

## **Performance Evaluation Guidelines**

The University's mission cannot be achieved without a competent, motivated workforce. The performance evaluation is a necessary component to any performance management and professional development program for employees. Performance evaluations are intended to support skill building of each employee and to encourage an efficient and effective operation. This guide will assist supervisors in carrying out this important assignment. These evaluation guidelines are intended to guide supervisors who conduct performance reviews for classified and contract professional employees.

Performance evaluations are intended to:

1. Measure the extent to which the employee's performance meets the requirements of the position. It is the opportunity to appraise past performance by recognizing and supporting good performance and identifying areas that might require improvement;
2. Establish goals for the future;
3. Strengthen the relationship between the supervisor and the employee by opening channels of communication and creating opportunities to assess the employee, the position and plan for the future of the departmental human resources. These goals are best accomplished through interactive review of the position description, identifying opportunities for performance growth and focusing on enhancement of all areas of performance.

The key ingredients in a successful evaluation are: identifying performance expectations; being consistent in measuring and communicating the extent to which those expectations are being met; and providing opportunities for feedback and clarification.

### **PROCEDURES FOR PREPARING THE EMPLOYEE EVALUATION FORM:**

**The Evaluation Forms.** The evaluation areas contained in the sample forms are intended to serve as guidelines for discussion. The completion of the form is not as significant as the discussion of performance that will naturally occur ---- a discussion which should foster two-way communication between you and the employee. The document, once completed, also becomes a record of that evaluation discussion for future reference.

Supervisors may select from the approved evaluation forms [<http://www.montana.edu/hr/EmployeeRelations.htm>] and select the form that best matches the evaluation factors for the position. Supervisors may develop their

own forms if the forms are approved in advance by HR/Affirmative Action (for contract professionals) or Employee and Labor Relations (for classified employees).

**The Evaluation Process.** The evaluation forms can be completed in one of several different ways as noted below:

1. The employee completes the form as a self-assessment or uses a self assessment tool, while the supervisor completes a copy of the form separately. The forms are then reviewed together. After that discussion, the supervisor finalizes the evaluation, signs it and submits to the employee for his or her acknowledgement of receipt. This type of interactive approach frequently generates the most productive discussions, as both parties to the evaluation process will have assessed the performance relative to job standards prior to the joint discussion.

2. You and the employee complete the form together. This approach allows the employee the opportunity to provide his/her perspective during the preparation of the evaluation form.

Please provide your staff member with advance notice of the evaluation process, along with a copy of the actual evaluation form. Each employee should have sufficient advance notice of the evaluation meeting to reflect on his/her performance prior to the actual evaluation meeting. Evaluations of all employees should be completed and submitted to HR/P&PS no later than April 15.

**Employee Evaluation Discussion.** The performance evaluation should include a planned discussion between you and the employee. The discussion should concentrate on the development of, or clarification of, clear performance criteria: what are the specific job responsibilities and what performance expectations will be used to measure the employee's success in achieving them. It is recommended that the position description serve as a starting point for review of job responsibilities. If the position description needs to be revised to reflect changes in operations, it is recommended that revisions be made each year to reflect changes in job responsibilities.

To reinforce the two-way communication process of successful evaluations, your employees should be encouraged to identify their most important achievements over the evaluation period. When giving feedback, it is useful to focus first on the positive aspects of the employee's performance.

An employee should be informed of any incidents of marginal or unsatisfactory performance or misconduct. When addressing these performance shortfalls, you may find it helpful, and less awkward, to seek the employee's input in identifying these deficiencies. Structuring developmental plans and timetables to improve deficiencies or to improve performance level is recommended. HR/AA or HR/Employee and Labor Relations can assist supervisors wishing to develop such plans.

It is important to allow enough time and privacy during the evaluation process to permit ample opportunity for the employee to respond and contribute. One should avoid assessments based on vague impressions or comparisons with other employees under your supervision. The most successful evaluations concentrate on concrete examples of job performance.

A successful evaluation is one in which the supervisor and the employee feel that they had the opportunity to participate and contribute to the assessment. The goal is to develop an evaluation that includes employee input and uses objective criteria related to the position requirements. While this will not always mean that the employee agrees fully with the results of the performance evaluation, the employee should be able to acknowledge that the evaluation has been completed and the results have been provided. There is space on the evaluation form for the employee to add any comments.

The completed evaluation form is maintained in the employee's regular file in the Department with a copy sent to HR/Personnel and Payroll to be placed in the permanent employee file. The employee should be provided a copy of the completed form.

### **Pitfalls In Performance Evaluations**

#### The "Halo" Effect

The "Halo" effect occurs when one factor influences ratings on all factors. Examples: An employee's work is of good quality; therefore, other ratings (such as those on promptness or work quantity) are higher than normal. Another employee is frequently absent, with the result that the ratings on other factors are usually low.

#### The "Cluster" Tendency

The tendency to consider everyone in the work group as above average, average, or below average. Some raters are considered "tough" because they normally "cluster" their people at a low level. Others are too lenient. "Clustering" overall ratings usually indicates that the rater has not sufficiently discriminated between high and low levels of performance.

#### Length of Service Bias

There is a tendency to allow the period of an individual's employment to influence the rating. Normally, performance levels should be higher as an individual gains training and experience, but this is not always the case.

#### Personality Conflicts

Avoid judgments made purely on the basis of personality traits. Effective, efficient employees do not necessarily agree with everything a supervisor believes in or states.

