

Integrity Spotlight

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Advisory

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Managing risk through the separation process

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Agencies often dedicate time and resources to ensuring rigorous recruitment processes. However, a thorough and consistent separation process is equally important.

A robust separation process safeguards against a number of corruption risks and assists in:

- Protecting public resources, including public money and physical assets
- Protecting the confidentiality of information the exiting staff member has gained through their employment
- Alerting the agency to potential issues or risks which require attention
- Maintaining goodwill between the agency and the exiting staff member.

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The process

The separation process should start when a staff member provides formal notice of their intended departure and conclude shortly after the staff member leaves the agency.

The process should apply to staff permanently exiting the agency and, where appropriate, **contractors and volunteers**, and staff commencing a **secondment** or a period of **extended leave**.

Responsibilities should be **clearly assigned** between the separating staff member, their line manager and other areas of the agency (such as Human Resources and ICT).

The separation process should be **consistent, clearly documented** and **regularly audited**. A **separation checklist** can be a useful tool to achieve those objectives.

Pre-separation

Return property

Separating staff members must return all property that belongs to the agency.

This includes identification cards, purchase cards, cab charges, keys, ICT equipment and mobile phones, documents and other information assets (including intellectual property).

Agencies should ensure that all property has been returned.

Save, store and delete records

Separating staff must ensure that all business records are appropriately saved on the agency's records management system.

Any work-related records should be also deleted from personal devices.

Confidentiality reminder

Separating staff members should be reminded of the ongoing confidentiality obligations which apply to information they have gained by through their employment.

Where possible, a separating staff member should be required to sign a declaration acknowledging they understand those obligations.

Post-separation

Remove access

Agencies must promptly deactivate a separated staff member's building and system access, including any remote access or access gained through a third party.

Deactivate payroll arrangements

Agencies must ensure that separated staff members are removed from the payroll once any outstanding entitlements have been paid.

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Value of the exit interview

The exit interview is a useful tool in the separation process and can benefit both the separating staff member and the agency.

An exit interview can gain valuable information about matters staff may be reluctant to raise during their employment. Agencies should embrace the opportunity to receive frank and constructive feedback and to learn about any alleged impropriety.

Agencies should provide the opportunity for all separating staff to partake in an exit interview and genuinely encourage participation. Exit interviews should be conducted by a senior and neutral staff member, such as an Executive or a member of the agency's Human Resources section.

Where a separating staff member declines to participate in an exit interview, they should be given the opportunity to provide any feedback in writing.




Information received during an exit interview should be treated in confidence. However, the information provided may require action from the agency if there is a significant risk present.

Further information and resources

[South Australian Protective Security Framework – PERSEC3: Employee Separation](#)

[Guideline of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment: Employee Exit Feedback](#)

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