Management for Performance System (MPS)

“Reach your Potential”

Guide for Supervisors
Contents

What is Management for Performance System (MPS)? 3
Core Principles 3
Responsibilities & Expectations 3
When does MPS occur? 4
Where can I find the MPS policy? 4
Outcomes of MPS and subsequent action 4
Who do I contact if I have a question about MPS? 4

Before the Meeting 5
Preparing for the meeting
• Gathering evidence 5
• Proposing work objectives for the coming year 5
• Organising the meeting 5

The Meeting 6
Reviewing performance for the past year
• How to conduct the MPS discussion? 6
• Key elements for a meaningful discussion 6
• How to identify and evidence performance? 7
• How to assess and rate performance? 8

Identifying and planning work objectives for the coming year 8
• setting SMART objectives linked to School/Centre’s operational plans 8
• Identifying professional development opportunities 9

What if we can’t agree? 9

After the Meeting 10
What happens after the MPS meeting?
• Completing the “My Work Plan” 10
• How is performance rewarded? 10
• How will I track the progress of staff members I supervise for the remainder of the MPS cycle? 10
• What support can I provide to improve performance? 10

Managing unsatisfactory performance 11

Documentation 11

Where can I get further information? 11
What is Management for Performance System (MPS)?

MPS is an initiative that supports the University’s goal to strengthen our leadership capacity and build a high performance culture. The University’s plan: “ECU Engaging Minds; Engaging Communities. Towards 2020” provides the strategic direction for ECU. These strategic priorities provide the context and organisational outcomes for each School/Centre’s operational plans which in turn provides staff with an opportunity to align their individual and team performance with the desired outcomes of the University.

Core Principles

The Management for Performance System:
- Provides clarity with respect to roles and responsibilities;
- Ensures individual’s work objectives closely align with ECU’s strategic and operational priorities;
- Identifies individual work priorities for the year ahead;
- Identifies relevant training and development opportunities;
- Promotes career planning and development;
- Encourages and facilitates an active partnership and ongoing dialogue;
- Provides recognition, constructive feedback, and support for staff;
- Enables supervisors to plan for and communicate work priorities in a structured way with individuals and teams;
- Provides the basis for evaluative decisions to be made in relation to probation, incremental progression, talent management and succession planning; and
- Provides the basis for managing performance improvement and unsatisfactory performance.

Responsibilities and Expectations

Who is involved and what are your responsibilities?

The staff member – gains a clear idea of what is expected.

The supervisor – has an expected means of communication that minimises surprises for staff and maximises collaboration and contribution.

The team – each member understands how his/her performance supports the responsibilities of the whole team. Team members have clarity about what outcomes are expected from each other.

The Director or Dean – sets the culture for managing performance. Establish the key work priorities and targets for the School/Centre that cascades down to all staff within the work area.

MPS is valuable when:

THE STAFF MEMBER
- develops “My Work Plans” that are SMART1 with specific targets that demonstrate a clear alignment to School/Centre and ECU’s strategic priorities;
- assists in determining the criteria for monitoring the achievement of these objectives;
- works consistently towards the achievement of the work objectives and professional development activities;
- monitors own performance and records and/or collects evidence of achievements;
- actively leads in the performance discussions at formal and informal meetings;
- notifies supervisor of any circumstances that may affect work performance and;
- acts on feedback and honestly self-assesses their work performance.

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1 Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely (SMART)
THE SUPERVISOR

• leads and conducts the process in an effective and constructive manner;
• conducts MPS meetings in an atmosphere of encouragement and support;
• plans equitable performance expectations and workloads for members of the work group/team;
• provides agreed resources and support in a timely manner;
• monitors performance and progress, and provides positive, constructive and timely feedback throughout the MPS period;
• records or collects evidence of staff performance;
• is encouraged to recognise staff for significant improvement or sustained performance for work recognised as over and beyond the expectations of the staff member’s role (where possible);
• addresses performance issues as they arise and assists staff in developing the appropriate skills necessary to improve their performance and/or behaviour;
• objectively assesses and rates staff performance, based on evidence and seeks assistance where/if conflict arises; and
• employs the principles of equity and justice when leading MPS discussions.

