important that you take responsibility for developing your own PDP.

Your role in the performance and development process is keep track of the progress of your goals and regularly communicate their status to your reviewer, especially if you are facing challenges that could prevent you from achieving your goals.

You should be clear about how you would like to develop and actively seek opportunities for professional and career development. By soliciting and being open to feedback you will gain an increased self-awareness about your performance and development which can inform your PDP.

Reviewer and Manager Responsibilities

For most employees, their manager will also be their reviewer. Some employees, will have a reviewer and a manager.

In that instance, reviewers are responsible for monitoring performance, agreeing goals, assessing performance and providing feedback; managers are responsible for facilitating learning opportunities.

Your reviewer should agree on a schedule of regular performance and development discussions throughout the PDP cycle. These meetings will be used to provide constructive feedback, check in on the progress of your goals and work with you to revise them as necessary, and support your development.

Stage 1: Setting Expectations

During the *Setting Expectations* stage you will work collaboratively with your reviewer to develop and agree what you are expected to achieve throughout the PDP cycle. This includes identifying the support and development needed to ensure success is achievable during the performance cycle.

The Department's *Performance and Development in the - Public Service Guide policy* outline what is required to create a valid plan and demonstrate outcomes and the *Remuneration in the Public Service Guide* outlines eligibility criteria. These policies together will establish what is required to achieve progression.

The PDP template on eduPay includes the following sections:

Goals - Key Deliverables / Progression /DET Values: Key Deliverables are the main priorities of your role for the PDP cycle, aligned with the Region/Area or Division/Branch plans. Progression Criteria are stretch goals demonstrating increased capabilities, productivity, performance and professionalism in a role. DET's Values details the values and key behaviours to be demonstrated throughout the cycle.

Career Plan / Development Plan: The Career Plan can be used to to note your future career or personal aspirations. The Development Plan are the learning and development goals which will enable you to build capabilities and achieve your potential.

You will write goals for these two sections of the PDP template. The process is initiated by a conversation with your reviewer to set expectations, discuss your performance and development and agree to the PDP. Each goal should outline what you will do, how you will do it (actions) and how you will know you have succeeded (evidence of achievement).

Learning Section: This lists the training you have accessed via LearnEd on eduPay.

It is important that you understand how your work fits into the bigger picture and contributes to the achievement of broader organisational goals. Cascading goals involves linking your goals to the applicable strategic and business goals from your Group, Divisional or Regional plan.
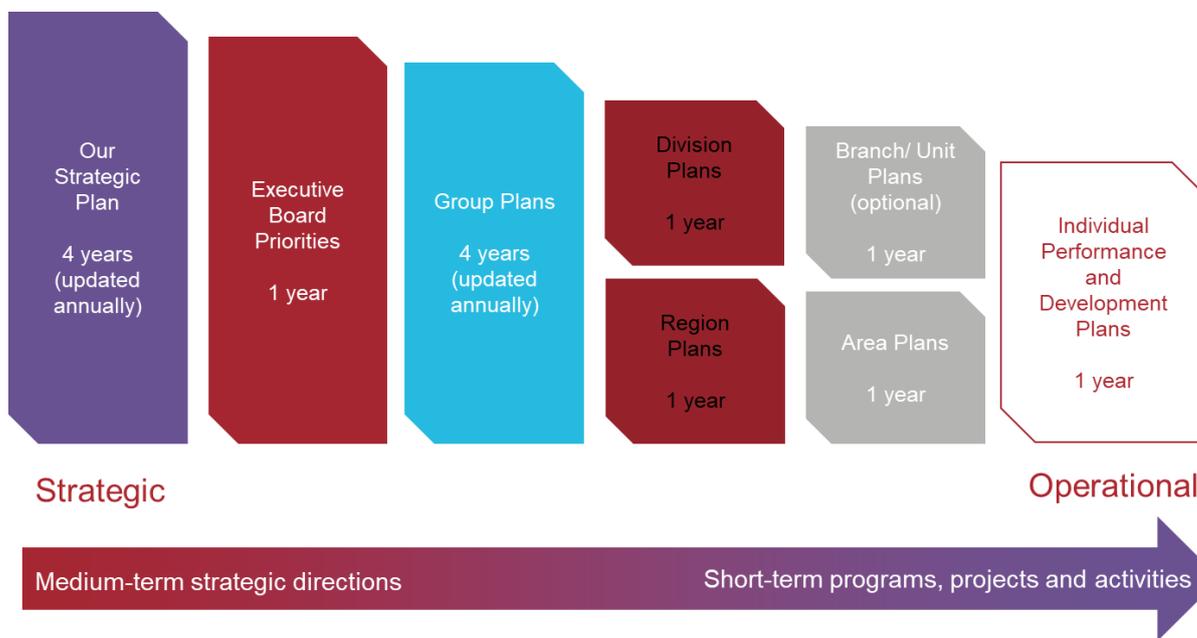
In addition to your Branch/Unit or Area Plan, other resources you might find helpful when planning your PDP are:

- Your position description
- VPS Grades and Value Descriptors
- Your previous year's PDP
- Previous year's Branch/Unit or Area Plan if the current one is not yet available
- Other strategic or planning documents

Goals - Key Deliverables / Progression / DET Values

Key Deliverables

Key deliverables are performance goals and outcomes to be achieved during the PDP cycle. They should be measurable which will allows you to demonstrate that they have been achieved according to the agreed standards.

