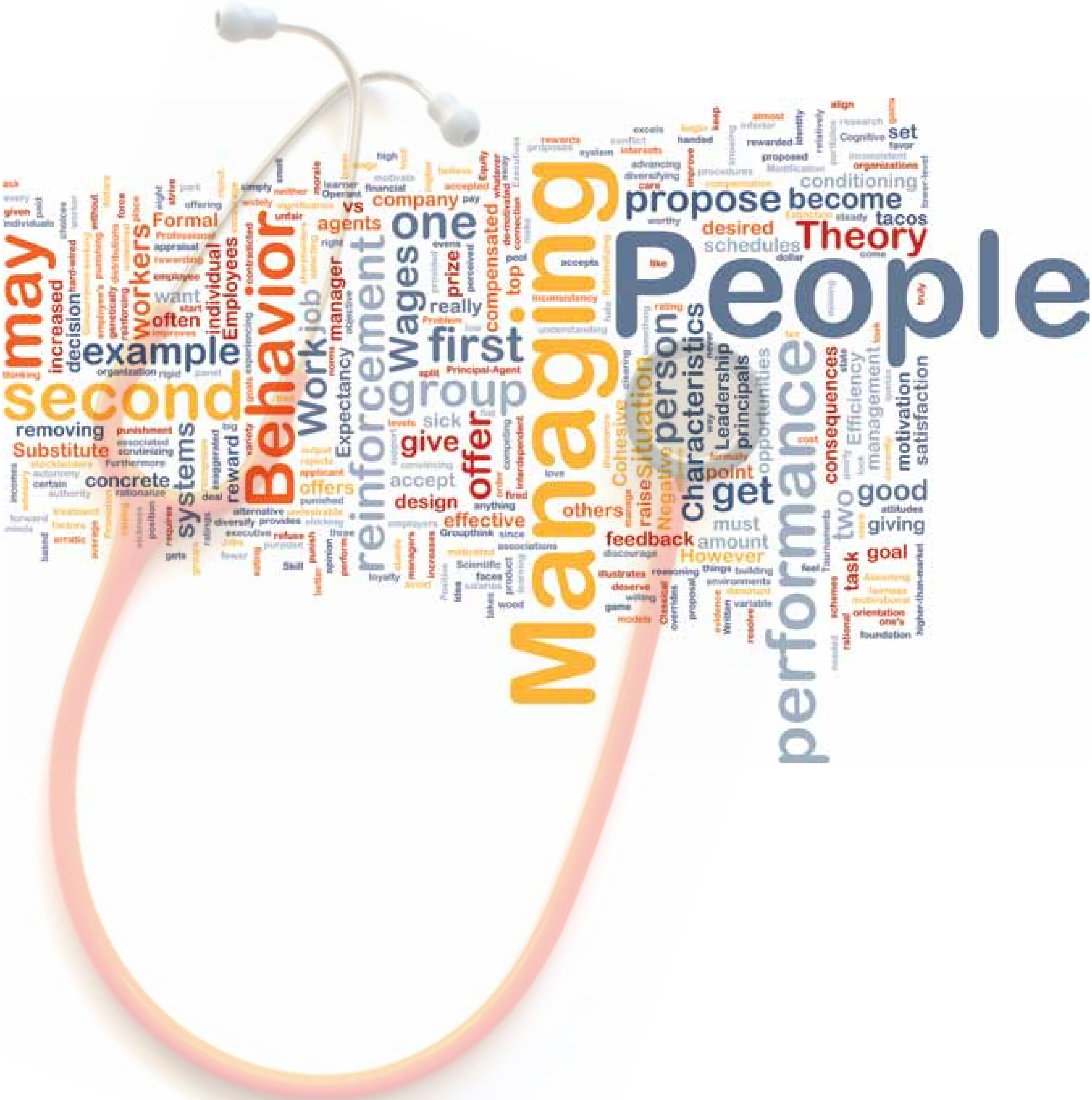
The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Employer guide

3rd edition



Employer guide (3rd edition)

Disclaimer

The information set out in this publication is current at the date of first publication and is intended for use as a guide of a general nature only and may or may not be relevant to particular patients or circumstances. Nor is this publication exhaustive of the subject matter. Persons implementing any recommendations contained in this publication must exercise their own independent skill or judgement or seek appropriate professional advice relevant to their own particular circumstances when so doing. Compliance with any recommendations cannot of itself guarantee discharge of the duty of care owed to patients and others coming into contact with the health professional and the premises from which the health professional operates.

Accordingly, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (the RACGP) and its employees and agents shall have no liability (including without limitation liability by reason of negligence) to any users of the information contained in this publication for any loss or damage (consequential or otherwise), cost or expense incurred or arising by reason of any person using or relying on the information contained in this publication and whether caused by reason of any error, negligent act, omission or misrepresentation in the information.

Published by:

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
College House, 1 Palmerston Crescent
South Melbourne Victoria 3205 Australia

Tel 03 8699 0510
Fax 03 9696 7511
www.racgp.org.au

ISBN: 978-0-86906-334-7
Published July 2012

Acknowledgements

This resource has been supported by The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) National Standing Committee – General Practice Advocacy and Support (NSC-GPAS).

The RACGP *Employer guide* (3rd edition) is an update of the RACGP *Employment kit – reaching a fair deal* (2nd edition), published in 2006. The updated RACGP *Employer guide* (3rd edition) incorporates new information relating to the recruitment, selection and management of medical practice staff as requested by RACGP members since publication of the second edition.

The RACGP would like to thank all those who were involved in the development of this guide.

The RACGP Employer guide resources discussed throughout this publication are available to members at www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides.

Note

This document contains references to other websites. The RACGP does not specifically endorse any organisation, association or entity referred to in, or linked to, this document.

Views or recommendations provided in referenced websites do not necessarily reflect those of the RACGP and the RACGP has no responsibility for the content of the linked website(s).

It is the readers' responsibility to make their own decisions about the currency, completeness, accuracy, reliability and suitability of information contained in linked websites.

Contents

Overview

Research from both general practice and other industries supports the importance of attention to human resource management (HRM).

HRM, or simply HR, encapsulates the management and ongoing professional development of the people employed in your practice to deliver patient services.

