Guidelines to Performance Management for Professional Staff	*Administrative Services: HR* Last update: 6/20/08

Overview

Performance management is the systematic process that a manager applies to involve an employee in accomplishing a unit's mission and goals, improving overall unit effectiveness, and helping an employee understand the importance of their contributions.

Most employees want to be successful contributors to an organization. They want to know what is expected of them and how they can most effectively achieve those expectations. The performance management and evaluation process is designed to help each employee do this.

At the UW, a manager may supervise professional staff, classified staff covered by one or more collective bargaining agreements, classified staff covered by civil service rules, and temporary employees. While performance management principles are the same for all employees, this overview provides the manager with guidance for professional staff performance management based on the professional staff program. Other guidelines and practices may apply for other employee classifications. Consult with HR or refer to online resources for more information.

The Importance of Performance Management

The overall approach of the manager should be to work with each employee to help them to achieve satisfactory performance. While professional staff are employed on an at will basis, the university does not treat employees as disposable or easily replaceable. The cost to the institution in time and resources to replace an employee is high. Therefore, employees should not be separated from the organization without reasonable efforts to provide clear communication of expectations, adequate resources and support, regular performance feedback particularly in the initial phases of employment, and ample training in job knowledge, skills, and competencies. A variety of tools and processes are available to a manager to evaluate, provide feedback, review, and enhance employee performance.

Another important reason to give careful attention to the performance management process is the contribution this makes to the external reputation of the university as an employer as well as the internal reputation of a department as an employer. The ability of the University or a department to attract, hire, and retain skilled and competent workers is linked to the treatment employees receive in the performance management process. Worker satisfaction also directly impacts customer satisfaction and as such performance management practices will impact a unit's customer experience and outcomes. Questions for supervisors to consider include:

- Do I set and communicate clear expectations?
- Do I provide my employees with the tools, training, and information they need to succeed?

- Do I give my employees regular, timely and constructive feedback?
- Am I reasonable and fair while new employees work to attain our standards and goals?
- Do I recognize successes and achievements?

Steps for Effective Performance Management

Effective performance management requires that the manager:

- Clearly identify and communicate the job duties and expectations to the employee.
- Clearly communicate the competencies (job knowledge and skills) necessary to be successful in a position.
- Ensure that employees have the required competencies or that there is a development plan in place by which the employee can acquire them.
- Allow reasonable time and support for attainment of satisfactory performance after communication of expectations takes place.
- Provide timely and regular feedback on how effectively employees are applying job knowledge and skills to achieve the goals established for their position.
- Reward effective performance or correct unsatisfactory performance.

Sample Performance Management Timeline

- Orientation Period – During the first 4 weeks an employee should be oriented to the organization, the systems, the culture, essential processes, job duties, and performance expectations. Work with the employee to identify the steps toward attaining full job performance. Plan out the training strategies and needed resources to support the acquisition of job skills and knowledge.
- Month 2 – 3 During this time, hold weekly meetings with the employee to check in on their progress and provide feedback. Adjust the plan as needed. Be sure to recognize successes in these meetings.
- Month 4 – 6 Hold bi-weekly meetings to monitor progress, provide feedback, and update training plan.
- Month 7 – 12 Hold monthly meetings to monitor progress, provide feedback, and identify new training and development interests and opportunities.
- Month 12 Annual performance review to summarize feedback from the previous year. This review is needed to be eligible for merit increases.

Detailed Performance Management Steps for Managers

A. Communicate Expectations and Performance Management Process

1. Ensure each employee has an up-to-date job description. Employees should have an opportunity to review their job description and obtain clarification on any elements they may not understand.
2. Develop a list of competencies for each position. If you find that some employees do not possess all of the competencies their positions require, establish development goals so that the desired level of competency can be achieved.
3. Select a process to most effectively assess and provide feedback about performance. Be sure your employees understand the measures and/or methods you use to determine how well they are achieving the goals established for them. Emphasis should be placed on the desire to support the employee to be successful and to clearly communicate any shortcomings and provide resources so the employee can respond and be successful.
4. Establish a calendar for communication, development, feedback, and review.

B. Provide Development and Resources Needed for Success

Most employees do not come to a new role with all the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to perform all the duties in their job description. Employees all require some level of orientation, training, coaching, and supportive resources to be successful. Managers must ensure that employees have or acquire the required competencies. A development plan should be crafted that matches needed competencies with strategies for acquiring them. A variety of strategies are available including:

1. Classroom training
2. Training by supervisor
3. Training by other employees
4. Observation
5. Coaching
6. Mentoring
7. Reviewing manuals, websites, or samples of work

Allow reasonable time and support for attainment of satisfactory performance as new skills and knowledge are acquired.

