



Bluefield State  
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# Performance Management Guide for Supervisors



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## **DISCLAIMER**

The information provided in the Performance Management Guide for Supervisors is intended to be used as a reference and procedural guide to the performance management and performance review process for staff employees of Bluefield State University (BSU). The general information it contains should not be construed to supersede any law, rule, or policy. In the case of any inconsistencies, the statutory and regulatory provisions shall prevail.

The Performance Management Guide for Supervisors is not an implied or expressed employment contract. The document serves as guidelines rather than policies and may be subject to change. BSU makes a good-faith effort to communicate changes to our employees.

## **ASSISTANCE**

For technical assistance concerning specific performance management situations, BSU supervisors are encouraged to notify their immediate supervisor of the situation before contacting the BSU Office of Human Resources at 304-327-4013. Also, the BSU Office of Human Resources welcomes comments and suggestions concerning the Performance Management Guide for Supervisors.

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**Bluefield State University**  
**Performance Management Guide**  
**For Supervisors**

## **Introduction**

Bluefield State University's performance management process is based on the belief that employees are our most critical resource and performance contributions and development of each individual are essential toward fulfilling the University's teaching, research, and service goals. BSU is committed to a performance management process that fosters strong performance. Effective performance management aligns the efforts of supervisors and employees with departmental and University goals, promotes consistency in performance assessment, motivates employees to perform at their best, and is conducted with fairness and transparency. The employee, the supervisor, and the University are critical members of a partnership that ensures effective performance planning, assessment, coaching, and development.

Effective performance management is a continuous process requiring clear performance expectations, periodic feedback, coaching/instruction, and recognition for improvement and contributions. Performance management is built on the foundation of a trusting relationship between supervisor and employee that enables and encourages open, two-way communication.

## **Defining Performance Management**



Performance Management is a collaborative, on-going process between a supervisor and an employee to plan for, develop, and evaluate an employee's work. It focuses on what employees do and how they do it; it aligns individual, departmental, and University goals; it identifies areas for employee learning; and, it includes opportunities to discuss and plan for an employee's career development.

## **The Importance of Performance Management**

Performance Management supports the University's commitment to recruit, develop, and competitively compensate our workforce and to better prepare us to meet the future needs of the University.

It facilitates on-going conversations between employees and their supervisors that benefit all. It enables employees to enrich their knowledge in their current jobs and gain skills for their current position and for future opportunities. And, performance management helps employees succeed, which helps supervisors succeed.



**The performance management process allows employees to clearly understand:**

- ✓ What their goals and/or duties are and what is expected of them;
- ✓ The criteria for success and how well they are doing;
- ✓ How their responsibilities help achieve organizational goals; and,
- ✓ How they can improve job performance.

**Supervisors benefit from the process also by:**

- ✓ Communicating frequently with employees and obtaining employee input;
- ✓ Having a better understanding regarding how employees are achieving goals and/or carrying out duties;
- ✓ Having a basis for coaching for improvement;
- ✓ Identifying training and development needs; and,
- ✓ Supporting career development opportunities.

**The performance management process supports the University's mission and leadership by:**

- ✓ Making clear the relationship between individual, unit and University goals which allows employees to be effective and enjoy a sense of shared purpose;
- ✓ Requiring that employees be evaluated based on clear and agreed upon goals, competencies, and development plans;
- ✓ Giving employees clear, specific expectations that they understand, and helping them to achieve the expectations outlined.

## **Performance Management Responsibilities of Employees and Supervisors**

**Persons who supervise one or more employees are responsible for:**

- Helping employees develop individual goals and identify competencies;
- Providing employees with clear expectations, consistent measures, and achievable standards of performance;

- Supporting and providing resources for employees to meet performance goals;
- Holding conversations to discuss employees' progress toward achieving performance goals;
- Holding conversations to discuss employees' development;
- Providing timely, on-going feedback;
- Conducting interim (formally or informally) and annual performance reviews;
- Identifying performance deficiencies and providing assistance and support for improvement;
- Assisting employees in identifying and participating in career development and training opportunities;
- Recognizing exceptional performance on a regular and on-going basis.

A supervisor is someone who is responsible for the performance of others. The role of a supervisor is to provide direction to employees, set priorities, assign work, ensure quality and provide assistance to resolve problems.

**Employees are responsible for:**

- Providing input to their supervisors in the performance planning process which contributes to departmental goals and the University's mission;
- Performing their assigned job duties toward successfully meeting goals and objectives;
- Providing their supervisors with input regarding their job responsibilities, including a list of accomplishments;
- Discussing concerns and questions about any part of their job or the performance management process, and offering suggestions to address any concerns or questions; and,
- Identifying and participating in career development and training opportunities.

## Performance Management and Performance Guidance



To be effective at reviewing an employee's performance, it is necessary for a supervisor to understand the performance management and performance review process. Supervisors should see the "Big Picture" and recognize how the various parts of the process fit together. This can be achieved by looking at all of the system's parts, individually, and then thinking about how the various parts relate to one another. One method to accomplish this is to look at each of the parts of the process in the order they occur, to include:

- Performance Planning
- Supervisor Feedback, On-Going Coaching and Counseling
- Annual Performance Review

Three primary aspects of the performance management and performance review process include:

1. Clearly communicate with employees what is expected of them, and give them a chance to accomplish it.
2. Provide feedback to employees from time-to-time on how they are doing. Reaffirm job tasks that are well done. Provide redirection when employees are not performing as expected. Understand what may be contributing to the performance issue, and offer suggestions for improvement as may be appropriate.