THE DEAN / DIRECTOR [OR EQUIVALENT]:

• leads and guides consultative planning and the management of performance within the School or Centre;
• ensures all staff are participating in the MPS round; and
• ensures that if conflict has arisen the appropriate University process is duly followed.

When does MPS occur?
The formal MPS round commences 1 October and ends 31 March each year. During this formal period, both you and your supervisor will meet to discuss your performance in terms of achievements, professional development and evidence for the performance period just completed. New work objectives and targets based on School/Centre’s key work priorities will be discussed and established for the coming year.

Throughout the remainder of the year, supervisors are encouraged to informally meet with their staff members to follow their progress, provide feedback where necessary and to review work objectives for currency.

Where can I find the MPS policy?
The MPS policy can be found at the following link: http://www.hr.ecu.edu.au/mps/html/

Outcomes of MPS and subsequent action
The outcomes of the MPS process may inform decisions and/or recommendations related to the following:

a) probation and confirmation of appointment of newly appointed staff;
b) provision of advice to staff on professional development;
c) provision of formal advice by the supervisor relating to the performance and career development of the staff member;
d) acknowledgement of a change in duty and reclassification;
e) identifying talent for promotion and/or succession planning;
f) enable the recognition and reward of high performing staff; and
g) a separate process will be used for the management of unsatisfactory performance.

Who do I contact if I have a question about MPS?
In the first instance, you are encouraged to discuss any matters relating to MPS with your supervisor. Should you require further information about the MPS policy or
process, please contact your relevant HR Account Manager.
Before the Meeting

Keep it simple. MPS promotes achievements, opportunity, development and commitment to the University.

Preparing for the meeting

Gathering evidence

As a supervisor, you will be assessing and providing constructive feedback on a staff member’s performance. To prepare for the meeting, firstly you review what the staff member has achieved in the past performance period, reflecting on both their specific and overall performance outcomes against the agreed work objectives. You will collect evidence that demonstrates how the staff member achieved or did not achieve the work objectives that were set in the previous year. Duties, responsibilities and accountabilities performed should also be noted.

Examples of evidence may include:

- samples of work produced;
- customer feedback (internal and external);
- academic/teaching portfolio;
- grant submissions and acceptance;
- UTEI/RAI points;
- publications;
- professional development events and activities undertaken.

Reference should also be drawn from position descriptions or position classification standards relevant to the position.

An initial assessment of the overall performance outcomes should be prescribed, based on the evidence gathered.

Proposing work objectives for the coming year

Next step is to consider broadly, the staff member’s work objectives for the next performance period and to identify professional development, resources and support that may be required to achieve the objectives. Review the School/Centre’s operational plan to determine the key work priorities, indicators and targets for the work area.
The following sources may assist you and the staff member in determining the key priorities and work objectives:

- ECU: Engaging Minds; Engaging Communities. Towards 2020;
- School/Centre’s budget;
- School/Centre’s operational plan;
- Academic Activity Areas (including UTEI, RAI);
- Academic Leadership Roles policy;
- Position Classification Standards;
- Position descriptions;
- Feedback from surveys, quality audits and reviews;
- Staff member’s previous years’ “My Work Plans”.

Organising the meeting

Before you meet with the staff member, gather all the relevant documents to be referred to during the meeting. Advise the staff member in advance of what they can expect to be discussed at the review and planning meeting, so they too can prepare for the meeting. Also, advise where the meeting will take place.
The Meeting
As the supervisor, you will ensure that the meeting will take place in a confidential, supportive environment that is free from distraction and interruptions.

As a guide, approximately 20% of your time should be spent on discussing and reviewing past performance and 80% of your time should be talking about the future.

Reviewing performance for the past year

How to conduct the MPS discussion?
The MPS discussion is a shared responsibility between you and the staff member based around the supporting evidence and relevant documents that has been collected.

The discussion is an opportunity for you to:
- give positive and constructive feedback about the staff member’s achievements and raise areas of performance that could be improved or enhanced;
- clearly explain the standards and expectations that you and the School/Centre expect from the staff member in relation to their performance. Check the staff member understands these; and
- discuss whether or not the work objectives and development plans that have been determined are achievable, appropriate with the classification level, and relevant to the needs of the School or Centre.