Key deliverables represent priorities that you are responsible for delivering. The accountabilities and evidence of achievement represent the minimum requirement for performance, demonstrating that you are performing effectively in your day to day role. When you are developing your PDP, consider the evidence you will need to support performance discussions in the mid-cycle and end-of-cycle review.

The key deliverables and evidence of their achievement should be consistent with the responsibilities of your position relative to the VPS Grade and Value Descriptors.

Progression Criteria

Progression Criteria are the 'stretch' goals aligned to your position and business plan but used to demonstrate increased capability and performance. You will work collaboratively with your reviewer to determine what can be delivered to achieve progression to a higher salary level through a combination of increasing capability, productivity, performance and professionalism.

The most important, demanding or complex tasks should be included in this section as a focus for developing the agreed standards required to obtain salary progression. You can use the VPS Grades and Value Descriptors to consider the VPS grade or value range above yours to determine appropriate 'stretch' goals. The Department's Capability Framework can be used to consider specific capabilities you would like to develop and you can use your Progression Criteria to support this.

Progression Criteria should be achievable and your Individual Development Plan can be used to outline the development and support you may need to deliver the agreed outcomes.

DET's Values

You should identify up to three of DET's values and the behaviours that enable them which you will demonstrate in undertaking your role. Where possible, consider how these behaviours support the delivery of your Key Deliverables and Progression Criteria. See the DET's Values page on HRWeb for more information on the seven values.

Career / Development Plan

Career Plan

The Career Plan is useful in identifying short and longer term aspirations. You may choose to build your career plan at any time, and use the insights to discuss with your reviewer, manager, a mentor or other trusted advisors within the Department.

The following Career Planning Template can help you to work out what your interests and abilities are, and then consider how to apply this self-awareness to roles you aspire to.

CAREER PLANNING TEMPLATE	
Where am I at? What do I know about myself and my capability and performance?	
What am I most motivated by?	**What do I find de-motivating?**
What are my strengths?	**What are my development areas?**
What is important to me?	**What do I want out of a job or career?**
What insights does this give me about my future and what career options might be appealing? What roles in the Department do I aspire to? What skills will I need to move towards those roles? How can I incorporate this into my stretch goal (in my PDP)?	

Remember, your career plan is flexible and you can change it if you need to. A good career plan should grow and change as you do. It's also a good idea to revisit your career plan to see how you're tracking or get some inspiration.

Development Plan

When you are building your development plan both development opportunities and strengths need to be a focus. Too many people ignore their strengths but you are more likely to build confidence when you work on your strengths, and these can turn into extraordinary assets.

In deciding which capabilities to develop, you and your reviewer could consider as many as possible of the following:

- Your development goals should be aligned with organisational goals. The ideal learning experience would meet the business needs, the requirements of your role, and your own needs

- Limit the number of development objectives. It's better to focus on a few goals and achieve meaningful development than to make no progress on a long list.
- What feedback have you received through recent PDP discussions, comments from your reviewer and others?
- Your current situation, what you are challenged by or where you have come up against roadblocks.

Experience, Exposure, Education model

When developing learning and development goals and corresponding actions/strategies, apply the Experience, Exposure, Education model for learning. The model is based on research undertaken in the 1980s which gathered key evidence on how adults learn.
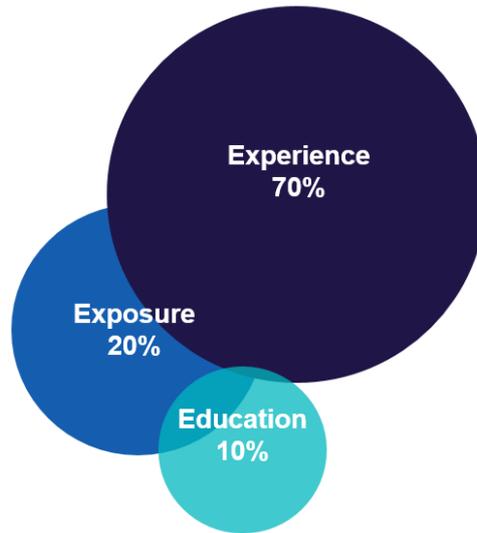
We all learn in different ways, and it is important to figure out what works best for you. In the past, what has helped you learn? What hasn't? Which parts of a learning process do you find easy? Which parts are hard? It's important to consider this information to inform your preferred learning styles — that is, learning by experiencing, reflecting, thinking, or doing.

The breakdown of the Experience, Exposure, Education model provides guidance about the ideal blend of development activities. Combining these methods often proves to be the most effective.

Consider for example, learning a language. In order to become proficient, you need to do many different activities, such as attend formal classes, use audio books or audio language lessons (Education). You also need to work with others, for example a coach, or a learning group, speaking with other native speakers (Exposure). However you will only become proficient through trying out your skills, speaking the language in public and getting involved with others (Experience). Until you actually speak the language, you are unlikely to learn it well and keep it in your memory. This blend of learning experiences creates the ideal and most effective learning experience.

Experience	Exposure	Education
Learning through experience should make up about 70% of learning. This is day-to-day tasks, challenges and practice. We learn from experience and achieve mastery through practice. Examples include: - Participating in stretch assignment or projects - Solving work problems in a considered way - Participating in reviews and analysing completed work	Learning through exposure to others should make up about 20% of learning. This includes coaching, mentoring, personal networks, feedback and other cooperative and collaborative actions. Examples include: - Seeking coaching and feedback from manager and other colleagues - External networking - Working with a new team - Secondment or acting up opportunities	Learning through structured education should make up about 10% of learning. This includes structured courses and programs to understand the theories or histories behind what you practice. Examples include: - Structured workshops, seminars or masterclasses - Reading articles and books

Capability Framework

The Department's Capability Framework is a development tool. You may refer to the Capability Framework to gain a better idea of what the Department defines as success and assist you to focus and plan development activities to support your current role, and potential future roles. Some of the capabilities in the Framework will be more important than others for your role, and your reviewer will be able to work with you to identify the most critical capabilities for you.

