

Title	Performance Management Policy
Cross References	External: 🍑 ACAS guidance on Performance Management and Appraisals 🍑 Equality Act 2010 🍑 UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 Internal: 🍑 Safer Recruitment Policy 🍑 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 🍑 Equality Policy 🍑 Complaints Policy 🍑 Confidentiality Policy 🍑 Staff Code of Conduct 🍑 Capability / Disciplinary Procedure 🍑 Data Protection and Privacy Policy
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1. Purpose

Apricot Online is committed to high-quality teaching, positive student outcomes and the professional development and wellbeing of its staff. Performance management provides a supportive and consistent framework for recognising strengths, agreeing priorities, identifying development needs and helping staff to perform effectively in their roles.

The process is intended to encourage professional reflection and constructive dialogue. Routine performance management is separate from formal capability or disciplinary procedures.

2. Scope

This policy applies to teachers employed by Apricot Online who are included in the organisation's performance-management arrangements.

Where a member of staff is subject to a separate probation, induction, capability or other formal process, Apricot Online will determine the appropriate review arrangements and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Performance review arrangements may also be adapted appropriately for other staff or workers where Apricot Online chooses to use the same principles.

3. Principles

Performance management will be fair, transparent, proportionate and applied consistently. Objectives and expectations will reflect the employee's role, workload, responsibilities and the needs of Apricot Online and its students.

The process will recognise effective performance as well as areas for development.

Reviews will be a two-way professional conversation and staff will have an opportunity to contribute evidence, comments and development priorities.

Performance information will be considered in context and will not normally rely on a single measure or observation.

Equality, reasonable adjustments and individual circumstances will be considered throughout the process. Performance records will be handled confidentially and in accordance with data-protection requirements.

4. Equality and Reasonable Adjustments

Apricot Online is committed to equality of opportunity and to avoiding discrimination in objective-setting, monitoring, development opportunities and performance decisions.

Performance expectations and evidence will be considered fairly and without assumptions based on protected characteristics, working pattern or other irrelevant factors. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required, including adjustments to the performance-management process itself.

Part-time staff will have objectives and expectations that are proportionate to their contracted hours and responsibilities.

5. Performance Management Cycle

The normal performance-management cycle will be annual, supported by ongoing feedback and professional discussion during the year. The cycle has three main stages: planning, monitoring and support, and review.

5.1 Stage 1 – Planning and Objective Setting

At the beginning of the cycle, the teacher and Department Head or appropriate manager will discuss priorities and normally agree no more than three objectives. Objectives will be recorded on Apricot Online's agreed performance-management system, including Standards Tracker where this remains the designated system.

Objectives should be clear, fair and achievable while providing appropriate professional challenge. They should normally be specific, measurable where appropriate, achievable, relevant to the role and time-bound.

Objectives may include:

- student progress, engagement or outcomes;
- quality of teaching, planning, assessment and feedback;
- development of subject knowledge or curriculum practice;
- adaptive teaching and meeting individual student needs;
- professional development or implementation of agreed training;
- contribution to departmental or organisational priorities; and
- other role-specific responsibilities.

Objectives should not be based solely on numerical targets where this would fail to reflect the complexity of the teacher's work or the needs and starting points of Apricot Online's students.

Objectives should be agreed wherever possible. If agreement cannot be reached, the manager may set reasonable objectives relevant to the role. The teacher will be able to record written comments or concerns alongside them.

5.2 Stage 2 – Monitoring, Feedback and Support

Progress should be discussed during the year rather than left until the annual review. Department Heads and managers should provide appropriate feedback, recognise effective practice and identify support at an early stage where needed.

Evidence may include, as appropriate:

- lesson observations or review of recorded lessons where these are routinely and lawfully available;
- planning, resources and curriculum materials;
- assessment and feedback;
- student progress, engagement and attendance information considered in context;
- quality assurance information;
- student, parent/carer or commissioner feedback where relevant and reliable;
- professional development activity;
- contribution to departmental and organisational work; and
- the teacher's own reflection and evidence.

Monitoring must be proportionate. No single source of evidence will automatically determine the outcome of a performance review.

5.3 Lesson Observation

Lesson observation is intended to support professional development and provide evidence of teaching practice. Routine performance-management observation will normally be limited to one formal observation within the annual review cycle unless additional observation is agreed for development purposes or is reasonably required under another procedure.

The teacher will normally be informed of the timing and intended focus of a formal performance-management observation. The lesson selected should be reasonably representative of the teacher's work. Feedback should be timely, constructive and linked to agreed expectations, strengths and development priorities.

Apricot Online's online delivery model will be reflected in observation. Observers will consider the context of the student or group, including SEND, anxiety, attendance history, starting points and other factors relevant to engagement and progress.

5.4 Stage 3 – Annual Review

At the end of the cycle, the teacher and Department Head or appropriate manager will hold a review meeting. The discussion will consider progress against objectives, achievements, professional practice, relevant evidence, support provided and future development.

The review should also provide an opportunity to discuss:

- what has gone well during the year;
- areas the teacher would like to develop;
- training, coaching or other professional development;
- wellbeing or working arrangements where relevant to performance;
- support or resources that would help the teacher perform effectively; and
- priorities for the next review cycle.

A written record of the review will be prepared and shared with the teacher. Where it is not completed at the meeting, it should normally be provided within 10 working days. The teacher may add written comments to the record, normally within 10 working days of receiving it.

6. Professional Development and Support

Performance management should help identify useful professional development rather than operate solely as an assessment process.

