



Smithsonian
Institution

SMITHSONIAN DIRECTIVE 204

November 30, 2006

EVALUATION GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Background

The Smithsonian Institution has benefited greatly from the use of Professional Accomplishment Evaluation Committees (PAECs) in evaluating the accomplishments of professional employees since these committees were first established in 1966.

These committees serve the directors of individual units, and the Smithsonian as a whole, by helping to ensure that the professional staff is of high quality, effectively assigned, and appropriately recognized. This directive sets forth new guidelines that apply to all such review committees throughout the Institution.

Scope

Although the term “professional” can be applied to a wide range of specialists at the Smithsonian, in this directive and as part of the title of the PAEC it refers to federal and trust employees assigned to scholarly research or other research activities that serve a critical service or program-related function.

Scholarly research assignments are positions devoted to studies and investigations that contribute to the advancement of knowledge in recognized disciplines in the sciences, the arts, and the humanities. Federal or trust employees who provide research support or have project-related obligations that benefit the scientific mission of the Institution may also be subject to PAEC review.

Scope (continued)

Investigations may include, but are not limited to: basic and applied research; art, scientific and historical research on museum collections; museum exhibition research; and historical research. The breadth of the problem, depth or intensity of the investigation, and the relative contributions made to the field of study are the basic issues that must be considered. Contributions to knowledge may be made available through publications, exhibitions, teaching, lectures, and participation in conferences and symposia.

Any Smithsonian employee meeting the following criteria should be subject to PAEC review on a regular schedule, as outlined in this directive:

- Grade 11 or above with independent research listed as a key factor in his or her position description; and
 - Research listed as a critical element in the employee's performance plan, which requires at least 25 percent of his or her work-oriented effort
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Authority

The Deputy Secretary and Under Secretaries may establish PAECs for the units under their purview, and provide instructions for committee procedures. In addition, the Deputy Secretary and Under Secretaries will monitor committee activities to ensure compliance with the following guidelines and verify that the results serve the intended management purposes.

Purpose

This directive provides guidance for PAECs to ensure that they:

- provide a fair and balanced forum for the discussion and assessment of individual scholarly accomplishments; and
- document and transmit relevant information about an individual's scholarly accomplishments, which can serve as one basis for management evaluation and decision making

Guidelines

- A. PAECs are advisory to the unit director. Their primary role is to evaluate the research accomplishments and achievements of professionals on an individual basis. The unit director may provide direction to the committee and designate areas of an individual's work that should receive special attention.
- B. Members of each committee will be appointed and the chairman designated by the unit director for a term not to exceed five years. Unit directors should ensure that those appointed to the committee have superior professional standing and the ability to objectively evaluate the accomplishments of other professional employees. To ensure relevant subject matter expertise, committees are required to solicit qualified representatives from outside the Institution to serve on an *ad hoc* basis, with the approval of the unit director. Such representatives or referees may participate in case reviews of the committee or may be asked for separate written evaluations. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) director should assign an HR representative to serve as a non-voting member of each PAEC. Employees will be informed in advance of the names of all persons assigned to the PAEC for review of their work.
- C. The unit director is responsible for seeing that each professional employee is scheduled for committee evaluation based on the following cycle:
- Grade 11: Every three years
 - Grade 12: Every three years
 - Grade 13: Every three years
 - Grade 14: Every five years
 - Grade 15: Every five years
 - Senior Level federal (SL) and trust (IL) employees: Five years after being promoted to SL or IL; every seven years thereafter

Note: When the employee has had a protracted assignment outside a primary field of interest, the review period may be extended at the discretion of the unit director. In instances when an employee is

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in a position that reaches full-grade and within-grade step potential (e.g., Grade 13, step 10), and upon agreement between the researcher, supervisor, and unit director, it is permissible to extend the interval for subsequent reviews to a maximum of five years. The review intervals for GS-14 or equivalent trust grade and above may not be extended beyond the intervals stipulated, even when within-grade step potential has been achieved.

Trust and federal professionals should be held to the same review periods. Requests for personnel action may be initiated without committee involvement, but the unit director should obtain an evaluation of the individual's accomplishments before proceeding with a significant action, such as a promotion or a job reclassification.