Key elements for a meaningful discussion

Building rapport
Building rapport is about building similarities at an unconscious level. It involves verbal and non-verbal communication and makes the other person feel comfortable. Rapport can be built consciously through good preparation and well-developed emotional intelligence skills. The physical setting is also a factor – people generally are more comfortable when one of the key boss-subordinate power symbols, the supervisor’s desk, is removed. According to one source there are six things needed to build rapport:

1. Match the person’s sensory modality – Match and mirror they way they think and talk
2. Mirror their physiology – posture, facial expressions, gestures, etc.
3. Match their voice – tone, tempo, volume, key words they use (“I see”, “I feel”, “I think”) etc
4. Match their breathing pace
5. Match how they deal with information – their ‘chunk size’ i.e. are they detailed or big picture?
6. Match common experiences – interests, values, background, etc.

Listening skills
Listening skills are vital – a good conversation involves synergy or deep listening (more than simply hearing what’s being said). Superior listeners put aside their personal values that may otherwise sway their judgements and assumptions. Skills to enhance active listening are: acknowledging, restating, paraphrasing, reflecting, interpreting, summarising, synthesising, probing, checking perception, avoiding distractions, leaving out emotions, feeling empathy, giving eye contact and being quiet.

When listening to the staff member try to get the most accurate understanding possible of her/his personal experience, without judging or providing advice. Be aware of your tone of voice, body language (open, closed) and facial expressions.

Useful questions to learn more about exactly what they mean might include: When? What? Where? Who? Do you mean…? (You are encouraged to paraphrase to check that your understanding is accurate.)
NB: Why? Be aware that this is sometimes overused.
Questioning skills

Questioning skills are closely linked to listening skills. Good questioning helps the other party develop greater self-understanding which should lead them taking personal responsibility for the outcomes of the performance conversation and achieve positive change.

Open questions provide greater opportunities for our listener to reflect and develop self-understanding – closed questions (did, have, etc) tend to provide yes/no responses only. “How”, “what”, “tell me” tend to be the most powerful questions followed by “when”, “where”, “who” questions. Use “why” questions sparingly as they tend to make our listener defensive, forcing them to justify their actions.

Assertiveness Skills

Management for Performance discussions require two-way communication. Our response to the staff member’s attempts to discuss performance can vary between being passive (where we do not express our thoughts or feelings honestly), assertive, or aggressive (where we place our own rights above those of the staff member’s). Assertiveness is the middle way – it’s the ability to honestly and constructively express our thoughts and feelings without placing our rights or needs above those of our listener (in this case, the staff member). Assertive statements are expressed without humiliating, dominating or insulting the other person. Often assertiveness requires that your clearly state what outcome you are seeking using “I” statements i.e. “I want”, “I need”, “I would prefer”, “I’m upset about”, etc.

A word of warning! Don’t fall into the passive trap by trying to minimise your desired outcomes by adding a question or statement that subordinates your needs i.e. “I don’t want to do that (the assertive comment), is that okay by you?” By being assertive you will feel more confident and gain respect from others.

How to identify and evidence performance?

As the supervisor, you will lead the discussion in highlighting the staff member’s overall performance and then specifically recognising achievements against the agreed work objectives, professional development and areas for improvement for the period just completed, based on evidence gathered.

In your preparing for the meeting you will have reflected upon and collated evidence of performance for the staff member.

Below are some examples of questions you may like to ask the staff member to lead or begin the review discussion:

1. Are you enjoying your current role? Do you feel you’ve been able to achieve all your work objectives?

2. What did you achieve in relation to the agreed work objectives? (Refer to specific objectives identified in the “My Work Plan”). What factors (if any) prevented you from satisfactorily achieving the agreed work objectives?

3. What other achievements have you accomplished that were not on the agreed “My Work Plan”? (if any)

4. What professional development activities did you undertake during the year? Did this help you achieve your work objectives?

5. (for Executive Staff only) How did you contribute to the achievement of ECU’s strategic priorities? What factors (if any) prevented you from contributing to the achievement of ECU’s strategic priorities?

6. (For situations where there are areas identified for improvement or enhancement) What can I do to support you in the achievement of your work objectives?
You should comment on any other performance issues relating to the relevant documentation (where necessary).

