Writing Effective Performance Appraisals

Performance and Staff Development Program
Performance and Staff Development Program Goals

- Provide accurate written feedback on performance and accomplishments for appraisal cycle
- Establish performance goals/expectations for coming cycle
- Address professional development needs and learning goals using competencies or other feedback
Writing Effective Performance Appraisals

- Prepare
  - Gather relevant performance documentation
    - Progress reports, letters, commendations, performance letters
  - Refer to goals/expectations and professional development plans for appraisal year
  - Advise staff that appraisals are being completed
  - Ask staff to complete Self-Appraisals and review these prior to finalizing appraisals
Assess performance results against established expectations/goals
- Consider any extenuating circumstances

Describe performance results in detail:
- Helps staff member understand how successful s/he is in performing job duties
- Lets staff member know where performance did and did not meet expectations
- Reference accomplishments, strengths and areas needing enhancement or improvement

Provide supporting examples to further clarify the assessment of performance
Example of Effective Feedback to Kathy about the Migraine Study

Kathy, you met the study intake goal by successfully conducting intake interviews with 50 study candidates by December 31, 20XX. During the year I discussed with you on several occasions the need to maintain accurate and complete study files and you have improved in this area. During our March 20XX audit all but two study files were completed per the established protocol. You have consistently received high ratings from study subjects, the study physicians, and the funding agency auditor about your interactions with study subjects. As previously discussed with you, our study review found that 95% of the subjects felt that you are accessible and “easy to talk to” and 98% said you have excellent customer service skills. The auditor noted that most subjects were pleased with the follow up and other services you provide.
Setting Clear Expectations

- Helps staff understand responsibilities
- Provides measures against which performance results are assessed
- Provides clear strategic direction for next appraisal cycle
- Sets foundation for effective performance management
- Enhances staff productivity
How do expectations and job duties differ?

- Job duties define what a person does.
- Expectations define how the person should perform the job duties.
- Expectations focus on end results, not just activities.

Sample Job Duty and Expectation

- Job Duty: Assist with recruitment and screening of study candidates.
- Expectation: In accordance with study protocol, recruit and screen 50 study candidates by December 31, 20XX.
Types of Expectations

Quantity or Output
- Focus on results; often involve numerical measurements
- Example: Recruit and screen 50 qualified study candidates by 12/31/XX.

Quality or Behavior Expectation
- Focus on means, method for achieving goal
- Example: Conduct an intake interview with each candidate by gathering demographic background, administering the study questionnaire, and gathering medical background information using established forms.
Use S.M.A.R.T.S. criteria to write expectations:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Results Oriented**
- **Time Bound**
- **Stretch**
Addressing the professional development needs of staff:

- Increases individual staff performance and effort
- Enhances the skills and abilities of the workforce
- Improves overall productivity
- Increases staff commitment and engagement
- Retains a highly qualified, diverse workforce
Professional Development Feedback can entail:

- Identifying competency areas staff member needs to enhance
  - Competencies are listed in the Online Performance Appraisal System or on HR website at [https://www.hr.upenn.edu/myhr/payandperform/appraisal/performance-management-programs](https://www.hr.upenn.edu/myhr/payandperform/appraisal/performance-management-programs)

- Suggesting or requiring formal or informal training

- Giving developmental assignments
  - Assignment to a project team
  - Designing or revamping a program, process or system
  - Training/mentoring others

- Discussing and formulating career plans
  - Consult with Penn’s Career Coach (215-898-3400) [https://www.hr.upenn.edu/myhr/learning/career/coaching](https://www.hr.upenn.edu/myhr/learning/career/coaching)
Discuss and document in the performance appraisal:

- How staff member demonstrated competencies identified for current appraisal cycle
- Competency areas that need further development
- Competencies that staff member should address in upcoming appraisal cycle to enhance development
- Staff member’s professional development and career plans
Feedback on competencies should:

- be detailed, qualitative
- help staff member’s professional development
- discuss in detail how staff member demonstrates the competency, using supportive examples
- advise staff member on how competency area could be further developed
**Instead of this feedback:**

“You have shown improvement in creating and maintaining study files.”

**Consider writing:**

“You have shown improvement in maintaining study files. You must continue to enhance your organizational skills to ensure that all files are completed accurately and that file information is in chronological order with most recent information on top. You should conduct periodic self-audits of the files to ensure compliance and take a file management or organizational skills workshop to assist you in managing large amounts of information.”
Program uses a 5-tier overall rating system:

- Staff member's performance consistently exceeds established goals/expectations for the position and is clearly outstanding overall.
- Staff member's performance consistently meets and frequently exceeds all established goals/expectations for the position.
- Staff member's performance consistently meets established goals/expectations for the position.
- Staff member's performance meets some, but not all, established goals/expectations for the position and improvement in specific areas is required.
- Staff member's performance is unacceptable for the position and significant improvement is required.
Writing Effective Performance Appraisals

- Things to consider when selecting the overall rating:
  - Did the staff member achieve all of the expected goals/expectations for this appraisal cycle?
  - Did the staff member achieve some but not all goals/expectations for this appraisal cycle? If not, were there extenuating circumstances which affected the staff member's ability to achieve the desired results?
  - If applicable, how did the staff member’s performance surpass the desired results? How often did the performance surpass the desired performance results?
  - What impact did the staff member's performance have on the attainment of the department's goals and objectives?
When completing appraisals remember:

- Give accurate, honest, detailed feedback
- Be fair and consistent
- Take into consideration the entire appraisal cycle, including extenuating circumstances that affected performance
- Feedback should summarize the verbal/written feedback given to staff during the appraisal cycle. (There should be few surprises.)
- Include feedback and discussion on professional development
- Differentiate overall ratings based on actual performance results obtained
- This is an important employment decision that should support the merit increase, other employment decisions, and comply with University policies
You can use the Online Performance Appraisal System to draft, complete, sign and distribute appraisals and self-appraisals. The Online Performance Appraisal System can be accessed at https://portal.hr.upenn.edu/

For assistance

Materials are available online at: https://www.hr.upenn.edu/myhr/payandperform/appraisal/performance-management-programs

Contact your school/center Human Resources professional or Human Resources Staff and Labor Relations at 215-898-6093
Writing Effective Performance Appraisals

- Performance Appraisal Schedule
  - June 1, 2017 – University-wide deadline for appraisals to be completed
  - Consult with your manager or school/center HR professional about the deadline in your area