Performance Reviews for Senior Medical Officers
Quick Reference Guide for Heads of Department

What is a Performance Review?
A documented annual discussion to ensure staff members are working towards the team and organisation goals.

Staff Specialists and Clinical Academics are required to have a written annual Performance Agreement and a Performance Review which is scheduled for their anniversary. For Visiting Medical Officers (VMO), their contract provides for a “Service Plan” and a “Level 1” Performance Review is due for completion by 31 July each year. For the current quinquennium ending 30 June 2017, the penultimate year is year ending is 30 June 2016, when additionally a “Level 2” Review is due for completion for this period.

What is the SMO Performance Management System?
The SMO Performance Management System automates paper based forms, which are forwarded via email to the SMO and their Head of Department for completion. For Staff Specialists and Clinical Academics, the due date is their anniversary and the form is sent four weeks prior this date. For Visiting Medical Officers, a Level 1 Performance Review form is sent in early July.

Compliance reports are provided to the relevant Director Clinical Services (DCSs) and LHD Executive.

Annually, the DCS’s are invited to review the SMO’s and the names of their Heads of Department (HoD) within the Performance Management System for accuracy.

Is there a form I must use?
There is a Staff Specialist Performance Agreement pro forma attached to the Staff Specialists Award. The Visiting Medical Officer Performance Review pro forma is attached to Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) Performance Review Arrangements PD2011_010. The on-line forms mirror these forms.

The exception is the base data at the top of the form on-line. This information is not part of the Performance Review but takes the opportunity at the time of the review for the SMO and Head of Department to ensure personal and employment details are recorded accurately. In addition the online system contains the Scope of Clinical Practice (SoCP) granted to the SMO. The SoCP should also be reviewed as part of the oral Performance Review.

Expectations of Heads of Department
As a minimum, Heads of Department are expected to complete a Performance Agreement for new Staff Specialists and Clinical Academics within three months of a staff member commencing and thereafter, an at least annual review with each member of the team as described above. For Visiting Medical Officers, while Heads of Department are to conduct the first and ongoing Performance Reviews on an annual basis, it is optimal to meet within the first three months and complete the services plan and discuss clearly expectations of the new VMO.

Preparation
- Review last year’s Performance Review to enable discussion and assessment of achievement against the agreed objectives and/or planned work.
- Review length of stay and waiting list data (from SPARC reports available from the SESLHD Business Intelligence and Efficiency Unit).
- Review attendance at meetings such as M&M, Drug Committee, etc seeking feedback from the Chair of Committees as appropriate.
• Review any complaint and plaudit information, and matters such as investigations and/or SAC1’s.
• Feedback should be sought from the relevant ward NUM’s, Allied Health HoDs and professional colleagues regarding collegiate and co-operative relations and role in multi-disciplinary teams.
• Feedback should be sought from the DPET and DPT and the SMO responsible for training within the relevant department, for the term assessments for interns and RMOs. Checks are required with Student Supervisors for feedback for the last year of teaching for undergraduate or other health professional students.
• Regarding CPD requirements, enquire into the activities and record provided to the Medical Board of Australia and discuss as appropriate.
• Where Heads of Department are conducting the single Performance Review for a multi-site SMO, feedback should be sought from the relevant site Director Clinical Services prior to the Performance Review meeting. If you have a VMO zero hours reliever, who has not worked in the last 12 months, you may wish to sign off their Performance Review as complete recording “a review has not been completed on the basis of nil work in the last 12 months”.

In addition, Heads of Department:
• Do about 20% of the talking in the Performance Review.
• Provide all relevant documentation, current and historical, for the meeting to their staff member. (NB SMO Services provides the previous year’s Performance Review by populating fields in the current Performance Review, except when generating a Level 1 Performance Review for a VMP following a new contracting period).
• Review the position description and highlight any changes or areas for discussion.
• Have suggested goals prepared for the next 12 months.
• Have considered what support as a manager can be provided to assist SMO to achieve their goals.

VMO’s can request further consideration of comments made in Level 1 or Level 2 reviews by persons other than those who conducted the initial review. This does not prevent the VMO seeking clarification from the reviewer without need to escalate outside of the process. Heads of Department should endeavour to record clearly the performance review discussion.

As a HoD entering into a performance agreement with a SS/CA, or a services plan with a VMO, you are seen as using the authority and accountability of your position. This includes responsibility for physical, financial and human resources of your department. If the SMO requests something be provided to them to undertake their role, you have a range of options available to you as their HoD. These may include:
• Agreeing to their request and providing the resources from within your department’s staffing and/or budget
• Escalating their request to your supervisor if you agree to the request, but do not have the resources available to meet it
• Not agreeing to the request

It is important that you take the necessary action if you have included in the performance agreement of your staff member something that needs to be provided.

Expectations of Staff Members
• Do about 80% of the talking in the Performance Review.
• Staff members should be well prepared for their review, having been provided all relevant documentation for the meeting by their manager. VMO’s are invited to complete a self-assessment and forward to their HoD prior to the Performance Review meeting.
• Staff members should review their position description, review achievements in the past 12 months, have at least three goals prepared for the next 12 months, and have an understanding of what support they require to achieve their goals.
**Managing Poor Performance**

The Performance Review is not the opportunity to raise any new or on-going work performance problems, attendance or disciplinary matters.

Conducted outside the Performance Review process, managing poor performance generally follows these steps:

1. Informal performance counselling – a “quiet chat” so to speak.
2. Performance Counselling – an escalation from step 1 which would generally be recorded in writing.
3. Performance Improvement Plan – a final, serious step in managing performance which clearly documents the requirements of the staff member.
4. A formal process – to address serious or on-going performance problems, which may include, misconduct or inappropriate work behaviour. This process would generally be conducted with the assistance of the Director Clinical Services and/or the Manager, SMO Services. More serious issues would involve the District Director Medical Services.

Heads of Department may contact the Manager, SMO Services for assistance.

**Extended leave of SMOs**

Should your SMO have taken extended leave, such as parental leave, please inform SMO Services if you would like their Performance Review due date moved by the commensurate period of the leave.

**Timeframes**

1. Four weeks prior to due date, the Staff Specialist is notified via email that their Performance Review will be due for completion.
2. Four weeks later, if incomplete, the Staff Specialist and HoD receive reminder email notification to state the Performance Review is now due.
3. Two weeks later, if incomplete, a reminder email is sent to the HoD to state Performance Review is now overdue.
4. Two weeks later, if incomplete, a reminder email is sent to the relevant DCS to state Performance Review is now four weeks overdue.
5. Four weeks later, the Chief Executive is sent a notification of any overdue Performance Reviews, for the purpose of following up with the DCS who can then refer the matter back to the relevant HoD.

For VMO’s, the timeframes are:

1. At the beginning of July, the VMO is notified via email that their Performance Review will be due for completion.
2. At the end of July, if incomplete, the VMO and HoD receive reminder email notification to state the Performance Review is now due.
3. In mid August, if incomplete, a reminder email is sent to the HoD to state Performance Review is now overdue.
4. At the end of August, if incomplete, a reminder email is sent to relevant DCS to state Performance Review is now four weeks overdue.
5. At the end of September, the CE is sent a notification of any overdue Performance Reviews, for the purpose of following up with the DCS who can then refer the matter back to the relevant HoD

**References**

Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) Performance Review Arrangements PD2011_010

Staff Specialists (State) Award (Clause 12: Performance Agreement)