Performance and development policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this page must follow the process outlined on the creating, updating and deleting operational policies page.

1. Overview

The Department for Education (the department) recognises the importance of the performance and development plan (PDP) process in building a learning organisation, improving employee engagement, enhancing collective responsibility and evaluating impact.

The PDP process is an investment in people. It promotes performance and development as a set of everyday practices that connects the work of all employees to the department's:

- purpose and strategy
- local priorities
- organisational plans
- relevant performance and professional standards.

The PDP process also provides for

- ongoing career development and professional growth to enable employees to be their best
- a coaching conversation focused on outcomes and improvements that accelerate organisational priorities to benefit our learners.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all department employees including:

- officers of the teaching service
- Public Sector Act employees
- corporate and school-based appointments under section 121 of the Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA).

The following employees are managed in line with the principles and broader objectives of this policy but are exempt from the performance and development plan requirements:

- hourly paid instructors (HPIs)
- casual employees (including swimming and aquatics instructors)
- bus drivers
- early childhood relievers
- school and preschool temporary relief teachers.

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4. Detail

4.1 Benefits

The purpose of the performance and development process is to support the ongoing improvement of outcomes for our learners through the continuous learning, development and career growth of all employees.

A world-leading education system recognises that the learning, development, and career growth of employees are important drivers of site and system improvement. It's about investing in people to be their best for the benefit of our learners.

Performance and development practices are the foundation for working with employees to support their development. The performance and development process supports people in their current role, helps to identify potential, understand aspirations, and support career pathways within the department.

Line managers play an important role in developing a culture of continuous development that builds capability, employee engagement, supports professional aspirations and individual wellbeing. The Performance and Development Plan (PDP) and ongoing coaching are the tools to support this process.

An effective PDP process is collaborative and creates a shared understanding of goals, development needs and career aspirations. It provides clarity of expectations and recognises employees' strengths and achievements.

Effective regular PDP coaching conversations enable line managers to:

- recognise and acknowledge the career growth and professional contributions of employees in the workplace
- align employees' goals to support school and preschool improvement plans or business unit priorities.
- support employees' reflections on their practices and achievements.
- Support an employee to match their goals to their career stage and role aspirations.
- co-design employees' goals to support the needs of a site/team or community setting.
- build trust and collaboration with employees to enhance culture.
- Connect their employees to the Strategy for Public Education and other strategic initiatives, including the Culturally Responsive Framework.

Effective regular PDP coaching conversations enable employees to:

- reflect on and review their practices and achievements in accordance with role descriptions, professional standards, school and preschool improvement plans or business unit priorities.
- Receive ongoing feedback on their performance against learning goals.
- adjust learning goals if required.
- discuss professional learning, development and career aspirations and plan a tailored approach to

support career progression.

- have a clear understanding of role and performance expectations.
- better understand how their role and their work contributes to the aspirations of the Strategy for Public Education.

4.2 Minimum requirements

Employees and their relevant line manager will work together to create an annual performance and development plan. Regular feedback and coaching throughout the year is required to support/enable an employee to achieve their learning goals.

Documented performance and development reviews must occur with employees every 6 months and must be recorded in the Human Resource Management Information system (HRS).

4.3 Performance and development cycle

A PDP document can be created at any time during the year and is normally based on when an employee commenced their employment.

For new employees, it is recommended that a written PDP be created within 90 days of starting their role with the department followed by 6 monthly reviews.

For existing employees changing roles, it is recommended that an existing PDP is updated to reflect new priorities in a timely manner followed by 6 monthly reviews.

The status of PDPs (current and overdue) for all employees is reported to the Senior Executive Group (SEG) and OCPSE twice a year as of 31 May and 30 November. The department's goal is for all eligible employees to have a PDP with clear learning goals at these reporting dates.

4.4 PDP Elements

There are 4 key elements that make up a performance and development plan and coaching conversations between employees and their line managers:

- **Learning Goals** are agreed in line with improvement priorities, career stage and professional standards. Employees are encouraged to nominate at least two, and no more than four learning goals.
- **Career fulfilment goal** that may relate to career aspirations or updating existing professional practice, which may take up to two years to achieve.
- **Wellbeing goal** to support wellbeing and articulate how it will be achieved.
- **Cultural responsiveness journey goal** to build cultural capability and responsiveness.

While line managers are responsible for leading and supporting their employees through the performance and development process and applying coaching techniques, responsibility may be delegated to appropriately experienced and skilled leaders.

