

## Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) Performance Review Arrangements

**Summary** This Policy sets out revised arrangements that deal with the performance review of specialist VMOs, and also provides for the scope to reappointment specialist VMOs without advertisement where there has been a satisfactory performance review.

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**Applies to** Local Health Networks, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Specialty Network Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations, Public Health System Support Division, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals

**Distributed to** Public Health System, NSW Ambulance Service, Ministry of Health

**Audience** Visiting Medical Officers; Medical Administrators

## VISTING MEDICAL OFFICER (VMO) PERFORMANCE REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

### PURPOSE

This Policy sets out revised arrangements that deal with the performance review of specialist VMOs, and also provides for the scope to re-appoint specialist VMOs without advertisement where there has been a satisfactory performance review.

### MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Public health organisations must ensure that a 'Level 1' performance review is conducted annually for each specialist VMO engaged by that organisation, and that during the penultimate year of any VMO appointment involving a term of three years or longer, a 'Level 2' performance review is conducted.

Public health organisations have a discretion to appoint a specialist VMO with an existing appointment without advertisement for a further term where:

- (a) the role and responsibilities of the VMO remains largely unchanged since he or she was originally appointed;
- (b) there has been a Level 2 review of the VMO in the penultimate year of the term of his or her appointment, and the performance had been found to be such as to warrant renewal without advertisement.

(An appropriate Determination waiving the requirement to advertise visiting practitioner appointments in these circumstances has been made under clause 5(4)(c) of the *Health Services Regulation 2008*).

### IMPLEMENTATION

Chief Executives are responsible for ensuring that the relevant medical administrators and other staff responsible for VMO engagements and arrangements in their public health organisations implement the arrangements set out in the attached document.

### REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Amendment notes
March 2005 (PD2005_496)	Director General	Sets out the procedures to be followed in appointing Visiting Practitioners.
March 2005 (PD2005_498)	Director General	Outlines the components of a performance review system for Visiting Practitioners.
January 2011 (PD2011_010)	Director General	VMO Performance Review Arrangements

### ATTACHMENTS

1. VMO Performance Review: Procedures.

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## VMO PERFORMANCE REVIEW: PROCEDURES

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Public health organisations are required to ensure that a Level 1 performance review is conducted annually for each specialist VMO engaged by that organisation, and that a Level 2 performance review is conducted in the penultimate year of an appointment involving a term of three years or longer for each specialist VMO.
- 1.2 The performance reviews for which this document makes provision constitutes the annual review of a VMO's service and performance required under both of the VMO Determinations, but not the review of ordinary hours or services plan also required under the Determinations.
- 1.3 The performance review arrangements for which this document makes provision can also be applied to Honorary Medical Officers and other Visiting Practitioners at the discretion of the public health organisation.

### 2. Level 1 Performance Review

- 2.1 Once every 12 months a public health organisation is to ensure that each specialist VMO completes a Level 1 performance review by completing a Level 1 performance review form and forwarding it to the person nominated by the organisation who will undertake the review.
- 2.2 The public health organisation should contact each VMO to advise that a Level 1 performance review form should be downloaded from the internet, and the name and email contact details of the person to whom the form should be sent. (If necessary, a form can be completed in hardcopy form, and mailed or otherwise forwarded to the nominated recipient.)
- 2.3 The Level 1 form can be accessed at:  
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/conditions/Pages/v.aspx>
- 2.4 The Level 1 form is divided into a self assessment component (Part A) and a component (Part B) to be completed by the reviewer, who would usually be the supervisor of the VMO or a medical administrator.
- 2.5 A copy of the completed Level 1 form signed by the reviewer should be returned to the VMO, with the original version being filed on the VMO's personal file.
- 2.6 Where a VMO's performance is assessed by the reviewer as acceptable or satisfactory, there may be no further action needed. Where the reviewer considers that it is appropriate, further action may be needed, such as an interview. Further action in this context may not necessarily mean that there is an unsatisfactory aspect to an assessment, but may be an appropriate way of clarifying matters that have arisen during the review or of discussing issues of clinical practice or professional development that a either a VMO or a reviewer wishes to raise.

