QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY
HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Guide to a Successful
Performance Dialogue Process
Grades 2 to 9
- For Employees and Supervisors

Last updated May 2012
I. PDP Process Overview

At Queen’s University, the Performance Dialogue Process (PDP) is designed to align individual jobs to support the mission of the University and to support the departments and their units, to improve job understanding, to promote the highest level of job performance, and to provide an opportunity to discuss future goals for career and personal growth.

The PDP cycle provides supervisors the opportunity to communicate with employees by:

- discussing expectations for performance during the coming year
- coaching on progress throughout the year and
- providing feedback on accomplishments toward the objectives set at the beginning of the year.

As described further in this Guide, this program helps staff members understand their job responsibilities and specific objectives each year, as the business to be accomplished within different parts of Queen’s University evolves.

The PDP is a way to formally acknowledge and document the results of the conversations during the cycle. It is different from a disciplinary process. Performance issues should be identified as they arise (separate from the PDP process) and the employee given the opportunity to improve.

This Guide is intended for employees and supervisors of staff at Queen’s. It refers to the first meeting in the PDP cycle, ‘The Performance Planning’ meeting.
At the beginning of the PDP year, the supervisor meets with employees to:

Set objectives - Agree on what is expected and the resources needed to achieve this. This includes agreeing on how to evaluate and measure their performance at the end of the year. Clarify at what level each of the core competencies are to be demonstrated by them in their position.

During the year they meet to ...

Check in on progress – Review the objectives to assess progress and adjust if necessary, based on changing business needs or priorities. Coach ongoing, as required.

At the end of the year, they meet to...

Review progress and accomplishments. Evaluate performance against the objectives agreed upon.
II. Preparing For the Meeting

This section reviews how to prepare for the meeting to set objectives and establish the “level required”, for each Core Competency (Sections 1(a) and Section 2 of the PDP form).

A. Preparing for Your Own PDP Meeting

This section will be helpful to the employee.

1. Schedule:
   - Time on your own calendar to prepare for the dialogue;
   - Time with your supervisor for the actual PDP conversation; and

2. Refresh your knowledge of:
   - Your current goals and priorities
   - Your job description for skills and major responsibilities.
   - How to set ‘SMART’ goals and other guidance concerning setting objectives (see Section III of this document for details)

3. Think about the objectives for the coming year:
   - Draft an initial version of objectives you think are relevant to your position for the coming year (as appropriate, as determined by supervisor)
   - Share this draft version of objectives with your supervisor before the meeting.

B. Preparing For a PDP Dialogue with an Employee

This section will be helpful to the supervisor.

1. Schedule:
   - Time to prepare for the discussion (remember the power of good preparation); and
   - Time on your calendar for the PDP discussion (at least one hour).
   - Give the employee plenty of notice of the meeting (at least 48 hours)

2. Review Employee’s draft objectives:
   - Review the draft objectives employee wrote relevant to their position and make any relevant notes.

   NOTE: You may decide that it is more appropriate for you to draft the list of objectives for the employee. Example: New employees may not have enough information or university knowledge to draft their own objectives.

3. Refresh Your Knowledge of:
   - The employee’s current projects, initiatives and priorities;
   - The goals, initiatives and priorities of the Department
   - The employee’s role and accountabilities.
   - How to coach somebody and help them develop a competency. (Contact Organizational Development and Learning, Human Resources Department. They can assist you with employee development); and
   - How to set SMART goals (i.e., SMART is defined as Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound).
4. Write in Draft:
   • The level required for each of the eight core competencies to be demonstrated by the employee in the coming year

III. Setting Objectives

To effectively measure performance at the end of the year, you need a reference point. Objectives map out what to achieve and how to measure it.

Each objective should include a clear description of what the measurable outcome is, and a time frame. Depending on the scope of responsibilities, the objectives may be individual based, a combination of individual, team, unit, departmental, or university-wide in nature.

During the PDP meeting, the supervisor discusses the final list of objectives, and determines the priorities. The employee and the supervisor can also discuss what support or resources may be needed to achieve the chosen objectives.

Making objectives measurable:

How will employees know that they have done a good job? A well-written objective often has a qualitative or quantitative measure, so that an objective assessment can be made regarding the accomplishment of the goal.

An example of this is “Respond to 98% of client enquiries within 24 hours with no resulting complaints from the clients.” In this case, a measure of the quality is the reference to ‘no resulting complaints’.

In many cases, outcomes are not readily quantifiable. Remember that the most important of the desired results should be captured in the statement of the objective, not just the ‘widgets’ that can be counted. For example, an objective might be “To complete and launch the ‘Information Monitoring Project’ according to the scope of the project and within the planned timeframe.”