4.5 Compliance

This policy supports good governance by adhering to South Australian Public Sector standards and guidelines, and addressing legislative and industrial requirements, including:

- section 8 of the Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA) that requires the Chief Executive to maintain efficiency and competency in the teaching service
- section 8 of the Public Sector Act 2009 (SA) that requires the Chief Executive to establish and administer effective performance management and development systems for department employees
- your responsibilities as a public sector employee (staff login required)
- the Public Sector Values and Behaviours Framework
- the Code of Ethics for the South Australian public sector
- the Direction of the Premier of South Australia – Performance Management and Development – 5 May 2016 that requires the Chief Executive to implement a performance management and development system that, at a minimum, includes:
    - performance management and development reviews with all employees (including executives) at least twice a year; and
    - reporting the percentage of performance management and development reviews that have occurred within the agency, to the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment at least twice a year.

4.6 Objectives

To improve performance and workplace culture to support strategic and operational objectives, this policy aims to:

- enable line managers to support employees to set clear learning and development goals that are connected to their work outcomes and practice
- promote the importance of coaching to drive learning goals and workplace culture
- provide guidance on how to support and measure learning goal progression
- link the guiding principles from the Strategy for Public Education to an employee's learning goals to drive a continuous improvement culture
- foster respectful and collaborative workplace behaviours that align with a positive workplace culture, employee engagement and the public sector values
- promote collaborative processes that support growth, development and improvement
- build capability that supports ongoing learning and wellbeing goals for line managers and employees
- encourage line managers to discuss and coach employees in how best to boost individual wellbeing and maintain a healthy work-life balance

- build the cultural capability of employees and awareness to the culture competency framework
- promote work practices that support diversity and inclusivity, and enable everyone to thrive and be at their best.

4.7 Principles

The following principles support this policy:

- Our primary commitment is to support every employee in our workforce to perform at their best so together we can enable children and young people to learn and thrive.
- Everyone is responsible to be their best, align their efforts and contribute to improvement outcomes for learners.
- The PDP document is open to adjustment, and refinement as employees build their knowledge on their specific learning goals or other goals identified in this process.
- Respectful, fair and equitable improvement processes are used consistently
- Mutual respect and constructive two-way feedback support ongoing growth.
- Recognition and appreciation for the contributions of individuals and teams is vital for a healthy workplace culture.
- Ongoing professional development and career progression in line with strategic guiding principles should always be considered.

4.8 Guidelines and procedures

The performance and development policy incorporates the:

- performance and development plan guideline (PDF 249KB)
- induction and onboarding guideline (PDF 603KB)
- managing unsatisfactory performance guideline (PDF 653KB)
- resolving employee complaints and requesting reviews process
- employee recognition guideline (PDF 583KB)
- professional learning and study support procedure (PDF 210KB).

These guidelines and procedures provide information and tools that support line managers and employees to apply effective performance and development processes in their workplace.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Chief Executive

Establish and maintain an effective performance and development system and process in line with section 8 of the Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA) and section 8 of the Public Sector Act 2009 (SA).

5.2 Executive Director, People and Culture

Delegate responsibility and provide support to line managers to effectively implement performance and development systems.

5.3 Director, Workforce Capability

Create processes to monitor, review, and evaluate this policy and corresponding guidelines.

Consult appropriately with relevant stakeholders and monitor ongoing feedback.

Ensure that new and updated policies are communicated to all stakeholders.

Coordinate the development of an implementation and communication plan and deliver training resources to support implementation.

Manage data and records about the policy and guidelines.

5.4 Line managers

Explain how the PDP process and coaching can build ongoing learning for employees, and our learners.

Create annual performance and development plans with employees.

Create plans with new employees in a timely manner (ie within 90 days of commencing).

Schedule and conduct performance and development review conversations with employees every 6 months, or twice a year for site-based employees, and report completed conversations via the Human Resource Management Information system (HRS).

Guide, support, coach and develop employees through meaningful and regular performance conversations, not limited to the prescribed twice yearly review conversations.

Establish and maintain processes that provide performance planning, professional learning, support and accountability for each employee consistent with this policy.

Use the PDP process to build a shared understanding of expectations, goals, development needs, and career aspirations.

Maintain written records about employee performance and development with appropriate regard to confidentiality.

Conduct performance and development processes in an ethical, inclusive and culturally responsive way.

Observe the professional practice of employees and provide observations and feedback openly and respectfully.