This resource includes practical information for general practices about:

- developing position descriptions that outline staff roles, responsibilities and conditions of employment
- recruiting and selecting staff with the right mix of skills, knowledge and competency for building a practice's capacity to achieve its goals and objectives
- deciding on the approach that is needed to attract the right field of candidates for a particular job
- observing and adhering to employment legislation
- inducting, mentoring, training and developing staff.

Taking the time to properly prepare and plan your management strategy is crucial to an organisation's overall success in achieving its objectives.

The resources discussed throughout this publication are available to RACGP members at www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides.

1. Preparing for recruitment

1.1 Position evaluation/job analysis

Prior to commencing the recruitment process, conduct a job analysis or review the position in relation to the future needs of the practice.

When a position needs to be filled, consider it an opportunity to reorganise and produce new ideas and processes for your practice. Take time to examine the selection criteria and job description to determine if they accurately reflect the practice's vision.

Considerations for conducting a job analysis

- How has the practice changed since you last recruited someone for this or a similar position?
- Will there be any changes in the services provided? Consider areas of growth and development, different ways of offering services, and technology that has either been introduced or that you plan to introduce.
- What are the implications of changes for the practice staffing needs? Consider future requirements for different skills and the impact these may have on the number and type of positions, what skills are lacking in the practice, staffing flexibility and the practice environment and culture.
- How well do your current staff skills and performances match the requirements of the practice services? Consider whether the staff level and composition provides effective patient care, skills and performance.
- What training would the employee require to perform the tasks effectively?
- What work can be organised more effectively? Consider how the sequence of tasks might be organised differently to improve service delivery.
- What factors contribute to staff turnover and what impact will staff departures and retirements have on the practice?
- How does this position compare to similar positions within the practice and to those externally?
- What are the patient expectations of the practice?

A job analysis may involve observing the job being done and talking to the staff undertaking the tasks. Often your practice staff will have the role of training and mentoring new staff members, so it is a good idea to seek their views regarding the skills and training required for the position. This may also be an opportunity for existing staff to develop new skills that could be incorporated into their position.

By examining the work flow and job roles before the need for new staff arises, you will be better prepared to find the right person who fits the mould and the practice team.

Practices are encouraged to use the job analysis process as an opportunity to:

- identify problem areas such as hold-ups, errors and inefficient and unnecessary systems
- improve, streamline and rectify such problems, thereby enhancing productivity and patient satisfaction
- improve job satisfaction
- up-skill employees
- improve teamwork and participation through a team approach.

Once you have evaluated the position and made any changes that suit your practice, start to build a competency and skill profile of what you want the new employee to achieve.

The RACGP has developed an example of the skill requirements for general practice employees, shown in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1. Skill requirements for general practice employees

Further information about developing a competency profile is available in the RACGP *General practice management toolkit,* Modules 5 and 8, available to order at www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides.

1.2 Position description

The position description establishes the specific role within the practice. It documents the responsibilities, tasks and activities associated with the position, defines the lines of accountability and includes all other information that is relevant to the job.

The parameters of the position description improves a practice's ability to manage staff and roles often used as a basis for performance management, training and development, remuneration management, succession planning, evaluation and areas of accountability.

Developing position descriptions is essential to the success and efficiency of your business.

The following information is usually included in the position description:

- position title
- term of the position (eg. 1 year fixed term, 3 year fixed term, or ongoing)
- who the position reports to
- purpose statement (the end results or objectives of this position)
- duties, responsibilities and goals
- budget authorisation (if applicable)
- knowledge, skills and attributes
- qualifications/credentials and experience required for the position
- type of employment arrangement (full time, part time, casual, other)
- standard hours of work
- job location and environment
- remuneration (salary range, hourly rate, applicable awards).

It is important for all GPs and their staff to have documented position descriptions.

The RACGP *Standards for general practices* (4th edition) supports effective human resource management in Section 4 – Practice management. For more information visit www.racgp.org.au/standards.

Table 1. How to prepare a position description

Use the headings below to develop the key requirements of the position. Use this information to compile a job description with clear specifications for the position.

Position number (if applicable)	
Position title	
Reporting to	
Type of employment arrangement, eg. full time, part time, casual, fixed term.	
Purpose of the role Describe the overall purpose of this position and how it contributes to the practice. What are the end results of objectives of this position?	
Key responsibilities and performance measures Outline the key responsibilities and performance measures for this position as they relate to relevant practice objectives.	
Stakeholder relationships Outline the stakeholders the role requires interaction with, eg. practice staff and external organisations.	
Key selection criteria What experience, knowledge and skills are required for the position?	
Qualifications What are the qualifications required?	
Workplace behaviours Outline the expected behaviours in the role, eg. focus on service, be respectful, be accountable and demonstrate integrity.	
Classification description What award the position is under or subsequent agreement (where relevant).	

Position descriptions and templates are also widely available through general practice professional associations, networks and divisions of general practice.

2. Recruitment of candidates

Having determined the practice's staffing requirements, the next task is to attract the appropriate people to the position. There are many ways to attract applicants and your final choice for advertising a position may utilise two or three different mechanisms.

Often it will depend on the position, the target groups, previous success in attracting applicants, cost and the objectives of the recruiting exercise.

2.1 Advertising roles

Practices often use specialist websites to advertise jobs as part of the overall recruitment plan, eg. MyCareer (www.mycareer.com.au), Seek (www.seek.com.au) and CareerOne (www.careerone.com.au).

The internet provides easily accessible information and has become a powerful tool in broadening the exposure for advertised positions. It offers many additional factors to the recruitment process, for example:

- speed – electronic recruitment can bring recruiters and applicants together more quickly, provides ready access to information and makes it easier to submit applications
- accuracy – in most cases it seems easier for the recruiter and the applicant to provide greater detail, which assists in being more discerning and selective
- breakdown of geographical constraints – recruiters can reach a wide group of applicants and people can locate and target opportunities wherever they are in the world
- improved communication – without the constraints of geography and time, stronger communication links are formed.

Also consider alternative placements for your advertisements where it might help to build a broader pool of applicants:

- newspaper and other printed media
- association journals and newsletters
- professional bodies (eg. RACGP classifieds – free to members, contact classifieds@racgp.org.au)
- industry forums, conferences and seminars
- educational institutions
- local and community newspapers
- community or public noticeboards
- specialist recruitment and search services
- recommendations from existing staff
- previous applicants and direct approaches
- targeted direct mail.

