Navigating the Annual Evaluation Process
The Performance Evaluation Process Overview

The Performance Evaluation (PE) process helps align employee work with the mission, vision, and University’s Four Bold Goals; improves job understanding; promotes a high level of job performance; and establishes future goals for career and personal growth. The performance evaluation provides managers with the opportunity to communicate with their employees by providing feedback on their performance and accomplishments from the previous year. The PE is also designed to assist staff members with understanding their job responsibilities and their manager's performance expectations for the coming year.

What is the purpose of the Performance Evaluation?
The Performance Evaluation is a tool designed to focus on aligning individual goal setting with the vision, mission, values and Four Bold Goals of the university. The PE also helps managers and employees identify development opportunities and the associated method of development. The Performance Evaluation is designed to:

- Provide managers with a tool to communicate performance expectations and goals, develop competencies, and evaluate performance.
- Ensure that individual goals and behaviors are aligned with UNT’s Mission, Vision Values and the Four Bold Goals;
- Provide employees with an opportunity to develop and improve their performance by receiving an honest assessment of their performance;
- Serve as a tool that allows employees and managers to create development plans that enhance their capability for the future;
- Demonstrate a genuine commitment to manage performance through developing and planning;
- Develop managers and employees for the future through the improvement of enhanced skills, abilities, and competencies.

The objectives of employee performance evaluations are to:

a) Provide feedback to employees on the quantity and quality of their work;
b) Identify those areas where employees are meeting or exceeding expectations or needing development;
c) Set specific goals and objectives for employees that align to the Four Bold Goals
d) Identify activities or projects for employees that align with the department goals;
e) Provide an opportunity for employees and supervisors to discuss development goals and the support needed to meet those goals; and,
f) Assist department heads and managers in evaluating their work force, identifying employee potential and establishing priorities for training, development, and merit compensation.

Evaluating Performance against Skills and/or Competencies

1. Start at a high level

- Overall how did this person carry out her/his role?
- What data do you have to support your judgments? How recent is that data?
- Do you need to collect more data from different perspectives (e.g., peers, project team members, students, faculty, external customers or vendors)?
Try to describe the person, including their strengths and weaknesses, without using the skills and/or competencies, and then reflect on the skills and/or competencies they exhibit.

Think about the UPO-31. Does the UPO-31 help you to understand how the employee could perform better in her/his job? If not, consider updating it.

Some of the questions which may be useful to consider are as follows:
- How does the employee approach problem solving?
- How does the employee lead?
- How does the employee work with others?
- How does the employee spend her/his energy?
- How would it feel to be working in her/his team?
- How does the employee get her/his ideas implemented?

2. Bring all of the information together
- Consider each of the tasks and related skills and/or competencies and reflect on the employee’s performance.
- Do you have evidence of what her/his intent was; how does this compare with how she/he behaved?
  - What was the result?
- What evidence do you have of negative performance or behaviors?
  - How frequent are they?
- Rate where most of the indicators are (e.g., the frequency with which you see behaviors)
- Consider whether the behavior is typical of the employee or whether there could be extenuating circumstances
- Ensure you fully understand the role of the employee.
  - Think about what success in this role looks like.
  - What are the key skills or competencies that will drive this success and attain desired performance results?

Setting Goals and Objectives

1. Ensure there is clarity on the departmental and university goals. Ask the employee to summarize if you are not certain of his or her understanding

2. Set SMART goals (e.g., Specific or Stretching, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound)

3. Align departmental and university goals to individual goals and supporting actions

4. Use open questions with follow-up questions to help the employee set their own goals

5. Ensure that all individual targets have clear measures and describe outcomes the employee can directly influence

6. Observe body language for any signs that the employee does not accept, or is unhappy with a target

7. Build ownership by describing the positive consequences of achieving the desired outcomes for the university, the department, and the individual
How is the PE structured? Review Job Aid

1. Position Data- This overview summarizes basic data for the position being evaluated
2. Planning guide- This is the evaluative portion of the review outlining the scores for this year’s performance. It contains the key result task (competency or job duty), performance standard, weight, score and justification.
3. Performance Agreement- This is the agreement for the coming year’s performance. This should outline the goals and objectives for the coming year as well as the development plans and action plans as necessary.
4. Performance Review- This is the summary page of the current year’s assessment. There is a section for general comments from both the manager and employee.