The Framework will also assist you when thinking about broader capability requirements, your Progression Criteria or in identifying capabilities needed for future roles that can be included in a career plan. The Capability Framework allows you to focus your development, by helping you understand required behaviours and skills, and identify opportunities to expand your skills. It provides context for candid feedback conversations with your reviewer.

Capabilities	Behaviours			
Support strategic direction	Reinforces and supports the Department's vision, objectives and outcomes	Contributes to the development of plans, strategies and team goals	Ensures work outcomes are aligned with business strategy	Researches and analyses information relevant to work tasks and responsibilities
Display personal leadership and integrity	Adheres to and upholds the Department's values	Commits to action and take responsibility for accurate completion of work	Follows legislation, rules, policies, guidelines and codes of conduct	Demonstrates honesty, remaining open to others ideas and opinions
Build productive relationships	Fosters teamwork and collaborative positive relationships with team members	Treats people with respect and courtesy	Values and responds to different personal styles	Establishes partnerships with people to facilitate outcomes
Stakeholder and client focus	Seeks to understand and meet client and stakeholder needs	Responds to changes in client needs and expectations in a positive manner	Strives for continuous improvement and innovation	Monitors client and stakeholder satisfaction
Communicate with influence	Adapts communication style and approach to address different needs	Prepares written documents in line with DET writing style guide	Prepares and delivers logical sequential and succinct briefs and presentations	Listens to and considers different ideas, and discusses issues credibly and thoughtfully
Results focus	Establishes tasks and project plans to deliver objectives	Sees tasks and projects through to completion at the expected standard	Makes effective use of time and resources	Shares information and contributes own expertise to achieve outcomes
Self-awareness and personal development	Seeks feedback from supervisor and peers	Explores feedback to understand behaviour and recognise the impact on others	Actively seeks out and participates in learning activities including putting new skills to practical use	
People management (if applicable)	Aligns team with DET values and objectives through setting specific performance goals	Clearly articulates role expectations, monitors performance and provides timely performance feedback	Actively seeks to improve the performance and potential of others by providing support and development opportunities	Identifies and addresses under-performance issues in a timely manner
Adapt to change	Clarifies drivers for change and translates into work plans accordingly	Adjusts and responds effectively to new and different situations	Maintains performance, positivity and effectiveness in times of change	Talks to, involves and supports others through workplace change
DET Business enablers	Understands and uses available technology to maximise efficiency and effectiveness	Recognises the implications of emerging trends and develops policy	Understands and applies information and knowledge management principles and processes	Applies procurement processes to ensure effective purchasing and contract performance
Job Specific expertise	Effectively apply professional, technical and specialist skills and knowledge to the specific role being performed. These capabilities need to be written by the individual/manager and should describe the knowledge and expertise required for the role.			

To assist with understanding the capabilities, it may be useful to consider the expected level of proficiency, as indicated in the table below, and discuss with your reviewer what level is expected of you for each capability.

Capability Framework Proficiencies	
Basic	**Advanced**
• Basic understanding or knowledge needed for the job sufficient enough to handle routine tasks • Requires some guidance or supervision when applying the capability • Understands and can discuss terminology and concepts related to the capability	• Highly developed knowledge, understanding and application of the capability required to be successful • Can apply knowledge outside the scope of the position; has a long term perspective • Is able to coach or teach others on the capability
Proficient	**Expert**
• Detailed knowledge, understanding and application of the capability required to be successful • Ability to apply the capability in handling non-routine problems and situations • Requires minimal guidance or supervision / works independently • Consistently demonstrates success in the capability • Capable of assisting others in the application of the capability	• Helps develop materials and resources in the capability • Specialist/authority level knowledge, understanding and application of the capability required to be successful • Recognised as an expert in the capability and is sought out by others • Works across team, across divisions, across DET, and across the portfolio • Applies skills across multiple projects or functions Able to explain issues in relation to broader organisational issues • Creates new applications and processes • Has a strategic focus

There are two resources to support you with the Capability Framework:

The *Capability Framework and Descriptors* provides more information including examples of development for each of the eleven capabilities which may help you when you are considering your Individual Development Plan.

The *Capability Self-Assessment Tool* can help you to look at your own level of proficiency in more detail.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING TEMPLATE		
Development Goal - What is the overall goal of my development?		
What **Capability** do I want to develop?	How does this link to my PDP goal?	Target completion date
The Plan - How will I go about developing my skills in order to achieve my goal? See the Capabilities site for development suggestions aligned to Experience, Exposure, Education		
Experience	Exposure	Education
Support and Measurement - What do I need to consider when planning my development?		
What barriers/challenges do I expect?		
What support/resources will I need?		
How do I know I am making progress?		

Writing Goals

Start with a verb:

Start with an action word, such as complete, conduct, achieve, increase ... Focus on outcomes and not activities. You want to capture the most important key outcomes and agreed progression criteria

Use Measurable Terms:

Include a measurement, such as How much, How many, How much better, How much faster, Costing how much less. Measurement usually covers cost, quantity, quality and timeliness.

