

Guidelines for the Annual Employee Performance Review

Purpose: Why Reviews Matter

The purposes of the annual performance evaluation process are to promote communication and provide useful feedback about job performance, to facilitate better working relationships, to provide a historical record of performance and to contribute to professional development. Continuous feedback of employee performance is an important aspect of the supervisor's job. By providing constructive feedback on a regular basis, the supervisor is giving the employee information about work performance and, if needed, allowing appropriate time to make corrections in performance and/or behavior. Regular feedback avoids "blindsiding" the employee. Constant communication is key for manager and employee success.

Remember, performance development is about ongoing two-way communication between the employee and their supervisor. The annual performance review should be a **summary** of various meetings throughout the year. There should be no surprises at this summary meeting.

Preparing for the Annual Discussion

Both the employee and the supervisor have a responsibility to participate fully in the conversation and to share feedback both ways.

For Employees

Take responsibility for reviewing your own goals and performance and be prepared to share this feedback with your supervisor.

- **Review your current role document.** Does it reflect your current role in the department? If not, discuss your thoughts with your supervisor.
- **Take a look at your goals for the year.** Were you able to meet them? Consider your achievements and think about obstacles/roadblocks you encountered and how you dealt with them.

- **Consider whether others could provide insight.** Is there anyone your supervisor should speak with before your conversation? If yes, let your supervisor know this before the review meeting.
- **Review the competencies required for your position.** Remind yourself of your strengths and be prepared to cite specific examples. In what areas have you improved? What additional skills or expertise would you like to develop or improve?
- **Think about ways to perform your role better and/or improve the operation of the department.** What can you do better or differently? How can your supervisor help you overcome obstacles?
- **If you manage others, outline how you have developed/strengthened your staff's performance and skills.** Be prepared to document specific ways you have assisted in this process.

For Supervisors

Do your own review of the employee's performance throughout the year and think about possible developmental goals.

- **Review the employee's job description.** Does it reflect his/her current role in the department? Review the primary position responsibilities. Has the employee effectively performed these? What is your overall assessment of how these responsibilities were performed?
- **Take a look at the employee's goals for the year.** Were any goals modified or changed during the review period? Have the goals been met? Have you been able to provide the employee with the tools and support to get the job done?
- **Review last year's annual review notes.** How does this year compare to last year? Have there been improvements? Consider whether you need to speak with anyone else to have a complete and more accurate picture of the employee's performance.
- **Review the competencies required for the position.** Assess the employee's strengths, weaknesses and areas of greatest improvement. Is there a specific area where you would like to establish a developmental goal?
- **Think about ways the employee could improve his/her performance in the role or improve the operation of the department.** What suggestions do you have for the

employee? Are there obstacles to achieving these goals? If yes, are there ways to mitigate them?

- **If the employee manages others, discuss what he/she has done to strengthen the performance and skills of these reports.** Ask about regular communication of information, job expectations, and feedback to these reports.
- **Give the employee a chance to talk about you could assist him/her.** Don't be afraid to ask for feedback on your performance as well.

Evaluation tips

Evaluations can be difficult. Below are some helpful tips.

- **Be Specific.** When you set standards and goals, spell out exactly what he/she will have to do to achieve them. For example, don't say "work harder" or "improve quality." Instead, say "make no more than three errors per day in data input." Similarly, when you evaluate, give specific examples of what the employee did to achieve -- or fall short of -- the goal.
- **Be Realistic.** If you set unrealistic or impossible goals and standards, everyone will be disheartened -- and will have little incentive to do their best if they know they will still fall short
- **Be Honest.** If you avoid telling the employee about performance problems, he/she won't know what needs to improve. Be sure to give the bad news, even if it is uncomfortable.
- **Be Complete.** Write your evaluation so that an outsider reading the review would be able to understand what changes, if any, are necessary.
- **Evaluate Performance, Not Personality.** Focus on how well or poor the employee does the job -- not on the personal characteristics or traits. For instance, don't say the employee is "angry and emotional." Instead, focus on the workplace conduct that is the problem -- for example, you can say the employee "has been insubordinate to line managers twice in the past six months. This behavior is unacceptable and must stop."
- **Listen to Your Employee.** The evaluation process should be part of a discussion and the employee should have an opportunity to express his/her concerns, too. Ask the employee what he/she enjoys about his/her jobs and about working at the University and department. Also, ask about any concerns or problems he/she might have. You'll gain

valuable information, and your employee will feel like a real participant in the process. In some cases, you might even learn something that could change your evaluation.