3. Discuss with the employee how they have done overall throughout the entire performance rating period and use that information toward developing future performance goals and planning.

Understanding the performance management process, the supervisory steps that need to be taken, and recognizing what forms to complete is just the beginning. It is just as important, if not more so, that supervisors understand the importance of encouraging employee involvement and active participation in all aspects of the performance management process. **Regular, ongoing communication between supervisors and employees concerning what employees are expected to do and how well they are actually doing it is essential to managing performance for success.**

## Performance Planning

A very important part of the performance management process is the establishment of realistic, challenging, yet attainable, performance expectations and standards. Supervisors must be able to develop and communicate expectations and standards to employees in a manner that can clearly be understood, that is in alignment with unit, department and University goals, and that are reasonable, challenging, yet attainable. It is difficult for employees to accept or “buy into” expectations and standards they do not understand or believe to be unattainable. With specific, realistic expectations and standards, employees can understand clearly the performance that is required of them — what they are being paid to do and achieve. As a result, work activities can be specifically targeted and planned, and good performance is likely to be successfully achieved.

## Performance Planning Participation

The creation of a performance plan should be a joint “supervisor *and* employee” activity. Employees should be encouraged to actively participate in defining performance expectations and standards. Employee involvement can improve the reliability, validity, fairness, and usefulness of those performance expectations and standards because employees have direct, first-hand experience with all of the factors that impact the work being performed. This makes their participation essential for developing realistic expectations and standards. After all, the individual who should best understand a job is the one who is performing the job.

## Review of Job Description and Goal-Setting

The supervisor and the employee should review the employee’s job duties and responsibilities and discuss the key expectations and standards (e.g., results, goals, objectives, etc.) to be reached during the upcoming performance period (usually 12 months). The supervisor and the employee should then develop several realistic, challenging, and achievable expectations and standards to be achieved during the upcoming performance period. These expectations and standards, or goals, will be used by the supervisor to monitor the employee’s performance and to decide when and what coaching and counseling, if any, is needed by the employee to assess and guide his or her own performance.

## S.M.A.R.T. Goals

There are five important characteristics that all performance expectations should possess. Performance expectations should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timely



Developing sound expectations/goals is critical to managing employees' performance. Each year, supervisors are to work with employees to set goals for the upcoming year/performance period. Goals should be developed using the S.M.A.R.T. principles - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. Below is a definition and example of each of the S.M.A.R.T. goal criteria.

**Specific:** Goals should be plainly written and clearly define what will be accomplished.

Specific is the What, Why, and How of the S.M.A.R.T. model.

**Example:** By August 1, implement a new leave management system for Staff, using clearly defined processes and HEPC guidelines, so employees and supervisors can track employee leave more efficiently.

**Explanation of Example:**

"implement a new leave management system for Staff" = what

"using clearly defined processes and HEPC guidelines" = how

"so employees and supervisors can track employee leave more efficiently" = why

**Measurable:** Goals should be measurable so employees have evidence that they have accomplished the goal. Usually, the entire goal statement is a measure for the project, but there are usually several short-term or smaller measurements built into the goal.

**Example:** By August 1, implement a new leave management system for Staff, using clearly defined processes and HEPC guidelines, so employees and supervisors can track employee leave more efficiently.

**Explanation of Example:**

The essential metric, or that which can be "measured," is whether or not the system is operational by August 1st.

**Achievable:** Goals should be achievable; they should stretch the employee slightly so they feel challenged, but defined well enough so that employees can achieve them. Employees must possess the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to achieve the goal.

Employees can meet almost any goal when the goal is thoughtfully planned and a timeframe is established that allows the employee to carry out those steps. As the



employee carries out the steps, they can achieve goals that may have seemed impossible when they started. On the other hand, if a goal is impossible to achieve, the employee may not even try to accomplish it. Achievable goals motivate employees. Impossible goals de-motivate them.

**Example:** By August 1, implement a new leave management system for Staff, using clearly defined processes and HEPC guidelines, so employees and supervisors can track employee leave more efficiently.

**Explanation of Example:**

In order for an employee to reach this goal, they must have a skill set, in this case in the area of leave management, that allows them to understand the nature of the goal, and the goal must present a large enough challenge for the employee to remain interested in and committed to accomplishing it.

**Relevant:** Goals should be instrumental or important to the mission of the department (and University). Goals should be results-oriented, or outcome-oriented, and not activities that are simply “busywork.”

**Example:** By August 1, implement a new leave management system for Staff, using clearly defined processes and HEPC guidelines, so employees and supervisors can track employee leave more efficiently.

**Explanation of Example:**

The result of this goal is to develop a system that allows employees and supervisors to more efficiently track employee leave.

**Timely:** Goals should be linked to a timeframe or a definite target date for completion and/or to milestones for specific action steps that are important for achieving the goal. Without timeframes or milestone target dates for completion, the goal is unlikely to produce a measurable or relevant outcome.

**Example:** By August 1, implement a new leave management system for Staff, using clearly defined processes and HEPC guidelines, so employees and supervisors can track employee leave more efficiently.

**Explanation of Example:**

August 1 provides the employee with a time-bound deadline.

