



UNSW Science guidelines for achievement relative to opportunity (ARO) during the Australian Bushfires 2019-2020 and COVID-19 crises.

UNSW Science acknowledges that many staff have been affected by the Australian bushfires in 2019-2020 and COVID-19 in 2020. There has been a significant change to the way academic staff are educating, researching and making impact. Professional and technical staff have also had to adapt quickly to new ways of working and delivering for the UNSW Science community.

Many staff are experiencing more substantial additional responsibilities and experiencing some of the adverse effects of working remotely and/or in isolation.

UNSW Science also acknowledges that during the crises staff have a social responsibility to extend themselves beyond work such as caring responsibilities and many staff will have encountered periods of severe disruption with impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing.

The aim of this paper is to enable staff to have these impacts considered when discussing the achievements they have made during this time.

Achievement relative to opportunity and performance evidence principles

These guidelines apply to all UNSW Science staff. Achievement relative to opportunity (ARO) principles aim to apply an equitable and inclusive approach to what staff have achieved given their circumstances. ARO principles give more weight to the overall quality and impact of achievements rather than the quantity, rate or breadth of achievements.

Consideration of ARO and performance evidence facilitates positive acknowledgement of what can be, and has been, achieved by staff given the opportunities available. When staff are preparing ARO performance evidence it should be clearly stated what the impact on performance was because of their personal circumstances.

ARO is not about expecting lesser standards of performance.

Assessing ARO performance evidence can involve estimating the overall time available for a given period and then evaluating the performance of staff considering this time. The ARO approach enables a more nuanced and contextual assessment of achievements through the supply of information about personal circumstances that may have adversely affected them.

Situations where application of ARO and performance evidence may be relevant include:

- Carer responsibilities such as looking after children, parents, extended family, housemates, friends, or those who need support in our community.
- Ill health, disability or medical conditions whether temporary, episodic or permanent
- Career interruptions related to parental leave, working in a different field or late entry to academia.

- Part-time, working from home and other flexible working arrangements.
- Increased stress and/or anxiety as a result of the Summer bushfires 2019-2020 or COVID-19 2020 pandemic such as:
 - Having family or friends who have lost their businesses
 - Friends, family etc. who are overseas.
 - Caring for people that are ill or supporting carers.
 - Supporting children who are learning at home.
 - Being called away for extraordinary emergency duties such as bushfire recovery or health expertise duties such as the Army Reserve or State Emergency Services.
 - Financial distress through loss of family income.

The extent of impacts of COVID-19 are yet to be known and there may be further experiences where ARO and performance evidence should be considered.

When should staff provide information on their achievement relative to opportunity?

All UNSW Science staff can provide evidence to support their achievement relative to opportunity. Information provided is only used for assessing the performance of the staff member's achievements. Confidentiality of this information will be maintained and shared only with the permission of the staff member presenting the information.

Application of achievement relative to opportunity and performance evidence in performance evaluation exercises.

UNSW Science acknowledges that staff members work hard to meet their milestones, targets, goals and vision as part of their MyCareer performance plans. Maintaining prior levels of productivity has been difficult for many during the Australian Bushfires 2019-2020 and COVID-19 2020 pandemic. Heightened stress and anxiety have seen many staff expressing concern regarding their levels of output during these times. They are wanting to know how to best describe the impact of their circumstances to address performance evaluations and promotion, and how these will be fairly adjudicated. The consideration of ARO and performance evidence facilitates positive acknowledgement of what can be and has been achieved by a staff given the opportunities available.

Situations where an ARO performance evidence case could be submitted include but are not limited to:

- Professional and Technical myCareer conversations
- Conversion of academics to continuing appointments
- Scientia Fellow renewal applications
- Special Studies Program applications
- PWIL & AWIL applications
- Academic promotion applications

Guidance for considering ARO and performance evidence for managers and performance evaluators

Managers and performance evaluators should use ARO performance evidence cases as a lens for evaluating achievements.

Examples of how the principle of achievement relative to opportunity and performance evidence can be applied

While all staff have different circumstances that need to be considered, scenarios where the principle of ARO may be applied are included below for example:

- In May 2020 a staff member rapidly transitioned to online teaching. From June 2020 the staff member spent a higher proportion of their time on teaching than they would have planned for this year. The staff member was able to perform superiorly in the education stream according to the Academic Expectations Framework but during this time, they were able to achieve XX in their research stream.
- A researcher was unable to complete a piece of research because of government direction to work from home, causing the researcher to be unable to access scientific instruments. The academic pivoted their work quickly to perform superiorly in the education and social impact streams according to the Academic Expectations Framework. There was a temporary interruption in research for XX months but the academic was able to complete XX in the education and social impact streams.
- In the period where staff were required to self-isolate during CoVID-2019 an academic was working from home and solely responsible for home-schooling their three children aged X, Y and Z. Following the return from self-isolation the staff member was able to return to normal levels of focus in July 2020. Disruption due to self-isolation led to a significant reduction in their research activity, although they were able to sustain their teaching duties for approximately XX months
- A staff member had elderly family overseas and from the outbreak of CoVID-2019 they were increasingly anxious about their safety. During this time, they were able to achieve XX. They were then able to return to full-time focus in August 2020. Disruption due to stress led to a significant interruption in normal duties, in particular in maintaining their research program, for XX months.
- A staff member's partner lost their job due to CoVID-2019 in March 2020. During this time, they were able to achieve XX. Disruption due to family circumstances led to a significant interruption in normal duties, in particular in the design of new educational programs, for XX months.
- A staff member who lives by themselves has transitioned to working from home as instructed by the government. They have a mental health condition which has been exacerbated by working remotely and in isolation. In a time period of 6 months the staff member was able to deliver on most of their milestones that included in their MyCareer plan. No performance management processes were put into place during this period.