The Review Session

Before the Meeting

1. Inform the employee approximately two weeks in advance that you intend to review his/her performance, and schedule a day and time for the review. Ensure adequate meeting time with privacy and without interruptions. Make sure the review takes place on this date unless there are extenuating circumstances.
2. Ask the employee to complete an "employee preview input" form and give it to you in advance of the review session. If performance issues are of concern, discuss them with the employee prior to writing the performance review.
3. Ensure that the performance review is based upon the employee's current job duties. If the job description does not accurately reflect the job duties the employee is performing, modify and attach it to the performance review, indicating that it has been modified. If the job description has changed significantly (more than one or two essential functions), please contact the Office of Human Resources.

During the Meeting

1. Conduct the performance review in a confidential manner behind closed doors.
2. Put the employee at ease. Reviews can be overwhelming to employees.
3. Review the employee's performance ratings. Go over each section of the evaluation form, explaining the content described.
4. Performance reviews are often one-sided, with the supervisor telling the employee what he/she thinks of the employee's work. But this process should be an exchange of information. Give the employee a chance to discuss issues of concern. Allow the employee to state his or her side of a situation by remaining objective and listening carefully to the employee's statements to determine validity without becoming defensive.
5. Keep the evaluation work-related. Do not address personality traits or personal issues. Interpersonal communication and behavior may be discussed, but they must have a

demonstrated effect on the employee's work and/or other employees' abilities to get the job done.

6. Have the employee sign the performance review form through the Kronos Workforce Ready (UKG) account. The employee's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the evaluation. If the employee does not wish to sign the form, indicate this on the form.

After the Meeting

1. If the employee's performance is unsatisfactory, please develop an action plan and work closely with Human Resource for continued performance management with appropriate time lines (use the SMART goal process). Attach a copy of the plan to the completed evaluation form. Monitor the employee's progress and ask for assistance and guidance from human resources staff if performance issues continue.
2. Discuss progress periodically with the employee. Provide feedback whether there is improvement or lack of improvement. Offer direction and coach the employee when performance does not meet expectations.
3. Remember that performance management is **ongoing**. Evaluate performance and communicate with the employee throughout the year.

Avoid Bias

Some of the following factors may bias performance reviews. It is important to keep these things in mind when preparing for and writing reviews so that each employee's performance is assessed in an objective, consistent and accurate manner.

- **Halo Effect** - all dimensions of performance are rated the same as a single dimension that happened to impress the supervisor either very favorably or unfavorably.
- **Overly Critical** - when a supervisor sets unrealistically high standards, employees may conclude they will never measure up and stop trying.
- **Overly Lenient** - the end result of being overly lenient is the same as being overly critical. If anything goes, why try harder?

- **Middle of the Road** - some supervisors rate all employees within a limited range. Not everyone performs at the same level. Review forms should reflect differences in performance. Evaluations like this are confusing and resented. They prevent the open communication a review should foster.
- **Recent Performance Error** - it is easiest to recall most recent performance. What the review should measure; however, is behavior over the entire span of the review period. Keeping documentation throughout the period and referring back to it will enhance the review and be more reflective of the employee's overall performance.

Goals Setting

Goal setting is an important part of the review process. Using **SMART** goal criteria will help you in setting effective goals for the future. A **SMART** goal clarifies exactly what is expected and the measures used to determine if the goal is achieved and successfully completed. A **SMART** goal may be used when drafting Maintenance or a Growth Goal.

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Realistic

T = Time-bound

Specific: Goals must be clear and unambiguous. When goals are specific, they tell employees exactly what is expected, when, and how much. Because the goals are specific, the supervisor can easily measure an employees' progress toward their completion.

Measurable: What good is a goal that can't be measured? If goals are not measurable, supervisors never know whether their employees are making progress toward their successful completion. Not only that, but it's tough for employees to stay motivated to complete their goals when they have no milestones to indicate their progress.

Attainable: Goals must be realistic and attainable by average employees. The best goals require employees to stretch a bit to achieve them, but they aren't extreme. That is, the goals are neither

out of reach nor below standard performance. Goals that are set too high or too low become meaningless, and employees naturally come to ignore them.

Realistic: Realistic, in this case, means "do-able." It means that the learning curve is not a vertical slope; that the skills needed to do the work are available; that the project fits with the overall strategy and goals of the university. A realistic project may push the skills and knowledge of the people working on it but it shouldn't break them. Devise a plan or a way of getting there which makes the goal realistic. The goal needs to be realistic for where the employee is at the moment.

Time-bound: Goals must have starting points, ending points, and fixed durations. Commitment to deadlines helps employees to focus their efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. Goals without deadlines or schedules for completion tend to be overtaken by the day-to-day crises that invariably arise.

Examples:

Not a SMART goal:

- Keep our department's website up-to-date does not identify a measurement or time frame, nor identify why the improvement is needed or how it will be used.

SMART goal:

- The first Friday of every month, solicit updates and new materials from our department's managers for the web page; publish this new material to the website by 12:00 noon on the following Friday. Each time new material is published, review our department's website for material that is out of date, and delete or archive the outdated material.