

Performance Review and Development Program Providing feedback to employees (PRDP)

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Providing feedback to employees

PRDP Supervisors are responsible for providing employees with feedback on their performance and professional development.

The majority of employees want to know how they are doing. The purpose of feedback is to assist employees in:

- identifying what they are doing well and to build on this;
- correcting any problems or behaviours; and
- developing new capabilities to benefit their growth.

Feedback to employees:

- recognises their contribution;
- helps improve their performance and professional development;
- corrects or eliminates behaviours;
- motivates self-improvement; and
- builds trust.

Feedback to employees also improves the Directorate/Section and University's performance.

Employees who do not receive regular feedback are still being evaluated by their PRDP Supervisors, but do not benefit from knowing how they are doing. PRDP Supervisors are thus responsible for providing employees with their evaluation of their performance and professional development through feedback.

1. Formal feedback and informal feedback

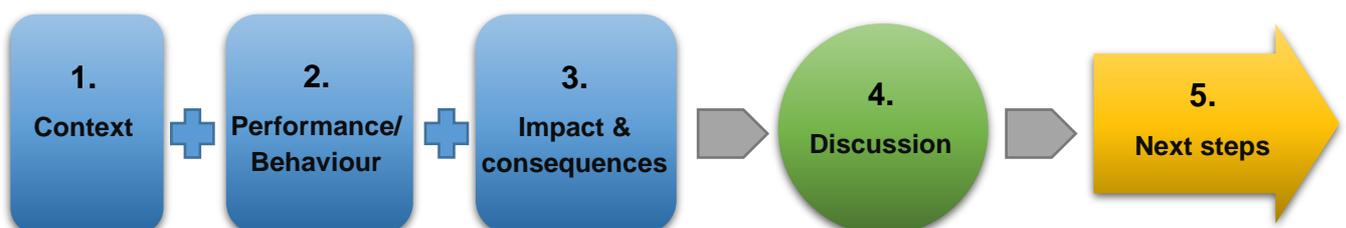
Formal feedback must be provided to employees at least once during the PRDP cycle, i.e. during *Stage 3 – Performance and Professional Development Review*.

It is also recommended that PRDP Supervisors provide employees with formal feedback during *Stage 2 – Monitoring Objectives*.

Informal feedback should be provided on an ongoing basis in order to follow the principle of “no surprises” during the final review. Informal feedback is timely feedback given immediately or as soon as possible to give praise or address problems. Informal feedback demonstrates PRDP Supervisors' commitment to continuous and open communication with employees and creates a supportive environment that emphasises mutual support.

2. A five-step model for giving effective feedback

The below Five-Step Model assists in preparing for and providing descriptive, factual and objective feedback:



Step 1 – Describe the content

Describe the situation. What was the situation? When did it occur? What happened or what did not happen?

Example	
Positive and reinforcing feedback	Step 1 <i>The report that you delivered to me last week Friday on the evaluation of training providers for the Management Program ...</i>
Corrective feedback	Step 1 <i>Yesterday at the staff meeting when Joe was presenting an update on the implementation of the new software ...</i>

Step 2 – Describe the performance or behaviour

Describe the actions that were or were not taken, the tasks that were or were not completed, the deadline that was or was not met, or the behaviour that was appropriate or not appropriate.

It is important not to draw conclusions or provide interpretations when providing corrective feedback as this is likely to promote defensiveness. Stating the facts creates a common understanding of actions taken or not taken, or behaviours displayed.

Example	
Positive and reinforcing feedback	<p>Step 1 <i>The report that you delivered to me last week Friday on the evaluation of training providers for the Management Program ...</i></p> <p>Step 2 <i>... is well structured and thorough. It has a comprehensive qualitative evaluation of each provider and an easy to understand clarification of costs for service.</i></p>
Corrective feedback	<p>Step 1 <i>Yesterday at the staff meeting when Joe was presenting an update on the implementation of the new software ...</i></p> <p>Step 2 <i>I observed you rolling your eyes and turning to talk to Bob.</i></p>

You were disruptive during Joe's presentation yesterday could be used to describe the same behaviour. However, it is an interpretation and likely to promote defensiveness.