By When:

Include a due date, or timeframe such as: daily, weekly, as scheduled, phase 1 by the 31st of March, phase 2 by the end of June 2018

Measures

Each goal needs to have a corresponding measure to determine how the outcome will be assessed. They are the way progress against the goal is tracked. When you are considering the measures for your goals you should reach an agreement with your reviewer on what will constitute success and what the evidence will look like to demonstrate this.

Measures need to:

- be an effective measure of the goal
- be observable (behaviours) or measurable (outcomes) and include relevant qualitative or quantitative data
- measure outputs, not activities.

It's most efficient and effective to use measures that are readily available. However, if a measure doesn't exist for a goal and target, you might need to create one. For example, the objective is, 'Respond to all stakeholder *requests within 24 hours',* you may need to create a log specifically for recording requests, the time at which they were addressed, and a description of the service provided.

Gathering feedback from others (internal or external stakeholders) can also be used to measure your progress.

Whilst it may be difficult to identify measures for some goals, they can include quality, timeliness and efficiency indicators. Keep measures simple and straightforward so they are easily used on a regular basis.

Examples of goals

Goal *These will depend on the capabilities/performance of the employee and VPS level*	Measurement Tool
Report on Project results on a quarterly basis to Manager and team.	Tracking sheets, meeting agendas
Achieve X% performance requirements in the 6 months to <date> and X% for the 12 months (Apr 20XX –Mar 20XX)	Financial reports
Prepare plan for particular project within the XXXXXXX sector and present to Manager/ Director by <date>	Business Development Plan, presentation
Initiate discussions to increase cross-divisional working, and continue communication with the Divisions. Aim for at least 3 project crossover success points.	Discussion dates, meeting notes, financial reports
Establish 'Project XXXXXX' as a monthly agenda item that is discussed and reported to by team members by <date>.	Meeting minutes, examples of tools in use
Establish Key project management plan by <date>, and implement by <date>	Key project management plan, activities update
Conduct follow-up reviews for staff with initial performance discussions in hand by <date>. All discussions to have written note on progress placed on their staff file.	Staff file, discussion notes
A communication plan must be established for 100% of the projects you lead. This is to be copied to the project team within X days of project confirmation. 90% compliance to this communication plan.	Communication plan, feedback from project members
Focus on relationship with <stakeholder> to increase opportunities to work with them. Increase on last year satisfaction by X%.	Financial reports, feedback on stakeholder focused activities
Prepare team meeting agendas that include information about topics based on team input. Distribute at least 1 day before the meeting.	Agendas, team feedback
Reduce staff turnover by XXX% (currently XXX%). Prepare a plan to address this issue and present to Director by <date>	Staff statistics, plan

Tips for writing goals

- Start each goal with a verb that describes measurable outputs or results (e.g. complete, conduct, achieve, increase, respond to all)

- Avoid where possible writing all or nothing goals, for example, achieve *100%* or deliver *all*…

- Don't mistake activities for goals e.g. lead a cross functional team to develop recommendations for new initiatives. This is an activity. You could reword this to become a goal as follows. *Develop recommendations for at least 3 new initiatives by the end of the first quarter, gain sign off agreement to them in the 2nd quarter and begin implementation of at least 2 by the end of the 3rd quarter*

- Ask yourself if these are the most important priorities for your job at this point in time? You don't need a key outcome for everything you do, just for the most important outcomes that will help you, your team and your manager to collectively achieve your plans

- Are they aligned with your Group and Divisional or Regional business plans?

- Check again - are they the most important priorities that will support your manager and the team to achieve their outcomes over the next 6 to 12 months?

Common Mistakes when writing goals:

Avoid	Try instead
"Improve performance"	"Increase outputs to x from y by z date", or improve quality by …
"… to manager's satisfaction/to a high standard	Define agreed standards
"Create/update people and culture policies and procedures"	"Create the following procedures: - Working from home

Avoid	Try instead
	Update five existing policies utilising agreed Department outlines and seek input and review from (name individual or group): • (list policies for updating) by October 31st Year
"Increase customer satisfaction"	"Customer feedback survey average score greater than 4"
"Increase innovation"	"Register four suggestions in innovation register each quarter"
"Reduce risk"	"Complete a risk register for all projects and a risk assessment for all projects over $10,000" by xxx date
Undefined or sketchy quantity, quality, cost or timeliness measures	XX Number of: • health promotion and education programs delivered • calls received • assisted referrals to services/ agencies • projects involved in • relevant community committees/ groups/ networks involved in • presentations to colleagues / team at team meetings • clients on waitlist for services • meetings attended
Words like "every", "always", "never" and "100%" are red flags – carefully assess any goals with these kinds of words as they are all or nothing	Use real numbers and realistic percentages (suggest you include an example here)
"All problems raised in team meetings will be resolved within a week"	"All problems raised in team meetings will be analysed using the problem solving circle within a week and reported back the following week." Where the outcome is very uncertain, focus on process goals
"All employee satisfaction ratings will reach 4 out of 5"	"Employee satisfaction ratings will increase, on average by 0.25 on a 5 point scale in the next employee survey"
Goals that are not linked to Divisional or Regional business plan outcomes and/or the employee's position description	Linked to goals
"Create the following procedures:" • Working from home "Update five existing policies:" • (list policies for updating)"	"Create the following procedures and seek feedback from (applicable person):" • Working from home by xxx date Update five existing policies: • (list policies for updating) by October 30 using agreed work units templates and quality guidelines"
"Employee satisfaction ratings will increase, on average , by 0.25 out of 5"	"Employee satisfaction ratings will increase, on average, by 0.25 out of 5 in the next half yearly employee survey"
"All problems raised in team meetings will be analysed using the problem solving circle"	"All problems raised in team meetings will be analysed using the problem solving circle within a week and reported back on in the following weekly team meeting"
Creating goals for other people	Set aside time to provide support in reviewing their proposed objectives. For team goals, discuss and workshop them together

