

PSC CIRCULAR

Public Service Commission, Berkley Crescent, P. O. Box 2211
Government Buildings, Suva. Telephone 3-314-588

PSC Circular No. 26/2006

To : Chief Executive Officers and Heads of Departments **File:** 29/685/18-1

Subject: Annual Confidential Report [ACR] **Date:** 17/07/06
for 2005, 2006 and 2007.

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this Circular is to inform addressees of the use of the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) as an interim measure for assessing staff performance for the years 2005-2007. The assessment shall be for promotion and staff development/training purposes only.

1.2 The Partnership Agreement signed between Government and the Public Service Unions has shelved the PMS and provide "...that a comprehensive review be undertaken of the current system of annual pay review in the Public Service, and to agree to a system, more appropriate for Fiji's Public Service which is to be implemented from 01/01/08". [Partnership Agreement, 2006]. PSC Circular No: 21/2006 is relevant.

2.0 ANNUAL COFIDENTIAL REPORT (ACR)

2.1 The Public Service Commission and the Public Service Unions have agreed to use the ACR to assess performance until a new appraisal system is developed and put in place by January, 2008.

2.2 As the ACR is a confidential reporting system, Officers will not to be shown their Reports. The Reports or aspects of the Reports are only released under the following circumstances:

- (a) to senior managers on a "need to know" basis;
- (b) to departmental staff board;
- (c) to the Public Service Appeal Board, upon request only;
- (d) to the Public Service Commission on request and in support of recommendations for appointment, promotion, training, etc; and
- (e) at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer s/Head of Departments.

2.3 The ACR should serve as a useful document providing an assessment of an officer's progress, performance and conduct which are very important and useful information to management.

- 2.4 The reporting period for the Y2005 ACR would be from 1st January 2005 to 31st December 2005 and ACRs should be submitted by 30th September 2006. The ACRs for Y2006 and Y2007 would cover the reporting periods 1st January to 31st December 2006 and 1st January to 31st December 2007 and due on 30th April 2007 and 30th April 2008, respectively.
- 2.5 All completed ACR should be submitted through the respective Corporate Services Sections/Divisions for proper verification and compilation.
- 2.6 All officers on probation (professional, technical and generalist administrative/clerical and equivalent), are requested to fill their first ACR (progress report) six months after their initial appointment. The report will be used to support either their confirmation of appointment and extension or annulment of probationary appointment. If the probationary appointment period is extended beyond six months, a further ACR (progress report) is to be completed every six months until the officer's appointment is confirmed.
- 2.7 Officers, who are away attending courses, etc., should have appropriate notes placed in their personal file stating their inability to fill their ACRs.
- 2.8 A guide to the proper completion of the ACR is attached as Appendix I.

3.0 ANNUAL CORPORATE PLANNING EXERCISE

- 3.1 The achievement of departmental targets as set out in the Performance Portfolio Statements (PPS), the Annual Corporate Plans (ACP), Business Plans (BP) and CEOs' Performance Agreements necessitate the maintenance of the Individual Work Plans (IWP), which form a vital part of the Corporate Plan, and as such is not affected by the suspension of the PMS. The IWP would be addressed through the Performance Budgeting Process.
- 3.2 The assessment of performance using the ACR will not be linked to the achievement of the ACP, BP and IWP.

4.0 CLARIFICATION

- 4.1 This Circular supercedes PSC Circular No: 1 of 2004 dated 15/01/04 and PSC Circular No: 6 of 2004 dated 17/02/04.
- 4.2 Please ensure that this Circular is brought to the attention of all Officers in your Ministry/Department(s), especially corporate services and/or personnel officers.
- 4.2 Any clarification may be sought from Mrs. Losana Ravuso, Principal Employee Relations Advisor, Employee Relations Division, Public Service Commission on telephone number 3314-588, extension 246 or email address: lravuso@psc.gov.fj



[A. Jale]
Chief Executive Officer-Public Service

CONFIDENTIAL STAFF REPORTS [FORM GP 36] GUIDELINE NOTES FOR
REPORTING OFFICERS AND COUNTERSIGNING OFFICERS

1. Time and again it has been emphasized that assessment or appraisal of the performance of staff at work is a very important function in personnel management. The process allows management the opportunity to take stock of the strengths and weaknesses of individual workers; to identify talents that are underutilized and put these to more effective use; to identify training needs to increase productivity and to help with manpower planning. The process also allows management the opportunity to assess the skills of an individual and he can thus be placed in a role most suited to his/her talents, thereby obtaining the greatest satisfaction from his/her work and at the same time contributing his/her greatest effort and output.
2. In an organization as complex as the Fiji Public Service, staff assessment must be as comprehensive and as objective as possible to achieve its aims.
3. The principal aims of our confidential staff reporting are:

(i) A two Way Communication

The transmission of information from management to staff and vice versa. Management must assess as objectively as possible the performance, capabilities, and attitudes of an employee and having done so should communicate, as appropriate, its finding to the employee as a necessary part of management and in the career interests of the worker. At the same time the employee should be given the opportunity to state his/her views on factors in the organization that may be having an adverse effect on his/her performance.

