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PLANNING AN INVESTIGATION

It is good practice for the investigator to make and use an investigation plan. Planning an investigation helps the investigator stay on track and to avoid common pitfalls.

What does an investigation plan look like?

A good plan will help identify the resources and evidence necessary to complete the investigation professionally and in a timely manner.

Investigation plans may be done in a number of ways. The investigator should choose the method that they find most helpful. You may, for instance, use a:

- Gantt Chart or Excel document setting out key dates and tasks
- table setting out the facts in issue, what evidence is required to determine the facts, and how you are going to get that evidence and/or
- a Word document divided into headings, such as 'allegations', 'interviews', 'documentary evidence', 'responsibilities', 'resources', 'tasks' etc.

The investigation plan is a living document that should change as the investigation progresses. You should constantly refer back to the terms of reference to keep the investigation plan on track.

The investigation plan should be altered if new allegations emerge and are incorporated into the investigation.

How to write an investigation plan

Things you should consider in planning your investigation include:

- the allegations and the terms of reference [\[FS11\]](#) [\[FS12\]](#)
- what facts need to be established
- relevant policies and legislation
- what evidence you will need to collect – both documentary and witness
- how you will collect the evidence [\[FS18\]](#)
- the order in which witnesses should be contacted [\[FS18\]](#)
- how you will manage confidentiality and privacy, particularly in relation to the source and the respondent [\[FS4\]](#)
- how you will manage any conflicts of interests (all investigators should make a conflict of interest declaration before starting an investigation) [\[FS10\]](#)
- timeframes and milestones such as interview dates – make sure you include any time you plan to be out of the office
- whether legal or other advice may be needed
- whether an external body should be notified or consulted about the matter [\[FS6\]](#) and
- what resources you will need, for instance a way to record interviews and a vehicle.

Making a chronology of events can help you identify the evidence you need to collect.

Consider making a list of stakeholders, including those that may be adversely affected by the outcomes of the investigation.

Depending on the nature and scale of the investigation, you may need to address risk management in your investigation plan. This may be done in accordance with Australian Standard AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management— Principles and guidelines.

Some key risks to consider include:

- threats to confidentiality and privacy [\[FS4\]](#)
- victimisation [\[FS2\]](#)
- media attention
- destruction of evidence
- unauthorised release or use of information
- disruption to the workplace
- stakeholder expectations and
- conflicts of interest. [\[FS25\]](#)