Planning and Conducting Annual Performance Evaluations for Meet & Confer Employees:

A Guide for Supervisors

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Monitoring and Measuring Performance

GRCC uses **performance management** to monitor, measure, report, improve, and reward performance. Development to enhance and expand individual employee’s capabilities is a key component of an overall performance management program. Performance management is the link between organizational strategy and results which involves and requires planning and goal setting.

In performance management, the supervisor’s role is:
- To help the employee understand what the job is AND how to do it;
- To articulate what constitutes good performance;
- To document and provide feedback on individual and collective performance; and
- To outline how to improve or enhance performance.

The **performance evaluation** is the process of evaluating how well employees complete their job duties compared to the established standards/criteria and communicating that information to the individual employee. The complete **performance evaluation cycle** is performed throughout the fiscal year.

Performance evaluations serve two purposes.
- **Administrative** – In the pay-for-performance model, performance evaluations are the link to administrative decisions such as salary increases.
- **Developmental** – Performance evaluations are a source of information and feedback for employees and are key to ongoing and future development. In a performance evaluation, a supervisor can note progress and successes and summarize key skills and abilities developed or new knowledge learned. In addition, supervisors can identify challenges, weaknesses, deficiencies, gaps, and training needs for employees and outline a learning and development plan and performance improvement plan when necessary. Areas for development can be suggested by the employee or the supervisor who sees potential for growth and contribution.

Performance evaluation occurs both informally and formally.
- **Informal evaluation** reflects interaction and feedback between employee and supervisor on a day-to-day basis. This may be verbal through conversations and meetings or written via email, memos, instructions, etc.
- **Formal evaluation** is more systematic and refers to the process which captures the employee’s activities, accomplishments and contributions and documents the supervisor’s feedback and observations.

Employees rate the fairness of performance evaluations higher when the following occurs:
- Ratings are based on actual performance.
- Standards are consistently applied.
- Two-way communication is allowed during the performance discussion meeting.
Performance management and evaluation processes begin with the job description. From the job description, two key components are drawn – professional skills and critical job knowledge.

- **Professional Skills** are the articulated or expected level of performance areas generally regarded as necessary for effective, responsible and successful work.
- **Job Knowledge** items are key elements of a job on which performance is measured.

**Professional Skills and Job Knowledge** are standards used for measuring performance. Criteria for evaluating these items are classified in three ways.

- **Results-based** – Results-based criteria look at what the employee has done or accomplished. This works well where measurement is easy and appropriate. In some cases, the evaluator needs to look beyond the results and consider the non-measurable parts of the job as well. In addition, how efficiently and effectively the results were achieved should be part of the evaluation.
- **Behavior-based** – Behavior-based criteria focuses on specific behaviors that lead to job success. For example, verbal persuasion is important to the success of a project leader. Behavioral criteria specify the behaviors that are important to the organization and to specific jobs.
- **Trait-based** – A trait-based criterion identifies subjective character traits such as “initiative” or “creativity” or “pleasant personality or demeanor.” Traits are ambiguous and often have little to do with the specific job. This is usually the least important criteria in evaluation and should be used with caution as they can be the least objective.
Planning for the Annual Performance Evaluation

Supervisors are expected to manage the annual performance evaluation process for their staff and to involve individual employees in the process.

- **Ensure there are no surprises for employee!**

  Supervisors are expected to evaluate employees realistically, objectively, and fairly. The supervisor’s evaluation ratings and comments should be objective and based on actual performance, factual data, and direct observation. Examples should be included to support ratings and are essential to document both positive and negative performance.

  No employee should hear something for the first time in their annual performance discussion meeting. The written evaluation and what is said in the performance discussion meetings should reflect the feedback you have given them daily and in weekly, biweekly, monthly or quarterly meetings during the review period. Feedback on successes and suggestions or directions for improvement should have been delivered verbally and in writing throughout the review period and should be summarized in the evaluation.

  Supervisors should NOT wait for the evaluation period to address performance issues. Performance issues and deficiencies and training needs should be addressed throughout the review period as soon as they emerge.

  Supervisors are also expected to include performance issues and deficiencies that have been discussed with the employee and/or Human Resources if they fall into the review period *whether or not* the issue has been resolved and/or deficiency has been eliminated. Ongoing performance issues must be included.

- **Plan ahead. Do not procrastinate. Do not rush through the process.**

  Conducting effective performance evaluations take time, thought, and planning. It takes time to document accurate information which reflects the employee’s performance and contributions. The supervisor needs to understand the employee’s job and know what a typical day or week is like for the employee before attempting the write an evaluation.