Step 3 – Describe the impact and consequences

Describe how the actions, lack of actions or behaviour impact on the University, directorate/section and/or employee and what the consequences are.

Example	
Positive and reinforcing feedback	<p>Step 1 <i>The report that you delivered to me last week Friday on the evaluation of training providers for the Management Program ...</i></p> <p>Step 2 <i>... is well structured and thorough. It has a comprehensive qualitative evaluation of each provider and an easy to understand clarification of costs for service.</i></p>

	Step 3	<i>I was able to table this report at the Development Committee Meeting on Monday. The Committee was able to select a provider without delay.</i>
Corrective feedback	Step 1	<i>Yesterday at the staff meeting when Joe was presenting an update on the implementation of the new software ...</i>
	Step 2	<i>... I observed you rolling your eyes and turning to talk to Bob.</i>
	Step 3	<i>I noticed that Bob lost his train of thought and he later told me he felt that you did not show him respect.</i>

Step 4 – Engage the employee in discussion

Positive and Reinforcing Feedback

Engage the employee in a discussion to allow them to acknowledge the positive feedback they have received. Also, engaging with the employee in discussion provides the employee with an opportunity to raise any problems they may have encountered during the assignment or ideas on what they think could be done differently next time. It also provides an opportunity to reinforce the positive outcomes.

Corrective Feedback

The purpose of engaging the employee in discussion is to brainstorm alternatives with the employee that will achieve the desired outcome and to secure the employee's commitment.

Some employees may be ready to engage in a discussion immediately after they have received feedback. However, some employees may need time to take the feedback on board and in these instances, ensure you schedule a follow-up session for the next day. It is important to follow through on the feedback to ensure the next steps are clarified and agreed.

Step 5 – Specify Next Steps

Positive and Reinforcing Feedback

Example	
Positive and reinforcing feedback	Summarise the good performance or positive behaviours. Provide the employee with encouragement to continue with the good performance or positive behaviours.
Step 1	<i>The report that you delivered to me last week Friday on the evaluation of training providers for the Management Program ...</i>
Step 2	<i>... is well structured and thorough. It has a comprehensive qualitative evaluation of each provider and an easy to understand clarification of costs for service.</i>
Step 3	<i>I was able to table this report at the Development Committee Meeting on Monday. The Committee was able to select a provider without delay.</i>
Step 4	Engage in discussion.
Step 5	<i>Thank you for delivering a comprehensive and thorough report on time. I was proud to table the report at the Committee. I look forward to working with you on the next project.</i>

Example

Corrective feedback

Summarise the alternatives that were brainstormed to improve performance or the alternatives that are positive and appropriate behaviours. Select and agree upon actions to be implemented or behaviours to be displayed. Determine and agree upon how often you will meet to monitor progress. Provide the employee with encouragement.

- Step 1** *Yesterday at the staff meeting when Joe was presenting an update on the implementation of the new software ...*
- Step 2** *... I observed you rolling your eyes and turning to talk to Bob.*
- Step 3** *I noticed that Bob lost his train of thought and he later told me he felt that you did not show him respect.*
- Step 4** Engage in discussion.
- Step 5** *We have agreed that it was inappropriate to roll your eyes and start a side conversation during Joe's presentation. You have agreed from now on to focus your full attention on the relevant presentation to ensure the presenter has the opportunity to present without being distracted and that other team members can listen uninterrupted to the presenter. If and when I observe any behaviour that could be distracting other team members, we have agreed that I will provide you with feedback as soon as possible and we will then discuss appropriate behaviour. I would like to encourage you to avoid displaying behaviours that are inappropriate.*

The following table is based on the Five Step Model for Providing Effective Feedback and may assist you in preparing for providing feedback and determining the next steps:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Context	Performance/ Behaviours	Impact and Consequences	Discussion	Next Steps
What? When? Where?	List actions, tasks, deliverables, deadlines or behaviours.	What was the impact? What were the consequences?	Brainstorm alternatives. What needs to change? How will it be achieved? What lessons were learnt? What could be done differently next time? What needs to be done to continue on the right track?	Determine and agree upon actions and behaviours.

