

Administrative Instruction

Date: 26 July 2011
To: All UNOPS Personnel
From: Pierre Moreau-Péron, Director, HRPG *J P-M-P*
AI Reference: AI/HRPG/2011/04
Subject: **Performance Management and Appraisal for staff members –
Instructions and Procedures**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Executive Director of UNOPS established UNOPS Personnel Performance Management Policy in Organizational Directive (OD) 38 (rev.1).
- 1.2. In accordance with section 12.2 of OD 38 (rev. 1), this Administrative Instruction hereby defines the tools and processes for performance management and appraisal for staff members¹.
- 1.3. The tools and processes described in this Administrative Instruction are not by themselves sufficient to nourish a productive relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Such relationship is built day after day with advice, coaching and trust. As such, the fixed meetings this AI refers to should only be seen as a means of formalizing results, progress or limitations which need to be continuously discussed throughout the year. Performance management is a process, not an event. It operates as a continuous cycle, meant to support and develop individuals throughout their employment with the organisation.

2. Scope

- 2.1. Subject to paragraph 2.2 below, this policy applies to UNOPS staff members, up to and including D-2 level on fixed term, permanent, continuing and temporary appointments, including Junior Professional Officers (JPOs).

¹ Personnel holding a UNOPS Letter of Appointment issued pursuant to the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules

- 2.2. This policy does not apply to staff members who are under the direct supervision of UNOPS partners, unless specifically agreed, according to paragraph 4.2 of OD 38 (rev. 1).

3. Objectives

- 3.1. Performance management is a process which contributes to the effective management of individuals and teams in order to achieve high levels of organisational performance. It should be a holistic approach to engaging everyone in the organisation in a continuous process to improve individual and team performance and thereby the performance of the whole organisation.
- 3.2. The aim of performance management is to increase staff engagement and develop individuals to deliver better results. As such there must be a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and an approach to leading and developing individuals to ensure that it is achieved. Performance appraisal is one of the tools of performance management and is the means to document and summarise performance management and development discussions. It serves the following key objectives:
 - 3.2.1 **Alignment of individual and corporate goals** - Aligning individual goals with corporate goals and setting specific targets for individuals -providing a clear link for all staff members to the organisation's purpose and performance, so they can clearly see how their results and actions relate to organisational priorities;
 - 3.2.2 **Continuous dialogue** – Establishing upfront performance expectations through mutual understanding between supervisor and supervisee on what is to be accomplished, promoting ongoing feedback between supervisors and supervisees, in order to review and evaluate performance and take corrective action if required;
 - 3.2.3 **Systematic and proactive staff development** – Unless there is continuous development of individuals and teams, performance will not improve. Development is to be encouraged through development discussions and the establishment of Learning and Development plans, as well as opportunities to discuss career aspirations;
 - 3.2.4 **Enabling the implementation of HR initiatives** – Performance management and therefore performance appraisals serve as the basis for the application of HR initiatives. The performance appraisal will be a key input to and inform HR initiatives.

4. Performance and Results Assessment (PRA)

- 4.1 The timely completion of a performance appraisal is mandatory for all staff members with six months or more service with UNOPS. The online Performance and Results Assessment (PRA) is the corporate performance appraisal tool.

- 4.2 The PRA process is cyclical, consisting of three stages, which must be completed with the following timeframes:
- 4.1.1 Stage 1, **Planning**: 1 January – 31 March;
 - 4.1.2 Stage 2, **Monitoring**: on an ongoing basis. The mid-year review is a useful milestone during the monitoring stage and takes place between 1 July – 30 September; and
 - 4.1.3 Stage 3, **Final assessment**: 1 December – 28 February.
- 4.3 Through performance appraisals, individuals can be made aware of their value to the organisation. Performance appraisals are an opportunity to highlight individual contribution, receive feedback and understand the links to corporate goals. Through this process, opportunities for individual development can also be identified and addressed.
- 4.4 The online PRA is designed to record the main aspects of performance discussions between supervisor and supervisee. As such, using this online tool as a replacement for verbal communication is considered a deviation from the recommendations of the present policy.
- 4.5 Guidance for using the PRA system is available on the intranet and related processes are documented in the Practice and Quality Management System (PQMS).

