

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME
FOR
CLERKS AND SENIOR CLERKS**

GUIDELINES



**DEPARTMENT OF POLICY AND PLANNING
MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives

The publication of this handbook responds to the need to provide an adequate source of information on how to conduct the Performance Management Programme (PMP) for Clerks and eventually Senior Clerks in the Public Service.

These guidelines are drawn up primarily but not only for public officers assuming the role of Supervisors of Clerks and Senior Clerks that are now being formally included in the Performance Management Programme. The handbook is a reference document defining the PMP procedures and their proper application in harmony with the pertinent PMP form designed for the Clerical Class in the General Service. By referring to these guidelines, supervisors and clerks will be better equipped for the planning, monitoring, and evaluation stages of the PMP process.

The majority of supervisors of employees in the grade of Clerk have the additional advantage of already being themselves on the Programme, and most of what is being explained in this guidebook should sound familiar to them.

As part of the implementation process, a number of PMP trainers have moreover been nominated by their respective Ministry to conduct in-house PMP training for Clerks in their Ministry or line-departments. The nominees have participated in specific *'Train the Trainers'* workshop sessions enabling them to be in a position to assist their Head of Department in implementing this other phase of the Programme with the provision of PMP guidance and advice to clerks, supervisors and fellow staff members.

Heads of Department or their Human Resources (HR) representatives are to ensure that employees are trained by these Trainers before being placed on PMP to secure quality, compliance, uniformity and consistency. The training should also enable clerks and their supervisor to be in a better position to determine and develop

workplans and proper performance standards before embarking on the PMP form proper.

Design

Part 1 of the Handbook explains the general concept behind Performance Management. **Part 2** focuses on the PMP form proper, and what both supervisor and clerk should know during the various stages of the compilation of the document.

Appendix 1 displays a number of frequently asked questions that may come in useful when drawing up the PMP form.

Appendix 2 is a reproduction of the new PMP form for employees in the grade of Clerk and Senior Clerk.

Terms commonly used in Performance Management

A list of common terms used in Performance Management and throughout this Guidebook is given hereunder together with generally accepted meanings:

- **Department:** any organisational unit, including a division, section or office that is directly under the responsibility of a Director or Head of Department.
- **Supervisor:** the clerk's immediate superior to whom the clerk is responsible.
- **Next Level Supervisor:** the immediate officer to whom the supervisor is responsible.
- **Work Plan:** a list of objectives and performance targets for a specific appraisal period, describing in advance what an employee is expected to achieve and the level of performance required.
- **Key task:** a major activity, expressed in broad terms, to be undertaken to complete an objective. Commonly used in performance systems, instead of the term objective. Key tasks wrap up the outputs which a Clerk is expected to deliver during the year.

- **Objectives:** summary statements of specific deliverables, which may incorporate performance targets in terms of timeliness, quality, quantity or cost. A key task may have one or more deliverables.
- **Review:** a scheduled meeting between employee and supervisor designed to give feedback and coaching on the employee's performance. Generally documented and a rating is given.
- **Performance Management:** a system designed to improve organisational performance, linking Corporate Planning and Budgetary cycles and plans to division, team and individual work planning, appraising, training and recognition activities.
- **Performance Assessment:** formal evaluation of performance, used interchangeably with the terms, **appraisal** and **review**. It is the process of giving employees regular and systematic information about their work performance. Normally the employee's immediate supervisor provides this information.
- **Performance Measurement:** a method to determine whether objectives or outputs were achieved. Key performance indicators that can be considered when measuring an employee's performance are quality, quantity, time and/or costs measurements.

In this guidebook the term "Clerk" shall be used interchangeably with reference to the grades of 'Senior Clerk' and 'Clerk'.

PART ONE

PMP: CONCEPTS AND BENEFITS

1. Why a Performance Management Programme?

The extension of the Performance Management Programme for Clerks and Senior Clerks is the final phase of a project to have all public service employees in the General Service Grades accountable for their performance under a common programme.

At a time when many organisations or corporations are engaged in unrelenting searches for ways to improve operations and reduce costs, performance appraisal systems are generally regarded as a necessary part of the organisation's management system.

A vast organisation like the Maltese public service is no exception. To ensure that government policies are implemented efficiently and effectively, the performance of public service employees has to be regularly managed and assessed against approved output and quality standard.