Avoid	Try instead
Agreeing to goals you think are irrelevant or unrealistic	Tell people what you think and feel and work collaboratively to agree relevant and achievable goals

Stage 2: Performance Discussions and Mid-Cycle Review

Performance Discussions and Feedback

Your PDP plan is a living document and it should be updated as you monitor and track your progress. Expectations are reviewed and clarified on an ongoing basis and you will work with your reviewer to evaluate your progress towards achieving goals. This involves ongoing and regular two-way feedback which should be specific and balanced. The more often you meet and discuss performance and development the more value you will receive. Ongoing conversations and constructive feedback is the key.

Feedback is developmental and should aim to motivate, empower and support you to identify where you could be more effective and how necessary adjustments could be made. Equally as important, you should enter feedback sessions with an open mind, and be willing and receptive to meaningful and constructive feedback.

Mid-Cycle Review

The mid-cycle review is a formal step in the PDP process which takes place by 31 January and is recorded on eduPay. It provides an opportunity to reflect on your performance, discuss your progress with your reviewer and review the evidence, and refine your PDP prior to the end-of-cycle review.

It is an opportunity for a discussion about expectations and areas for improvement prior to the end-cycle review. This may include identifying further opportunities for collaboration, capacity building and capability development. It is important to note that concerns about performance should be raised as soon as they have been identified and discussed in the context of how you can work towards meeting your goals.

Evidence

Evidence should be the information or data collected as part of everyday practice, and should not be 'extra'. In consultation with your reviewer, you should select quality evidence that enables you to demonstrate progress towards achieving your goals. Evidence should demonstrate the impact of your actions, not simply that you have completed an action.

When selecting evidence, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- How will I know I have achieved my goal and had the desired impact?

- How could I demonstrate that I have achieved the goal?

- Who will benefit from me having done this?

- Can I ask those who benefit from my work for feedback?

There are multiple sources of evidence that can be used to demonstrate achievement of goals. These include:

- self-reflection – what did I do? how did it go? what could I do differently to do better next time?

- feedback from your reviewer, peers, people you have worked with

- individual or team-based learning

- workplace artefacts, for example, documents, emails, photos etc. and assessments against relevant standards/processes/key performance indicators.

Preparation

You should prepare for the reviews by:

- collating and analysing evidence collected over the course of the PDP cycle

- reflecting on your performance and growth over the cycle, with reference to goals

- preparing to describe your achievements, how you have grown and areas for further development you have identified for the future (supported by evidence)

- preparing to have a constructive professional conversation with your reviewer and receive feedback regarding your progress and growth.

MID-CYCLE REVIEW PREPARATION TEMPLATE
What is my goal for this PDP review discussion?
What do I think my reviewer's goal may be?
What challenges have I faced in the last six months?
What have I done well in the last six months that I want to make my reviewer aware of? What evidence can I provide to support this?
How am I tracking against the goals in my PDP? Have I actioned my development goals?
How could I open this conversation?
What questions do I think my reviewer may ask me?
What questions do I need to ask my reviewer?
Consider the rest of the current PD cycle - what could I do to better engage with the process?

Stage 3: Performance Discussions and End-of-Cycle Review

In May your reviewer will endorse your PDP in eduPay. This is preceded by a discussion to review your PDP and determine whether your PDP is still relevant and if you are on track to meeting your goals. The endorsement step provides an opportunity to make any final amendments to your PDP and implement any solutions to ensure you meet your goals. Once your PDP has been endorsed by your reviewer it will no longer be possible to edit it in eduPay.

The end-of-cycle review comprises a documented meeting where you and your reviewer discuss the goals outlined in the employee's PDP, recognise achievements, reflect on the evidence collected throughout the year, and identify areas for further development.

A formal end-of-cycle review meeting will take place in June/July. You and your reviewer will review your performance throughout the cycle and will discuss your progress in your current role, including your Key Deliverables, Progression Criteria, DET's Values and Development Plan. You and your reviewer will record the end of cycle review on the 'PDP Portal'. Your reviewer will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether progression is recommended or not.

Remember, there should be no surprises here as there has been regular feedback, coaching, monitoring and tracking of performance throughout the cycle.

END-OF-CYLE REVIEW PREPARATION TEMPLATE
What is my goal for this PDP review discussion?
What do I think my reviewer's goal may be?
What challenges have I faced in the last 12 months?
Did I achieve the goals in each section of my PDP? • If yes, what evidence can I provide to support this? • If no, what are the reasons for not meeting the goals?
How could I open this conversation?
What questions do I think my reviewer may ask me?
What questions do I need to ask my reviewer?
Consider the next cycle - what could I do to better engage with the process?

PDP Guidance for Reviewers: Additional Notes

Principles Underpinning Effective Feedback

Effective feedback does many things including:

- honouring competence and reinforcing desired behaviours
- aligning expectations and priorities
- filling gaps in knowledge
- providing guidance on where to take corrective action, and
- alleviating fear of the unknown.