It is recommended that PRDP Supervisors refrain from using the “sandwich method,” i.e. providing employees with some positive feedback followed by corrective feedback and then concluding with some positive feedback again. With this method, employees are often waiting for the “bad news” and not listening to the positive feedback. After receiving the “bad news” employees are often mulling it over in their heads and do not hear the concluding positive feedback.

3. Some Tips for Providing Effective Feedback

Be clear about your objective

Why are you providing the feedback? You are more likely to achieve positive outcomes if your objective is to praise, improve performance and/or professional development, solve a problem collaboratively or correct/eliminate a behaviour.

Give feedback frequently

The benefits of feedback accrue over time. Therefore, by giving feedback frequently, good performance and positive behaviours are reinforced or changes required are influenced.

Give feedback timely

“Just in time” feedback should be given as soon as possible after the event. This is to either praise and provide positive recognition or to influence changes required in performance and/or behaviour.

Consider the timing of the feedback too, i.e. when will be the most appropriate time to provide feedback to the employee to ensure the employee listens to the feedback.

Give authentic feedback

Employees respond positively to feedback that is descriptive, objective, factual and non-judgemental. In order to provide authentic feedback, you need to focus on the needs of the employee receiving the feedback.

Describe what happened. Do not judge the employee as judgements lend value, e.g. good or bad, or right or wrong. Employees accept descriptions more easily and are likely to become defensive when judged.

Be specific

Focus on what was done or not done. The employee will then know what was good or what needs to be improved or what behaviour was inappropriate.

Focus on the amount of feedback you give

Keep it simple. Giving too much feedback can be ineffective.

Be considerate

Provide feedback in private. Also, choose a date and time that is convenient for the employee.

Be supportive

Demonstrate through your words and body language that you are interested in the employee and their performance and professional development.

4. Identifying and Addressing Performance Concerns

As a PRDP Supervisor you may need to address performance concerns. As a general rule, there are four major causes of performance problems:

- The employee lacks the knowledge or skills to perform.
- The employee has the knowledge and skills, but lacks motivation.
- The employee does not have the resources to perform.
- The lack of performance is caused by the environment, e.g. process.

The following two questions can assist you in identifying performance issues and provide guidance on corrective actions:

- Does the employee have the knowledge or skills to perform the job?
- Does the employee have the motivation to perform in the job?

Based on the above, employees can be placed in one of the performance analysis quadrants below:



4.1. Motivation

Employees who have sufficient knowledge and skills to perform, but lacks motivation fall within this quadrant. A lack of motivation may be caused by a number of factors. PRDP Supervisors should assist employees in recognising and understanding the negative impacts and consequences of their lack of motivation.

PRDP Supervisors are also reminded that regular feedback provides employees with the means to motivate themselves. If an employee's performance does not improve over a reasonable period of time, PRDP Supervisors should contact Human Resources for assistance.

4.2. Resources

If an employee has both the knowledge and skills and the motivation to perform well, then the problem may be outside of the employee's control. For example, the employee may lack the correct resources or sufficient time allocation to do the job, processes may be time consuming and not support operational objectives, too many projects allocated without clear direction on organisational priorities, incorrect job design or work station is not ergonomically designed.

PRDP Supervisors should support employees in addressing problems outside of the employee's control.

4.3. Selection

If an employee does not have the knowledge, skills or motivation to perform well, the employee is most likely in the wrong job. This may mean that an incorrect merit selection or promotion decision was made.

PRDP Supervisors should contact Human Resources for assistance when facing the above concern.

4.4. Training

If an employee is motivated, but lacks the knowledge and skills to perform, further training may be required.

PRDP Supervisors should address this through the Professional Development Plan in the PRDP using SMART objectives. If an employee's performance does not improve over a reasonable period of time, PRDP Supervisors should contact Human Resources for assistance.

A *Manager's Introduction to Unsatisfactory Performance* resource provides assistance and guidance in managing unsatisfactory performance. This resource is available from Workplace Relations in HR.

PRDP Supervisors are reminded that the University's [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) can assist employees with personal and workplace problems, and are encouraged to remind employees of the EAP. PRDP Supervisors can access the [Manager's Assist](#) of the EAP to assist them with any employee management concerns and problems.