(ii) An Aid to Staff Selection Process

The minimum qualifications for appointment to various positions have been established in terms of qualifications and experience needed. These are relatively easy to gauge but personal qualities, characteristics and attributes are subjective judgments and must be measured and compared in the most efficient manner and then placed on record for use at a later stage to help in the process of promotions, regradings and transfers etc.

(iii) To Forward Training Programs, Manpower Planning and Career Development

Remedial action could be taken on any weakness or shortcomings identified and at the same time opportunity is taken to identify potential and encourage its growth by delegation, on the job training, job rotation and other forms of training.

(iv) To Improve Supervision

The process of reporting provides in a more formal framework than the day to day relationship, the opportunity for the supervisor to examine the performance of his/her subordinates, to analyse the effectiveness of his/her own leadership, and to develop mutually with staff an understanding of the objectives of the organization and how best to achieve them.

4. The confidential staff reporting is an exercise of great importance. It is something to be undertaken after careful preparation and should not be allowed to come upon us suddenly, nor should it be regarded as something thrust upon us as additional to our daily work.
5. Special time should be set aside to write the annual staff reports without any interruption and what is recorded should in effect be a summary of the entire period under review.
6. Performance appraisal and staff management form part of our normal duties. Ideally this should take place on a less formal note on an on-going basis as part of our routine communication with our subordinates.

The Role of the Reporting Officer

7. (i) He/She has to be honest, objective and make a sincere effort at comprehensive assessment.
- (ii) He/She must identify the job and analyse the duties to determine what can be reasonably expected of a good officer in such a post. He/She ought to compare his/her own standards with those of his/her peers who have subordinates of corresponding grades. Having decided this he/she should then examine the performance of the officer upon whom he/she is reporting – and this should be confined to his/her actual performance against the expected performance in his/her present position. Performance in his/her present position should not be confused with potential for higher responsibilities.
- (iii) He/She must free himself/herself from any prejudice which might work unfairly against the officer being reported on. He/She must similarly remove bias and favouritism.

- (iv) He/She should make an honest attempt at weighing overall performance over the preceding 12 months and should not confine himself/herself to a few critical incidents.
- (v) He/She should examine the performance of the officer reported upon not only in the job itself, but in relation to the overall work situation, to the way he/she fits in with his/her colleagues and thus with the overall objectives of the section and organization in which he/she works. If possible, the Reporting Officer should compare this factor with other officers in the same grade.
- (vi) He/She should take care not to overrate seniority.
- (vii) He/She should after placing a tick in the rating boxes make qualifying statements in the remarks columns.

The Role of the Countersigning Officer

- 8. The Countersigning Officer should, where applicable, take the same steps as those outlined for the Reporting Officer. Additionally, he/she should assess the officer reported on in comparison with others in the same grade and in different units. Different Reporting Officers invariably set different standards against which they measure workers and it is for the Countersigning Officer to strike a balance so that there is uniformity in assessment. In this respect he/she should feel free to make amending entries or remarks against the assessments made by the Reporting Officers. The Countersigning Officer should provide reasons for any amendments made by him/her.
- 9. In Section VII the Countersigning Officer should, using his/her own knowledge of the officer reported upon, elaborate on the assessment and remarks made by the Reporting Officer. Merely endorsing the gradings awarded by the Reporting Officer and stating the period he/she has known the officer reported on is not sufficient and shows a lack of interest in such an important exercise. The longer the Countersigning Officer has known the officer reported on the more advantage he/she has in elaborating and qualifying the assessment of the Reporting Officer.

Some Common Faults in Reporting

- 10. (a) The “halo” effect. This occurs when one quality is so dominant in an officer’s performance that it influences the reporting officer in his/her assessment of other qualities. The reporting officer must make the effort to separate the various qualities which go to make up an assessment of performance.
- (b) “Averaging”. It is a human tendency to give the benefit of the doubt to mark in the middle section of the boxes. We must be reasonable and we must be fair, but we must also be precise. It is most unlikely that an officer will be average in all respects and if you find you made a report which ends up looking like this, examine it carefully again and

try to be definitive. This reflects very poorly on the writer, showing that he/she has taken the easy way out, and it defeats the whole purpose of the exercise. In other words Reporting Officers should bear in mind the importance of the document and should do justice by making a fair assessment.

- (c) **Lack of information.** Reports often come in with only a series of ticks in Section II. Such reports are rarely of any use, and again reflect badly on the reporting officer. Every effort must be made to be as informative and descriptive as possible.
- (d) **Contradictory markings** One finds reports where markings are given in two different items which cannot be reconciled. To quote an example from the previous forms” “Knowledge of work leaves something to be desired” followed later in the report by “Gets through a great deal of work”. Reporting officers should read through reports to avoid contradictory remarks.
- (e) **Ambiguous Statements.** Care should be taken to write clear, precise statements so that the writer and the reader (now and in the future) share the same understanding. Avoid words and phrases which could have different interpretation.