

Performance Appraisal
Handbook
For Supervisors

For the evaluation of
Non-Instructional Academic Staff (NIAS)
and University Staff

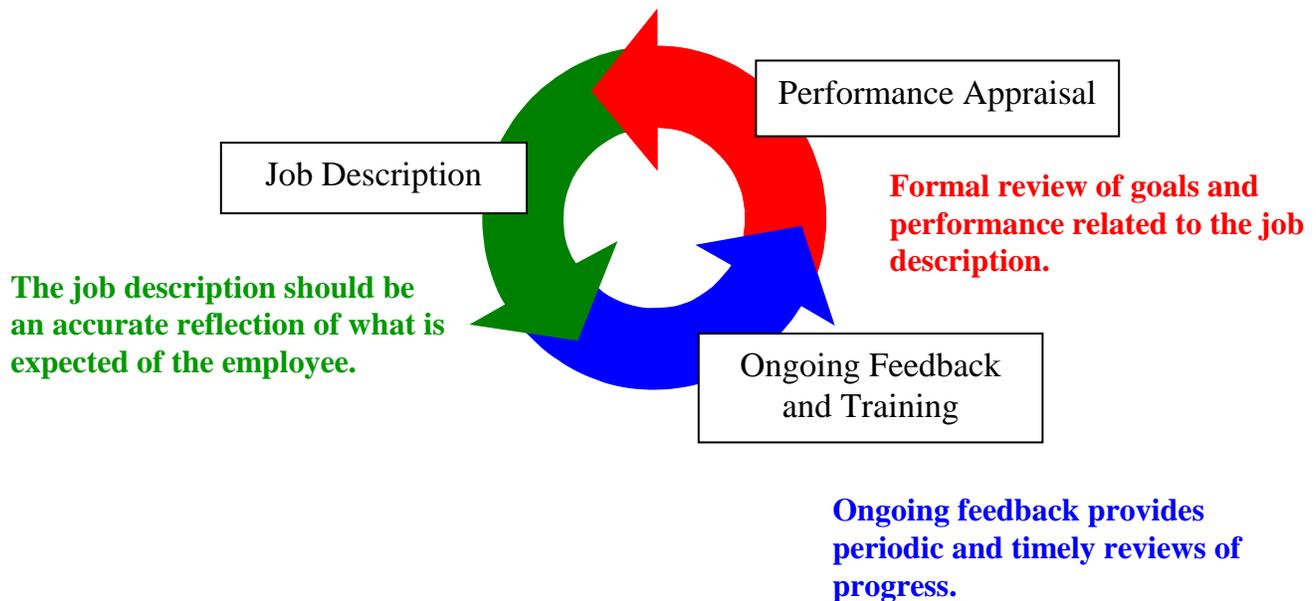
Department of Human Resources
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Introduction

Performance management is designed to be a year-round partnership between you and your employee in planning, coaching and reviewing job performance. Performance management takes into consideration “what” your employee has accomplished over the year and also “how” your employee went about accomplishing the work.

This guide explains the performance management process from setting goals to the completion of the appraisal form. The graphic below shows how the end of one cycle leads into the next year’s performance assessment. Both you – the supervisor - and your employee are expected to have ongoing discussions about the knowledge, skills and abilities required to succeed.

Performance Management is a process for establishing a shared understanding about what is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved and an approach to managing people that increases the probability of achieving success.



Supervisor's Role in Performance Management

- Planning:**
- Explain to the employee how his or her job/role, as outlined in the position description, contributes to the success of the department and the university.
 - Work with the employee to define and understand the employee's goals.
 - Discuss the behaviors and performance expectations in terms of what they mean for the employee's job.
 - Let the employee know that he or she is responsible for taking an active role in managing and assessing his/her performances throughout the year.
 - Let the employee know what his or her role is in the planning process.
- Coaching:**
- Provide frequent informal coaching.
 - Identify ways that the employee can develop and improve.
 - Promptly communicate new opportunities or changes that affect an employee's work.
 - Make informal notes throughout the year.
 - Keep track of praise or complaints from others throughout the year and communicate these to the employee in a timely manner.
 - Consider conducting an informal mid-year review.
- Reviewing:**
- Put together all saved notes and documents about employee's performance
 - Hold the review discussion with employee.
 - Provide verbal and written praise when performance deserves.