  The supervisor should complete the evaluation prior to the meeting. Adjustments or employee comments can be made following the discussion (prior to turning the document into your supervisor).
Start with the Job Description

The perfect starting point for the annual performance evaluation is the job description. Reviewing the job description and updating it as part of the annual performance evaluation process ensures that an employee’s job description remains up-to-date and allows supervisor and employee to plan ahead for the coming year in terms of developing performance goals and establishing performance standards. Use the official version on file in Human Resources. Your HR generalist can provide a copy for the supervisor and employee.

There are three ways to approach the review of the job description.

- The supervisor and employee can meet and review the job description together.
- The supervisor can review and update the job description, ask the employee for their comments, and integrate the changes.
- The supervisor can ask the employee to review and update the job description for discussion.

The supervisor is responsible for approving and submitting the updated job description to Human Resources.

Review and Complete the Remainder of Sections I, II, and III.

Supervisors should begin the process by reviewing Sections I, II and III. Determine if the suggestions, action plans, training were completed and document this in the evaluation by reporting on activities and accomplishments as well as contributions and impact.

- Focus the content of the evaluation on the period under review.

The performance evaluation should be focused on the activities, accomplishments, and contributions of the individual employee for the period under review which is the fiscal year that runs from July 1, _____ to June 30, _____.

Do not evaluate on future potential. Do not evaluate on past performance or length of service. Keep in mind that length of service or job grade do not necessarily correlate to better performance.

Keep in mind that the individual’s performance may vary from year to year. In one year, an employee may “meet expectations” while they may “exceed expectations” in another year. In both cases, provide specific feedback.

- Draft the evaluation using a variety of data.
Developing the evaluation narrative should be a process where the supervisor pulls data from various sources.

- Review the individual’s Goals and Outcomes from Section I to see what goals have been completed and which are in progress and what has been deferred.
- Review what training the employee has attended during the year and what the impact has been on efficiency and effectiveness in Section II.
- Examine the job description and outline the major responsibilities in Section III.
- Determine rating for each of the professional skills in Section III. If not applicable, indicate using n/a. Comments should support the rating given.

In crafting the evaluation, be specific. Use specific examples from during the review period to support your summary and conclusions related to specific categories or duties. In using specific examples, provide narrative detail and statistical information as appropriate. Be sure to provide context about the contribution and work in relation to the department plan and priorities.

- **Involve the employee by asking for input.**

An important aspect of the process is to seek employee input regarding their activities and accomplishments and contributions. Any additional information provided by the employee should be included in the employee comments section before the form is signed and turned in to the next supervisor.

- **Each applicable category should have BOTH a rating AND supporting comments.**

The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the comments support the rating and that the rating and comments are not inconsistent and contradictory. The supervisor needs to evaluate the quantity and quality of the work (the “how”) not the work that was done (the “what”). Seek to provide meaningful comments and avoid excessive flattery.

Comments should NOT be a listing of the tasks assigned or completed (i.e., the job description duties) nor should it be a description of the category. The overall rating and supporting comments must also be consistent and must be supported by the individual category ratings and comments.

Supervisors who evaluate more than one employee are responsible for ensuring consistency among the evaluations. Once all are written, they should be compared to determine if there are any inconsistencies. You should ensure that you compare the work results, NOT the employees. The spectrum of work and productivity should be reviewed to ensure the ratings are objective and fair to individual employees.

If you need assistance in developing any supporting comments, please contact your HR Generalist.
Comment Guidelines for Supervisors

- Focus comments on factual data and observations not inferences or second-hand information. Factual data such as completed projects and assignments and statistics provide supervisor with clear information on an employee’s productivity and contribution. Direct observation is most relevant to feedback.

- Focus on specific behaviors, not the individual. In providing feedback on behavior, outline what you saw and heard, not what you interpreted. Compare to the expected behavior.

- Use specific examples. These are more compelling than general statements. Stating that someone goes the extra mile for patrons has less impact than a specific example of how the person went the extra mile for a specific patron. Use examples that illustrate the employee’s consistent behavior or performance, not one-time incidents. Specific accomplishments or projects in context best illustrate organizational contribution.

- Do not base evaluation on past performance OR on potential for future performance. Overrating a poor performer as motivational tool never works. Underrating a high performer can result in de-motivating a top employee.

Using the Ratings

The performance evaluations forms used for employees contain three possible ratings. Supervisors need to understand what each rating signifies in terms of performance.

- **Highly Effective**

  *This rating is the exception, not the norm!* This rating represents performance that is consistently exemplary and excellent even in demanding situations or circumstances. The performance goes beyond the articulated standard or expectation in quality, quantity, efficiency, and effectiveness. The employee’s performance surpasses expected levels for the review year. Work by this employee serves as an example for others as the individual demonstrates a thorough and insightful understanding of job responsibilities coupled with superior execution of duties. In many cases, the employee not only does the assigned task but also suggests innovative methods for improving the operation, thus adding value to the work and enhancing overall organizational effectiveness.