Guidelines underpinning effective feedback[1]

Feedback should therefore be a gift that reviewers both give and receive. Some key principles underpin effective feedback and can be kept in mind as you prepare for your feedback conversation:

1. Focus on the business reason underpinning the goals and be prepared to change the goals if the business has changed.
2. Focus on the future – the past is over so the focus needs to be on performance improvement in the future. You will need enough data from the past so the person understand your concerns then discuss how things could be different in the future.
3. Put feedback in context – is this a big issue or a minor problem? If you don't give context upfront, people's attention will be directed at working out how big a problem this is rather than on what you are saying.
4. Check the timing – formal reviews should not contain any surprises. Also ensure you focus on the previous 6 months, not just the last month when planning your feedback.
5. Keep it simple – keep feedback to only the most important concerns. It is easy to feel overwhelmed if presented with a list of concerns. Allow time for people to digest the feedback and to come back to you for more information.
6. Focus on behaviour – the focus should be on behaviour, not personalities. The SBI model (Tool #3 in this Guide) provides a framework to assist with this.
7. Speak in the first person – where at all possible gain first hand evidence. If you speak for others (e.g. They said..") the person will be focusing on who you have been speaking with (the "they"), not what you are saying.

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[1] Adapted from Rick Maurer's Book, *Feedback Toolkit: 16 Tools for Better Communication in the Workplace.*

Applying the Guidelines

The following 6 steps an assist in applying the guidelines for effective feedback.

1. Prepare for the feedback using the templates provided in this Guide
2. Present the feedback giving specific examples and explaining the impact on you / the organisation
3. Listen to hear the other person's point of view
4. Engage in dialogue, listening and conversing
5. Plan for action by searching for solutions that all can agree to, and
6. Acknowledge and thank the person for what you have both accomplished via this discussion.

Potential reactions to feedback

A UK organisation called Coaching Leaders identified four possible reactions when you give someone feedback, depending on a combination of how open they are to the feedback and how confident they are in their ability to handle and learn from challenges.

Defensive (Low Openness/Low Confidence)
Take the feedback as an attack, whatever the intention behind it. The feedback may be about one small aspect of behaviour or performance, but it's received as if it was aimed at their identity. Their emotions respond as if it was a threat to their existence.

They might respond by blocking the feedback out and ignoring it, by denying that there is any truth in it, or by getting angry and retaliating. Either way, they learn nothing and this can damage the relationship.

Dispirited (High Openness/Low Confidence)
Take the feedback on board uncritically, agreeing with every word (at least inwardly) and feeling crushed by it, without checking if the feedback is supported by the facts.

As with the defensive reaction, they take the feedback as if it was a criticism at the identity level, rather than a statement about behaviour, and have a correspondingly strong emotional response.

Even though they agree with the feedback, they may be too demoralised to learn from it and change behaviour.

Dismissive (Low Openness/High Confidence)
Don't take the feedback seriously, automatically assuming that the facts of the feedback are wrong and/or that the person giving the feedback is not to be taken seriously.

With this reaction, they are not upset by the feedback, but equally they do not engage with it and so miss out on the chance to learn anything from it.

Open (High Openness/High Confidence)
To be open to feedback, people need to remain calm so they are not hijacked by a 'knee-jerk' emotional reaction. Rather than taking any criticism or praise instantly to heart, they can keep it while they check how it relates to their recollection of the incident or behaviour that the feedback is about.

The first emotional response to the feedback may change when they examine it in a more detached, dispassionate way later.

When they do this, they can accept and learn from any useful information in the feedback, while dispassionately discarding any elements that don't fit the facts. They will also be able to make allowances if the person giving the feedback is not very skilled at delivering it.

This response requires confidence in their ability to learn and improve, rather than in their current performance level, so they can be open to feedback with any level of ability.

VPS Performance and Development Guidance

Common Employee Reactions to Constructive Feedback and Appropriate Reviewer Responses

Employee reaction	Sample employee statement	Guidelines for reviewer response	Sample reviewer response
Hostility/ resistance/ denial	▪ "I don't know what you're talking about. I provide great customer service!" ▪ "I do not accept your feedback regarding my project management skills. The incident you cited did not take place."	**Do**: ✔ Provide sufficient examples to support your feedback ✔ Gauge the employee's reasons for resistance ✔ Ask the employee to reflect on the feedback defer the discussion if the employee seems to be pointlessly resistant ✔ Candidly discuss the consequences if the employee does not address the development area ✔ Refer the employee to the employee assistance program (EAP), if appropriate **Don't**: ✘ Get aggravated with the employee's open hostility and resistance to your feedback ✘ Soften your feedback to alleviate the reaction ✘ Attack the employee's personality based on his/her reaction	▪ "Let's review the examples I gave of areas where I see an opportunity for improvement." ▪ "Let's give you some time to reflect on the feedback I've provided and reconnect tomorrow morning." ▪ "This is an opportunity for you to improve your performance. Disregarding it will continue to impact your performance reviews down the line, as well as the future opportunities available to you here at the organization."
Indifference	▪ "Maybe; I'll see what I can do." ▪ "I can't make any promises, but I'll try." ▪ "Sure, whatever you say."	**Do**: ✔ Ask the employee to reflect on the development areas and confirm whether he/she is able to commit to them ✔ Discuss the consequences of denial if the employee does not commit to improving **Don't**: ✘ Overlook the employee's indifference and non-commitment toward the feedback ✘ Lose patience with the employee ✘ Judge the employee for being apathetic	▪ "I'd like you to think about what we discussed and whether it's something you can put the required effort toward developing." ▪ "It's important to let me know if this isn't something you can make a full commitment to. If you decide it's something you can't do then that's acceptable, but then we'll need to talk about the consequences."