Planning for the Performance Appraisal

You should plan and prepare for each employee's appraisal throughout the appraisal period, not just at the time that you write the appraisal. Continuous, constructive communication helps to establish a positive supervisor/employee relationship and keeps your employee informed about his or her work so that the written appraisal is not a surprise.

Another way you can prepare for the appraisal is to document examples of both excellent and/or poor performance throughout the appraisal period. This is important because it is often difficult to remember clearly what happened many months before, and the appraisal should be a reflection of the entire appraisal period.

As you read through the handbook and follow the guidelines, remember that the performance appraisal is an important tool to help both you and your employee do your jobs as effectively as possible.

The Performance Appraisal Policy and Procedures

Performance appraisals are a formal, written means of evaluating employees. Each appraisal covers a specific period of time, as noted on the form. A performance appraisal is a permanent document kept in the employee's personnel file.

Generally a performance appraisal is completed annually for Non-Instructional Academic Staff (NIAS) with the appraisal period being the fiscal year. University Staff employees receive a performance appraisal within 30 days prior to the completion of their probationary period and annual thereafter. A special appraisal may also be completed for employees whenever the supervisor determines the employee's performance has changed from the rating level reflected on the last appraisal in order to address and correct unsatisfactory performance prior to any discharge for poor performance.

There are five ratings used to describe the level of performance achieved by an employee during the appraisal period. Keep in mind that the ratings you assign in each category should be an accurate reflection of the employee's performance for the entire appraisal period. They should be fair and consistent with the standards you have established. Under the university's policy, an employee's performance will be rated at one of the following rating levels:

- Outstanding
- Exceeds Expectations
- Meets Expectations
- Below Expectations
- Unsatisfactory

Remember that performance appraisals have an important impact on both you and your employee. A well-documented appraisal gives you the opportunity to discuss performance strengths and areas that need improvement, offer positive reinforcement, discuss training and development needs and, if necessary, a "plan of action" for improving performance and recognize employee's potential for promotion.

Special Considerations if the Appraisal Covers Probationary Period

University Staff employees serve a probationary period when first hired at the university (initial probation) or if the employee is appointed to a different classification. The appraisal should be conducted within 30 days prior to the end of the probationary period. It is important to note that informal reviews of performance should take place throughout the probationary period leading up to the formal evaluation. At the end of the initial probationary period, you must decide whether or not to recommend regular status for the employee. You have the following options:

- recommend regular status based on an overall rating of "Meets Expectations" or higher.
- recommend dismissal based on an overall rating of "Below Expectations" or "Unsatisfactory"

Prior to issuing a Below Expectations or Unsatisfactory performance appraisal, you should contact Human Resources to discuss the employee's performance and determine the next step.

The Appraisal Process

Approximately 30 days before the due date of the NIAS or University Staff employee appraisal, you should access the blank performance appraisal form on the HR website. If you do not know the information in order to complete the “header” area of the form, please contact the Department of Human Resources. You have the option of including a working title for the employee if you have identified such a title on the position description.

The appraisal period is a specific period of time that is designated on the appraisal form. Only one rating may be in effect for a specific appraisal period. Employees cannot be rated for a period not yet worked (i.e. an annual appraisal cannot be completed before the end of the appraisal period), however, the exception is that a probationary appraisal must be completed within 30 days prior to the end of the designated probationary period for that classification.

Probationary performance appraisals must be completed and returned to the Department of Human Resources prior to the due date on the form or the rating will default to a “Meets Expectations”. Annual performance appraisals should be completed and returned to the Department of Human Resources within 30 days of the period ending date.

Absence of an Appraisal

University Staff probationary appraisals that have not been received by the Department of Human Resources within 30 days prior to the probationary end date will result in the employee receiving a rating of “Meets Expectations” and will receive regular status.