Preparing for the PE Meeting

1. Schedule the meeting in advance (Week 4)
   • Dedicate time on your own calendar to prepare for the discussion;
   • Schedule it in Outlook and add employee to meeting notification
   • Allow ample time with your employee for the actual PE discussion; and
   • If possible, arrange a meeting room for the actual PE discussion rather than your normal office

2. Self-Assessment (Week 4)
   • Ask your employee to complete a self-assessment well before the PE discussion; and
   • Ask them to share their self-assessment with you before the meeting.
   • Give between 1 & 2 weeks for self-assessment if possible.

3. Review the previous PE and any interim appraisals (Week 3)
   • Review the current performance criteria, goals, objectives, projects, and activities;
   • Assess current skills/competencies and review the development plan;
   • Recall how to set SMART goals (i.e., SMART is defined as Specific or Stretching, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound)
   • Read their job description, UPO-31 and their major responsibilities

4. Collect inputs from others (Week 3)
   • Look at departmental surveys;
   • Speak with other departments about service received or given; and
   • Examine relevant cards, letters, emails, and other correspondence
   • Consider doing a 360 feedback on your employees;

5. Determine the goals and objectives for the upcoming year (Week 2)
   • Where you feel they have skill gaps or skills in which they excel?
   • Where you feel they have competency strengths or gaps?
   • Which skills and competencies do they need to develop next year?
   • What development methods would you like them to use to build or improve competencies?

6. Prepare a draft of the PE (Week 1)
   • Enter the outcomes for the key result areas including: goals, objectives, projects, and activities for the current year
• Determine the outcomes of the current development plan
  Assess how the employee performed against the core requirements
• Gather evidence to support your conclusions
• Ensure that you have ‘tested’ your conclusions by obtaining feedback from others
• Revise the UPO-31, if necessary

7. Complete the Review (Week 1)

The PE Discussion

• Make sure you have done your preparation
  • Collect all relevant information, including PE documentation
  • Give the employee plenty of notice (at least 48 hours notice)
  • Keep the appointment
  • Ensure there are no interruptions
  • Allow adequate time for the meeting (at least one hour)
  • Think about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it.
    ■ What do I want them to know?
    ■ What do I want them to be thinking?
    ■ What do I want them to be feeling?
    ■ What do I want them to do more of?
    ■ What do I want them to do less of?
    ■ What do I want them to do just the same?

• Establish a climate for development, not evaluation.
  • Avoid “barriers” such as desks between you and the person during the PE discussion
  • Put the employee at ease
  • Develop a climate to encourage open, honest, and productive discussions

• Remember to explain the overall process and purpose of Performance Evaluation before going to the specifics.

• Set an agenda for the whole meeting at the outset and ensure you ask if the employee has any points to add.

• Start the discussion
  • Start with the high level general assessment of performance.
  • If you had them complete self-assessment you should discuss any differences of opinion
    ■ use questions to uncover learning from successes as well as failures; and, identify areas of opportunity for improving;
      ▪ What do you think you did well in this area?
      ▪ What could you have done better?
  • Provide balanced feedback.
  • Be objective. When giving constructive feedback on the less successful aspects, provide evidence rather than opinion; describe facts rather than judge evidence.

• Assess and Measure Accomplishments
  • Discuss how the employee’s work impacted the department or university
- Explore the impact of their work and whether it made a significant difference or initiated a change to a process or procedure
- Was the quality and quantity of work what was communicated and expected?
- Did the quality and quantity of the work reflect the employee’s job knowledge?
- Were the goals achieved in a planned manner or was it last minute?
- How did their achievements impact the department, and/or team in terms of quality and timely delivery of services?
- Were the agreed objectives as specific or stretching as first thought, or were the objectives too easy?
- Were there significant other, unplanned situations that were delivered in lieu of the planned goals that were of a higher priority?
- What other factors impacted their ability to deliver?