- **Effective**

  *This rating is the norm for most employees!* This rating represents competent performance in most situations and circumstances and should be used for an employee who is meeting articulated expectations in relation to specific duties and overall performance. It indicates the
employee understands the job and performs it to the expected standards and is an active, contributing member of the college. Overall quality and quantity are within articulated standards or expectations. The individual’s performance in most areas was strong and within expected levels. The individual consistently demonstrates an understanding of their job responsibilities and performs consistently. Many of the jobs at the college require specialized knowledge and expertise and are complex. An employee who is meeting expectations is doing well.

- **Needs Improvement**

The rating of “needs improvement” signals discussion and action by the supervisor and employee. When this rating is used, it is critical for the supervisor to discuss what is happening and to document with specific examples. Identifying the reasons for why the employee does not meet expectations is vital to correct the problem. It can also indicate inconsistency in behavior or performance, both of which can be addressed. In such cases, a performance goal that clearly outlines what is expected to improve **should** be included in the evaluation and/or individual’s work plan for the coming year.

**Common Rater Errors**

Performance criteria and standards help ensure objectivity and fairness.

In compiling information and data and developing evaluations, the rater needs to be aware of the possibility of rater error. In performance evaluations, there are several common errors known as rater errors, i.e., mistakes made by the rater.

The most common rater errors are:

- **Recency Effect** – An error where the rater gives greater weight to recent occurrences or latest behavior when evaluating performance rather than reviewing performance for the entire period.

- **Initial Impression** – Performance rating is based on first impression and not the entire review period.

- **Spillover Effect** – Rater allows past performance evaluation ratings to unjustly influence current ratings. Past performance ratings, good or bad, result in a similar rating for the current period even though the demonstrated behavior and performance, good or bad, does not deserve the rating.

- **Rating Pattern** – Rating patterns may exhibit leniency or strictness.
Leniency error occurs when all employees are rated at the high end or consistently higher than the expected norm or average.

Strictness error occurs when the supervisor rates on the lower end of the scale or consistently lower than the normal or average.

- **Central Tendency Error** – The tendency to rate all employees in a narrow band in the middle. For example, even poor performers are rated as average.

- **Rater Bias** – Bias occurs when a rater’s values or prejudices distort the rating. This may be unconscious or unintentional.

- **Halo Effect** – The halo effect occurs when a manager rates an employee high or low on all items because of one characteristic. An evaluation where ratings in all categories are the same may be evidence of the halo effect.

- **Contrast Error** – This is the tendency to rate individuals to other employees rather than to performance standards.

- **Same as Me** – Rater rates the employee as higher than deserved because the person has qualities or characteristics that are similar to those of the rater.

- **Different from Me** – Rater rates the employee as lower than deserved because the person has qualities or characteristics dissimilar to the rater.

**Conducting the Performance Discussion Meeting**

One of the final steps in the process is the performance discussion meeting. This is one of the most important aspects of the process.

This might be one or two meetings. Some supervisors may have a short meeting to present the draft to the employee and to briefly review it. A subsequent meeting to discuss the evaluation in detail and to finalize is scheduled. In other cases, the supervisor presents the written draft to the employee prior to the meeting and holds one meeting to discuss and finalize the evaluation.

**Meeting Guidelines for Supervisors**

- Prepare for the meeting in advance. Know what you want to accomplish – identify the goals and objectives.
- Select a time and date and place. Confirm with the employee at least 3 working days in advance of the meeting. Performance discussion meetings can be integrated into regular employee-supervisor meetings held weekly or biweekly if you plan ahead.

- Set aside 60 to 90 minutes so you are not rushed.

- Conduct the meeting in a private office or meeting room. Eliminate interruptions and distractions.

- Create a positive environment and try to put the employee at ease.

- Provide balanced feedback, both positive and negative. Start with the positive.

- Link any negative performance to developmental goals. Discuss areas for improvement and methods and strategies to enhance and improve performance. In cases of serious performance deficiencies, outline a performance improvement plan.

- Focus on the job and behaviors, not the person.

- Ask questions as needed and allow the employee to comment and provide feedback.

- Summarize and review the points of discussion and action items and develop a timeline for follow-up discussions and action.

- Allow the employee to provide comments in writing.

- Supervisor and employee should both sign the evaluation.

- Complete all evaluations and review all as a group to ensure you have consistently covered all aspects for all employees.
The following resources were used in the development of this guide.