The Performance Management Programme provides employees with an opportunity to receive regular feedback regarding their performance. The proper application of the Programme leads to reduced error and waste, increased productivity, improved quality and service for customers, as well as enhanced employee motivation, commitment, and a sense of ownership.

2. PMP for the Clerical grades

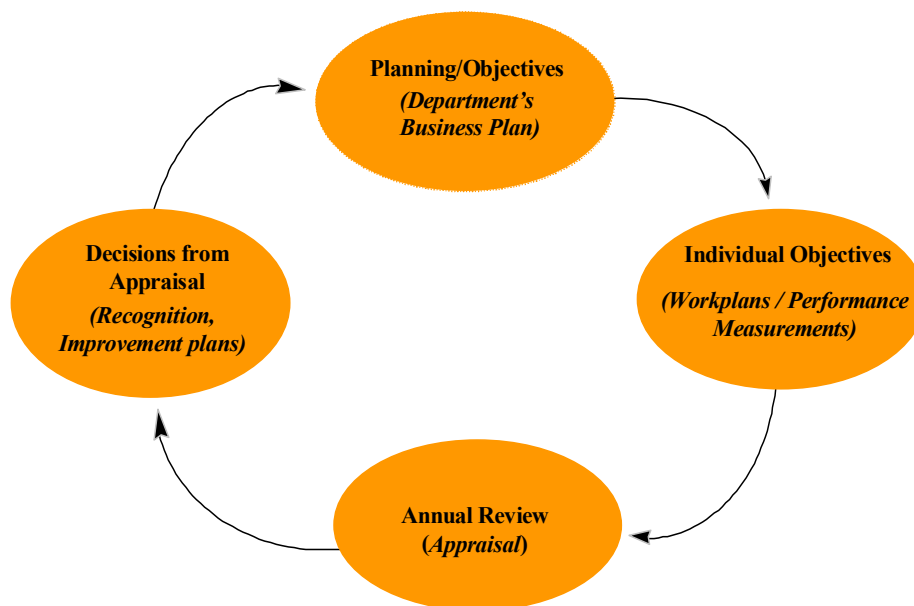
With the extension of PMP to the grades of Clerk and Senior Clerk, the Programme now covers all grades of the General Service Class. Although the PMP form for the Clerical grades is somewhat different from the form for the other General Service grades, the principles remain the same. The PMP form for these grades is less

demanding, but still promotes the concepts of planning, goal setting, coaching, appraisal and feedback. These are components that no performance appraisal system can ignore.

3. The PMP Cycle

Clerks and their immediate superiors mutually plan their work in advance in line with Departmental goals, by drawing up well defined individual Work Plans, on a twelve-month or calendar basis.

Individual work plans are drawn up for each Clerk to reflect the priorities and overall objectives of the Department. Annual and interim reviews base feedback, progress and achievements on tangible evidence.



4. Benefits

Taken collectively and meeting expectations, the individual objectives defined in the PMPs of each employee eventually contribute to the achievement of departmental Business Plans.

The Programme also seeks to enhance two-way communication between supervisor and employee and encourages employee training and development to utilise new technology and acquire new skills to attain the individual objectives.

There are a number of other benefits for supervisors, clerks and customers alike when the Performance Management Programme (PMP) is regularly and properly applied:

1. Supervisors benefit through the development of clear workplans, and the timely delivery of quality work;
2. Clerks understand better individual priorities, learning more about overall activities and the personal efforts required to meet organisational goals;
3. Customer demands for better service and care stand a better chance of being met through improved public service delivery.

Proper preparation prevents poor performance. The Programme is a fine deterrent against crisis management.

PART TWO

THE PMP FORM FOR CLERKS

Overview

The Performance Management Programme for Clerks and Senior Clerks is formalised by recording its various phases on a standard two-page document modified for employees in the clerical grades of the Public Service.

The PMP form for Clerks is a two-page document normally covering a twelve-month working cycle. Many of its components are similar to those in the PMP form for General Service employees in the higher grades who were introduced to the Programme before employees in the clerical grades. A copy of the PMP form for these grades is reproduced at Appendix 2.

The form displays seven specific Sections as listed hereunder:

1. Personal Information
2. Period Covered
3. Schedule of Reviews
4. Skills (Training)
5. Work Plan
6. Final Overall Rating
7. Global Comments

The second Part of this handbook shall go through each Section and explain procedure and requirements for each Section. As we go along through each Section, we shall also try to cater for the most common difficulties a supervisor and employee may encounter when addressing the various stages of the document.

