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| SWARTHMORE COLLEGE  Office of Human Resources | GUIDELINES FOR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & REVIEW |

**OVERVIEW**

At Swarthmore College, we believe that our staff members are committed to the mission and have the desire to support it in their day-to-day work performance and contributions. We promote recognition and welcome opportunities to engage and inspire all staff members to do their best and to be supported in their efforts as appropriate. Each staff member deserves open and constructive dialogue with their supervisor to perform their job successfully. In the end, everyone benefits.

The most important reasons to conduct performance assessments are to provide continuous communications, recognize achievements, and motivate and improve performance. An effective evaluation process begins with the initiation of clear conversations to establish goals, set expectations and desired outcomes. Supervisors and staff must take time to monitor performance, accomplishments, and challenges, and to provide performance management feedback as they work towards achieving goals.

***Performance Management*** is an ongoing activity consisting of regular, timely, constructive feedback and active coaching.

***Performance Assessment*** is an annual process that formally documents performance and identifies ways to help staff members continue to contribute to achieving Swarthmore’s mission and to provide staff with personal and professional growth opportunities. Coaching and managing staff are on-going activities, whereas the formal performance assessment occurs once a year. If the supervisor and staff member have been communicating clearly and effectively throughout the year, there should be no surprises at the performance assessment meeting.

***There are essentially two components to the performance review:***

***LOOKING BACK***

Review the past year, discuss how the staff member performed, and give constructive feedback. When you meet with each member of your staff individually, discuss the staff member’s job description and how the staff member performed their major job responsibilities, and the staff member’s performance of the goals and objectives that were set during the last review.

The Performance Assessment is intended to address performance over time unless an incident had significant or adverse impact to warrant disciplinary action. Do not focus on minor isolated incidents unless they represent a pattern of behavior. Any recent changes in performance, either positive or negative, should be acknowledged and discussed.

***LOOKING AHEAD* - *SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES***

Identify specific ways in which the staff member could improve performance, build skills and competencies, and/or take on additional responsibilities and setting goals and objectives for the coming year. During this part of the assessment discuss the actions the staff member can take to maintain or further develop their skills, knowledge, and competencies, and, if necessary, improve performance.

Please note that the basic criteria for assessment should be based on the premise that the supervisor and staff member have discussed and established *appropriate* goals and objectives, relative to the performance of the specific job. If this discussion has not occurred, then it should take place as soon as possible.

The staff member must clearly understand the responsibilities of the position, the expectations of the supervisor, and the goals that are to be achieved. In establishing goals, it is important to seek the full potential of the individual and to set the standard for established goals. The supervisor and staff member should discuss and develop goals that stretch the staff member's ability to continually improve job performance both personally and professionally.

# *Completing the Form*

**For Staff members and Supervisors.**

The Performance Assessment Template is formatted to facilitate both performance planning and feedback during and at the end of the performance period.

**Overall Steps to Complete and Submit the Final Performance Assessment Copy**

* **Performance Assessment Window: July 1 – August 31, 2020**. All final copies should be in Human Resources by August 31, 2020.
* The supervisor sets up a [virtual] performance assessment meeting. The meeting should be held about 10 days after the supervisor sends the staff member the performance assessment template.
* The staff member completes the performance assessment template. The staff member completes:
* the data section at the top of the template, including a staff member identification #.
* The staff member also includes comments in the
* Competency Evaluation, Annual Overview Comments section
* Goal Accomplishment section
* Goal Setting section
* Once the staff member completes the template, saves a copy, and sends an electronic copy to their supervisor’s email address at least 2 to three days before the performance assessment meeting.
* The supervisor reviews and includes comments in the performance assessment template prior to the meeting.
* During the meeting, the supervisor shares the updated copy and discusses the comments. The supervisor provides time for the staff member’s input and for asking questions.
* Once the staff member and supervisor have discussed the assessment, they both sign it. The supervisor then makes a PDF copy and sends it to the staff member and the Department Head and/or Vice President. The supervisor keeps a copy, too.
* The Department Head or Vice President **sends a final signed copy to Human Resources [**humanresources@swarthmore.edu**]** for placement in the personnel file
* It is encouraged that the supervisor establishes regular check ins, goal setting and professional development opportunities.