Initial NIAS performance appraisals that have not been received by the Department of Human Resources within 30 days of the period ending date will result in the employee receiving a rating of “Meets Expectations.” Annual appraisals will default to the same rating level as the preceding appraisal.

It is important to note that the UW System Operational Policy regarding Regent Pay Plan and Supplemental Pay Plan Distribution states that distribution of pay plan shall be based on the assessment of meritorious performance and solid performance, therefore the completion of a performance appraisal is critical.

The Performance Appraisal Form

The performance appraisal form is to be completed electronically, and then printed for comments and signatures. The form includes text and check boxes for your convenience. Please “tab” through the form to insure that you get to the appropriate section or question. You must

complete all sections except Section II for all employees. Section II must be completed if the employee has supervisory responsibilities.

Section I. Core Competencies of University Positions

Core competencies describe the performance factors that each university employee is rated upon. Generally, the competencies are those areas that, if performed well, will support the university's mission and goals. For each core competency, a description is given, e.g., "Dependability – the thoroughness demonstrated in following through on assignments and instructions; attention to work in the absence of direct or indirect supervision."

To assist you in rating your employee on the core competencies, "anchors" have been developed to help guide you in identifying the level of work performance associated with each rating level. The form provides a consistent description of expectations for individual ratings within each core competency. Referring back to "Dependability", the Meets Expectations rating indicates the employee "Adheres to work schedules and completes tasks on time." The Below Expectations rating is described as, "Fails to complete tasks in a reliable and timely manner" while Exceeds Expectations is described as, "Consistently completes routine and non-routine tasks independently in a reliable and timely manner." By looking at the anchors, you can begin to sense the continuum of performance on which you will rate your employee.

Remember that Meets Expectations describes the employee that performs the majority of the work well, a majority of the time.

All employees must be rated on all the core competencies in relation to the employee's tasks and level of responsibility. Note: Under the competency of "Communication Skills", both written and oral communication must be rated as they apply to the specific job function.

Section II. Additional Competencies for Supervisory Personnel

Complete this section only if the employee is responsible for supervising staff. This may include the supervision of student workers or temporary employees should that supervision be consistent and on-going.

Section III. Goals for Next Year

Part A: Provide narrative on the employee's achievement of goals set last year. If this is the first year of employment for the employee, you may not have specific written goals. In that case, simply complete Part B and C.

Part B: You are expected to establish goals and objectives for the upcoming year with your employee. Goals are tailored to the specific results or outcomes desired from the employee and are directly linked to the university and department's mission and goals. They focus on results and speak to the "what" of performance. Ideally, you should develop goals for all employees when he or she begins the new job or transfers to a new position.

Goals should be written to the "Meets Expectations" level – so if the employee reaches the goal, he or she will receive a "Meets Expectations" rating for the goal. One of the main things to keep in mind about goals is that they will change on a yearly basis and reflect the unique aspects of each individual's job.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals are:

- ***Specific:*** Goals should be specific (not general). You and your employee should know what is expected. You should have no trouble holding your employee responsible for the activities or accomplishments.
- ***Measurable:*** A goal is measurable if you can clearly determine whether the activity took place and how well it was done.
- ***Attainable:*** You should hold your employee responsible for activities that are within his or her control and can be achieved within the 12-month period.
- ***Relevant:*** Each goal should be related directly to the job, a developmental plan or the university's or department's goals.
- ***Time-based:*** You should be able to track the employee's progress against specified target dates and timeframes.

Examples of Goals

"Develop and implement a security system for computer payroll access before the end of July that will provide reports on which user accessed the system, and the duration and frequency of the access."

"Develop and facilitate orientation sessions for new employees."

“Complete training to qualify for professional certification within the next 12 months.”

“Develop and submit the department’s annual budget according to the prescribed format and timeline with only minor modifications needed.”

Part C: The University strongly encourages employees to participate in professional development opportunities. As a supervisor, you should assist your employee in identifying and scheduling professional development opportunities. Please identify particular training needs and opportunities for the employee.