The PMP process normally starts in December just prior to the opening of a new calendar year. There may be PMP documents that are not drawn up on a calendar sequence for reasons explained further down this guidebook.

Section 1 - Personal Information

The personal information of the clerk on the PMP is inserted in Section 1 on the front page of the document. Details required are self-explanatory: they identify the employee, as well as the employing Department, the immediate supervisor responsible for the clerk's output, and finally the next level supervisor to whom the immediate supervisor is accountable.

Once the validity cycle of a PMP form expires, the completed form is submitted to the Personnel Section for insertion in the Personal file of the employee. It is important therefore, that details in Section 1 of the form are accurate, particularly in large departments with Area or District Offices.

Section 2 - Period Covered

This Section defines the validity cycle of the work plan in the PMP form. In a standard PMP document it is twelve months, usually but not necessarily on a calendar basis.

There may be instances where the twelve-month cycle in PMP documents is determined by the date of the formal introduction of the PMP programme for the particular grade of the employee under review. Other Departments keep the date of appointment of the employee in the grade as the date of commencement of subsequent PMP forms.

Personnel Sections tend to prefer PMP documents on a calendar basis. This may require an adjustment to the standard twelve-month period in the first or one of the following PMP documents of employees with non-calendar based PMPs.

As long as there is no break of sequence between one PMP document and the following, any of the above-mentioned options is acceptable.

Section 3 - Schedule of Reviews

The PMP appraisal cycle can be conducted half-yearly or yearly (we recommend half-yearly). The supervisor and employee mutually establish the performance review dates when the Work plan and performance measurements are determined and formally registered in the document.

Section 4 - Skills (Training)

This Section is intended to include, if any, the additional skills or training that employees sometimes need to improve their performance and output levels. Successful organisations invest significantly in their human resources. It is important that where and when the need of training is identified, action is taken to ensure that the employee obtains the training required.

Skills required at these levels may vary from simple hands-on training by more experienced colleagues, to formal training that may entail short or even long-term courses. Where problems arise as to the provision of training, it is suggested that the Department consult the Staff Development Organisation within the Office of the Prime Minister.

At the end of the full PMP cycle, the supervisor is expected to verify that the necessary skills have been acquired, and determine whether any gains in performance have been achieved.

Section 5 - Planning and Appraisal

Section 5 caters for:

- i. the Workplan, a concise but clear definition of the top job priorities for the upcoming twelve months;
- ii. the Performance Measurements, or levels of output defining expectations that can be applied as indicators when assessing the performance of the clerk in each specific activity;

- iii. Performance reviews that include a Points Rating System applicable during the mid-term and annual appraisal stages.

5i. Workplan

The individual Work plans for each employee in a Department should collectively contribute at different levels to the implementation of the Business Plan of their Department. Although on a smaller scale, Work plans for Clerks are no exception.

It is in the interest of the employees to book and obtain a meeting with their immediate supervisor to discuss the drawing up of their PMP in advance of the twelve-month period that the PMP document will be covering.

Section 5 in the PMP form allows employee and supervisor to set up to five tasks or activities for each appraisal period. These responsibilities may be nominated by the employee. However they need be approved by the supervisor as both practical, worthwhile and in line with the immediate exigencies of the Department or Section.

It is suggested that the employee initially prepares a draft of the key 3-5 activities that s/he considers to be the top job priorities for the forthcoming twelve-month period. Although there are many duties and side details in a complete job, the tasks selected for inclusion in the PMP form should be presented in the form of concise but clear statements. The selected activities should cover the key job aspects and work which the employee has control over and is accountable for.

The employee and supervisor then meet to discuss and formalise the work plan. At this stage, employees cannot expect to impose their own version of tasks or activities. The supervisor may have other plans or been asked by his/her superiors to address new projects or initiatives that may entail a revision of duties or responsibilities for his subordinates. The latter may not be aware of these developments when drafting their work plan.

It is important therefore, that there be a strong element of communication, understanding and cooperation between the two parties during this planning phase of the PMP that should finally lead to a formal Workplan agreeable to both interested parties.

5ii. Performance Measurements

A Workplan is not complete without pre-established performance measurements. Leaving the '*Performance Measurements*' column blank in a PMP form is an indicator of lack of commitment, haphazard planning, or simply mismanagement.

Some time and thought has to be dedicated at the planning phase of the tasks and activities in order to determine achievable standards defining what the expectations in respect of each activity are. Results and proper performance appraisal depend on pre-determined standards, whether in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, cost or other performance measurements.