- **Giving Feedback** in a performance discussion
  - Giving feedback is a fair, consistent, and respectful interchange of information
  - Constructive feedback must be honest, factually-based and free of biases or discrimination
  - Explore each performance area to acknowledge successes and strengths to build on
  - Explore improvement and development opportunities
  - Feedback should be balanced between positive and constructive
  - It should be individual and descriptive rather than judgmental
  - It should also be objective, observed behavior and specific rather than general
  - To be most useful, feedback should be timely. Ideally, this is immediately or as close as possible in time to the behavior to which it refers
  - Feedback works best when the individual: hears, understands, accepts, and acts appropriately on the feedback given

- **Receiving feedback** in a performance discussion
  - Model good behavior
  - Actively encourage and seek feedback
  - Receive it positively. If you cannot think of anything to say, just say ‘thank you.’ You want them to continue to give you feedback even if it is difficult to hear
  - Listen to their feedback. Do not give reasons, excuses or defend your behavior. Try to understand the other person's point of view and avoid defensive reactions
  - Ask questions to clarify. Remember that feedback should be on the impact of your behavior not on your intention
  - Remember it is their perception. A person’s perception represents their reality. Therefore, you should demonstrate a willingness to respond positively and address their concern.
  - Act on the feedback appropriately. Reflect on the information, research the facts, then decide the best course of action
Skills and Competencies Development Planning

Development Planning can be used to address either performance or development for new skills/competencies to help the employee continually grow in their current role or for a new job.

1. Key steps in skills development planning:
   - Invite your employee to give her/his assessments first. “I would like to talk about areas that you feel like you could develop your skills and competencies. What areas do you think you could improve?”
   - Summarize to demonstrate understanding with supporting examples of actual behaviors or performance criteria demonstrating skill gap. “From my perspective, you could work on... I say this because I have seen you <insert skill>. What is your perspective on that?”
   - Review and reference the job description, UPO-31, cite major job responsibilities and job knowledge.
   - Where there is disagreement, use evidence and/or supporting examples of demonstrated ability and not opinion. (This should never be a surprise.)
   - Ask open questions to test employee’s understanding. “Do you understand? Can you reframe that back for me to make sure we are on the same page?”
   - Use suggestions rather than giving answers to explore options and encourage the employee to gain ownership and accountability for her/his actions. “What do you think about...?”
   - Summarize the agreed actions, being clear on timing and responsibilities.

2. Key steps in competency development planning:
   - Be prepared and have multiple examples of any competency development need
   - Identify progress already made
   - Give at least equal weight to an employee’s strengths and development needs. Be honest.
   - Remember the rules of good feedback
   - Concentrate on the behavior not on the person. “This behavior is unprofessional and needs to change immediately.” NOT “You are unprofessional.”
   - Use observations not opinions; facts not assessments.
   - Describe outcomes and consequences and not what the person should have done
   - Ask questions to get the employee to consider the benefits of changing behavior
   - Ask open questions to test employee’s understanding. “Do you understand? Can you reframe that back for me to make sure we are on the same page?”
   - Look for non-verbal cues as to how the employee is reacting. Reflecting feedback can diffuse the situation when they react emotionally
   - Look for situations where the employee has already demonstrated the desired behavior
   - Answer a question with a question to encourage the employee to explore the options
   - Look to create a safe environment to practice and develop skills and competencies for the employee
Common Errors:

- **Lack of ongoing communication** during the year
  - Remember to address performance throughout the year, both positive and negative
  - Information in the performance evaluation should not be the first time someone learns of their performance deficiency or their successes.
- Focusing on **evaluation** and **not development**
- **Supervisors not prepared**- too busy
- **Failing to develop staff** in their current or for future roles
- **Review** is continually **delayed**
- Employee not given time to respond
- **No** concrete **examples** provided
- **Halo Effect**- do one thing really well, overshadows any areas of improvement
- **Horns Effect**- do one thing really poorly, overshadows any areas of good performance
- **Recency Error**- performance improvement close to evaluation makes you either forget about the poor performance during the rest of the year or do not want to rock the boat.
- **Cookie Cutter Effect**- rating everyone doing similar work the same to simplify

Details:

Review Window- April 1 through May 31.
- Annual evaluations for **retirement-eligible staff** utilizing the UPO-31
- Complete an evaluation on all staff **hired on or before March 1, 2017**
- Submit all signed and completed documents
  - **Hardcopy**- Campus Human Resources (Sycamore Hall, Room 119)

Front cover of UNT System Human Resources brochure.