



The Staff Performance Appraisal Process

This guide is designed to provide details about the University of Florida's staff appraisal process, which is used for both TEAMS (Technical, Executive, Administrative, and Managerial Support) employees and USPS (University Support Personnel System).

Formal appraisals are designed to recap feedback that has been provided to an employee throughout the year. When completing a staff performance appraisal, supervisors will want to focus on the employee's job performance (the employee's competence or ability to perform the job) and his or her work-related behavior (the way in which an employee performs his or her job), using specific language and examples of work performance or behavior observed throughout the evaluative period.

Ultimately, effective feedback is designed to do one of two things: (1) to reinforce positive work behavior so the employee will repeat the desired behavior in the future or (2) to redirect the behavior so the employee will improve performance moving forward.

An Overview of the Process

The University of Florida's appraisal period for TEAMS and USPS employees is March 1, through February, 28. The completed appraisal must be discussed with the employee, signed, and dated by March 31 and then returned to Employee Relations.

Appraisal Forms

Both TEAMS Exempt and TEAMS Non-Exempt and USPS employees are evaluated using the same time frame, however the forms used for each differs. The TEAMS Non-Exempt and ALL USPS form includes an employee self-assessment and supervisor assessment sections to outline a detailed description of the employees performance in the following categories: **work performance, attendance/reliability, customer service, initiative/productivity, teamwork and interpersonal skills**. A goals sections is also included. An overall rating should be assigned based on a total of the ratings assigned to each of the categories. Those overall ratings are:

- Below
- Minimally Achieves
- Achieves
- Above Average
- Exceeds

Why it matters?

For employees to remain engaged and to become high performers in an organization, they need to feel "connected" to their work and the workplace. That connection largely forms through the relationships of the employee with others in the workplace—both peers and supervisors. Thus, the supervisor's on-going feedback and the culmination of feedback annually in a written evaluation is critical to how the employee feels about his or her work.

All TEAMS Exempt employees receive a *narrative* appraisal which should be attached to the appraisal form for TEAMS exempt employees. The narrative should provide a detailed evaluation of the employee's performance in areas such as **productivity, initiative, leadership, attendance, reliability, customer service, teamwork, interpersonal skills, supervisory skills or other appropriate areas of responsibility**. Goals should also be set for the next appraisal year. An overall rating should be assigned on the appraisal form itself. The ratings are the same as listed above. Although the TEAMS exempt form does not include a self-assessment section, it is recommended that TEAMS exempt employees complete a self-assessment as part of their evaluation.

Please contact your Employee Relations satellite office prior to assigning an overall rating of *Minimally Achieves* or *Below*. Chances are you have already been in contact with them regarding the employee. Employee Relations may advise that additional documentation, such as a performance improvement plan, accompany the appraisal. Supervisors may use any of the ratings for individual categories without consulting Employee Relations on individual evaluative criteria but are asked to discuss issues of concern with Employee Relations if the overall rating will drop below "Achieves." Keep in mind that all evaluations should provide a clear and detailed notation and explanation for each category, however, categories in which the employee received a rating of *Minimally Achieves* or *Below* should also include detailed examples of the deficiencies as well as expectations of performance to raise the rating to an Achieves level.

Probationary Appraisals

Probationary appraisals are required for all TEAMS Exempt and Non-Exempt employees. If a probationary period for a new employee was completed before December 31, an annual appraisal should be completed for this coming appraisal period using dates that begin on the day after the last day of the employee's probationary period.

For example, Allie Gator was hired on January 1. Her probationary period lasted six months: January 1 to June 30. A probationary appraisal was completed for her covering her entire six-month probationary period.

- Her annual appraisal this year would be from July 1 (the day after the last day of her sixth month of employment), to February 28.
- Next year, her annual appraisal would get "on cycle" and would be for the standard evaluative period of March 1 through February 28.

