Operational Failure Diagnosis Worksheet

Understand where a process breakdown occurred and what needs to change.

Use this when work is delayed, returned, repeated, incomplete or incorrect. The aim is to identify the process weakness—not simply to assign blame.

A. Describe the breakdown

What happened?	What should have happened?

B. Trace the breakdown

Work through the questions in sequence. Use facts and available records where possible.

Check	Questions to ask	What did you find?
1. Starting point	Where did the problem first appear? What triggered the process?	
2. Step	Which step failed, was missed or had to be repeated?	
3. Ownership	Was responsibility clear? Did the person have what they needed?	
4. Control	Was a check or approval required? Did it happen and identify the issue?	
5. Evidence	What record exists? Does it show what happened and when?	

C. Identify the likely cause

Likely cause or contributing factor	Evidence supporting this conclusion

D. Agree the response

Immediate action for this instance	Change that could prevent recurrence

Remember: Address the immediate issue where appropriate, but also address the weakness that allowed it to occur. Follow the relevant process and escalation route.

Use as a working aid. Apply approved procedures and involve the appropriate manager or process owner when corrective action or escalation is required.