**How to assess and rate performance?**

You will be required to assess and rate the extent of achievement for each of the staff member’s agreed work objectives based on the following ratings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Outcome Ratings</th>
<th>Definition of Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieved Above Expectation</td>
<td>Performance outcomes consistently exceed expectation. The consistently high standard has earned recognition by others internal and/or external to the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Performance outcomes (in most areas) met the requirements of the work objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Achieved</td>
<td>Performance outcomes and/or behaviour falls short of the required standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff are also encouraged to rate their own performance against each of their work objectives.

In determining a rating against each work objective, consider the extent the indicators and targets were met or exceeded.

Staff may comment on each of the overall final ratings against the agreed work objectives, however, the final performance outcome ratings will be determined by you, the supervisor. Your final assessment is based solely on the achievement of the work objectives agreed and documented in the staff member’s “My Work Plan.”

**Identifying and planning work objectives for the coming year**

**Setting SMART objectives linked to School/Centre’s operational plans**

As the supervisor, you will lead the conversation to ensure that work objectives are SMART (see below) and are clearly aligned with School/Centre’s operational plans and ECU’s strategic priorities.

The staff member should come to the meeting prepared, having considered their role in relation to the work area. Staff are encouraged to draft their own work objectives utilising the SMART technique and propose these for discussion at the meeting.

When setting work objectives, identify the key priorities for the School/Centre that relate to the staff member’s position and where that position can add value or contribute to achieving that priority, to determine the number or scope of the work objectives applicable. As a guide, staff should work toward achieving 3-5 key work objectives relevant to their School/Centre’s operational plan.

You will discuss with the staff member in turn, one or more work objectives in each of the key work priorities. These work objectives must be relevant to the School/Centre’s operational plan and to the staff member’s classification level as prescribed at: [http://www.hr.ecu.edu.au/est/html/position_classification_standards_home.cfm](http://www.hr.ecu.edu.au/est/html/position_classification_standards_home.cfm)

All work objectives should be written in accordance with the following “SMART” principles:

- **Specific** – means that work objectives clearly specify the intended outcomes
- **Measurable** – means that it is possible to monitor progress and outcomes and determine the extent to which objectives are achieved, based on evidence
- **Achievable** – means that objectives are challenging but are capable of being achieved, and that individual staff have the necessary time, skills,
resources and authority to deliver results

- **Realistic** - means that objectives are relevant and align with and support the strategic priorities of the School/Centre and ECU
- **Timely** – means that clear target dates are set for achieving work objectives and completing interim steps.

Guidelines for how to set and write SMART objectives are available on the MPS website, listed under Resources.

Throughout the performance year, if work priorities change for the staff member you supervise, it is strongly advisable to meet informally with the staff member to review and discuss the work objectives to ensure it reflects the changing work demands. The “My Work Plan” should also be updated to reflect the outcome of the informal discussion.

**Identifying professional development opportunities**

The professional development activities identified should assist the staff member to meet or exceed expectations in relation to their work objectives, current position or to develop their career. Those activities chosen should be relevant to the staff member’s role and provide benefits to both the individual staff member and the team/School/Centre.

Examples of professional development opportunities:

- **External conferences** – a short term or one-off learning program offered by another institution
- **Higher education study** – enrolment in a course of study in a University, TAFE or registered training organisation
- **Professional Development Courses** – various courses offered by the Professional Development team at ECU
- **Breakfast seminars** – invitation to attend business breakfast seminars or brown bag sessions that relate to your work area
- **Work-based learning** – activities undertaken within the workplace, examples include on-the-job training, working in project teams or working groups, higher duty appointments, committee participation
- **Mentoring or Coaching** – working closely with a designated person to help you develop skills, knowledge and strategy.
- **Temporary Internal Appointment** – temporarily working in another area of the University for a period of time to develop new skills.
- **Other** - there are other ways that you can identify and offer the staff member, that will assist them in achieving their work objectives.

Note, the above are subject to the appropriate approvals.

Both you and the staff member should agree to the professional development activities identified. Who is responsible for taking action of and ensuring that it is organised should be discussed between you, including the time frames in which these activities need to be completed by. As supervisor, you will ensure that it is followed through, factoring in time and resources.