Lack of confidence/ self-pity	▪ "I don't know where to start from." ▪ "I knew this would happen; I can never do anything correctly."	**Do**: ✔ Give the employee time alone to regain composure, if necessary ✔ Highlight that this is an opportunity to improve ✔ Assure the employee that improvement is possible with effort—use past examples of his/her successful development ✔ Reassure him/her that you will offer support ✔ Provide examples of small steps the employee can take toward improvement ✔ Refer the employee to the employee assistance program (EAP), if appropriate **Don't**: ✘ Focus on the employee's past inability to achieve outcomes ✘ Moderate your feedback to alleviate the reaction ✘ Reflect the employee's negative attitude	▪ "Now that we have identified this area for development, it is an opportunity for you to improve your performance. I firmly believe you are capable of achieving this goal. I've seen you achieve similar development goals in the past, for example…" ▪ "You will have support from me as you work on this. For example…" ▪ "Let's talk about what you can do to improve in this area."
Responsibility skirting	▪ "It's not my fault…" ▪ "I'm sorry, but when people ask such basic questions it is very annoying."	**Do**: ✔ Listen to the employee's reasons and situation ✔ Restate the examples ✔ Clarify that the employee will need to meet expectations and improve the development areas despite his/her reasons **Don't**: ✘ Agree with the employee when he/she blames other people ✘ Change your perspective based on the reasons or excuses if they are not valid	▪ "I know this might be difficult for you to focus on, but the fact remains that I need you to work productively with your peers." ▪ "I know there have been a lot of changes recently, but I still need you to support the change and increase sales in your new territory."
shock/anger	▪ "This is not fair! I always knew you didn't like me, but this is unreasonable." ▪ "I've been working so hard to meet all of my project deadlines, and this is what I get to hear?" ▪ "I was expecting a promotion and I think I deserve it."	**Do**: ✔ Acknowledge the fact that the employee is not satisfied with the feedback ✔ Prod the employee for opinion and comments ✔ Restate examples, explain your perspective ✔ Refer the employee to the employee assistance program (EAP), if appropriate **Don't**: ✘ Attack the employee's personality based on his/her reaction ✘ Become defensive ✘ Moderate your feedback to alleviate the reaction	▪ "I can see that you are upset with these results. I would like to hear your opinion." ▪ "If I understand correctly, you are angry because you feel that I have not given you enough challenging assignments, and that I don't have any confidence in your abilities. Is that correct?" ▪ "Let me explain what I think happened so you can understand my opinion. Then we can work this out together."

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More Feedback Tools

Tool 1: Blended Coaching

Blended Coaching is an approach developed by Gary Bloom from the University of Santa Cruz[2]. It has as its guiding metaphor the Möbius strip, and explains how effective reviewers move between instructional coaching (coaching for doing) and facilitative coaching (coaching for being), depending on the needs of the person being coached. This is seen as a dynamic process, not a continuum to traverse.

Examples of Doing and Being include:

Ways of Doing	Ways of Being
Planning an agenda for a team meeting	Engaging all team members voices in the meeting
Providing staff with performance data	Building and facilitating a community of practice focused on team performance
Using the formal PDP process to evaluate and provide feedback on staff performance	Providing ongoing feedback throughout the year to uphold high standards and support ongoing staff growth

You would use a facilitative coaching style with someone who you believe has the capability to do the work required and may just need their confidence built, and someone who has the skills to engage in reflective conversation. Autonomy and control sits with the person being coached.

Facilitative coaching style	Examples of what you might say
Create new possibilities by taking a fresh look at underlying thinking	"Tell me what you are trying to accomplish. I am wondering what your priority is."
Develop problem-solving skills by looking at problems from different angles before reaching conclusions	"That's a great thought – let's think about other ways that this could be achieved." "Who else might you need to engage?"
Build self-reflective practice	"Have you had similar experience to this in the past and if so, how might it apply?" "What has surprised you? How can you use this knowledge?"
Shifts responsibility and control to the person being coached	"So what will be your next steps?"

You would use an instructional coaching style with someone who does not possess the skills, knowledge or internal resources required for action.

Instructional coaching style	Examples of what you might say
Direct questioning to elicit understanding	"Tell me exactly how you will undertake x (eg a step in goal attainment)"
Get permission to instruct	"Would you like me to describe some options to you?" "There are a number of approaches that might work."
Check decision-making / action strategies	"There are a few things you need to keep in mind as you implement this."

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[2] Bloom,G et al, 2005, *Blended Coaching; Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development*, Corwin Press, Ca

Tool 1: The Grow Model

The GROW model is a helpful tool for planning solution-focused feedback conversations. Tips for how it can be used are shown below.