**Remember:**

The performance assessment is meant to summarize and evaluate performance over the past performance year, which for us was approximately July 2019 to June 2020. That means approximately two thirds of the review year took place before COVID-19 and the shift to work-from-home, and approximately one third took place during COVID-19. A method is to: consider goals, responsibilities, values, and behaviors for the time before COVID and during COVID as two distinct parts of the year. Staff will complete the evaluation first and submit it to their supervisor to include additional comments and feedback. As such, both the staff member and supervisor can take time to document each part of the year individually before a final rating is determined.

**Tip:**

* How to scan a document on your iPhone: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT210336>
* How to scan a document using an Android: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgA1-MBTMKg>

*once scanned, the document can be sent to an email account*

**Staff member and Supervisor Expectations**

The template is a tool to help the supervisor and the staff member think about the performance of the job and to assess if the performance outcomes met the expectations and goals that were established. The staff member should complete it and provide the supervisor with an electronic copy. The supervisor and staff member must meet and discuss the assessment before it is finalized. Staff and supervisors are encouraged to keep the written documentation as concise as possible. Using bullet points rather than complete sentences to list accomplishments is acceptable provided every bullet is in the form of an achievable action.

It is important that the staff member’s assessment be clear and accurate. All staff should know where they stand and understand how you, as their supervisor, perceive their performance. Additionally, if the staff member is not meeting the expectations of the job, it is important to document the performance clearly and specifically to take appropriate corrective action.

During the meeting, the staff member and supervisor discuss overall performance. The assessment should be based on observed or verified performance. The aim of the conversation is to have an open and constructive discussion that leads to an understanding of how well the staff member did in meeting expectations throughout the performance period.

*Supervisor Expectations*

**The Role of the Supervisor**

Performance management is designed to help staff members take ownership for their own performance and career growth. Staff members will complete a self-review and are encouraged to actively participate in the review discussion. This will give you as a supervisor, insight into the staff member’s perspective, and gives them an active, rather than passive, role in the process of their own career progression.

You are also required to complete an assessment of the staff member’s performance. At the meeting, you and the staff member will compare and discuss the two s. You may request to include Human Resources if you feel you will need a facilitator in the discussion.

It is important to remember that this process is not designed for you to relinquish your supervisory responsibilities. Rather it is designed to facilitate clear communication and discussion. Ultimately, the goal is to provide support and guidance for the staff member:

* Accomplish the necessary job responsibilities,
* Work in a way that is consistent with the broader objectives of the department and the College,
* Receive appropriate guidance and be given accurate, regular, and constructive feedback, and
* Identify promotional opportunities, if applicable.

**Tips for Conducting the Assessment Meeting**

The tone of the meeting along with the discussing the content is important. The goal is to have a productive meeting about job performance and developmental activities so the meeting should not be adversarial. Here are some tips to help make the meeting more successful:

1. Be sure you understand the overall job duties and responsibilities.
2. Make certain when setting up the appointment that the staff member understands the purpose of the discussion. Schedule ample time for conversation, questions, and joint goal setting. Prior to the interview, complete the assessment.
3. The discussion is the most important step in the process. This is an excellent time to communicate with the staff member, receive suggestions, or make plans for improvement. Approach the interview positively, highlighting both areas of excellence and areas in need of improvement.
   1. For those few staff members with performance problems, this is an opportunity to define the necessary steps for improvement and get back on track.
   2. For the staff member with very good performance, you have the pleasure of saying thank you and well done. You can use the interview to explore goals for still further improvement.
   3. For the average achiever, use the discussion to coach, motivate, and improve communication/performance.
4. Ensure privacy and avoid interruption during the discussion. Try to establish a relaxed atmosphere. Schedule the use of a conference room if you do not have a private office available. Do not take phone calls. Make sure you set aside enough time for complete and full discussion; you do not want another appointment to interfere with everyone.
5. Emphasize the positive aspects of the evaluation, however, be honest and do not hold back valid criticism. All criticism should be objective and constructive.
6. In ranking performance, do not compare the performance of individuals in different classifications. Staff members should be ranked against other similar jobs. Try to rate individuals against their own job descriptions rather than other people.
7. Ratings should be based on performance over the past period. Try to remember positive instances as well as negative ones.
8. Be able to explain the reason for rating with logical, objective reasons, never with hearsay. Keep notes during the year.
9. Listing one or two specific instances of performance will encourage you to be more objective.
10. Do not consider your personal likes and dislikes when rating job performance. Rate the person's performance and not the individual's personality unless it is job relevant.
11. Do not allow longevity to be given undue emphasis when rating an individual. The rating should reflect the performance compared to the expectations of the job, not how much has been accomplished relatively over a given period. That is, someone may have done an excellent job considering the time in that position, but, because of inexperience, still have a long way to go to reach the expected standard for the position.
12. Avoid generalities in describing what should be done to improve performance. Indicate specific actions which can be taken by the staff member or by you to assist them in improving performance. Work on one or two performance areas at a time. Use the Performance Conversation Notes area or the Performance Development Plan document as appropriate to list a plan and timetable for follow-up.
13. Encourage the staff member to comment on what you say about their performance. The discussion should not be a lecture by the supervisor, but a dialogue. Ask open-ended questions to get the staff member talking.
14. Determine the reasons for any disagreement which may emerge during the discussion. Clear up any misunderstandings which might have caused a difference of opinion. Be willing to change your rating if you are in error.
15. If appropriate, be sure you both agree on any follow-up which is needed and determine when it is to take place.
16. Set goals with the staff member for the upcoming evaluation period. These goals should be agreed upon by both parties, meeting the needs of the department, as well as the interests of the staff member.
17. Make sure the staff member signs the evaluation, even if he or she insists on adding a note prior to signing.
18. Before closing the conversation, ask for feedback regarding how you can improve as a supervisor. Getting this feedback from your staff can be useful in strengthening your working relationships and ensuring that your staff’s coaching needs are met.

**Guidelines for Managing and Communicating with Staff Remotely**

Performance Assessments are considered the most stressful work conversation staff members will have all year. For supervisors, the discussion can be as tense. Adding the possibility of conducting the meeting virtually can add to the already existing pressure.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in most of our workforce now working remotely. For many of us, this may be our first experience managing staff remotely. Even for those with experience with remote work, the added strain of the pandemic and its ongoing impact presents new and unexpected challenges. These guidelines have been developed to support you during this period. As always, our goal is to offer our community resources and information to support their work and professional development.

There are several key considerations when successfully managing staff members remotely including technological support, **consistent communication, clear expectations, established goals and objectives, and meaningful feedback,** and perhaps most importantly, flexibility and the willingness to re-evaluate and reconsider approaches.

This guide includes helpful information on each of these areas. We encourage you to also visit our website for [additional resources](https://www.swarthmore.edu/human-resources/covid-19-wellness-and-work-life-resources#remote%20work) on supporting your staff in working remotely. If you have questions, please contact us at [humanresources@swarthmore.edu](mailto:humanresources@swarthmore.edu).

**Technological Support**

Working remotely, especially for people without prior experience, can prove to be challenging. Staff may feel distant and out of sync with other staff members or supervisors, and struggle with finding solid connections and consistent support. Fortunately, technology can help mediate many of the challenges. Utilizing tools like instant messaging, Zoom, Google chat and Hang Out can allow you to connect in real time, eliminating some of the sense of distance working remotely creates.

Your staff members should be adequately equipped with the necessary technology to work from home effectively. You can access ITS resources, support, and training at this link: [kb.swarthmore.edu/display/remote/Working+Remotely](https://kb.swarthmore.edu/display/remote/Working+Remotely).