5. PRA cycle

- 5.1 The performance appraisal period shall normally follow a 12 month cycle, in line with the calendar year i.e. from 1 January to 31 December. The period may be adjusted if necessary, but is normally not less than six months or more than eighteen months. If a staff member has served for less than six months during the performance cycle, this period may be included in the PRA cycle of the subsequent year.
- 5.2 Where dual reporting lines exist, both primary and secondary supervisors should maintain an ongoing dialogue on the performance of the staff member and coordinate assessments to fully engage in the following three phases of the PRA cycle.
- (a) **Phase 1: Planning (January to March)**: This stage is used to establish objectives, a development plan and select competencies each staff member should focus on during the performance review year.
 - (i) **Objectives**: Staff members and supervisors should define a minimum of four and a maximum of six objectives. The objectives should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Time-bound and in line with the priorities of the specific entity and practice.
 - (ii) **Learning and development**: Staff members and supervisors should also identify any learning and development activities. Learning activities may for example consist of training and/or relevant practice certification(s).

- (iii) **Competencies:** The competencies to be assessed should be a minimum of five (8 for staff members with a supervisory role), to be selected by both supervisor(s) and supervisee out of a list of 18 possible competencies within the established UNOPS Competency Framework. When selecting the most relevant competencies for the performance cycle, it is useful to think of them as performance standards, or as success criteria, for the achievement of the agreed-upon objectives. For example, if the successful achievement of the staff member's objectives requires collaboration with colleagues, teamwork is an essential competency. To encourage continuous development of staff competencies, it is a requirement that at least one of the competencies assessed in the PRA is established at the start of the year with a focus on development.

- (b) **Phase 2: Monitoring (ongoing):** Ongoing performance related discussions must take place throughout the year. The mid-year review stage (July to September) is an important milestone and another formal opportunity for supervisors to provide feedback and for supervisees to receive guidance and advice. Staff members must be given this opportunity. Supervisee and supervisor are required to meet at mid-year to assess whether objectives are on track, and any issues need to be addressed. The relevant checkboxes in the mid-year review section of the online PRA system may be used if all below conditions are met:
 - (i) Objectives are on track and no adjustments are required; and
 - (ii) Performance is satisfactory; and
 - (iii) Neither the supervisor nor the supervisee wish to conduct a more formal discussion.

However a formal discussion must take place in one of the following two cases:

- (i) The supervisor has observed less than satisfactory results and/or deficiencies in demonstrating required competencies, and needs to address these shortcomings. This feedback should be communicated in a constructive way and the supervisor should not wait until the end-year review to share it with the staff member. A [performance improvement plan](#) is a very useful tool which use is recommended to address performance shortcomings. Its implementation should be agreed upon by supervisor and supervisee, in consultation with HR²; or
- (ii) The staff member is new in his/her position and still needs to be guided as to his/her new responsibilities.

² A performance improvement plan can of course be initiated before the mid-year review if performance shortcomings are identified earlier. In cases where the supervisor does not deem a performance improvement plan to be viable, the justification must be documented in the online PRA system, following consultation with HR.

Results of mid-year review discussions must be duly documented in the online PRA.

- (c) **Phase 3: End of year review (December to February):** This stage is the final evaluation of results and performance. The final assessment is made by both staff member and supervisor, reflecting on the results and performance of the appraisal period, which leads to the final overall performance rating. The review includes the stated objectives, the competencies displayed and the overall performance. This stage should be completed after an end-year discussion has taken place and includes a self-assessment and a supervisor assessment.

5.3 While phase one (year x+1) and phase three (year x) can overlap, it is ill-advised to have the two meetings held on the same day (end-year review of year x and planning phase of year x+1). For obvious reasons, the end-year review of year x should precede the planning phase of year x+1, so that lessons learned can be implemented.

6. Performance ratings

6.1 Performance ratings are assigned to staff members for each objective and each selected competency. From these individual ratings for both objectives and competencies, a final overall performance rating is assigned.

6.2 UNOPS Performance ratings follow a three-point scale which emphasizes the importance of a fully satisfactory achievement. Exceptional and partially satisfactory performance ratings may only be used for staff members who have either demonstrated outstanding performance or need to improve their performance.