It may also be necessary to approach people you know who have the required skills but are not actively seeking a job change. GPs should be on the lookout for suitable people both inside and outside the practice who could be approached directly when a vacancy occurs.

2.2 Recruitment agencies

You may decide to undertake the selection process internally or to use a recruitment agency. An advantage of using a recruitment agency is that they have expertise in conducting selections, which reduces the demand on your time. However, the practice may also have the capacity to do this effectively itself.

If you decide to use a recruitment agency, the cost may be higher and you will need to choose an agency which suits your business. Consider the following points when selecting an agency:

- **someone who gets to know your business:** a good quality recruitment agency will expect to meet with you at your premises and get a feel for your business, the environment, people and culture
- **searching for skills and experience:** speed should not be the only consideration, as finding the right person often takes time
- **internal processes:** find out how they go about searching and selecting candidates for you. A good recruiter will talk to you about their methodology, systems and processes
- **source of candidates:** ask questions to make sure they have good practices in place and operate ethically and professionally. Send the recruitment agent a copy of the job description template for discussion.

When selecting a recruitment agency, certain terms and conditions must be considered. These may include:

- initial search fees for locating, interviewing, screening, testing and short listing candidates
- placement fees for permanent and temporary
- fee schedule and percentages for different salary ranges
- job advertising for print and nonprint media advertising. The advertisement format, content, logo, approval process and associated expenses
- replacement guarantees for the replacement of the original candidate, if required.

As with any commercial agreement, you need to ensure you clearly understand all of the included terms. If there are areas you are unsure about, clarify them. The terms should dictate clearly what the total cost of the recruitment exercise will be for you. When this document has been reviewed and agreed upon, you can then sign and proceed with the service.

3. Selection of applicants

For some positions you may be inundated with applications and you will need to be able to filter out those who are unsuitable in order to arrive at a short list of potentially suitable candidates. Requiring potential employees to apply with a resume and cover letter or a standard application form can assist in the selection process, as it ensures the important questions are answered and allows comparisons of applicants.

Relevant information regarding an applicant can be obtained from a variety of sources, including:

- the applicant's initial letter and resume
- employment application form
- the employment interview
- reference checks.

Usually, you will base your decision about whether to interview the applicant on the information you receive and how it matches the competencies required for the position.

3.1 Preparing for the interview

Interviews serve several important functions and are the most commonly used method of employee selection. They give both the prospective employee and the practice principal GP/staff member a chance to learn about each other and the applicant's suitability for the role. The interviewee can get a feel for the practice, while the interviewer can obtain firsthand and detailed information about the candidate.

Some practices conduct up to three interviews, including:

- a preliminary interview (this is sometimes conducted via telephone)
- a main interview to assist with the selection of a short list of suitable candidates (the employer can assess the applicant's ability to perform in the role)
- a final interview with the practice owner (or delegated member of staff), who will make the decision about which candidate to appoint.

A structured or unstructured interview

Interviews will vary, depending on the type of position, the applicant and the interviewer(s).

For example, an interview for a GP candidate may be more unstructured than an interview for a practice manager. Where unstructured interviews are used, a series of open ended questions might be desirable. The questions asked can change depending on how each individual responds.

Structured interviews involve asking the same set of questions to all applicants. A structured approach increases reliability because candidates can be easily compared against skills.

Structuring the interview and developing questions

Prepare for the interview by considering what areas need to be covered, and writing the specific interview questions you will ask in order to discover the applicant's ability to address the key requirements of the job.

The person conducting the interview should plan the structure of an interview to:

- start with open ended questions, including
  - tell me about yourself?
  - tell me about your previous roles?
  - what are your strengths and areas of development?

- focus on experience rather than hypothetical situations
- confirm the candidate's qualifications and experience
- encourage the candidate to give examples of his/her work that demonstrate his/her achievements and capabilities
- promote the practice as a preferred employer
- allow the candidate to clarify matters pertaining to conditions of employment
- test the candidate's ability for the job (eg. a demonstration of his/her ability to use a clinical desktop system)
- allow a set time for each part of the interview so that each candidate has equal time
- think of job related questions that will elicit the required information.

The aim should be to learn about past performance, skills possessed and the character of the applicant.

Scoring system

Develop a scoring system to rate each candidate's responses and prepare an interview sheet to use during each interview (ensure that each interviewer understands the scoring process).

For example, assign a score of 1–5 for each answer the prospective employee provides to the set questions, and include additional sections for 'overall impression' and any other relevant areas.

Selection panels

Selection panels usually present a perception of impartiality. However, it is important to note that a panel interview may not suit all recruitment situations.

With regard to selection panels, consider the following:

- the size of the panel depending on the position (usually two or three people)
- including a staff member at the same level as that of the vacant position
- selecting panel members who are trained or experienced in interviewing
- the reasons for convening a selection panel and the outcomes to be achieved
- when there are large numbers of applicants, conduct a telephone based interview to short list and use a panel for the main interview
- encouraging panel members to meet, discuss and document the relevant merit (where appropriate) for each of the job related requirements – this could include consideration of the transferable skills, values and attitudes that the practice is looking for.

3.2 Conducting the interview

Preparing the environment

- Position the chairs in the room so that it is not intimidating
- Provide a glass of water, as some applicants may be nervous during the interview.

Commencement of interview

- Start the interview by making the applicant comfortable, discussing general topics unrelated to the role.

Body of interview

- Provide an overview of what the position entails and what they should expect in the position

- Ask open ended questions that can't be answered by yes or no. These may include:
  - tell me about your last job?
  - what made you decide to become a GP /nurse/practice manager/practice receptionist?
  - what was your previous practice like?
- After you ask each question, give the applicant enough time to think and respond – be wary of jumping in and filling the gap of a thoughtful silence
- It is important to remain neutral, whether you agree or disagree with the candidate's answers
- Question with purpose and explore past performance under various headings based on your selection criteria. What do candidates need to know and be able to do (competencies) in order to perform the job well? Obtain specific evidence to determine each candidate's ability to meet your criteria.