The concept of writing S.M.A.R.T. goals is very important for accomplishing individual goals, which in turn are linked to unit, department, and University goals. It is also important to ensure good communication between employees and supervisors so there are no surprises during annual performance reviews.

The S.M.A.R.T. Goal Questionnaire that follows is designed to assist employees and supervisors in creating S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely) goals.

## S.M.A.R.T. Goal Questionnaire

### Goal:

- ✓ **Specific.** What will the goal accomplish? How and why will it be accomplished? Does this goal address the five Ws... who, what, when, where, and why? Make sure the goal specifies what needs to be done with a timeframe for completion. Use action verbs... create, design, develop, implement, produce, etc. *Example: resolve accounting discrepancies within 48 hours.*
- ✓ **Measurable.** How will you measure the goal? Does the goal include numeric or descriptive measures that define quantity, quality, cost, etc.? How will you and your staff member know when the goal has been successfully met? Focus on elements such as observable actions, quantity, quality, cycle time, efficiency, and/or flexibility to measure outcomes, not activities. *Example: secure pledges from three new donors by the end of each week.*
- ✓ **Achievable.** Is it possible? Have others done it successfully? Is the goal within the staff member's control and influence; a goal may be a "stretch" but still feasible. Is the goal achievable with the available resources? Is the goal achievable within the timeframe originally outlined? Consider authority or control, influence, resources, and work environment support to meet the goal. *Example: obtain the XYZ professional certification within two years.*
- ✓ **Relevant.** What is the reason, purpose, or benefit of accomplishing the goal? What is the result of the goal? Is the goal instrumental to the mission of the department (and ultimately, the institution)? Why is the goal important? How will the goal help the department achieve its objectives? Develop goals that relate to the staff member's key accountabilities or link with departmental goals that align with the institutional goals. *Example: develop and implement a business student recruitment plan that increases the number of business students by ten percent by FY2020.*
- ✓ **Timely.** What is the established completion date and does that completion date create a practical timeframe to complete the goal? How often should the staff member work on this assignment? By when should this goal be accomplished? Incorporate specific dates, calendar milestones, or timeframes that are relative to the achievement of another result (i.e., dependencies to other projects). *Example: check the fire alarms and emergency lighting in all buildings every six months.*

### Let's look at some more examples:

*For an organization or department...*

Not SMART "Improve our student service."

**SMART** "Achieve and maintain an average student service rating of at least 4.0 (out of a possible 5.0) on our annual survey by 11/20/XX."

*For an exempt staff member...*

Not SMART "Create our 2022 strategic plan."

**SMART** "Create our 2022 strategic plan, obtain final approval from the Budget Committee, and discuss it with our department so individuals can begin setting their performance objectives by 07/01/XX."

Not SMART "Improve project management skills."

**SMART** "Take the Project Management Essentials workshop on 10-18-2019, report what was learned to our team by 11-01-2019, and apply the important points from the workshop while implementing our 2020 marketing plan."

*For a nonexempt staff member...*

Not SMART “Send out welcome letters to our new students.”

**SMART** “Produce and distribute personalized welcome letters, error free, to all new students in our department by 9-15-19.”

Not SMART “Be more receptive to coaching suggestions and feedback.”

**SMART** “At our monthly progress meetings, ask for feedback on what you are doing well and what things to improve. Keep a notebook with this information, try out the suggestions, and document each week what worked and what didn’t.”

*For an exempt or nonexempt staff member...*

Not SMART “Keep our department’s Website up-to-date.”

**SMART** “Solicit updates and new material for the Website from our department managers on the first Friday of each month; publish this new material by the following Friday. Each time material is published, review the Website for material that is out-of-date and delete or archive that material.”

Remember the S.M.A.R.T. acronym when establishing goals and objectives. This formula for goal-setting helps ensure that both supervisors and staff members share the same understanding and clarity on goals set during the performance management cycle.

## Supervisor Feedback, On-going Coaching and Counseling

Providing on-going feedback to employees about their performance is very important for maintaining productive working relationships, accomplishing goals, and for general work performance reinforcement or redirection. Reinforcement occurs when a supervisor wants an employee to continue performing as they have been performing. Redirection occurs when the employee needs to change what or how they’ve been performing. The “Take 10” Check-In can be used for reinforcing performance while the “2 Minute Challenge” may be used for redirection.

### Coaching Employees: The “Take 10” Check-In

Supervisors should take at least ten minutes a week to check-in with each employee. This check-in time will foster clear and on-going communication between the supervisor and employees. Supervisors are encouraged to ask each employee the following three questions and document the conversation:



- How are you doing?
- How do think the team is doing?
- How can things be improved?

The purpose of the “Take 10” Check-In is to foster good communication; it is not required that each supervisor do this, but rather should serve as a guideline and method of achieving regular and on-going conversations with employees.

## Counseling Employees: The “2 Minute Challenge”

The “2-Minute Challenge” is a way to have a brief - maybe not two minutes, but certainly short and focused - and meaningful conversation that identifies a specific problem and redirects the employee. The “2-Minute Challenge” can improve communications and perhaps mitigate any further action, including formal disciplinary action. It consists of the following steps:

1. State what you have observed – “This is what I saw...”

**Example:** Brad, I could not help but notice that you were late again with your monthly report.

2. Wait for response from employee

3. Remind employee of goal – “This is what I need to see...”

**Example:** We spoke before about the importance of getting those reports to me on time so I can include them in our department summary. I expect you to have it to me on time in the future.