- D. The PAEC chairman is responsible for collecting review materials from the professional employee and ensuring that committee members receive materials to review prior to the case evaluations. These materials should include:
- The professional employee's current curriculum vitae and bibliography;
 - A statement outlining the professional employee's achievements in research, as well as administrative and curatorial duties, exhibit development, public service, project-related support, collections care, outreach, teaching, service to professional societies, etc., which the employee has performed during the review period;
 - A statement outlining the employee's professional goals;
 - A list supplied by the employee that identifies four or more prospective external peer reviewers (the employee should have input into the review process by identifying experts in his or her areas of research); the PAEC chairman should seek their assessments, but also those of additional peer reviewers to ensure objectivity; and

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- Relevant reprints of professional articles, monographs, and other published works from the review period

In addition, the PAEC chairman is responsible for assembling copies of all review materials and documentation to accompany the findings submitted to the unit director.

- E. Committee evaluations will emphasize the employee's accomplishments since the last PAEC review, but may take into account the cumulative accomplishments of his or her career as a Smithsonian employee. The review should also include information on the level of supervision received by the employee, the impact of his or her work, the extent to which the employee has developed the program on which he or she works, and the innovation of the employee's contributions. Findings will be reported in writing to the unit director, and should include analyses and conclusions about the professional standing of the employee, the level of accomplishment, and the extent to which the professional achievements of the employee are typical of, greater than, or less than those expected of staff members with comparable assignments and experience. The review should be thoughtful, cogent, and analytical rather than subjective. Trust and federal employees should be evaluated by the same standards, without exception.

The committee report submitted to the unit director should include a summary of the deliberations of the PAEC, as well as a summary of the major points contained in the written reviews submitted by external and internal reviewers. The confidentiality of all reviewers (both internal and external) should be maintained by redacting their names from the summary report. The actual un-redacted letters should be included in the package submitted to the unit director, but those should not be provided to the person being reviewed. Evaluation methods should

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be documented in the report, and these may involve the use of appropriate classification standards, or other criteria developed by the committee. Each unit has the discretion to express its conclusions in narrative form or in sealed, numerical, or adjectival/alphabetical ratings. If the committee's conclusions are not unanimous, the report may contain both majority and minority opinions.

- F. The PAEC review is intended to inform the unit director of the career trajectory and success of the professional employee. Although the PAEC report is not required to specify recommendations for salary/grade increases or performance improvement, the unit director is expected to take PAEC reports into account, along with variables that are beyond the purview of the committee (e.g., strategic priorities, availability of funds, supervisory relationships), as well as the employee's past performance evaluations, when making and recommending personnel decisions to the Deputy Secretary and Under Secretaries. Personnel actions involving staff assignments are decisions of the unit director. Personnel actions involving grade levels are made based on the recommendation of the unit director, with approval of the Deputy Secretary or Under Secretary. It is incumbent upon the unit director to communicate with the employee regarding how PAEC recommendations may affect his or her prospects of receiving a salary/grade increase.
- G. A report of the results of the PAEC review should be made promptly to the unit director, the professional employee's supervisor, the employee, and, if the review results in a recommendation for promotion, to the Deputy Secretary or Under Secretary. Within 30 days of receiving a PAEC report, the unit director or delegate will first discuss the PAEC report with the employee's supervisor and determine how the recommendations will be incorporated into the employee's annual performance plan. The unit director or delegate will meet with the employee

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without the supervisor whose work has been reviewed.

Proposed changes in the professional employee's annual performance plan will be communicated to the employee by his or her immediate supervisor. The employee will receive a copy of the report, and will be given an opportunity to submit comments to the unit director, if desired.

- H. In order to protect the rights of employees to privacy, committee discussions and reports must remain confidential. At the close of each evaluation meeting, copies of all materials considered by the committee will be collected by the chairman. One copy will be submitted to the unit director, along with the report. All other copies will be destroyed. The unit director will provide the employee with a copy of the report for his or her records, and ensure that a copy of the PAEC review is kept on file within the unit and available for future reference.
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Appraisals

Committee evaluations do not relieve supervisors of their responsibility to conduct annual appraisals of employee performance, as required by Chapter 430 of SDs 212 and 213, the Smithsonian directives for federal and trust fund personnel. Chapter 430 of SDs 212 and 213 is available on PRISM.

CANCELLATION:
INQUIRIES:
RETENTION:

SD 204, August 31, 1995
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Indefinite. Subject to review for currency 24 months from date of issue