C. Provide Regular Feedback

The University encourages a work environment in which employees and supervisors communicate regularly about job performance. Regular performance feedback should include:

- the employee's progress toward achieving unit goals and objectives,
- recognition of individual accomplishments and
- opportunities for growth,
- comments from faculty, students, clients, and peers as appropriate.

Ongoing communication helps ensure that there is a mutual understanding of job performance requirements and the employee's success in meeting them.

It is important that feedback be timely. Acknowledge really good work just as readily as work that needs improvement. It can be easy to take good performance for granted and only point out problems. Employees appreciate balance, honesty, and fairness.

Suggested Format for Feedback Meeting:

1. Review expectations, employee performance goals, and unit objectives.
2. Describe employee performance against those standards – both positive and negative examples.
3. Discuss with the employee steps needed to achieve satisfactory performance. Agree on a development plan to help the employee attain the skills, knowledge, or competencies for success.
4. Agree on a timeframe to next review progress.
5. Document the conversation in writing or in email.

D. Annual Review

At least annually, comprehensively review your employees' performance. An annual review is a summary of the previous performance feedback discussions you and the employee have had throughout the year. Nothing should be a surprise during this meeting. The annual standard is a minimum timeframe and an employee can request more frequent review as well. Individual units have maximum flexibility in designing a performance review program that best meets the needs of their staff.

An annual review is an opportunity to accomplish the following:

1. Summarize in an overall assessment how work has gone over the previous year.
2. Identify goals that have been met and those where additional effort may be required.
3. Determine whether the employee's job description and competencies accurately reflect the reality of the position, and make updates as necessary.
4. Identify performance, achievement and/or development goals for the upcoming year.
5. Make sure that the employee has an opportunity to provide input before the review is finalized.

The annual review should be finalized, then reviewed and signed by the employee. A current performance evaluation (completed within the previous 12 months) is required to support recommendations for merit salary adjustments and in-grade or grade change salary increases.

The format of the review and its level of detail depend on the nature of the employee's position.

Annual Performance Review Options

Two sample formats and a feedback solicitation form are available to assist units in planning and conducting performance reviews. The examples and the feedback form are MS Word documents.

Example 1 - A "conversational approach" ([Download](#)).

Example 2 - Specific rating range and rating elements identified. ([Download](#)).

The Professional Staff Feedback form may be used to gather input from faculty, students, clients, and peers. [(Download)](#).

E. Recognizing Performance

Employee recognition of performance is an important part of the performance management process. Recognition can be given in many ways—through saying thank you, giving praise, providing opportunity, or showing respect. Many studies on the work place have shown that being recognized for achievements, knowing that one's contributions matter to the organization, and the opportunity for growth and professional development have a considerable impact on employee satisfaction and commitment.

[Informal Recognition](#)

Find ideas for informal, on the spot recognition activities for individuals, teams and work groups.

[Formal Recognition](#)

Develop a department or college-wide formal recognition program that recognizes significant accomplishments.

[University Honors and Awards](#)

Each year the University of Washington recognizes and honors alumni, faculty, staff and students who contribute to the richness and diversity of the university community.

[Service Recognition Program](#)

The University of Washington funds the Service Recognition Program to show appreciation to permanent classified and professional staff for continuous years of dedicated University service.

F. Correcting Performance

If an employee's job performance is not satisfactory and normal coaching, counseling and development have not brought performance to an acceptable level, corrective action may be necessary. Several corrective processes and methods available can help improve employee performance. Contact Human Resources if you believe some form of corrective action may be appropriate. HR will discuss this with you and review options for addressing your concerns.

The employee assistance program, UW CareLink, offers support for employees having personal concerns that may be affecting job performance.

Further Assistance in Performance Management

The Human Resources department can advise you in your implementation of performance management practices.

Learn more about performance management from Professional & Organizational Development (POD):

- POD's Supervisory Certificate includes courses on Managing Employee Performance and more.
- The University Consulting Alliance offers a variety of services, including leadership coaching, to help you with challenges regarding employee performance.
- Skillsoft e-Learning subscriptions through POD include topics on employee performance for quick reference or in-depth learning.
- If you have completed the UW Strategic Leadership Program, revisit your course materials on employee performance. If you have not attended SLP and are supervising employees, contact POD at 206-543-1957 or pod@u.washington.edu.