Wrapping up

- When you are satisfied that you have all the information you need, invite the candidate to ask any questions he/she has
- Ask the candidate if he/she is successful, when he/she will be available to commence employment
- Confirm that you may contact the candidate's referees, or if not provided already, request contact details for the candidate's referees
- Close the interview by thanking the candidate and explaining the next steps in the selection process.

Post interview

Start to evaluate the candidate's suitability for the position. Although you would have made notes during the interview itself, take a few minutes now to gather your thoughts.

What was your overall impression? In what ways did the candidate match the selection criteria? You may be interviewing several people and it is easy to become confused between the candidates if you have not made clear notes. Write down anything you will need to help recall the candidate and his/her suitability for the position and, if you have developed a scoring system, ensure it is completed immediately after the interview.

The RACGP has developed an interview form for interviewers available at www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides.

At the end of the interview process, each potential employee should leave the premises with a positive impression of the practice and the satisfaction that the interview has been fairly and professionally conducted.

Every employment interview is in part a public relations exercise. Each person you interview is a potential patient of your practice and so are their families, friends and colleagues.

3.3 Selecting the right candidate and reference checks

Reference checking is an essential part of the selection process. The purpose of reference checking is to validate or delineate between the preliminary selection assessment. This can sometimes be the determining factor between two excellent candidates. A reference check on the chosen candidate should always be carried out, as a good predictor of future performance is past performance.

A reference check is usually conducted over the telephone and normally includes an explanation of the reason for your call and a brief explanation of the key tasks of the position, outlining the main selection criteria.

Ask questions directly related to the requirements of the position and clarify and substantiate the information you obtained from the candidate during the interview. The potential employer should ask questions regarding the candidate's strengths and areas for development. Probing the referee's responses may produce further information.

It is normal practice to contact only those referees supplied by the candidate. If you are concerned that those referees will not be able to provide the information you require you should ask the candidate for other referees. You are required to obtain the candidate's permission to contact other referees.

Caution: Discriminatory questions must not be asked. Questions asked of referees and of previous employers are subject to the same legal constraints as those asked of the candidate.

3.4 Offer of employment

After identifying the successful candidate, you need to contact the person as soon as possible and make a job offer. The initial job offer is usually verbal and once the candidate has accepted the position, it is followed up in writing with an offer of employment.

The offer of employment informs employees about the terms and conditions of their employment.

The following details are usually included in the offer of employment and modified for the type of employment category, ie. full time, part time, casual, other:

- remuneration
- commencement date
- position title
- who the position reports to
- hours of work
- performance management
- probationary period
- superannuation
- leave entitlements
- termination
- confidential information (intellectual property, assignment of copyright)
- return of property
- conflict of interest
- policies, procedures and code of conduct.

The offer of employment is an important legal contract and is usually signed by the new employee prior to them starting employment in your practice. Any related policies are also attached to the offer of employment and often are sent to the employee in a kit, eg. a new starter employee kit.

Employment resources, including employment contract templates, are available through the Fair Work Ombudsman website at www.fairwork.gov.au, and the Australian Government Business website at www.business.gov.au.

Further information about awards and agreements are discussed in *Section 3.7 Employment legislation.*

The RACGP has developed offer of employment examples available for members at www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides.

3.5 Notification of unsuccessful applicants

All unsuccessful applicants should be notified verbally or in writing as soon as possible after the position is filled. Care must be taken when advising unsuccessful applicants to ensure equal opportunity and discrimination legislation is not breached. In line with the *Privacy Act 1988*, applicants' details are kept for a specified period of time and then disposed of as confidential documents. For further information visit www.privacy.gov.au.

For some unsuccessful applicants, eg. those who were seriously considered for the role, you may wish to advise that whilst they have been unsuccessful in this instance, you will consider them for future roles. Some applicants ask for feedback, and you will need to prepare notes to provide constructive feedback as required.

3.6 Negotiating with potential employees

A negotiation window exists from the time you make an offer of employment until the formal acceptance of the offer by your selected candidate. Good practice involves completing negotiations prior to issuing a contract.

Before starting any negotiation, be aware that the goal is not to win at the expense of the other party, as a win–lose approach is usually indicative of a failed or less than optimal negotiation.

The negotiation process should be a positive experience for both parties and preparation often leads to a successful outcome.

Before any discussion or negotiation with a potential employee, make sure you:

- read and become familiar with the National Minimum Employment Standards (NES) and the relevant modern awards. Detailed information is available on the Fair Work website at www.fairwork.gov.au and copies of awards can be found on the Fair Work Ombudsman website at awardfinder.fwo.gov.au
- understand what you want by creating a list of conditions necessary in an acceptable contract. This may come before or after an offer, or alternatively, it may form the criteria for you to put an offer to the other party. It also involves considering remuneration and the conditions that would make a contract acceptable to you
- identify the key requirements in terms of best outcomes, must haves and trade-offs for each condition. For example, the practice may require GPs to take part in after hours and residential aged care visit requirements. To encourage the new employee to consider this work you could offer a higher percentage for after hours work, or alternative work arrangements
- consider the employment conditions most likely to be negotiated for. For example:
  - remuneration – salary, percentage of billings, superannuation, the frequency of pay/billing cycles, financial incentives, eg. Practice Incentives Program (PIP) and Service Incentives Payment (SIP)
  - flexible hours of work
  - scheduled consulting times including home, hospital and nursing home visits, locations, time for administration, teaching and educational hours and any on-call or after hours duties and expected number of patients per hour
  - practice environment – equipment and facilities, sharing consultation rooms, decision making involvement in practice, access to other resources, practice nurse and other health professionals
  - professional development and continuing education. For example, support for educational activities within the practice, scope to develop special interests, ongoing study and professional development, role in practice accreditation, involvement in projects and other initiatives as required

- allowances and expenses. For example, an employer may approve that an employee uses their privately owned motor vehicle for the performance of their duties. In such cases reimbursement of costs are determined by the appropriate Australian Taxation Office rates.

Remuneration is shaped by a number of factors including the practice's cost structure.

While remuneration is necessary for new employees, never underestimate the importance of workplace conditions and their effect on a person's job satisfaction, relationships and general wellbeing. There are many other ways to reward staff that address needs beyond remuneration.

3.7 Employment legislation

As an employer you are required to observe employment legislation, including when you are negotiating and preparing employment contracts and agreements with employees.