4. Ask for a specific solution – “What can we do to make sure this happens?”

**Example:** What can you do to assure me that you will turn your report in on time?

5. Agree on solution – “So we agree that...”

**Example:** So, beginning today, I can expect to have your report prepared and delivered on time?

6. Follow up using positive reinforcement and pay attention for signs of relapse

**Example:** Thanks, Brad. I appreciate your help. Your contributions are important to our team.

During this conversation, supervisors should remain focused on the issue they are addressing and avoid being side-tracked by unrelated items.

Also, it’s important that the solution is specific and time-bound, and that the employee takes ownership of the issue and thus is responsible for changing his/her behavior accordingly.

## Counseling Employees: The Role of a Good Supervisor

Counseling has boundaries that must be respected. Counseling is not:

- An opportunity for you to practice psychiatric therapy.
- A one-time activity.
- An off-the-cuff discussion.
- Punitive.
- Solely concerned with personal problems.
- Human Resources’ business.
- An opportunity to review an individual’s whole life.
- A one-way mini-lecture by the counselor/coach.

- A brief, hurried activity.
- Intended to solve all of the individual's problems.

A good counselor:

- Is easy to talk to.
- Listens well.
- Helps people solve problems but does not over-control.
- Shows empathy when discussing problems.
- Is receptive to feelings.
- Can keep a confidence.
- Is perceptive in recognizing when help is needed.
- Wants people to do well.
- Builds self-esteem and confidence.
- Is interested in what the other has to say, not just what he or she wants to hear.
- Takes the other seriously.
- Is willing to spend time.
- Is receptive to the ideas of others.
- Gives the other his or her full attention.
- Encourages another try.

*Taken from A Passion for Excellence by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin*

An effective performance review process requires supportive supervision and employee feedback. In order for a performance review system to be effective, there must be formal and frequent informal performance feedback from both the supervisor and the employee.

Supervisors, though they may not be conscious of it, review and evaluate the performance of their employees, informally, almost daily. While such feedback may be nothing more than the comment, "Good job," it is feedback just the same and lets employees know they are meeting expectations.

Feedback is essential in gaining the maximum benefits from goal setting. On-going coaching and feedback allows employees to make adjustments in job performance and to receive positive reinforcement for effective job behavior. Effective performance feedback is timely, specific, behavioral in nature, and presented by a credible source. It is effective in influencing positive employee work behavior and enhances employee job satisfaction and overall performance.

# The Annual Performance Review

The annual performance review serves as a written review based upon a year-round performance management dialogue between the supervisor and the employee. The annual performance review should be another meeting between the supervisor and employee to review and update past goals and tasks, and to develop future performance expectations and standards.

## Evaluating Performance

Interim reviews and annual performance reviews should include an employee's self-assessment of his/her performance goals and competencies. While not required, employee self-assessment is encouraged so that their voice is heard in the process. Then, the supervisor rates the employee on the goals and competencies that were established at the beginning of the performance cycle and provides an overall rating. Ratings should be supported with comments providing specific examples of observed performance during the performance review cycle.



## Rating Categories for Annual Performance Reviews

### Rating Categories for Staff Employee Performance Reviews

#### **4 = Exceeds Expectations**

Demonstrates job performance at a level exceeding that of a satisfactory review. The employee's performance regularly surpasses the standards expected.

#### **3 = Meets Expectations**

Demonstrates success and competency in the performance of the job. The employee has produced the desired or intended results and completely satisfies the established standards and expectations.

#### **2 = Needs Improvement**

Indicates performance that is unacceptable due to the employee's lack of effort or skills. The employee has not met the standards as expected and must take immediate corrective action.

#### **1 = Unsatisfactory**

Indicates poor standards of work, e.g. frequent mistakes, not following a job through, and unable to follow instructions. Unable to perform a reasonable volume of work to a satisfactory standard.

## Tips for Conducting the Annual Performance Review

- Decide in advance what you want to achieve: review, positive reinforcement, training, coaching, morale-building, redirection, professional development, goal realignment. Do not let one goal interfere with another.
- Do not wait until the review to let your staff know what you expect from them. Review the job description with the employee. Let the employee know early on exactly what the job requires, what specific goals, standards, and deadlines you expect him or her to meet, and how you plan to evaluate and reward performance. It is a daily process.
- Keep a written log or journal throughout the year in which you enter detailed accounts of individual performance — good performance, or deficient performance — on typical tasks during “critical incidents” for use at review time. Supervisory notes should be maintained by the supervisor in an administrative file and **not** in the agency personnel file.
- The review should be a two-way conversation. Allow the employee to offer their perspective about their own performance, and any particular challenges encountered, as well as acknowledging goals attained throughout the rating cycle.
- Be fair, and give honest feedback regarding overall performance. Employees want to know where they stand and how well they have achieved, or not achieved, the objectives identified at the beginning of the performance cycle. Encourage the employee to discuss his/her performance. Listen to what the employee is saying. Ask open-ended questions such as, “What do you think we can do to improve the situation?” Use a prompt such as “Go on,” or “Tell me more.”
- Listen. The review is your chance to receive valuable feedback from your own staff about their jobs, and how work is performed, and to receive suggestions for improved efficiencies.
- Discuss your written performance review with the employee, including their expectations of their performance review rating. If the employee disagrees strongly with the rating, it is worth exploring the reasons for the disagreement.