The type of performance measurements to be applied depends on the nature of the duties being performed by the clerk. Performance measurements are required as points of reference when comparing what has been promised and agreed to be done, with what has in fact been achieved by the end of the validity period of the work plan.

Once the Supervisor and Employee mutually agree upon the Workplan and measurements for each specific activity, details are formally inserted in the appropriate columns at Section 5.

Signatures of the Supervisor and Employee at the bottom of Section 5 are required to assert that both parties have been involved and are perfectly aware of plans and commitments jointly agreed upon. At this stage, the Supervisor keeps the original PMP form until it is brought up for the mid-term review, but the employee may request a copy for his/her own reference.

5iii. Performance Reviews

The notion behind these reviews is for Supervisor and Clerk to meet and discuss output and achievements as compared to expectations for each listed task or activity.

The PMP form for Clerks provides for a mid-term and an annual Performance review. The points allotted during the two reviews in respect of each task performed by the clerk, assist the Supervisor to determine the final overall rating required at Section 6 of the PMP document.

Performance reviews are perhaps the most delicate part of the whole PMP process. The supervisor should arrange to spend enough time with the employee for this session without interruption or distraction. Both parties should be prepared for the interview and have thought about what needs to be said, with notes ready.

The supervisor should remember that the employee is likely to be anxious about their appraisal, even if they show little sign of it. Appraisal is a powerful employee communications tool, and most employees want and expect their supervisor to give them clear and honest performance feedback. The creation of a relaxed atmosphere is recommended. A performance review should never turn into a heated argument. Discuss and try to reach an agreement on each rating and improvement action.

The **Points Rating System** is applied when half of the validity cycle of the PMP has expired, and then again at the end of the twelve-month period covered by the PMP document. Points are allotted for each task or activity in the appropriate columns on the far right of Section 5. Points for each task may vary from 0 to 20 to reflect the performance levels of the employee. Reference to the Rating Scale classification in Section 6 of the PMP form is recommended.

Section 6 - The Rating Scale and Final Overall Rating

The rating scale for Clerks spans four performance levels. The following comments describe the general nature of the ratings:

Outstanding (16 - 20)

Exceptional performance that has regularly exceeded the standard expected to such a degree that it be visibly above expectations.

Above Average (11 - 15)

Employee demonstrates very good performance, often above the required standard for the job. Relevant skills and abilities tend to be strongly developed and applied with consistent good effort.

Average (6 - 10)

Employee demonstrates acceptable performance, which tends to match the job's required standard. Expectations have been met and relevant skills and abilities are appropriate for the job, but an improvement on some aspects is required.

Unsatisfactory (0 - 5)

Employee demonstrates performance well below the required standard for the job. A serious performance problem is evident and requires urgent attention. Effort may be lacking or inconsistently applied.

The Final Overall Rating

The final overall rating should represent at a glance an overall average of all the points obtained by employee during the mid-term and annual reviews of his/her performance.

The overall average rating is obtained by dividing:

$$\frac{\text{Sum Total of Points}}{\text{Number of tasks} \times 2 \text{ reviews}}$$

The Table below is a self-explanatory example. Here we have a Clerk with a Workplan displaying four tasks, and the points obtained for each task during the two formal reviews:

	POINTS	
	MID-TERM	ANNUAL
Task 1	15	15
Task 2	6	9
Task 3	10	11
Task 4	11	11
Sub-Totals:	42	46
<u>Sum total of Points</u> 4 (tasks) x 2 (reviews)	<u>42 + 46</u> 8	
Final Overall Rating:	11	

The Final Overall Rating in this particular example indicates that the overall performance of the Clerk under review was slightly above average.

When determining the final overall rating, there may be instances where the number of points so ascertained includes a fraction. In these cases, the 'to the nearest' concept shall be applied. If, for example, the final average figure reads 11.625 or 11.75, the overall rating shall be quoted as 12. Any fraction being less than one half shall be disregarded.

Redress

The practice of performance appraisal should be ethical, honest and fair. It is the appraiser's responsibility to strive for balance and objectivity at all times. Naturally the hardest part of appraisals is the need to deliver adverse feedback to some employees.