The structure of your medical practice and the needs of each candidate will differ and it is essential that employers are well informed about the NES and modern awards (for specific industries and occupations) in your state or territory.

There are a range of laws in federal and state jurisdictions that apply to your workplace, covering a number of issues, including:

- discrimination (eg. age, sex, racial)
- equal opportunity
- bullying
- human rights
- industrial relations
- occupational health and safety.

The RACGP *General practice management toolkit*, discusses employees and legislation in Module 4 – *Starting a medical practice* and is available at www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides. The Australian Government's business website includes employment information and provides links to workplace laws in each state and territory. Visit www.business.gov.au.

Further information and advice is available by visiting the Fair Work Ombudsman website at www.fairwork.gov.au.

3.8 Legal advice

In all employment matters, it is a good idea to seek professional legal advice to assure yourself that you have covered all the important issues that relate to your practice and the position you are filling.

Examples where legal advice might be sought include:

- specific requirements in relation to restricting future practice set-up (restraint of trade agreements) and confidentiality clauses
- employment contracts
- offer of employment.

For further information refer to your professional legal advisor.

4. Managing staff

4.1 New employees

Induction and orientation

Induction is the first step in building a two-way relationship between the practice employer and the new staff member.

It is important for the practice to have an induction program for all new GPs (including registrars and locums) and other new staff to assist new members of the practice team to perform in their roles.

The RACGP *Standards for general practices* (4th edition) supports a practice induction program and explains what new GPs and staff need to understand in the day-to-day operations of the practice, as well as key occupational health and safety issues, such as infection control and the processes for maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of patient health information.

It is useful for new staff to have an understanding of the local health and cultural environment in which the practice operates. For example, if the practice is located in an area with a high level of problems caused by illicit drug use, it is useful for new staff to understand the practice's policy concerning management of Schedule 8 medicine prescribing.

Furthermore, staff and GPs in particular need to be aware of key public health regulations (such as reporting requirements for communicable diseases or mandatory reporting of child abuse) that will affect how they work. GPs need to be made aware of local health and community services including pathology, hospital and other services they are likely to refer to in the course of normal consulting. See www.racgp.org.au/standards for further details.

Components of the induction program might include:

- job requirements
- occupational health and safety
- clinical software, workstation, email and communication system
- practice layout
- practice policies, working conditions, processes and procedures
- performance management and review framework
- emergency and after hours arrangements.

Developing your own induction and orientation for new employees is an important task. The benefits of providing staff induction include:

- improved productivity
- expanded knowledge base and skills which provide increased capability and flexibility
- higher staff morale
- reduced staff turnover
- increased loyalty
- better teamwork.

The Australian Government business website has information on employing and managing staff at www.business.gov.au.

Templates and guides are available through your local general practice professional associations, networks and divisions of general practice.

Probation

As an employer, you are required to ensure that your practice complies with the formal requirements of a probationary period. It is vital that an employee is made fully aware that their ongoing employment is subject to the completion of a probationary period, prior to their acceptance of an offer of employment. It is fundamentally important for employees to have signed contracts of employment.

Throughout the probationary period, there should be regular assessments and feedback on the employee's work performance, even if this is done informally. The frequency of the feedback will vary according to the nature of the work and the position – at least monthly would be the minimum requirement. Ensure that you document the process of meetings and observations.

In the probation assessment:

- establish what progress is being made (talk to other appropriate staff that the person liaises with)
- identify any areas for development and suggest solutions, avoiding negative criticism
- clarify any misunderstandings about the position and be alert to any issues which could affect the work performance.

A document will need to be prepared for the employee to confirm their employment status.

For further information visit the Fair Work Ombudsman website www.fairwork.gov.au.

4.2 Performance management

Performance management is a process through which a manager or supervisor and staff member set agreed performance standards, track progress, share feedback and implement change to enhance staff performance. It ensures alignment between the practice's goals and staff members' individual goals – and emphasises improvement, learning and development in order to achieve the practice's overall goals. It involves the following:

- setting standards for performance
- assessing performance against standards
- providing and receiving feedback in relation to job performance
- agreeing on actions to further develop performance.

A person's motivation and job satisfaction is linked to achievement, recognition, responsibility and the work itself. Performance management can have a profound effect on levels of staff motivation and satisfaction.

Performance management provides individuals with:

- clarity around what is expected of them in their work
- the opportunity to engage in the review planning process
- constructive feedback on areas requiring further development
- recognition for their work effort – the power of which, as an incentive, has been long noted
- the opportunity to grow and develop their career.

Training and development is vital to improving staff performance and level of competency and performance management offers an excellent opportunity for a manager and staff member to recognise and agree upon individual training and development needs.

Retaining good staff is important. The total cost of staff turnover will have a significant impact on your practice. Not only do you lose valuable experience when a staff member leaves, there are other factors that are being influenced as well. For example:

- the costs of decreased productivity
- lost investment in training and development
- recruitment costs
- the new staff member's induction into the practice culture
- management downtime in interviewing new candidates
- legal fees and payout commitments.

4.3 Performance management process overview

In developing your practice's performance management system, consider incorporating the following four steps in the process:

- plan
- develop
- track
- review.