- Be direct and specific. Speak in terms of objective work data. Use examples such as attendance, arriving to work on time, quality records, inspection reports, orders processed, productivity records, material used or consumed, timeliness of tasks or projects, control or reduction of costs, number of errors, costs compared to budgets, customer comments, order processing time and accuracy, accident reports, etc. and the impact to performance or achievement of goals.
- Keep the review focused on the employee's performance. Show that you care about his or her performance contributions and career development.
- Be respectful and specific. Make sure the employee understands what he or she is doing well, and that there is an understanding of areas of new focus or improvement. Give specific examples. If performance improvement is desired, develop a written improvement action plan detailing specific performance steps and expected results within targeted completion dates.
- Do not get personal. Refrain from using statements such as, "You are too slow in producing those reports." Instead, try to compare the employee's performance to a standard (e.g., "These reports should normally be done within ten days"). Similarly, do not compare the employee's performance to that of other employees (e.g., "He is quicker than you are").
- Critique the behavior, if necessary, and not the employee. Keep the discussion on a professional level. Make sure you also give encouragement, when critiquing an employee's performance. Reinforce good habits with praise and offer suggestions as to how the employee can improve performance in the area(s) identified, giving specific examples.

## Meeting with the Employee to Discuss Performance Review and Obtain Signature



On-going and clear communication is fundamental to being an effective supervisor. Having an outline, or conversation process, can assist supervisors in having effective and productive discussions with their employees. Below is a sample conversation outline to help supervisors begin the process.

**Begin:** Begin with the purpose and importance of reviewing progress. Be sure to create a positive environment; set the employee at ease; highlight the purpose and benefits of the review; provide an overview of the process, and reinforce the shared responsibility of the performance review.

**Example:** "Thanks for coming in today, Sue. I appreciate your time. As you know the purpose of our meeting is to review your annual performance review. This performance review serves as a summary of your work over the course of this year. It also gives us a great opportunity to discuss both your strengths and your areas for continued development. There are three components to this process: performance planning/goals, competency development (knowledge, skills, and abilities), and learning and professional



development planning. Let's review the job description and then look at performance goals first."

**Share:** Review the employee's progress made toward the employee's goals and competencies; share your opinion of successes and concerns; identify any special circumstances that may have influenced the employee's performance.

**Example:** "You made excellent progress on these three performance goals (discuss those goals and provide examples of why you believe excellent progress was made), and satisfactory progress on these other two performance goals (discuss those goals and provide examples of why you believe satisfactory progress was made). I am a little concerned about the lack of progress you made on your fourth goal. Can we talk about that?" Overall, your performance review rating is \_\_\_\_\_. Your organizational skills are evident in the way you coordinated our annual meeting this year.

**Seek Input/**

**Discuss:** Describe the results of the employee's performance; ask for the employee's perspective by reviewing the self-review (if the employee completed a self-review).

**Example:** "I see from your self-review comments, that you faced several major hurdles. Can you tell me more about those hurdles and what you did to overcome them? What would you do differently in the future if the same problems occurred?"

**Decide:** Confirm rating, supported by data in the 'Share' step.

**Example:** So, we agree on the following: (summarize based on the responses to the previous questions).

**Conclude:** Summarize the performance review and confirm your confidence in the employee's ability to either continue performing well or to improve performance in the area(s) identified. Ask how the employee feels about the performance review. Have the employee sign the form and end on a positive note.

**Example:** So, let me summarize what I think I heard you say today regarding the work over the past year and the goals for the upcoming year (Summarize accordingly). Thanks for your input. I appreciate it, and the work you do for \_\_\_\_\_ unit and for the University.

## The Importance of Fair and Objective Performance Reviews

In evaluating performance, it is important to always compare actual performance to the performance goals/standards as determined during the Performance Planning stage. To be fair and objective, a performance review must be based on the employee's job-related behavior, not on the employee's personal traits or other factors not related to the job. Validity is the extent to which an employee's rating corresponds to actual performance. Unfortunately, personal biases can sometimes cause an employee's performance review to be distorted. Therefore, it is important that supervisors understand not only the College's rating scale but also these potential rating biases. The following list outlines some of the most common errors.



## Avoid These Common Performance Review Errors

### A. Using the performance review as a corrective action tool:

- a. Ratings should never be used to replace a meaningful and detailed performance discussion.
- b. The performance review meeting should not be a disciplinary session. Inappropriate behavior must be addressed appropriately when first observed.
- c. Discipline and discussion of performance goals/responsibilities don't work well together. Corrective action should be addressed at the time it is first warranted, and not at an annual performance interview.
- d. The performance review is a time to discuss strengths and weaknesses, perhaps assessing how an employee has done in correcting past behavior. However, it isn't the place to raise new disciplinary actions.

### B. Central Tendency:

- a. Occurs when a majority of individuals are rated in the middle. Supervisors who display central tendency tend to ignore or suppress differences in employee performance. Avoid this tendency by documenting observable behavior over the entire review cycle, and ask yourself if you are seeing the person's behavior objectively.

### C. Excessive leniency:

- a. giving a good performance review hoping a poorly performing employee will "grow into" it
- b. "easy" - giving all employees higher ratings than warranted
- c. Avoid the Leniency effect by measuring performance against established standards and expectations that are reasonable and attainable.