GOAL: **This is the end point; clearly define what your goal is for this conversation**	Considering our limited time, what are the most important things you/we need to cover? What are the key points you want to make sure we discuss right now? Before we discuss details, can I share why this is an issue or opportunity that needs to be discussed? Does that work for you? Can we check what we can discuss in the time we have available now? How does that sound to you?
REALITY: **Where are you/they right now and what interferences are stopping you/them achieving your/their goal?**	What has happened so far? What has been achieved to date? Where are you up to? What process are you following? How effective is the process? What concerns if any, do you have? What's working well? What measures are in place? What are they telling you? Here's my thinking …. I'm noticing … The information I have is …. From experience, what do you think?
OPTIONS: **Develop suggestions about how to get to where you/they want to be**.	What are your ideas for ….? What process steps do you think you / we should ….? What else? Any other ideas? What solutions have worked before? What needs to be different this time? I'm thinking we could/you could …. What do you think?
WRAP UP: **Commit to actions that fit with the chosen option, set timelines, monitoring and support**	What steps will you/we take? Who will be responsible for ….? What support do you need? How can I help? What resources do you/we need? How much time is needed for ….? How will you/we measure ….? What timelines do you need to put in place?

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GROW: A planning template

Purpose: This form is ideal to plan performance discussions and reviews. The power of the GROW model is that it leads to a clearly defined end result through four phases. The employee is personally active in identifying problems and generating ideas for solutions.

GOAL

This is the end point, where the employee wants to be. The goal has to be defined in such a way that it is very clear to the employee when they have achieved it.

Prior to the discussion: What do I as the reviewer want to get from this session?

- What do I want to say?
- How will I frame the discussion?
- How will you know that the conversation has been successful?
- What questions will I ask to prompt the discussion?

REALITY

The current reality is where the employee is now and identifying the issues, the challenges and obstacles.

Prior to the discussion: What do I identify as the issues/concerns?

- How do I perceive the reality?
- What evidence is there to support my view?
- What strengths or development areas do they need to consider?
- What questions will I ask to understand my employee's perspective on the reality?

OPTIONS

Once obstacles have been identified, the employee generates ideas that can contribute to the solution of the problem. Evaluate every option

Prior to the discussion: What options can I identify?

- How do I perceive the reality?
- What evidence is there to support my view?
- What strengths or development areas do they need to consider?
- What questions will I ask to understand my employee's perspective on the reality?

WAY FORWARD

Prior to the discussion: What outcomes would you like to see implemented?

- How could the preferred option be implemented?
- What risks or challenges might they encounter?
- What might I need to do to support them to achieve it?
- What other support might they need?
- How will I agree an action plan and with agreed responsibilities?

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Tool 3: The Situation-Behaviour-Impact (SBI) Model[3]

The SBI model is a useful tool for providing specific feedback. It has three steps:

1. Identify the **s**ituation
2. Describe the **b**ehaviour
3. Explain its **i**mpact

When you structure feedback in this way, people understand precisely what you are commenting on, and why. When you outline the impact of their behaviour on you or others, you give them the chance to reflect on their actions, and think about what they need to change. It also gives you the opportunity to check your assumptions about the person.

The following example shows the SBI model in action.

Situation	"At the Divisional meeting last week…"
Behaviour	"At the Divisional meeting last week you interrupted your colleague's presentation on four separate occasions with long and complex questions."
Impact	"At the Divisional meeting last week you interrupted your colleague's presentation on four separate occasions with long and complex questions. This meant that the flow of the presentation was negatively impacted and the it ran over time"

You then pause to allow the person time for discussion and what they might need to do in the future to change their behaviour.

Tool 4: More Question Stems

The following questions stems may help if you are feeling stuck[4]. These are useful for both formal and informal conversations.

Anticipation
What is possible?
What if it works out exactly as you want it to?
What is the vision?
What is exciting to you about this?

Assessment
What do you make of it?
What do you think is best?
How does it look to you?
How do you feel about it?

Clarification
What do you mean?
What is the part that is not yet clear?
What do you want?

Elaboration
Can you tell me more?
What else?
What other ideas/thoughts/feelings do you have about it?

Evaluation
What is the opportunity here? What is the challenge?
What do you think that means?
What is your assessment?

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[3] Developed by the *Centre for Creative Leadership*
[4] Adapted from Whitworth, L et al's *Co-active Coaching*, 2007

Example
What is an example?
For instance…?
Such as…?
What would it look like?

Exploration
What is here that you want to explore?
What part of the situation have you not yet explored?
What other angles can you think of?
What is just one more possibility?

History
What led up to it?
What have you tried so far?

Implementation
What is the action plan?
What will you have to do to get the job done?
What support do you need to accomplish it?
What will you do?
When will you do it?

Learning
If the same thing came up again, what would you do?
If we could wipe the slate clean, what would you do?
If you had it to do over again, what would you do?

Options
What are the possibilities?
If you had your choice, what would you do?
What are possible solutions?
What will happen if you do, and what will happen if you don't?

Outcomes
What do you want?
How will you know you have reached it?
What would it look like?

Perspective
What will you think about this five years from now?
In the bigger scheme of things, how important is this?

Planning
What do you plan to do about it?
What kind of plan do you need to create?
How do you suppose you could improve the situation?
Now what?

Predictions
How do you suppose it will all work out?
Where will this lead?
What are the chances of success?

Resources
What resources do you need to help you decide?
What do you know about it now?
How do you suppose you can find out more about it?
What resources are available to you?

Summary
What is your conclusion?
How is this working?
What do you think this all amounts to?

Taking Action
What action will you take? And after that?
What will you do? When?
Is this a time for action? What action?
Where do you go from here? When will you do that?
What are your next steps? By what date or time will you complete these steps?"

Further Assistance

Further information, advice or assistance on any matters related to Performance and Development Plans is available by:

- accessing the A-Z topic list on HRWeb
- contacting the Organisational Development Team by email: vps.performance.development@edumail.vic.gov.au