If the feedback is seriously adverse, it would be wise to discuss the matter first with the Next Level Supervisor. In these cases, the Next Level Supervisor is expected to evaluate the fairness of the Supervisor's judgements and ratings, and also listen to the employee's objections. The role of the Next Level Supervisor in these situations is that of a mediator and arbiter. The aim should be to achieve agreement. This may or may not involve modifying the appraisal. Decisions taken or rulings given by the Next Level Supervisor should at this stage be final.

Section 7 - Final Global Comments

This Section is intended for any final short comments that the employee, the immediate supervisor, and the upline (Next Level) supervisor may wish to include, following the completion of the twelve-month cycle covered by the PMP form. Comments in this end Section of the document are expected to be in harmony with the global rating given at Section 6.

Signatures and dates at the bottom of Section 7 are **required at the end of the full validity cycle** of the document, and **only after** having addressed and completed all the Sections of the PMP form.

Completed PMP forms

Once the PMP document is completed in full, the final version goes to Next Level Supervisor who reviews it, adds their own brief comments by hand if desired, and signs.

The document is finally referred to the Personnel Section for insertion in the personal file of the employee. The employees are entitled to a copy of the completed PMP form for their own reference or disposal.

End of one complete PMP document! Time for the next Workplan and a fresh PMP....

PMP CLERKS

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When does the twelve - month cycle start?

A. The majority of Government Departments tends to prefer PMPs running on a calendar basis. Other Departments keep the date of the formal introduction of the Programme as their point of reference for the drawing up of the first and subsequent PMP documents.

The date on the letter of appointment of a Clerk may also establish the day when the first PMP is required. This option applies when a Clerk is appointed in the grade after the formal introduction of the Programme for this category of general service employees.

In the case of first-timers, and where PMPs on a calendar basis are preferred, a short-term Workplan and PMP may initially be drawn up, ranging from the date of appointment till end of that particular year. The following PMP document may then be planned on a calendar basis in harmony with other PMPs.

Any of the above options are legitimate as long as there is no break of sequence between one PMP document and another.

Q. Who should take the initiative when it comes to drawing up a PMP?

A. It is in the interest of both clerk and supervisor to ensure that these performance documents are regularly drawn up and reviewed. Work plans and performance measurements on the PMP form are required in advance of the validity cycle they are supposed to cover.

Employees in the grades of Clerk and Senior Clerk are reminded that, as with other employees in higher general service grades, their progression from one salary scale

Appendix 1 - Frequently Asked Questions

to another is also subject to satisfactory performance. PMP documents accounting for the performance of Clerks and Senior Clerks shall in the near future be replacing the Performance Rating Report (PRR) required for progression purposes.

PMP forms are also subject to random internal or external audits for quality and compliance.

Q. What happens if for some reason or other a clerk has no immediate supervisor?

A. In such situations, the clerk should approach the next higher level of management or consult the Human Resource Manager to determine the person who will be drawing up the PMP.

Q. To what extent is an employee consulted by the supervisor about his/her work plan and performance measurements?

A. Consultation, collaboration and trust between supervisors and their employees are very important goals in the PMP process. There should always be an element of discussion and negotiation rather than imposition when it comes to drafting Work plans and performance indicators. These concepts apply also for performance appraisal.

Q. How much detail should be put into the work plan?

A. The definition of tasks in the work plan should be clear but concise. Although there are many side-duties in a complete job, only the key activities are to be chosen for each cycle as the top job priorities for the upcoming year.

The workplan should display corresponding performance measurements whether in terms of quality, quantity, time or costs. Expectations should be achievable and within the control of the employee.

Appendix 1 - Frequently Asked Questions

Q. If the available space for drawing up the Workplan is not sufficient what should I do?

A. Should the available space for drawing up the work plan prove insufficient, a supplementary sheet with the required additional details may be attached to the PMP form. The personal details of the employee and the period covered by the PMP form should again be copied on this page.

Supplementary details regarding the tasks and activities of the employee are ideally presented in the same table format displayed in Section 5 of the PMP form. Both employee and supervisor are to endorse the contents in the additional sheet.

Q. Why should an employee sign the PMP document every time?

A. PMP forms are endorsed by employee and supervisor alike, to indicate that both sides are aware of the content in the PMP document. Signatures are required to certify that important matters like the Workplan and ratings showing on the Form have been discussed, and consensus reached.

Q. What type of training should an employee receive?

A. The type of training to be received depends on the needs of the employee in order to complete her/his work satisfactorily. If the workplan lists a number of tasks which the employee is (due to lack of skills) not be able to perform, then the supervisor should enable the employee to follow the necessary training courses.