### D. Excessive strictness:

- a. "tough" - giving all employees lower ratings than warranted
- b. Avoid the Strictness effect by measuring performance against established standards and expectations which are reasonable and attainable.

### E. "Opportunity bias":

- a. the employee is given credit or faulted for factors beyond his/her control
- b. Examples:
  - i. Employee did not meet goals because there was a budget shortfall that caused resources to be unavailable
  - ii. Employee happened to be in the right place at the right time and had an opportunity to look really good.

### F. Halo/Horn effect:

- a. Letting a single strength or weakness of an employee determine the overall rating; a high (or low) rating given to an individual based on a single performance goal. This effect is also demonstrated if you let an overall global impression of the employee influence the ratings. It often occurs with employees who are friendly or unfriendly toward the supervisor or who are especially strong or weak in one skill. Avoid the Halo/Horn effect by:
  - Establishing clear and specific standards;

- Keeping good documentation of employee performance over the review period;
- Keeping things in perspective in terms of frequency, significance in the overall picture, and representation of the person's overall performance;
- Identifying specific behavioral examples which support your ratings; and,
- Asking yourself if you have overemphasized aspects of the person's performance you find particularly admirable or irritating.

**G. "Recency bias":**

- a. Basing the review on the last few weeks rather than the entire review period
- b. Recent observations tend to be more in the forefront of the supervisor's mind and therefore more "memorable". Avoid this tendency by:
  - Documenting observable behavior over the entire review cycle and giving it balanced consideration; and,
  - Asking others for their observations of the employee over the course of the year to see if they have different views than you.

**H. Similar-to-Me Effect:**

- a. Tendency to rate people who have qualities that you perceive in yourself. There is a common tendency for supervisors to rate those who are different from them lower than those who are similar to themselves. Avoid the Similar-to-me-Effect by:
  - Becoming aware of your own biases and challenge them;
  - Having clearly defined and agreed upon goals and competencies identified;
  - Regularly collecting documentation of observable performance covering the entire review period; and
  - Checking to see if your ratings are significantly different across groups, e.g., different for men and women, different across racial lines.

**I. Rating the job rather than the individual:**

- a. Some jobs seem to be more critical to the operation than others. For instance, a researcher who brings in \$100,000 or more might be critical to the operation. However, that does not mean that the researcher's performance is automatically Modeled.

**J. Length of service bias:**

- a. Length of service is not a factor in evaluating performance. A person may have lots of institutional knowledge but that fact in and of itself does not equate with exceeding expectations. Employees should not automatically receive high ratings based on longevity nor should employees be penalized for being relatively new to BSU.

**K. Comparison:**

- a. Tendency to rate people in comparison to other individuals instead of documenting performance goals and competencies. This tendency can be particularly unjust when comparing a person to someone else who is a superstar. Avoid this tendency by:
  - Establishing clear performance goals at the start of each review cycle, and evaluate performance against those goals.

## General guidelines for evaluating employee performance fairly and objectively include:

- Working with each employee at the beginning of the review cycle to develop performance goals.
- Throughout the review period, focus on observable behaviors related to goals and competencies; document observations, and provide feedback and coaching to the employee;
- Comparing observed behaviors to the established goal or competency, not to other people or the employee's past performance.
- Considering factors that may have changed the nature or scope of the job, including circumstances beyond the employee's control and your role in the employee's performance;
- Focusing on the employee's work and not on personal matters that are tangential unless those personal matters affect the work of the employee; and,
- Checking your perceptions for accuracy, fairness, balance, reasonableness, and consistency.
- Put the employee first. When an employee feels forced to defend his or her self-esteem, messages do not get through. Create a safe atmosphere, be empathetic, and focus on the positive. *How* a manager says what he or she says may actually be more important than what is said. The wrong tone can distort the content of the message.  
*Positive Remark:* "I asked Joan for feedback regarding your presentation skills. She said you were prepared and professional, but your style was a bit formal for that particular audience. Let's meet so we can work on this."  
*Negative Remark:* "I thought you had better presentation skills. Joan's feedback was that there was something about you that makes clients feel uncomfortable."
- Aim for self-review. If the Performance Management Process is a respectful, cooperative and participatory process, then the review of an employee's performance should be one also. This means that employees should be given the chance to take a long, hard and objective look at their own performance to identify areas where they perform well and areas in need of improvement. Supervisory and employee ratings may not always agree. However, in a participatory system, the goal is not absolute agreement, but rather a process directed towards achieving a consensus over time. When managers create ongoing dialogue year-round, employees already know where their performance lapses are and almost always raise them themselves during the rating cycle.
- Be open to respectful disagreement, but be specific about performance behaviors and their consequences. The point of performance-oriented dialogue is to reset direction, not overemphasize performance deficiencies.
- Set objectives and make accountability explicit. Reviews should be about the future, not the past. Determine what is working and what is not and apply the lessons learned. Employees should leave an annual performance review to understand how performance behaviors need to be adjusted and what they should do in the future. Supervisor's dialogue should also set specific objectives and follow-up dates for monitoring progress.

## Emphasizing the Importance of Performance Management

Effective communication between employees and supervisors is the key to successful performance management. Regular feedback helps employees focus their work activities so the employees and their supervisors can achieve their goals in support of the goals of their department and the College. Working together, employees and supervisors validate their job responsibilities, participate in developing goals, identify competencies, and discuss professional development opportunities while contributing to the mission of Bluefield State University.