### 3. Level 2 Performance Review

- 3.1 During the penultimate year of appointment of each specialist VMO who has been appointed for a term of three years or longer, a public health organisation is to ensure that the VMO completes a Level 2 performance review.
- 3.2 The Level 2 process involves the VMO completing a Level 1 performance review form and forwarding it to the nominated person in accordance with the process set out above. The public organisation must then nominate at least two reviewers to undertake the Level 2 review. They should include the supervisor/manager of the VMO (usually the relevant Head of Department or Divisional Director unless that position is held by the VMO being reviewed) and, as appropriate, the relevant hospital Director of Medical Services, Divisional Director, or a medical administrator. A VMO who has objections to the reviewers who have been appointed may put a request to the relevant Chief Executive that the persons appointed as reviewers be changed.
- 3.3 The Level 2 reviewers need to be provided with a copy of a Level 1 form completed by the VMO, and the review should be undertaken within a month of the receipt of the Level 1 form by the nominated recipient of the form. The reviewers should hold an interview with the VMO and complete a Level 2 performance review form.
- 3.4 The Level 2 form can be accessed at:  
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/conditions/Pages/v.aspx>
- 3.5 As part of the Level 2 review process, the VMO should nominate 3 referees from whom comments can be obtained by the reviewers on the matters dealt with in the Level 2 form, using the separate form available for this purpose.

The referees should include

- another medical practitioner from a different speciality;
- a non-medical person with whom the VMO works;
- another person able to comment on the work of the VMO.

The reviewers should obtain written reports, or oral reports with the comments then recorded in writing, about those topics dealt with in this form on which they are in a position to comment.

- 3.6 There are two separate Level 2 referee comments forms: one for medical referee and one for non-medical referees' comments. The Level 2 referee comments forms can be accessed at:  
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/conditions/Pages/v.aspx>
- 3.7 Where applicable and possible, the reviewers should obtain aggregated data on feedback from medical students and junior medical staff concerning the teaching and supervision provided by the VMO, to inform them about

the issues to be covered under Section 3 “Teaching” in the Level 2 performance review form. Any material in the completed form should be presented in such a way as to de-identify the source of any adverse feedback.

- 3.8 A copy of the completed Level 2 form signed by the reviewers should be returned to the VMO as soon as possible and preferably within a month of the interview with the VMO, with the original version being filed on the VMO’s personal file.

#### **4. VMOs can request further consideration of comments made in Level 1 or Level 2 reviews**

- 4.1 VMOs who wish to query or challenge some or all of the comments made by Level 1 or 2 reviewers can request that a further review of the comments be undertaken by persons other than those who conducted the initial review.
- 4.2 Such requests need to be made in writing to the person specified on the review form for receiving such requests (ie the person who conducted the Level 1 review, or one of the level 2 reviewers) within one month of the completed form having been returned to the VMO. The public health organisation is to nominate the person to conduct the further review. A VMO who has objections to the person who has been appointed to conduct the further review may put a request to the relevant Chief Executive that a different person be appointed.

#### **5. Outcome of Reviews**

- 5.1 Where concerns are raised about a VMO’s services and performance as a result of a review, the action that should be taken will vary according to the nature of the concern. Issues about patient communication, or the maintenance of collegiate and co-operative relations with other staff, could be addressed by way of counselling provided to the VMO by the reviewer. The review should consider the VMO’s scope of practice; where it appears that the clinical privileges of a VMO should be reviewed or changed, the matter should be referred to the Medical and Dental Appointments Advisory Committee. More significant issues can be dealt with in accordance with those policies and guidelines that deal with concern or complaint about a clinician (ie PD2006\_007 and GL2006\_002).
- 5.2 Performance reviews can also be relevant to decisions about VMO appointments as outlined below.
- 5.3 Where there has been an adverse or qualified Level 2 review performed in the penultimate year of a VMO’s appointment term, with the agreement of both the VMO and the public health organisation a further Level 2 review can be carried out in the final year of the appointment term.

## 6. VMO Appointments

- 6.1 Chief Executives have a discretion to reappoint a specialist VMO without advertisement for a further term where:
- (a) the role and responsibilities of the VMO remained largely unchanged since he or she was originally appointed;
  - (b) there has been a Level 2 review of the VMO in the two years preceding the expiration of the term of his or her appointment, and the performance has been found to be such as to warrant renewal without advertisement.

In such circumstances, there would only be a need to advertise any remaining vacancies.

- 6.2 Where appointments have been advertised and a selection process occurs, past Level 1 and Level 2 performance reviews should be accessed and used to assist the medical and dental appointments advisory committee in making decisions about the comparative merit of applicants (in addition to the other material such as applications and referees' reports that is available in this context).

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