If a probationary period ends after December 31, this coming annual appraisal in March should be skipped. The employee's first annual appraisal should be completed for the March 1, to February 28, appraisal period next year. In the absence of a completed probationary appraisal, the employee will default to an "achieves" rating.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Preparation

Although the appraisal time frame goes until the end of February you should begin preparing for the task in January. Collect performance documentation for the employee and begin to make notes on each of the performance categories. Remember to think about the entire appraisal period not just the past few recent month's events. In mid-February ask your employees to start preparing to write their self-assessment and to be prepared to turn it in to you at the first of March. Waiting until the last minute to write an appraisal makes meeting the deadline the priority task versus writing a meaningful appraisal.

Writing the Appraisal

Write with concentration and focus and make the writing a priority. Know that in order to write a meaningful appraisal that you will need to set aside time so you aren't rushed and where you can limit interruptions. Be sure to be specific and focus on behavior when giving an account of the employee's performance. Consider these tips when writing your appraisals:

- Describe specific challenges and actions taken
 - Name a specific problem or goal
 - Tell what was done and accomplished
- Describe recent education and training completed
- Include special assignments
 - Projects, task forces, and committees
- Exclude statements of beliefs and philosophies
- Use examples, but not the same ones repeatedly (consider the entire appraisal year)
 - Vary examples in different categories
- Provide context
 - Describe climate or environment surrounding the situation, problem, or goal
- Include outcomes and results
 - Add numerical data, if possible
- Use clear, direct language

Avoid Major Evaluator Errors

- The Halo/Pitchfork Effect- Allowing one good deed or bad incident to color the entire evaluation
- The Recency Effect- Failing to assess performance for an entire year and focusing only on the past few months
- Compatibility- Using friendship or lack of friendship to affect the rating
- The Central Tendency- rating all employees the same

Setting Goals

Establishing goals and objectives makes it clear what a supervisor expects of an employee. It also develops the employee and advances the organization. It is important that the goals set are relevant and directly relate to the basic objects of the work but that also challenge the employee. To create performance based goals consider using the SMART goal criteria.

- Specific- Make them as specific as possible
- Measurable- How will I know when it is accomplished?
- Aggressive and Achievable- Give them stretch
- Relevant- Make sure they focus on outcomes that really matter
- Time-bound- By when?

Read, Revise, and Edit

Prior to meeting with your employee take some time to refine ideas, streamline wordiness, and delete redundancies in the appraisal. Check for accuracy in spelling and grammar. Look for alignment of assigned evaluation score and narrative. Ensure that the narrative supports the rating. And get a second opinion from your supervisor. As a final step ask yourself:

- Does the evaluation clearly state observed behavior?
- Have you completed a final edit?
- Can you sign it with confidence?

The appraisal “Interview”

Chose a convenient time and place for your meeting. Select a location that will be comfortable for both you and the employee—one that provides privacy and is away from the immediate work area. In addition to reviewing the past years performance also spend time emphasizing growth and development and discussing the employee’s performance goals and encourage open discussion.

Regular Check-ins

As a supervisor you should be providing continuous feedback to your employees. Nothing on the appraisal should be a surprise—rather it should be a way to formalize the feedback you’ve been providing all along. Carving out time on a reoccurring basis to have “check-ins” with your employees is a way to ensure you are setting expectations, monitoring goals and objectives, as well as understanding what your employees need to be able to do their jobs effectively.

Conclusion

Appraisals are a key component for effective and ongoing employee development. They ensure employees receive reinforcement for those skills and accomplishments that are important for the efficient and effective functioning of the work group while also receiving information about those areas of performance that are not as strong and need attention for growth and development. Lastly, they provide an opportunity for employees and their managers to talk about goals in the year ahead.

If you have questions at any time about the appraisal process please contact your local Employee Relations office.

- Education and General, Auxiliaries, (352) 392-6615
- Health Science Center, (352) 392-3786
- Business Affairs, (352) 392-2333
- IFAS, (352) 392-4777

Your understanding of the process and responsibilities as a supervisor will ensure that your employee receives a meaningful appraisal that enables them to be more connected to their role, feel that they work they do is valued, and identify ways to grow, develop, and thrive.