# BSU Procedural Overview When Conducting Annual Performance Reviews

## Annual Performance Review Procedural Overview - Staff

For Performance Reviews Conducted for Staff, Supervisors are to:

### ✓ Prepare

- a. Schedule an interview with each staff employee. It is recommended interviews be scheduled at least one week in advance of conducting the interview. When scheduling the interview, provide each employee with a blank copy of the following forms (forms are available at <https://bluefieldstate.edu/resources/human-resources/forms>) and ask them to bring the forms to the performance review:
  - 1) The Annual Performance Review Form – Staff (for self-review). Note: *Self-review should be encouraged but is not required.*
  - 2) Discuss goals for the upcoming performance cycle during the performance review.
- b. Supervisors are to prepare for the performance interview by reviewing all performance documentation compiled over the review period. Supervisors should also review the position description and goals that had been established for the respective rating cycle. Supervisors are then to complete the “Annual Performance Review” Form before the interview, commenting as may be appropriate on performance elements. Those elements checked “Unsatisfactory” “Needs Improvement” “Meets Expectations” or “Exceeds Expectations” require comment. Note: Comments, negative or positive, should come as no surprise to the employee.
- c. Supervisors are to establish goals for the upcoming performance in advance of the employee performance interview.

### ✓ Conduct the Performance Interview

- a. The Supervisor is to meet with the employee privately and without interruption.
- b. The Supervisor is to review the employee's job description together with expectations and standards established and communicated at the beginning of the performance period.
- c. Discuss performance elements as indicated on the completed annual performance review form, allowing for employee input.
- d. Encourage employees to make written comments on the completed form.
- e. Sign the annual performance review form in the employee's presence and obtain his/her signature.
- f. Discuss goals and objectives for the upcoming performance plan year, and enable employee input with regard to goals and objectives. Give the employee copies of their completed annual performance review. The supervisor makes copies of the completed annual performance review for the department file and then sends signed originals to the Office of Human Resources.

## Additional Considerations

- Schedule the forthcoming performance review with the employee preferably two weeks in advance of the session.
- Prepare for the session and explain to the employee how the performance interview will be conducted.
- Provide the employee with a current job description and relate specific measures of output and results established for the job.
- Ensure that the job description tasks and related measures are output-oriented and relate to quality, quantity, timeliness of service, etc.
- In preparation for the session, it is important to review all performance documentation compiled over the entire review period.
- Ensure that performance will be appraised based on direct measures of output and results.
- Ensure that employee behavior and personal traits will be considered only to the extent that they are job-related and affect job results.
- Appraise the employee's performance using the applicable performance criteria listed on the form as a guide in the review process.
- Identify the critical elements of the job plus any goal-setting standards and relate them to the specific criteria listed that best measure the actual performance. For example, the major job function of "answers all inquiries about admissions from students, faculty, the public, etc." relates to *Interpersonal Relations and Oral and Written Communications*.
- It is strongly recommended that supervisors review the performance review comments and the completed annual performance review form with your upper-level administrator in advance of meeting with the employee to assure general agreement regarding the employee's performance.
- When meeting with the employee:
  - ❖ Meet on time and privately, without interruption.
  - ❖ Review the purpose of the performance review.
  - ❖ Mutually review the job description to ensure it is accurate and current.
  - ❖ Proceed with the performance review, providing the employee the opportunity to respond.
  - ❖ Discuss summary comments, including strengths, areas needing improvement, and plan for improvement.
  - ❖ Conclude the performance review with an overall summary of the review.
  - ❖ Plan and schedule any follow-up activities concerning performance, development, or mutual goal-setting.
  - ❖ Offer the employee the opportunity to make written comments regarding the performance review.
  - ❖ Inform the employee when to expect the next formal performance review.
  - ❖ Secure the employee's signature.
  - ❖ Provide a copy of the completed annual performance review to the employee.

- After the Performance Review Session with the Employee:
  - Y After obtaining the necessary signatures, forward the original completed performance review to the Office of Human Resources for inclusion in the employee's personnel file by the deadline specified. Be sure to keep a copy in the department's supervisory files.
  - Y Conduct follow-up activities regarding performance goals and objectives, including performance improvement, if identified, that may have been discussed with the employee.
  - Y Continue ongoing performance review each day.
  - Y Continue creating opportunities for professional development for each employee under supervision.
  - Y Continue monitoring the progress with which employee and department goals and objectives are being achieved.

## Developing Employees and Encouraging Career Growth

Developing employees is critical to the University's future. Each employee serves as a leader within the organization and represents not just an individual school or department, but also the larger University community as well. Therefore, BSU expects supervisors to support employees with professional development opportunities that will assist employees:



- To productively meet the demands of their current jobs, prepare for future work opportunities and challenges; and
- To experience satisfying and successful work experiences and future career choices.

To help facilitate professional development conversations, supervisors can choose a few of the following questions to prompt conversations with their employees.

### Current job

1. What do you like most about your current job?
2. What would you like to do more of?
3. What do you like the least about your current job?
4. What would you like to do less of?
5. What skills does my current job require? What is your current skill level in these areas?

### Professional Growth Goals

1. Two or three years from now, where would you like to be professionally?
2. What would you need to achieve now to accomplish this?
3. What new responsibilities or challenges would move you ahead?