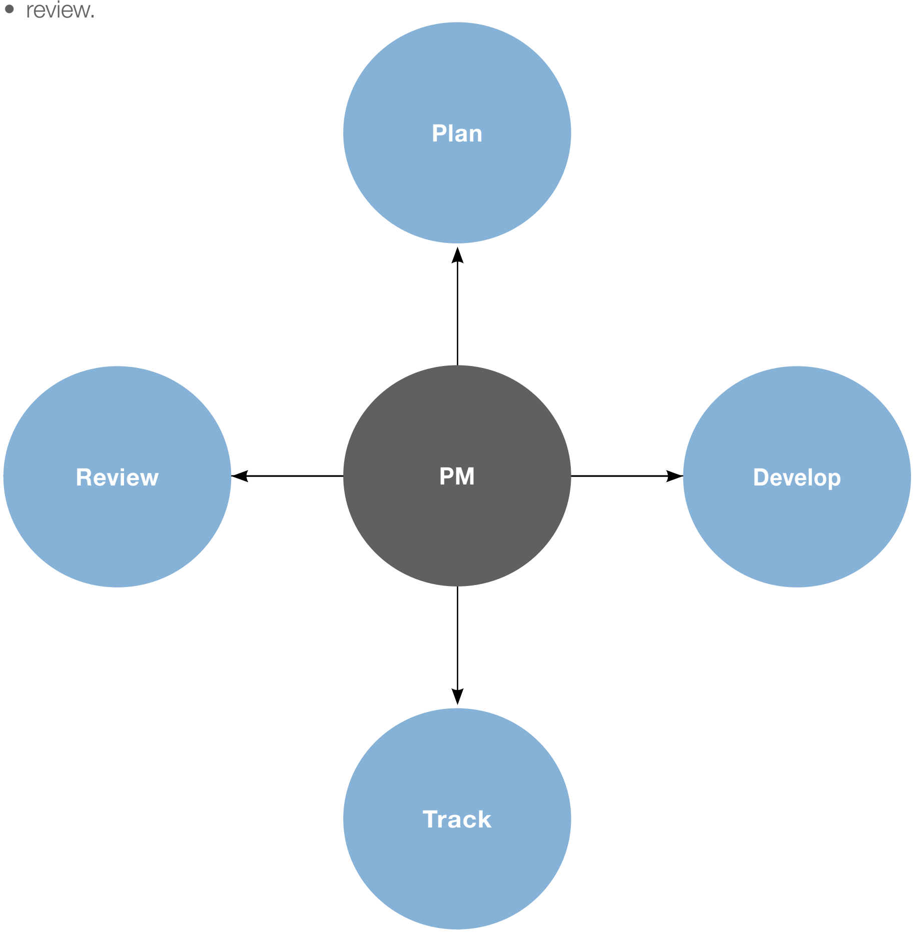


Figure 2. Plan, develop, track, review
Adapted from: The RACGP *Performance management guide for managers*. Melbourne: Human Resources department, 2012.

Plan

Planning involves establishing a set of agreed goals/objectives, success indicators, targets and setting individual work plans. It may also include understanding behavioural standards of the workplace.

Develop

Development involves improving staff performance and level of competency. It may also include designing a development plan/strategy, which is usually done by both the staff member and manager at the beginning of the performance cycle and adjusted as necessary throughout the cycle.

Track

Tracking progress on achieving performance goals involves conducting regular meetings between the staff member and manager. Any issues will be addressed and development needs will be added to the development plan where necessary.

Review

Reviews usually occur twice in a cycle. A mid-review in which the manager and staff member meet to rate performance and behaviour over the first half of the cycle; and the final review, in which the staff member's performance over the entire cycle is rated. At both formal reviews, any issues will be addressed and development needs will be added to the development plan where necessary.

4.4 Conducting performance review meetings

Below is an example of the performance review steps:

1. Prepare for the meeting
   - Ensure you understand the staff member's role and responsibilities.
   - Ensure the staff member's position description is up-to-date and that there is a proper match between the position and the employee's skills, knowledge, ability and interests.
   - Ensure the staff member's work plan is up-to-date and includes notes from ongoing discussions tracking progress and previous reviews, eg. a 6 month review or the mid-cycle review.
   - Read the last performance review documentation and notes – this will assist to refresh you on key points.
   - Check actual performance against mutually agreed goals and ensure the overall performance is considered, not just positive or negative factors.
   - Consult with other managers or supervisors who have contact with the employee in the performance of their role.
   - Arrange for the review to be conducted in confidence and where you will not be interrupted. Accordingly, arrangements should be made (eg. formal allocation of meeting times, diversion of telephones and so on) prior to the meeting.
2. Plan and schedule a meeting with each staff member
   - Contact the staff member to inform him/her of the upcoming meeting well in advance, so he/she can undertake the necessary preparation. Attach a copy of the staff member's current work plan. Inform the staff member that you will be discussing the work plan in the meeting.
   - Ask the staff member to evaluate his/her own performance before the meeting and encourage the staff member to focus on his/her performance, particularly

in relation to the goals that were agreed and what has been achieved. Some examples of questions to ask on the self-evaluation form may include:
  – what training/development do you feel you need?
  – what do you see as your next move?
  – what are your future career interests?
  – how can I help you to achieve your goals?

- The employee's self-evaluation should be handed into the reviewer before the meeting.

3. Conduct the meeting with each employee
   - Conduct a review of the staff member's performance over the last cycle.
   - Identify areas requiring improvement – focus on the areas that need attention. Explain why improvement is necessary and develop plans. Ownership of the issues by the staff member is essential – he/she must be involved in the plan and devising the solution to address these issues.
   - Reinforce behaviours that the staff member is meeting and encourage him/her to be aware of behaviours he/she is not demonstrating enough.
   - Acknowledge good performance – positive reinforcement is a form of reward to staff. Provide positive reinforcement to them in many ways, most commonly through ongoing feedback on good performance. It can be a highly effective form of staff motivation. It generates a sense of confidence, job satisfaction and the motivation to repeat and improve the efforts that lead to good performance. Failure to reinforce effort over an extended period can lead to a loss of motivation and, eventually, diminished performance.
   - Prepare a development plan and discuss and agree on future training, directions and goals. Consider what training the staff member may need and how you can assist him/her to improve overall performance. List these on the development plan and update the staff member's position description if necessary. The review of this list will form the basis of the next assessment.

4. Performance evaluation
   - Identify whether the staff member has met, exceeded, or not yet met expectations for each task. This is to formalise the feedback you have been giving in your regular meetings, not to surprise the staff member with new feedback. Prepare examples to justify your review.

5. Meeting close
   - Complete the meeting by summarising what you have jointly discussed.

Individual review outcomes and documentation should be kept confidential between the staff member, and those relevant in the reporting hierarchy (ie. the supervisor, practice principal/owners).

Issue each staff member a copy of their assessment so they are clear about any aspects of the review, their performance or other areas. Documentation is important; ensure you make clear, legible and comprehensive notes and file in their personnel file.

Regular tracking of progress with staff members

The performance management process should involve regular tracking of performance indicators, behaviours and agreed development strategies. Arrange regular one-to-one meetings with the staff to discuss how they are tracking in these areas and provide feedback. This gives you the opportunity to document in-the-moment feedback and will assist greatly in carrying out the review (6 month or 12 month review cycle).