Recognise and celebrate employees' contributions, measure performance against agreed expectations, and address any unsatisfactory performance or behaviours.

Clarify minimum performance expectations and appropriately address failure by an employee to meet those standards.

Review the effectiveness of performance and development practices and support employees to improve.

Consider an employee's workload when establishing and reviewing performance and development plans.

Update plans with existing employees new to their role in a timely manner.

5.5 Employees

Participate positively and actively in the performance and development process, 6-monthly reviews and relevant learning and development opportunities.

Assume ownership of their career growth and development and be proactive in approaching their line manager for regular feedback and performance review conversations.

Identify professional learning goals that contribute to career growth and local priorities.

Seek and receive feedback openly and respectfully from colleagues and their line manager.

Critically reflect on their own performance and identify relevant improvement goals.

Take responsibility for the performance expectations and behavioural standards that relate to their role and duties.

Share learning and practice with others.

Contribute to a safe and supportive work environment that supports their own wellbeing and their colleagues' wellbeing.

6. Definitions

6.1 line manager

Any employee with line management responsibility. All line managers are also employees when it comes to their own performance and development.

6.2 performance

Includes conduct and behaviour as well as the duties required in employment. Line managers should not separate employee's performance of duties from their overall conduct.

6.3 performance expectations

Established standards of performance including professional, ethical, and behavioural standards.

6.4 unsatisfactory performance

Occurs when an employee is not performing the duties of their role to the required standard or is not performing in a satisfactory manner. Performance expectations include employees' technical duties and their overall behaviour in connection with their role as a public sector employee.

6.5 site managers

Also means site leaders and line managers. Their responsibility includes signing off bona fides and monthly leave returns.

7. Supporting information

Preparing a performance and development plan (staff login required)

7.1 Related legislation

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA)

Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020 (SA)

Fair Work Act 1994 (SA)

Public Sector (Honesty and Accountability) Act 1995 (SA)

Public Sector (Honesty & Accountability) Regulations 2025 (SA)

Public Sector Act 2009 (SA)

Public Sector Regulations 2025 (SA)

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

7.2 Related policies

Code of Ethics for the South Australian public sector

Direction of the Premier of South Australia – Performance Management and Development – 5 May 2016

Employee recognition guideline (PDF 583KB) (staff login required)

Guideline of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: Performance Management and Development

Guideline of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: Management of Unsatisfactory Performance

Induction and onboarding guideline (PDF 603KB) (staff login required)

Managing unsatisfactory performance guideline (PDF 653KB) (staff login required)

Public Sector Values and Behaviours Framework

Professional learning and study support procedure (PDF 210KB) (staff login required)

Performance and development guideline (PDF 249KB) (staff login required)

8. Record history

Published date: April 2026

8.1 Approvals

OP number: 174
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Policy sponsor: Director, Workforce Capability
Responsible Executive Director: Executive Director, People and Culture
Approved by: Director, Workforce Capability
Approved date: 8 April 2026
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8.2 Revision record

Version: 3.1
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Approved date: 8 April 2026
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Amendment(s): Updated according to the new Public Sector Regulations 2025 and Public Sector (Honesty & Accountability) Regulations 2025.

Version: 3.0
Approved by: Executive Director, People and Culture
Approved date: 28 May 2024
Review date: 28 May 2027
Amendment(s): Revised policy, guideline, and PDP template support all employees to engage in more inclusive PDP conversations that consider learning goals around cultural responsiveness and wellbeing, and how this can be practised at work.

Version: 2.3
Approved by: Director Workforce Capability
Approved date: 12 November 2021
Review date: 12 November 2024
Amendment(s): Changed the minimum requirement to have a PDP within 2 months of commencing to be within 6 months with bi-annual reviews following this, to align with the Premier's Instruction - Induction.

Version: 2.2
Approved by: Director, Culture and Capability
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Amendment(s): Implementation of Education and Children's Services Act

Version: 2.1
Approved by: Director, Culture and Capability
Approved date: 2 July 2019
Review date: 30 June 2020
Amendment(s): Transfer to new template and update hyperlinks. New branding applied to document, published as HTML document on EDi, edited for plain English in consultation with Communications Directorate.

Version: 2.0
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Version: 1.1
Approved date: June 2014
Amendment(s): Minor changes to existing reference documents and addition of language and references relevant to Families SA employees.

Version: 1.0
Approved date: September 2011
Amendment(s): Initial document.

9. Contact

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