One reference to assist in checking whether an objective is well written is the following ‘SMART’ criteria:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Measurable</td>
<td>Achievable</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>Time Bound</td>
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<td>Describes an observable behaviour and clearly explains what the employee is to achieve</td>
<td>Can be assessed by a qualitative or quantitative measure</td>
<td>The employee has the skills and authority to complete the objective. Resources for the project are adequate to allow for success.</td>
<td>Supports the mission of the University and /or the University’s department(s) and/or a units</td>
<td>Has clear, agreed upon milestones or completion dates (where applicable)</td>
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At the end of the year’s Performance Discussion cycle, the supervisor gives the employee feedback on her/his achievement towards the objectives that were set and agreed upon.

Below is the rating scale used to assess performance according to the objectives set out at the beginning of the year in section 1(b) of the PDP form.

**Needs Improvement to meet expectations (NI)**
The employee did not satisfactorily meet job expectations and has not completed most objectives.

**Partially Achieves Expectations (PA)**
Partially achieved objectives; improvement in needed.

**Achieves Expectations (AE)**
The employee met and occasionally exceeded job expectations and objectives.

**Exceeds Expectations (EE)**
The employee consistently exceeded job expectations and objectives.

**Outstanding Achievement (OA)**
The employee by extraordinary performance or an outstanding achievement, made a significant contribution to their department.

**How do we set objectives?**

There are four different types of objectives and examples of each described below. Some or all types may be used depending on the employee, the role and departmental or unit goals. All employees should set one Personal Development objective each year.

**A. Regular activities, with performance measures**

These objectives describe day to day activities in your position summary that must be done in order for your department to function.

*Example: Respond to all student enquiries within 24 hours.*

**B. Problems that require solutions**

These objectives describe something that will be done to improve processes, products or services; they may be a “quick fix” or require a series of activities. If significant input or approval from others is needed, be sure to note this.

*Example: Improve the effectiveness of committee meetings by*
  - **Distributing the schedule for remaining meetings by March 15**
  - **Developing a set agenda template for use in all meetings by March 20**
  - **Appointing a rotating Chair for all meetings by March 20**

**C. Opportunities**

These objectives involve innovative approaches, new products and services, or ways to reach new customers. These are sometimes called **stretch objectives.**

*Example: Increase enrollment by 5% this year by holding recruiting events in three new cities.*

**D. Personal Development**

These objectives develop technical, organizational or personal skills and knowledge.

*Example: Improve communication skills by attending Foundational Leadership: Effective Written Communication in June.*
IV. Competencies

The term “competency” refers to a combination of skills, abilities and knowledge directly related to successful performance on the job. A competency is often defined in terms of the behaviours a person demonstrates on the job. Core competencies are important for all staff of the University, regardless of their position or level.

There are eight core competencies:

- Working with others
- Inclusivity
- Communication
- Customer service and support
- Planning and organizing
- Continuous improvement
- Attention to detail
- Adaptability and support for change

Each of these Core Competencies can be demonstrated at three levels (from a minimum level of proficiency (Level 1) to a high level of proficiency (Level 3). The supervisor decides the depth at which the individual must demonstrate their ability in that competency. The supervisor discusses this expectation with the employee and indicates this on the PDP form at the beginning of the year in the ‘Level required’ section. This does not need to change from year to year (unless the responsibilities of the position change significantly).

On the PDP form, there is a column indicating ‘Level Required’, and a separate column labelled ‘Level Demonstrated’. At the end of the year the supervisor decides what level the employee demonstrated each of the Core Competencies. Strengths (where the demonstrated level is higher than what is required for the job) and gaps (where the demonstrated level is lower than what is required for the job) are used to create the employee’s development plan for the following year.

Section 3 of the PDP form ‘Job Specific Competencies’ is optional. Unlike the eight core competencies, job specific competencies may not be required for all roles. In cases where critical skills or qualifications are required in a given position, the supervisor writes job specific competency descriptors and clarifies expectations with the employee at the beginning of the year. For example, positions responsible for department websites may require advanced use of web content software. Assistance writing job specific competency descriptors for your department or faculty is available by contacting Organizational Development and Learning, Queen’s Human Resources.

V. The Follow Up

Either the employee or the supervisor may revise Section 1(a) Objectives of the PDP form to reflect any changes agreed upon during the PDP meeting before the form is filed in preparation for the next step in the process.

The manager completes Section 2: Core Competencies “Level Demonstrated” after discussing this with the employee.