Behaviours in the workplace

Many organisations are beginning to acknowledge that each staff member's overall fit in their job not only reflects their ability to get the job done, but also the way by which they go about their job in the workplace.

Within the performance review context, considering an individual's attitude and behaviour in the practice may be vital to undertaking a complete evaluation of that individual's success at work. For example, it would be inappropriate to rate overall performance highly if the person had behaved unethically or had failed to observe the normal consultative processes and communication protocols, even though agreed objectives had been met.

4.5 Managing underperforming staff and performance issues

In a general practice setting it is inevitable that practice owners and managers will need to deal with staffing problems, including performance issues. It is essential to work through these differences in a professional and meaningful way, with the aim of reaching agreed conclusions. There are legal issues governing the way practice staff are managed and problems addressed.

The Australian Government business website has information on employing and managing staff, including dealing with bullying and complaints resolution at www.business.gov.au.

For further information relevant to managing staff, refer to the RACGP General practice management toolkit, available to order at www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides.

Appendices

For further RACGP *Employer guide* (3rd edition) tools, templates and activities, visit www.racgp.org.au/practicesupport/guides.

Appendix 1. Competency profile (activity)

Consider the skill requirements of your practice and insert the main responsibilities and tasks for the position. Then list, in order of importance, the skills and competencies the candidate will need in order to complete the tasks.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Identifying competencies required for the position</th></tr>
<tr><th>Tasks of the role</th><th>Competencies required</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Communication and interpersonal skills
The ability to listen, to interpret and to convey information in a clear and accurate manner, delivery of information in a timely manner, and select the most appropriate method of communication. Also includes the ability to deal effectively with others on a personal level and demonstrates fairness in interactions with others.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Teamwork
The ability to cooperate and work within a team environment, value the contribution of others and coordinate work with team members.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Planning and organising
The ability to look ahead, develop strategies, consult with others, set priorities, schedule work, manage time, and allocate and coordinate the use of resources.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Professional/technical expertise
The ability to apply appropriate expertise, skills and knowledge to achieve required work outcomes and to further own professional/technical development.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Judgement and problem solving
The ability to anticipate, identify and analyse problems, consider options, develop solutions and decide on the most appropriate solution to achieve desired outcomes, and implement and monitor the solution to ensure its effectiveness.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 2. Key selection criteria and scorecard (example)

Open ended questions are useful as they allow the person being interviewed to demonstrate communication and interpretation skills. For example:

- what interests you in this role/why are you applying?
- briefly summarise your education and employment history for us
- what do you know about the practice and our services?
- what particular skills do you believe you will bring to this position?
- what would you say are your main strengths and areas of development?

Selection criteria/attribute	Question	Evidence/notes
1. Customer/patient service focus Demonstrated patient focused approach in service provision with genuine empathy and interest in their needs by providing helpful, courteous, accessible, responsive and knowledgeable service.	• Can you briefly outline your experience in patient/customer service? • What does good patient service mean to you?	
2. Planning and organisation Demonstrated organisational skills, high level administrative skill, the ability to look ahead, develop strategies/plans, consult with others, set priorities, schedule work, manage time, and allocate and coordinate the use of resources.	• How do you coordinate your work with team members? • How do you schedule your time and set priorities?	
3. Technical/professional skills Demonstrated computer skills in (name packages) and clinical desktop systems	• Which computer program packages/clinical desktop systems are you familiar with? How do you rate your level of competence?	
4. Communication skills Excellent communication style, ability to listen, interpret and convey information in a clear and accurate manner	• Describe the most difficult situation you faced in the workplace. What specific actions did you take to improve the relationship? What was the outcome?	
5. Relevant knowledge and experience Demonstrated experience, skills and knowledge and commitment to on-going professional development	• Can you briefly outline your experience? Describe a situation where you applied your experience and skill. • How have you furthered your own professional development?	

Key selection criteria scorecard for (applicant name):

Date: / /

Score each key selection criteria (KSC) out of 5.

KSC 1 Customer/patient service focus

1.

2.

3.

KSC 2 Planning and organisation

1.

2.

3.

KSC 3 Technical/professional skills

1.

2.

3.

KSC 4 Communication skills

1.

2.

3.

KSC 5 Relevant knowledge and experience

1.

2.

3.

Comments

Appendix 3. Selection report (example)

Title

Position

Practice unit

Location

Short listed applicants

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Interviewer/selection panel

1. Name

2. Name

1. Signature

2. Signature

Date of selection panel meeting for short listing

Date(s) of interviewing

Appendix 4. Selection recommendations (example)

Preferred applicant

Reasons

Attach referee notes

Recommended initial salary offer

Additional range

☐ Full time ☐ Part time ☐ Casual ☐ Other

Proposed starting date / /

Other applicants in order of preference

1. Name

Reasons

2. Name

Reasons

Appendix 5. Reference checking process (example)

The following is a process that can be followed when reference checking.

Introduction:

- Introduce yourself
- Make sure you are talking to the right person. Determine whether the person is able to evaluate the applicant's capabilities sufficiently to serve as a reference. Did he or she supervise (interact with) the applicant? For how long? When?
- Explain the purpose of the call and give the name of the candidate being checked
- Ask if it is convenient for the person to speak with you
- Emphasise the confidential nature of the call
- Use the application and interview guide to compare stated information against reference information.

Checking some facts of employment:

- Ask behavioural questions
- Explore some specific aspects of the candidate's work (communication style, procedural skills, breadth of experience, judgement)
- Follow up on notes/impressions/concerns from the interview.

Example questions include:

- how would you describe the major duties the candidate performed in the position?
- how long was the candidate employed?
- what was their reason for leaving?
- are there any areas of improvement or development this person needs to work on?

Closure:

- Would you re-employ this person?
- Is there anything else you wish to add to give us a complete picture about this applicant, to assist in our recruitment decision?
- Thank you for your time (assure confidentiality)
- Note the date of the discussion.

Appendix 6. Performance management work plan (example)

A work plan is designed by both the manager/supervisor and the staff member. Developing a work plan involves establishing a set of agreed goals, objectives, success indicators and targets.