Section IV. Supervisor’s Comments

To determine an Overall Rating, review the individual ratings that you already have assigned. Look at each core competency and determine the relative importance of each. Then decide what you feel is an accurate overall rating. Keep in mind that you do not just count up scores to determine the Overall Rating. It is possible to have seven ratings of "Outstanding" and 13 ratings of "Meets Expectations" and decide that the overall rating should be "Outstanding", because the importance of the seven ratings of "Outstanding" far outweighs that of the "Meets Expectations".

Regardless of the Overall Rating, you should always include written comments. Describe the employee's strengths as well as areas needing improvement. This is the section to offer praise and positive reinforcement and to describe a "plan of action" for improving performance.

Section V. Employee’s Comments

Once you have completed your comments, print the form. The employee should be given the opportunity to complete this section during the performance appraisal discussion. Additional employee comments may be added at a later time to be included with this performance appraisal.

Signatures

Prior to discussing the performance appraisal with the employee, it is recommended that you forward the completed appraisal form to your supervisor. Your supervisor can not change the completed appraisal; however, reviewing supervisors may include any written comments they deem appropriate. Review by the higher level supervisor is to insure consistency in the application of the performance appraisal system.

Upon completion of the performance appraisal discussion, the employee should sign the appraisal form. The employee’s signature does not indicate agreement with the appraisal, only that the appraisal was administered. If the employee refuses to sign the form, check the appropriate box and sign the form where indicated.

Rating Pitfalls

Employees need to know how they are performing and how they are meeting your expectations. It is your responsibility to be as accurate and unbiased as possible. There are many factors that influence us when we are writing an appraisal which often lead to common errors.

Use this list as a guide, when you are planning to write the appraisal:

- **Halo Effect**: the supervisor is extremely impressed with one or two factors in the employee's performance and therefore tends to over-rate all other factors.
- **Leniency**: this is the most common error. It is much easier to give a good appraisal than unfavorable one and sometimes supervisors take the "easy way out" rather than facing the unpleasant task of discussing performance problems.
- **Central Tendency**: this often happens when the supervisor is not well informed about the employee's actual performance. Therefore, the supervisor gives a "middle of the road" appraisal which is not an accurate reflection of the employee's performance.
- **Recency**: we all tend to remember the recent past more vividly than what happened many months ago. This can influence how a supervisor evaluates an employee. The best way to alleviate this problem is to take notes and document behavior throughout the appraisal period.
- **Past Performance**: many managers look at past performance appraisals and are overly influenced by the ratings and comments given in prior years. This is unfair to the employee because it does not accurately reflect the work accomplished during this appraisal period.

The Appraisal Meeting

If you and your employee did a good job in goal setting and communicating throughout the year, the year-end performance appraisal should seem like a formality. The appraisal discussion allows both you and your employee to acknowledge what happened in the past, good or bad, and have a new beginning.

Planning for the Appraisal Meeting

A successful performance appraisal meeting depends on how well you prepare yourself and your employee. At least several weeks before the meeting, you should begin preparing for it by taking these four steps:

1. **Evaluating your own performance**: since your performance can affect your employee's performance, it's important to take this step before you evaluate the performance of others. Have you supported your employee by providing training, equipment and supplies and encouragement?

2. Gathering helpful documentation: Documenting performance throughout the year helps you conduct an accurate and effective appraisal meeting. Once you and your employee have established goals, you should maintain ongoing written documentation of the results your employee achieves. *Documentation is not meant to imply only negative documentation.* You should be documenting positive goal attainment as well.

Without such documentation, you may tend to emphasize just one example of employee performance during the appraisal period. It is better to have too much detail than too little. Relying on memory when it is time to conduct an appraisal meeting could result in one of the rating pitfalls previously mentioned. Look to the following for positive or negative examples of work:

- Written reports submitted by your employee.
- Copies of correspondence that you or your employee received.
- Personal notes you've written based on your observation of the employee's results.
- Personal notes that document comments from others who have worked with your employee.
- Training courses your employee has taken.
- Notes regarding any disciplinary action you have taken.
- Successes and/or failures of note.