Where a development need is identified, Apricot Online will consider appropriate support such as:

- training or CPD;
- coaching or mentoring;
- peer support or sharing effective practice;
- additional resources or guidance;
- opportunities to observe or discuss effective practice; and
- reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

Development priorities will take account of the needs of the individual, students, the department and Apricot Online.

7. Performance Concerns

Where a performance concern arises, the manager should seek to understand the reason and discuss it with the employee. Appropriate informal support, feedback, training, coaching, clarification of expectations or reasonable adjustments should normally be considered before a formal capability process is started.

Where appropriate, an informal performance improvement or development plan may be used. This should identify the concern, the required improvement, the support available, a reasonable review period and how progress will be assessed.

The employee should understand the concern and have an opportunity to respond and contribute to the improvement plan.

8. Relationship with Capability and Disciplinary Procedures

Routine performance management does not form part of Apricot Online's formal capability or disciplinary procedures.

Where, despite appropriate support, there are significant or sustained concerns about an employee's ability to perform their role to the required standard, the matter may be considered under Apricot Online's formal capability arrangements.

Conduct concerns are distinct from capability concerns and will normally be managed under the appropriate conduct or disciplinary procedure.

If a matter moves into a formal process, the employee will be informed clearly. Relevant performance-management records may be considered where it is fair, lawful and appropriate to do so, but the formal procedure and its safeguards will apply.

9. Pay and Reward

Performance management may inform pay or reward decisions only where Apricot Online has an applicable contractual or organisational arrangement that links the two.

Any performance-related pay decision will be made using fair and objective criteria and in accordance with the employee's contractual terms and equality requirements.

An organisational decision about whether the business is able to award a general pay increase is separate from an assessment of an individual's performance.

10. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Performance-management information is confidential and will only be accessible to those who reasonably require it for management, HR, professional development, pay, legal or other legitimate organisational purposes.

Records will be stored securely and processed in accordance with UK data-protection law and Apricot Online's Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

The teacher will receive a copy of their review record. Records will be retained in accordance with Apricot Online's records-retention arrangements rather than an outdated fixed period contained in previous versions of this policy.

11. Responsibilities

Directors and Senior Management

- ensure the performance-management framework is applied fairly and consistently;
- support managers to conduct effective reviews;
- consider organisational training and development needs; and
- monitor the effectiveness of the process without unnecessarily identifying individual employees.

Department Heads / Managers

- agree or set fair and relevant objectives;
- maintain appropriate professional dialogue during the year;
- use balanced and proportionate evidence;
- provide timely feedback and identify support;
- conduct and record annual reviews; and
- raise concerns promptly rather than allowing them to accumulate until the annual review.

Teachers

- engage constructively in objective-setting and review discussions;
- work towards agreed objectives and professional standards;
- participate in relevant development and support;
- provide appropriate evidence or reflection where requested; and
- raise concerns about objectives, workload, support or adjustments at an early stage.

12. Review of the Policy

Apricot Online will review the operation of performance management periodically to ensure that it remains effective, proportionate and supportive of high-quality teaching and professional development.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where changes to legislation, guidance, organisational practice or identified needs make this necessary.

Appendix 1 – Online Teaching Observation and Professional Development Framework

The following framework may be used to support lesson observation and professional-development discussions. It is a guide rather than a rigid scoring checklist and should always be applied in the context of the student, group and lesson.

Planning and Preparation

- The lesson forms part of an appropriate planned programme of learning.
- The purpose and intended learning are clear and suitable for the student or group.
- Resources are prepared, accessible and appropriate for online delivery.
- Planning reflects available information about individual needs, starting points, SEND and barriers to engagement.

Subject Knowledge and Curriculum

- The teacher demonstrates secure and appropriate subject knowledge.
- Content is accurate, relevant and sequenced appropriately.
- Explanations and examples support understanding and progression.

Teaching and Adaptive Practice

- Instructions and explanations are clear and appropriately paced.
- The teacher adapts teaching in response to students' strengths, needs and level of engagement.
- Online resources and interactive tools are used purposefully rather than for their own sake.
- The teacher creates appropriate opportunities for participation while respecting the individual student's circumstances and agreed provision.

Assessment, Questioning and Feedback

- Questioning or other assessment methods are used to check understanding.
- Mistakes and misconceptions are identified and addressed appropriately.
- Feedback helps students understand what they have achieved and what to do next.
- Assessment information is used to inform future teaching.

Engagement, Behaviour and Relationships

- The teacher establishes a calm, respectful and professionally appropriate online environment.
- Expectations are clear and proportionate.
- Disengagement or inappropriate behaviour is managed in accordance with Apricot Online procedures and the individual student's needs.
- Professional boundaries and safeguarding expectations are maintained throughout.

Student Progress and Expectations

- The teacher communicates appropriate expectations and encourages progress from the student's starting point.
- Activities are purposeful and contribute to the intended learning.
- The pace and level of challenge are appropriate to the student or group.
- Progress is considered over time and in context rather than judged from one lesson alone.

Online Classroom Practice

- The virtual learning environment is organised and appropriate resources are available.
- Technology is used competently and problems are managed reasonably.
- Screen sharing, messaging, cameras, microphones and other tools are used in accordance with safeguarding and data-protection expectations.

Independent Work / Homework

- Independent work is set where appropriate to the student's programme and circumstances.
- Expectations are clear and achievable.
- Useful feedback is provided on completed work.

Professional Development

Observation feedback should identify strengths as well as development priorities. Any agreed actions should be specific, proportionate and linked to appropriate support or CPD.

Authorised by: Jodie Phillips, Operations Director

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