6.3 **Rating the objectives:** Under the Objectives section of the PRA, each objective shall be rated as one of the following:

- (a) **Exceptional:** The objective has been achieved in an exceptional manner and exceeded either in qualitative or quantitative terms by far what could have been expected from a staff member in this role and at this level.
- (b) **Fully Satisfactory:** The objective has been achieved successfully in qualitative and quantitative terms and corresponds to expectations for a staff member in this role and at this level.
- (c) **Not fully achieved:** The objective has not been achieved to a satisfactory level according to what was planned both in qualitative and quantitative terms and according to what could reasonably be expected from a staff member in this role and at this level.

6.4 **Rating the competencies:** The ratings for the competencies follow a similar pattern:

- (a) **Exceptional proficiency:** This is the highest level of proficiency in a given competency. The specific competency is mastered in a way which goes far beyond the expectations for someone in this role and at this level. The staff member is considered a role model for other staff members in a similar role and level and serves as an example of the values, attitudes and behaviours associated with this role. The staff member exhibits model behaviour that exemplifies the core values of the organisation and is worthy of emulation by peers and colleagues.
- (b) **Full proficiency:** The specific competency is mastered in a fully satisfactory way considering the expectations for a staff member in this role and at this level. For example, the staff member is recognized by others as demonstrating sufficient knowledge and skills regarding this competency.
- (c) **Developing proficiency:** The specific competency is not displayed at an appropriate and consistent level and needs rapid development to reach a fully satisfactory level considering the role and level of the staff member. When this rating is assigned to a competency, examples of situations where the competency was not displayed at an appropriate level should be shared with the staff member.

6.5 **Assigning the overall performance rating:** The overall performance ratings are as follows, and are based on the combined ratings for objectives and competencies:

- (a) **Exceptional performance³:** Describes an overall performance which is exceptional in both qualitative and quantitative terms, beyond what can be expected for staff at this level and in this role. The overall achievement is exemplary. The staff member significantly and consistently goes beyond expectations, with little supervision. Such exceptional performance may be found in the following examples:
 - (i) The staff member undertakes additional job functions/duties on his/her own initiative that further the goals and make significant contributions to the business unit, Practice and/or organisation; or
 - (ii) The staff member performed his/her functions under exceptional circumstances for a significant period of time; or
 - (iii) The staff member demonstrates exceptional in depth knowledge of his/her job functions and is highly recognized by others within his/her area of expertise as an authority.

Achievements and competencies are obvious to peers, colleagues, clients, supervisees and managers. Such performance must be duly documented by

³ The percentage of overall ratings of “exceptional performance” is not expected to exceed 15%.

supervisors, with mention of critical incidents. This rating should correspond to the performance of a relative minority of UNOPS workforce.

- (b) **Fully Satisfactory performance**⁴: Describes an overall performance which consistently fulfils expectations and is within what can be expected for staff at this level and in this role. Performance may occasionally exceed expectations. A fully satisfactory performance is further defined as follows:
- (i) Performance is solid and consistently meets the standards set for the position (in terms of quality and productivity, knowledge, skills and competencies); and
 - (ii) The staff member possesses full knowledge of his/her job functions/duties and is perceived by others within his//her area of expertise as skilled and dependable; and
 - (iii) There are no critical aspects of the job (both in results achievement and demonstrated behaviours) which are not performed satisfactorily

A rating at this level indicates that the staff member is a fully competent, productive, and valued member of the workforce. This rating should correspond to the performance of the majority of UNOPS workforce.

- (c) **Partially satisfactory performance**: describes an overall performance which is inconsistent with regard to the expectations and requirements set for staff at this level and in this role, in qualitative and/or quantitative terms. Such overall rating can be assigned in any of the following cases:

- (i) Performance does not consistently meets expectations, i.e. performance failed to meet expectations in one or more critical aspects of the job (demonstrated behaviours for example); or
- (ii) One or more of the most critical objectives were not achieved during the review period; or
- (iii) The employee lacks competence and knowledge of critical aspects of his/her position.

This rating should correspond to the performance of a minority of UNOPS workforce.