**Consistent Communication**

Communicating in clear and consistent ways with your staff is even more important than ever. Without the usual opportunities to catch up in person in the break room, or pop by a staff member’s office, it is especially important that you intentionally create opportunities for ongoing communication throughout the day and week. If your staff members are used to a weekly meeting, continue that practice over Zoom. If you have a 1:1 meeting scheduled every week with staff members who report directly to you, continue that practice as well. Remember that all staff members are individuals and the amount of support and interaction they require must be individualized as well. Encourage them to speak up if they need more interaction, both as a whole team and from you as their supervisor.

When communicating with your staff, be mindful of the following components -

* **Intention:**  Zoom meetings can cause fatigue easily. Be mindful of whether all meetings need to occur over Zoom or if a simple phone call or text or email exchange will suffice. Use meeting times wisely by establishing and following an agenda. Be aware of the lengths of meetings and their frequency.
* **Consistency:** holding regularly scheduled meetings, including 1:1’s, staff meetings or departmental meetings, can offer structure and help build a sense of normalcy for your staff. Avoid the urge to allow regular meetings to be canceled; regular communication is key to creating a cohesive working environment and a sense of teamwork, and it is key to sustaining engagement even across distance.
* **Comprehensiveness**: Ensure that whatever means you use to keep your staff in the loop on changing priorities, projects, and deadlines are adapted to remote work. Communicating changes in writing, holding virtual stand-up meetings, using shared documents circulated amongst everyone will help ensure information trickles down to everyone.

**Suggestions for Using:**

* **Zoom:** 1:1 meeting, departmental meetings, and demonstrating new responsibilities, for example.
* **Phone:** back-up to Zoom, quick check-in or follow-up, need to ask a question/need answer, etc.
* **Email:** quick update about work, schedule conflicts, etc.

**Clear Expectations**

One of the most effective ways to ensure success when working remotely is to communicate expectations clearly, in advance, and to all staff. You should be setting clear expectations around:

* **Expected work hours/schedule**: Many staff members are currently working hours slightly different than their regular work schedule due to issues like childcare, home schooling, or care for sick family members. Whenever possible, supervisors are expected to encourage their staff members to think creatively to set work hours that best accommodate their needs. This approach could include working hours outside of the traditional daytime schedule such as in the early morning or evening. To support clear and consistent communication, it is helpful to include the work schedules of all staff members within the department on a shared calendar. This approach can also help to manage expectations and make scheduling meetings less cumbersome. If there is a specific time for all staff meetings, schedule those in advance to allow those who may be working on different schedules to plan and communicate expectations about attendance clearly.
* **Preferred method and frequency of communication:** To stay connected, find tools you can use to communicate on a regular basis. Some teams use Google chat or Slack for quick response scenarios; others prefer texting when there is an immediate need. Think about how and when you communicate, and take a consistent approach; for example, you could schedule a daily check in at the beginning or end of the workday to ensure everyone is equipped to get their work done. Whatever method you establish for your staff, communicate it clearly and in writing to avoid confusion.
* **Responsiveness to emails and phone calls:** If they have not already, make sure your staff members implement call forwarding and update their outgoing email messages to provide a reasonable timeframe to allow for a response. To ensure no one is without answers or resources when needed, emergency needs should be fielded through an alternative email box or phone number that is being frequently monitored.
* **Contingency plan:** In the case of a staff or family member’s illness, a contingency plan outlining who will share responsibilities or provide back-up assistance should be created and shared in an area that can be accessed by other staff members.

**Established Goals and Objectives**

Establishing goals and objectives is the first step to effectively supporting your staff members’ performance and productivity. Some duties and responsibilities translate relatively seamlessly into a remote working environment. However, it is still your responsibility as a supervisor to ensure status of the day-to-day work and specific projects or initiatives undertaken by your staff members. For staff members whose work does not easily translate into a remote working situation, it may be necessary to assign new or existing projects that may have been delayed prior to COVID-19. This is also a time to encourage your staff to take advantage of any required certification training and/or online professional development courses. For a full understanding of the status of your staff’s work, you should:

* **Establish clear goals** to be accomplished during this remote work period using the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound) method.
* **Develop a consistent reporting method:** This could include a shared document or a report that is developed by your staff member and includes regular updates. Having staff members share updates on work projects during 1:1 project vs staff meeting to increase the probability of getting accurate updates, particularly from anyone that might be struggling or in need of additional support.
* **Determine the frequency of check in’s** - establish whether you are meeting weekly, biweekly, etc. and communicate clearly what information you expect the employee to provide at that time
* **Adjust timetables and due dates as needed:** Continuously changing conditions may result in new or different initiatives needing to be prioritized. Flexibility and adaptability are especially important when setting priorities in a rapidly changing environment. Clearly communicate the priority of new developments and reassign due dates for projects that are being delayed as a result.
* **Communicate how goals, priorities, and changes impact your whole team:** It is helpful for all staff members to understand the demands being placed both on their colleagues and on their team. Clearly communicating how goals, priorities, and ongoing changes impact individual team members and the entire team opens the opportunities for staff members to collaborate or help when possible. Additionally, it allows you to clearly align (and realign as needed) the work of individual staff members and the overall goals and objectives of the department.
* **Measure results, not simply hours worked:** There are many ways to recognize and value productivity beyond the simple number of hours worked. While some supervisors may struggle to evaluate productivity in a remote working environment, remember that simply having someone present in a shared workspace does not demonstrate productivity or performance either. Supervisors should focus on the results their team is able to achieve during this period of remote work, and assess progress made on the goals and objective they have set, both with individuals and with their whole team.

**Meaningful Feedback**

Providing meaningful feedback safeguards their success. Keep in mind that your feedback should be:

* **Timely:** Both accolades and constructive criticism should be delivered in a timely fashion. Be mindful of recognizing good work and effort openly and on a regular basis.
* **Continuous:** Your staff members deserve continuous feedback so that they can understand where they are excelling, and where they may need to strengthen their work. Too often, supervisors wait until there are a multitude of issues and address them all at once, an approach that can leave staff members feeling overwhelmed and defeated. Remember that only providing feedback when there are opportunities for improvement will not increase your team’s morale.
* **Honest**: Your staff members deserve an honest assessment of their performance so that they can understand where they are demonstrating success and where they can improve. An honest response does not have to be harsh or unkind; your focus should be on offering constructive, thoughtful criticism that can help your staff member grow professionally.
* **Mutual:** as a supervisor, it is important to remember the value of two-way feedback. Create an environment that permits your staff members to let you know what support they need from you, and that they feel comfortable communicating struggles as they work to accomplish the goals you have set together.

**The goal**? Spend enough time during the meeting to ensure there is not any part of the discussion lost in translation!

*Check out the HBR article,* [*How to Do Performance Reviews – Remotely*](https://hbr.org/2020/06/how-to-do-performance-reviews-remotely) *by Rebecca Knight. June 15, 2020.*

**Throughout the Year**

In addition to the annual performance assessment, the staff member and supervisor meet on an informal basis periodically (at least at mid-year) to update the progress towards goals. This is particularly important if there has been a history of performance issues or if there has not been a regular opportunity throughout the year to communicate. By providing regular feedback and discussing the issues on a regular basis, the supervisor minimizes the anxiety of the "formal" assessment, since it should be expected. It is important that the supervisor and the staff member continue to understand the priorities and expectations as they change throughout the year. It is also important for the supervisor to be fully aware of the actual work being done and the impact of that work, through direct observation and, when appropriate, through obtaining the input from others.

Some of the items to think about during the annual assessment and throughout the year are:

* Is the staff member performing at expected levels? Have you clearly expressed your expectations?
* How are their goals being tracked? How is theSMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound) method used?
* Has anything occurred that might change those expectations or the staff member’s ability to meet those expectations, such as a change in the department, new technology, etc.?
* Is there anything that should be handled differently to help the staff member be successful in their job?
* The goal is to keep the lines of communication open so that there are no surprises at the end of the year and to change inappropriate behavior before it escalates or becomes entrenched.