Be sure you start a new file for the coming appraisal period. This will prevent future performance appraisals from being affected by results that were achieved during the previous appraisal periods.

3. Preparing yourself for the appraisal discussion: The better prepared you are, the better the discussion will be. Thoughtful preparation will also keep the meeting focused and ensure that it achieves the results you want. Remember a key part of performance appraisal is the opportunity to build on your employee's strengths.
4. Preparing the employee: Help your employee understand the performance appraisal process and benefit from the discussion. Set a specific date, time and place and check with the employee to find out if he or she will be available at a particular time. Be sure to explain the purpose of the meeting and how the results will be used. Give the employee the same professional courtesy you would give any business associate. Make sure the employee has a copy of the goals and appraisal form that will be used. Give the employee the opportunity to ask questions and be prepared to defend the appraisal ratings.

Conducting the Appraisal Meeting

Much of your success in the appraisal process depends on your skill as a discussion leader. To be effective, you should provide an opportunity for your employee to explain his or her views and you should work to keep communication open. Your performance appraisal discussion will likely be more successful if you follow these guidelines:

- **Control the Environment** – schedule the meeting for a time when you won't be interrupted. It's often a good idea to hold the meeting somewhere other than your office to reduce the potential for interruptions. Your entire focus should be on your employee.

Put the employee at ease. Providing copies of the job description, appraisal form and goals prior to the Discussion will go a long way toward reducing the stress of a performance appraisal. Plan your opening remarks to set the right tone.

- **State the Purpose of the Discussion** – if you have prepared your employee for the Discussion, your employee will already know the purpose. But reiterating it serves to reinforce for your employee that there has not been a change in plans.

It is helpful at this time to talk about the advantages of the performance appraisal process in discussing progress towards goals, identifying ways to improve performance, identifying current or potential problems and to improve communication.

- **Ask for Your Employee's Opinion** – productive dialogue depends on two-way communication. If your employee is hesitant to share his or her opinions with you, try asking open-ended questions about specific areas and wait for the answers. Listening is a requirement on your part as well as your employee's.
- **Present Your Appraisal** – it may be tempting to gloss over problems or generalize, but don't do it. You must be candid and specific when you discuss performance. Also be prepared to explain how you arrived at your ratings and offer suggestions and support for improvement. Remember to also give positive feedback to your employee. Thanks for a job well done or a student well served goes a long way to constructive communication.
- **Focus on Performance, Not the Person** – whether you're providing positive or corrective feedback, be sure you are evaluating your employee's performance, not his or her personality. Be sure you focus on the job description, goals and results.
- **Ask for Your Employee's Reaction** – Be open to the response, this is another opportunity to show your good intentions. Your employee may agree with you or have a different point of view. Either way, you must really listen. Your employee may have other documentation or understood the expectations differently. Use this discussion to resolve differences of opinion.

- Set Specific Goals – complete the goals section with your employee based on the appraisal and the discussion. Your employee may identify goals that you may not have thought of but which are relevant and important to this position. Don't forget to agree on training and development goals as well.
- Close the Discussion – the discussion is not complete unless you summarize what you talked about, allow time for your employee to make comments on the appraisal form and sign the form. Be sure to explain when the next appraisal should be expected. This is particularly important if you developed a performance improvement plan for your employee.

Conclusion

It is important that recognition of performance be given in a fair and consistent manner. Favorable recognition when it is not earned may reduce an employee's pride in his or her work. On the other hand, when recognition is not given where it is deserved, employees become discouraged and lose their incentive to do a better job.

You must become skilled in writing accurate performance appraisals. Recognizing our best performers, and helping and encouraging others to improve, leads to a quality work force.

Completing the appraisal process in a professional manner, from the preparation to the appraisal discussion, is an important responsibility of every supervisor. Although the process requires your time, the results are worthwhile.

If you have any questions about the Performance Appraisal process, call the Department of Human Resources at 785-8013.