6.6 Staff members' performance is assessed on both the achievement of the approved objectives and the proficiency displayed in the related competencies. The overall performance rating is derived from a combination of these. The online PRA provides a guide for the supervisor as to the appropriate final rating, based on their assessment. This is based on the staff member's average rating for competencies and objectives, taking into account the relative weighting of objectives and competencies. If the supervisor chooses to deviate from the proposed overall rating, justification must be noted in the appropriate comment field in the PRA.

⁴ The percentage of overall ratings of "fully satisfactory" should be approximately 80%.

- 6.7 In order to ensure a consistent and fair application of performance ratings, regular controls of the rating distribution across the organization, regions and business units will be undertaken and managers held accountable for this distribution.
- 6.8 With a view of improving the objectivity and fairness of the ratings, supervisors are strongly advised to supplement their own assessment with feedback from other sources. UNOPS staff members work on multiple projects with numerous stakeholders, and feedback from different parties is required to get a full picture of each individual's performance. Supervisors should therefore gather and analyze feedback from other sources e.g. peers, direct reports of the supervisee, partners or other supervisors on particular competencies, results or an individual's overall performance before assigning ratings. Likewise, supervisees are encouraged to gather such feedback and provide it to their supervisors to facilitate a fair and balanced appraisal of their performance.
- 6.9 Whenever dual reporting lines exist, both primary and secondary supervisors are jointly responsible for managing the performance of their supervisee as per the provisions of paragraph 7.9 of OD 38 (rev. 1) and paragraphs 3 and 6 of OD 15 (rev. 1 - add.1). Secondary supervisors should be actively involved in providing input on the competencies and the results of the supervisee. In such cases, the PRA cannot be finalized until the input from the secondary supervisor has been provided. In the event the primary and secondary supervisors do not concur on the final rating, mediation shall be sought from their respective supervisors in line with the provisions of paragraph 7.10 of OD 38 (rev. 1).
- 6.10 Whenever a supervisee disagrees with the ratings assigned to him/her, the following informal recourse methods are available and must be explored: a) discussion with the supervisor and/or secondary supervisor where dual reporting lines exist; and b) assistance from HRPG to facilitate the discussions. If attempts to avail of both of these remedies fail, staff members who receive a final overall rating of "partially satisfactory performance" have the possibility to submit a formal request for rebuttal, in line with the provisions described in section 11 of OD 38 (rev. 1).

7. General considerations

- 7.1 Performance management and supervisory responsibilities are a critical part of UNOPS management roles, and a sufficient amount of supervisors' time must be spent on people management. As part of strengthened accountability measures, performance management therefore needs to be included as a criterion in assessing supervisors' own performance. For this purpose, in accordance with the provisions set out in paragraph 7.7 of OD 38 (rev. 1) on Performance Management, all supervisors shall have one of their performance objectives directly linked to performance management. This objective can for example be connected to ensuring full completion of the performance appraisals under their remit by the deadline, encouraging supervisees to enrol in learning activities, coaching or mentoring them or having very regular and frequent development discussions, beyond the three milestones of the PRA cycle.

- 7.2 In line with the above, a supervisor not completing the performance appraisals of members of his/her team within the prescribed deadlines will be assigned a rating of “not fully achieved” under the relevant performance objective.
- 7.3 In cases of underperformance, supervisors must act to help staff members improve their performance. There may be different reasons for underperformance –early detection and the right corrective action are crucial for managing and improving performance.
- 7.4 The improvement of individual performance is ultimately the responsibility of staff members. However, supervisors are responsible for empowering staff members’ performance through support, coaching and advice and for identifying opportunities to improve the tools and guidance available to them. Proactive solving of underperformance requires first a clear identification of the source of the underperformance -Indications on potential causes for underperformance can be found on the intranet in the Human resources site ([here](#)). A [performance improvement plan](#) can help both the staff member and the supervisor to put performance back on track.
- 7.5 HR Focal Points are available upon request to facilitate dialogue and discussions between supervisor and supervisee if need be, provided both parties agree in writing, and to provide advice on the processes.

8. Effective date

- 8.1. This AI is effective **28 July 2011**.