Responsibilities Refer to the position description and list all the key responsibilities	**Work performance goals** What are the work goals? You may choose to relate a goal or group of goals to a relevant responsibility	**Indicators of success (key performance indicators)** How will these goals be achieved? What are the indicators of success?

Signature for agreed work plan

Staff member

Date

/ /

Manager/supervisor

Date

/ /

Appendix 7. Performance management review form (example)

Name

Position

Review cycle (mid, annual, other)	Review date
	/ /

Manager/supervisor

Part 1: Assessment against key performance objectives	Feedback				Comments
List position responsibilities, performance targets and agreed goals. Refer to the position description and work plan	Exceeded objectives	Met all objectives	Met most objectives	Did not meet most objectives	

Part 2: Assessment against behavioural expectations	Feedback				Comments
List behavioural expectations These are the behaviours used in dealing with responsibilities and expectations of the position. For examples refer to the behaviours in the workplace list below.	Exceeded expectations	Met all expectations	Met most expectations	Did not meet most expectations	
Progressive leadership					
Positively influences others					
Takes initiative					
Flexible/adaptive					
Service focused					
Strives for excellence					
Effective decision maker					
Demonstrates integrity					
Accountable					
Respectful					
Collaborative					

Consider one assessment which most closely describes the staff member's overall performance:

- ☐ Exceeding expectations
- ☐ Meeting all expectations
- ☐ Meeting most expectations
- ☐ Below expectations

Signature for performance management review form

Staff member ______________________ Date / /

Manager/supervisor ______________________ Date / /

Appendix 8. Performance management development plan (example)

A development plan is designed by both the manager/supervisor and the staff member at the beginning of the performance cycle and adjusted throughout the year.

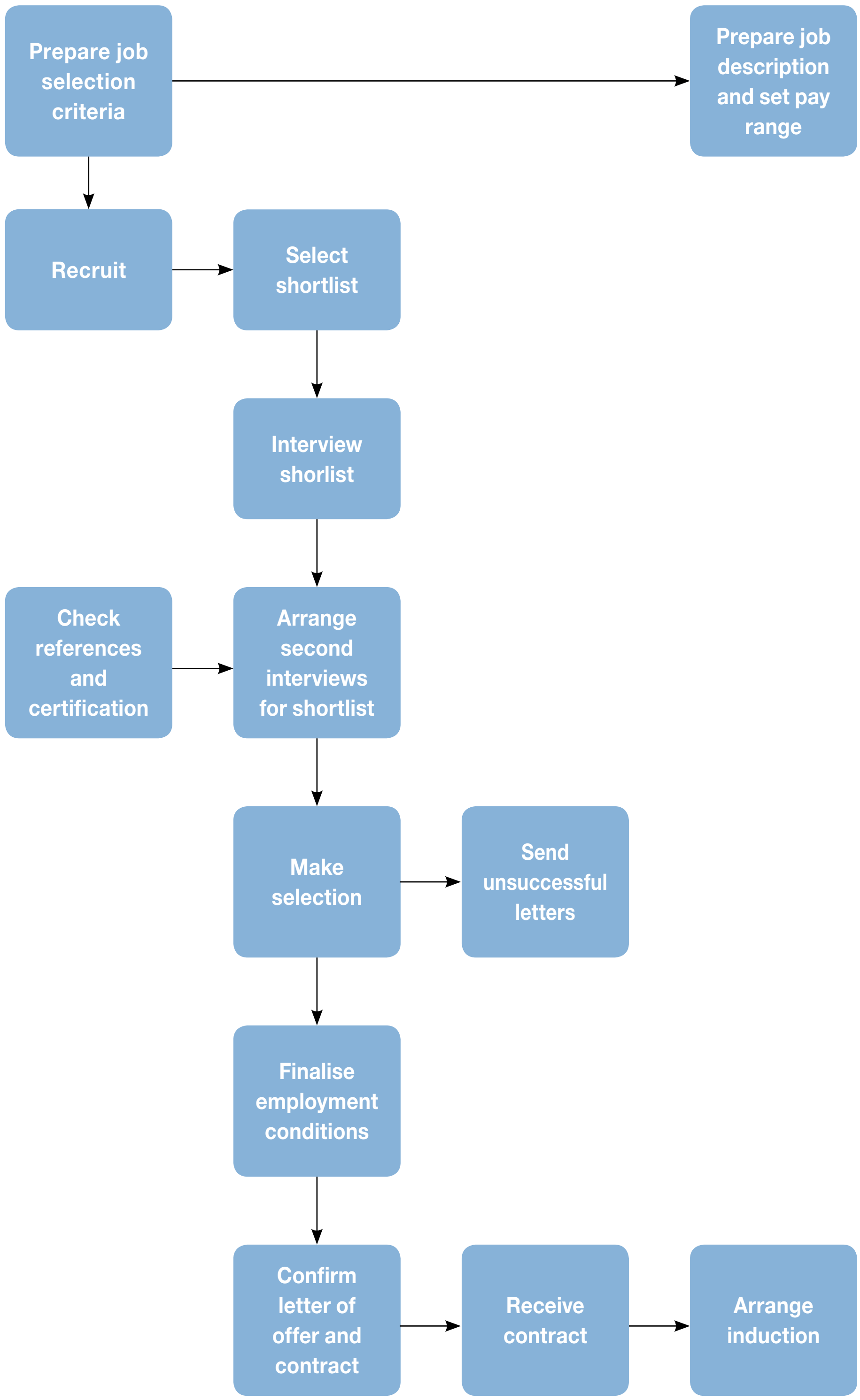
Development goals/ learning aims	• What would help you improve in your job? • List ideas in this section • What are your career interests and goals? • Recommend possible future positions and describe any major requirements to achieve career goals.
How will you achieve these goals?	• Specify activities for any or all of the following: – within the practice 'on the job' – coaching – training – external training – other.
When, where, cost	• Which of the development goals/learning aims are feasible in terms of when, where and cost in the next performance cycle?
Agreed plan	• Agreement is reached with staff member concerning learning and development activities.
Tracking	• Track progress on work plan.

Signature for agreed learning and development plan

Staff member	Date
	/ /

Manager/supervisor	Date
	/ /

Appendix 9. Recruitment flowchart (example)



The Royal Australian
College of General
Practitioners

Healthy Profession.
Healthy Australia.