Training techniques are various. An employee may simply learn from hands-on training from the more experienced colleagues at work. Lectures reference to manuals or computer tutorials is also a good form of instruction. Self-learning and job rotation are another two training modalities that help an employee to improve performance and meet job expectations.

Appendix 1 - Frequently Asked Questions

Q. If a Clerk is assigned additional tasks during the year, how are these accounted for in the PMP form?

A. New tasks and Performance measures may be added to the original Work plan in the PMP form, but if space is lacking a separate sheet may be attached to the PMP once these tasks and measures have been determined and defined. Changes in activities should also be accounted for when performance assessments are due.

Q. Where would the PMP form be retained during the 12-month cycle?

A. The PMP form is retained by the Supervisor with a copy provided to the employee. The HR Manager within the employing Ministry or the Personnel Section of the Department may request a copy at any time for record keeping or monitoring purposes.

At the end of the twelve-month cycle the completed PMP document should be referred to the Personnel Section for filing in the employee's personal file. PMP documents are to be treated as confidential matter. Only appropriate staff should have access to appraisal information.

Q. What should be done if during the year an employee is transferred to another Section or Department?

A. Employees may from time to time be assigned new duties and a different supervisor elsewhere. In such cases, the outgoing supervisor reviews and completes that part of the original PMP form covered by the employee till the date of transfer. A fresh PMP with tasks and activities pertinent to the employee's new posting is then drawn up together with the new supervisor. It is important that the sequence of PMP documents is not broken.

Appendix 1 - Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How can employees make sure that their supervisor at work discusses their progress?

A. PMP is designed in a way that formally schedules regular review meetings concerning your work. The holding of each meeting requires your endorsement to signify completion. This process should ensure that supervisors provide the time to direct, encourage, support, and guide their employees as necessary.

Employees should not miss the opportunity to remind their immediate and if necessary, their next level supervisors when any of their performance reviews is overdue.

Q. What happens when an employee disagrees with the performance ratings given by the supervisor in the PMP?

A. The employee may ask the Supervisor for a revision of ratings, explaining why s/he disagrees. If the supervisor insists on the original assessment, the matter may be referred to the Next Level Supervisor. The latter is expected to act as arbiter and mediator in these situations. If agreement is still not reached, and after evaluating both versions of things, the Next Level Supervisor is expected to give a ruling, which at this stage should be final.

Q. Is a Clerk or Senior Clerk entitled to a copy of the final completed version of the PMP form?

A. All employees on the Performance Management Programme are entitled to a copy of their completed PMP form. A copy may also be requested at any stage of the PMP cycle particularly after the tasks or activities are determined in the Work plan, and when reviews and the final assessments are formally recorded on the form.



Performance Management Programme

1. PERSONAL INFORMATION

FULL NAME	ID NUMBER
MINISTRY	DEPARTMENT
SECTION	UNIT
GRADE	SCALE
<i>Supervisor (Name & Grade)</i>	<i>Next Level Supervisor (Name & Grade)</i>

2. PERIOD COVERED

FROM

DAY	MONTH	YEAR
DAY	MONTH	YEAR

TO

3. SCHEDULE OF REVIEWS

MID-TERM REVIEW

DAY	MONTH	YEAR
DAY	MONTH	YEAR

ANNUAL REVIEW

4. SKILLS (Training)

Additional skills and knowledge required (if any) by employee during the year in order to achieve targets

Completed

Yes / No

Completed

Yes / No

Appendix 2 - The PMP Form for Clerks

5. WORK PLAN (to be agreed upon between supervisor and employee at the start of the validity period)

Tasks / Activities – To include in broad terms the major tasks or assignments as agreed between employee and supervisor.

Performance Measure – Determines how an activity or task is to be done and how results are to be ascertained in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness etc...

	Tasks / Activities	Performance Measurements	REVIEWS	
			Mid-Term	Annual
			Points	Points
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Employee's Signature: _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____

6. FINAL OVERALL RATING:

(To be filled by Supervisor)

Insert the overall rating of the employee's performance for the entire PMP validity period

Points

Rating Scale

Outstanding	16 - 20
Above Average	11 - 15
Average	6 - 10
Unsatisfactory	0 - 5

7. GLOBAL COMMENTS:

Employee's Comments:	
Supervisor's Comments:	Signature & Date
Next level Supervisor's Comments:	Signature & Date
	Signature & Date