

Framework for the performance management of staff who are working from home

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FRAMEWORK FOR THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF STAFF WHO ARE WORKING FROM HOME IN THE CONTEXT OF BUSINESS CONTINUITY AMIDST THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Many University staff members are working from home as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. Working from home ensures that the University's quest for business continuity in these extraordinary circumstances is materialised. This situation requires measures to ensure that such an arrangement does not compromise the work of the University, the collaborative efforts across its campuses or the discipline of staff.
- 1.2. This framework provides measures to guide the continued performance management of staff during this period. These measures serve as guidelines and allows environments to apply it contextually in terms of their needs and challenges.
- 1.3. These measures include certain adaptations to the normal process of handling cases of under- performance.

2. Purpose of this document

To provide an institutional framework for line managers to continue to manage the performance of staff of the University working from home during the Coronavirus pandemic.

3. Applicability

This framework applies to all staff members at Stellenbosch University who are employed on a permanent, fixed term or temporary basis, and includes both full-time and part-time employees.

4. Institutional Framework and Principles

<p>The Line Manager's role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Line managers are required to identify to what extent, if any, their staff's ability to discharge their duties is affected by the shutdown of the University. - Line managers must take into account the staff member's home context in determining what level of work is possible. - Line managers are required to identify priorities and deliverables for their subordinates during this interim period. - Line managers will continue to be responsible for monitoring deliverables and holding staff accountable. - Line managers are required to establish appropriate reporting mechanisms during the lockdown period. This can include the preparation of regular progress reports, conference calls, regular Skype, WhatsApp or Teams meetings or any other appropriate form of communication. Regular contact between line managers and their subordinates allows for the troubleshooting of issues or problems as they arise and the identification of potential productivity issues. It also ensures that staff are held accountable for their work. - Engage with staff to determine whether goals are being met. Keep record of underperformance, develop, and agree on plans to improve future performance. - Any perceived under- performance must be handled by following the "managing of poor performance processes" as stipulated in SU's Performance Management Policy, as varied by the measures contained in this framework. - Monitor the work from home arrangements to ensure that the agreed outcomes are constantly delivered. - Line managers must ensure that staff members have all reasonably necessary infrastructure and resources in place in order to be able to work from home, e.g. laptops, network devices and data. Any difficulties experienced by staff must be taken into account in assessing performance. - Line managers should ensure that staff are aware that if they cannot manage (perform) working from home, revoking their working from home privileges will be considered, where appropriate. This should only be done after the line manager has held discussions with the staff member about their performance and the chance to remedy the situation was given. - Where a lockdown or any other measure is imposed and it is therefore not possible to revoke a working from home arrangement, the measures to improve performance as set out in this document, must be utilised.
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<p>The Staff member's role:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adhere to all the University's policies and procedures. - Staff working at home are required to work their contractually agreed hours of work. - Staff are expected to meet the deliverables agreed to with their line manager during the lockdown period. - Staff should provide their line manager with regular feedback reports as agreed upon. - Work plans will continue to evolve and instructions from line managers must be adhered to. No staff member may refuse to attend to reasonable and lawful instructions. - Check in with the line manager as determined by the line manager. - Staff must be readily available and contactable during the SU standard working hours (i.e. 08h00 – 16h30) or as otherwise agreed to with the line manager. Availability not only refers to telephone calls, e-mail, online calls and meeting, but also if staff are needed to physically come to work, when appropriate and possible under the prevailing measures. - Staff are required to provide their line manager with a contact number. - The responsibility remains with staff to respond within the agreed timeframes. - Should a staff member not be available when such contact is made, the staff member will be required to provide a satisfactory explanation. - If a staff member needs to take leave, the normal leave processes will apply. - Discipline and performance management processes remain in place and staff are expected to comply with work-related rules and carry out their work in a satisfactory manner. - It is a staff member's responsibility to timeously notify their line manager if they require any resources in order to work from home.
<p>How will performance management be impacted?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The line manager will set out expectations. Given the uncertain times, we find ourselves in and the fact that many staff will operate from home for long periods of time, line managers must decide how best to set out those expectations. Clear instructions must be given with specific deadlines. - Work must be assessed. It can be done on a daily, weekly or other frequent basis, as the nature of the work dictates. - If the staff member fails to meet deadlines or the work is not up to standard, the staff member must be asked to explain why this is the case. The conversation can take place via a call or email. - The line manager must determine what support or guidance the staff member requires, and provide these as far as is possible. - The line manager must inform the staff member that the performance will be monitored and give the staff member a reasonable time to improve. Depending on circumstances, this can be a few days or longer. - The line manager must record the steps taken in an email to the staff member and the HR practitioner (HRP) for the environment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should the underperformance persist, a second conversation must be held with the staff member. If possible, the HRP should be part of this conversation. - The staff member must be asked to explain the reasons for the under-performance. Where there is no acceptable explanation, the line manager must indicate to the staff member that there is a concern with the performance and if it persists, it could lead to termination of employment. This must be done in writing by way of an email to the staff member and the HRP. - The staff member must be given a final opportunity to improve the performance. The line manager must clearly spell out where the problems lie and what needs to be given attention to. The staff member must be invited to indicate what support and guidance is required. - In the event that the under-performance persists, the line manager must, in writing, request the staff member to give reasons why their employment should not be terminated for incapacity. The staff member will get the opportunity to respond by making representations in writing or at a meeting of the line manager, staff member and the HRP. The staff member must be given no less than 48 hours to make representations. The line manager, after considering the staff member's representations, will make a recommendation to the Chief Director: HR who must review the matter. The Chief Director: HR can decide to accept or reject the recommendations from the line manager or decide on appropriate steps to address the underperformance. - The Chief Director: HR will communicate a final letter indicating the outcome to the staff member. - There is no further internal process to challenge the decision to terminate employment. The staff member can elect to refer a dispute to the CCMA. - All terminations for poor performance will be on notice. This means that the environment can decide whether to have the staff member work the contractual notice period or waive the notice period and pay the staff member in lieu of notice.
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5. Conclusion

The framework is an interim measure and will be reviewed as the situation changes.

6. Supporting documents

Item number	Name of document	Status <i>(e.g. identified, in process or approved)</i>
PM0301	Performance management policy and strategy & Policy for managing poor performance	Approved
PM0302	Check list for performance management	Approved