**What if we can’t agree?**

Performance Management is a partnership between you and the staff member, however there may be an occasion where, after discussion, you and your staff member cannot agree on ratings or objectives. If this occurs, you will note this fact and you are authorised to make the final decision. If conflict does arise during the meeting, either of you may adjourn the meeting and arrange a third person (Performance Review Associate) to attend the reconvened meeting, in accordance with the relevant grievance resolution process.
After the Meeting

For those staff you supervise, you will determine a final decision about their performance, of which will be recorded on the individual’s “My Work Plans.”

What happens after the MPS meeting?

Completing the “My Work Plan”

You may request for the staff member to complete the sections within their “My Work Plan” after the performance and review meeting and to return the work plan to you, to allow you to finalise the matters considered during the review. These matters should be formally documented in the staff member’s “My Work Plan” before signing the final copy. Both parties will sign the document, with the original being placed on the staff member’s Management for Performance file.

How is performance rewarded?

Staff are eligible for salary progression to the next salary point of their classification if they achieved most if not all of their agreed work objectives. Within your School or Centre, staff may be rewarded locally by being invited to attend relevant conferences, enrol and participate in professional development activities or receive local rewards such as movie passes (at the discretion of individual faculties/Centres), based on achievement.

How will I track the progress of staff members I supervise for the remainder of the MPS cycle?

As supervisor, you are encouraged to monitor the progress of the staff you supervise throughout the review year. You may do this informally by seeking feedback from relevant customers or having an impromptu discussion with the staff member to see how they are progressing. It is good practice to collect evidence of work outputs and make a note of specific work achievements to build a portfolio of evidence of performance which will help prepare you for the next formal review meeting.

Throughout the remainder of the MPS cycle, you should also provide timely, positive and constructive feedback. This feedback will focus on the staff member’s behaviour and performance outcomes and should be evidenced by one or two examples. Where relevant, you should recognise performance where the staff member has demonstrated significant improvement, good or sustained performance by for example, local recognition at a team meeting or complimenting them on a job well done.

Staff should be given the opportunity to meet with you to address any performance issues and to correct them (if necessary) to ensure they will be able to achieve the agreed work objectives by the next review meeting. Any performance review meeting should be addressed constructively and in a timely manner to ensure the appropriate support is provided to assist the staff member in achieving their performance targets. It is also an opportunity to ensure the work objectives remain a priority for the work area. If priorities have changed since the last discussion, you should meet with the staff member to determine what the new work objectives should be. You will need to ensure the staff member is clear of this change and has the support and resources to carry out the revised work objectives.

What support can I provide to improve performance?

Where a staff member demonstrates a gap between agreed expectations and performance during the review period, initiate a formal progress review meeting with the staff member. Refer to the staff member’s “My Work Plan” to remind you of what the agreed work objectives and targets were.

Questions you may like to ask include:

- What progress or outcomes have you achieved to date, in relation to each of the agreed work objectives?
- What factors (if any) have inhibited your progress?
- What has been achieved to date, in relation to your professional development plans?
• What changes (if any) need to be altered to your “My Work Plan” to ensure your work objectives are relevant and achievable?
• What changes (if any) need to be altered to your professional development plan to ensure your professional development objectives are relevant and achievable?
• What additional resources or support (if any) are required to allow you to achieve your work objectives and professional development activities?

Any changes discussed should be formally documented in the staff member’s “My Work Plan.” Both parties should sign on the revised documentation, with the original copy filed into the staff member’s Management for Performance file and a copy to be kept by the staff member.

Managing unsatisfactory performance
Where staff does not achieve their performance targets/outcomes, that is, where performance falls short of the required standard, the relevant policies for managing unsatisfactory performance should be adhered to – Unsatisfactory Performance – General Staff and Disciplinary Action for Unsatisfactory Performance for Academic Staff.

Consult with your relevant HR Account Manager for further advice on these matters.

Documentation
Both parties will sign the “My Work Plan” with the original copy being filed into the staff member’s Management for Performance file, stored in a secured location. A copy of the document is to be provided to the staff member.

Documentation may be accessed by relevant line management at any time.

Where can I get further information?
If you require further assistance or need clarity about MPS policy or procedure, please contact your relevant HR Account Manager.