### Untapped Abilities

1. Is there something more that you could do that would make a greater contribution to your organization?
2. Is there a new task or role you could take on that would make better use of your talents?



3. What additional value could you provide? What would it take to “release” this?
4. What are you not “allowed” to do that you could do and would like to do?
5. What challenges would you like to face that might help you grow?

#### **Job Satisfaction**

1. What would help you obtain more satisfaction from your work?
2. What changes could you make in your performance that would satisfy you more?

#### **New Skills and Capabilities**

1. What new jobs, roles, and so forth, would you like to be better prepared for, or to pursue?
2. What training, certifications, etc. would you like to obtain?

*Adapted from the University of Washington U-Plan: Workforce and Career Development Planning Guide, February 2007  
Source: Strategic Employee Development Guide,  
Robert Brinkerhoff and Rhonda Messinger*

Each career discussion should be documented so employees may plan the next steps, such as seeking opportunities to learn by experience, from others, or through additional education.

## **Employee Refusal To Sign and/or Acknowledge Performance Review**

In the event an employee chooses not to sign or acknowledge the review, the supervisor should take the following steps (these steps assume a conversation between the employee and supervisor has already taken place):

- The supervisor makes a note on the form that the employee has refused to sign the performance review, signs the form, and then sends the form to the Office of Human Resources.
- The supervisor contacts the Office of Human Resources and notifies them that an employee has refused to sign/acknowledge the performance review.

## **Performance Review Appeals**

An employee’s signature does not indicate agreement with the performance review, but rather that the employee has read and understood the contents of the form. If an employee disagrees with a performance review and cannot resolve the disagreement with the supervisor, and if there is a Reviewer at the next reporting level higher than the supervisor (up to the level of President of Bluefield State University), the employee may appeal to the Reviewer for another review of the performance review. Performance review appeals must be made in writing by the employee to the Reviewer and received by the Reviewer within 10 workdays of the initial performance review meeting (the performance review meeting that occurred with the supervisor and the employee). In instances where a position reports directly to the President, the performance review is at the discretion of the President.

## Appeals - Reviewer's Action

The Reviewer should discuss an employee's appeal with the supervisor and employee. After discussion of the appeal, the Reviewer should provide the employee with a written response within fifteen (15) workdays of receiving the appeal. The response should indicate one of the following:

- The Reviewer agrees with the performance review;
- The supervisor will revise the performance review;
- The supervisor will complete a new performance review;
- The Reviewer will revise the performance review; or,
- The Reviewer will complete a new performance review.

*Portions of this Guide Adapted from  
The West Virginia Division of Personnel's Supervisor's Guide to the Performance Management and Appraisal Process – July 2005; and  
The University of Virginia Resource Guide to Performance Management 2013*

## Appendix

### FAQs

**Who will use the performance management process?** The use of the performance management process is required for all regular Staff employees.

**What if goals change or need updating during the year?** An employee, with the concurrence of their supervisor, or their supervisor can update goals up to the time when the performance review is scheduled.

**I hired a staff employee two months ago. Do I need to complete an annual performance review for this employee?** Supervisors of new full-time or part-time regular staff employees serving 6 months are to complete the 6 Month Performance Review at the end of six months.

**If the immediate supervisor leaves the job during the year, who will rate the employee's performance at the end of the year?** The individual who is hired to replace the departing supervisor will conduct the performance review. That person can, and is encouraged to, seek input from others regarding the employee's performance.

**What happens if an employee changes jobs during the year?** Tasks in the process by the former supervisor should be completed and then transferred to the new supervisor.

**What happens if a supervisor doesn't turn in an annual performance review?** All performance reviews that have not been turned in to the Office of Human Resources by the specified deadline will be reported to executive leadership. Executive leadership will be responsible for obtaining "late" performance reviews for their

designated areas and forwarding them to the Office of Human Resources as soon as possible. The supervisor's failure to complete a performance review will not penalize the employee.

**What happens if an employee refuses to sign the performance review form?** Employees are asked to sign the performance review form and indicate that they have met and discussed the review with their supervisor. The employee's signature does not indicate agreement with the content of the performance review.

**If an employee refuses to participate in the performance management process, is the performance review for that employee still valid?** Yes. Employees are required to participate in the performance management process. Failure to do so does not stop or impede the process. The supervisor will complete the performance review, document that the employee refused to sign the performance review, and then forward the completed performance review to the Office of Human Resources.

**My supervisor does not have time to give us all performance reviews. What do I do?** All supervisors are required to complete the performance management process for their staff employees. If a supervisor has an abundant number of direct reports, then the department should consider a redistribution of responsibilities so employees receive an accurate and fair performance review.

**What happens in a year when there is no money for salary increases? Do we still do a performance review?** Yes. The purpose of performance management is to reflect on a person's work and provide feedback that helps them improve and grow. Regardless of budget considerations, performance reviews for staff employees must be conducted annually.

## Policies & Forms

A number of different policies relate to performance management. Relevant information may be found at <https://bluefieldstate.edu/resources/board-governors/policies>. Forms may be found at <https://bluefieldstate.edu/resources/human-resources/forms>.

## Questions

Questions regarding performance management should be directed to your immediate supervisor, or to the Office of Human Resources at 304-327-4013. A copy of this guide is available on the Office of Human Resources "Performance Review" webpage at <https://bluefieldstate.edu/resources/human-resources/forms>. Thank you.