
The Narrative Performance Appraisal

Many supervisors become nervous when asked to prepare narrative performance appraisals. Most of this stress comes from a lack of confidence that they can write a summary, which accurately describes their employee's performance. This issue is at the heart of why the "GUIDELINES" were prepared.

Although the narrative approach promotes flexibility in preparing the performance appraisal document, the process should involve structure and consistency where appropriate. For example, if you are completing a performance appraisal for three administrative specialists who report to you, then the criteria used should be consistent from position to position and the format should be similar.

Preparing the narrative appraisal involves a structured process including:

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| Step 1 | Organizing Your Thoughts |
| Step 2 | Selecting Applicable Criteria |
| Step 3 | Getting Ready to Write |
| Step 4 | Describing Performance on Paper |
| Step 5 | Discussing the Evaluation |
| Step 6 | Preparing for the Next Review Cycle |

Guidance in completing each of these steps is provided in the pages that follow. It is important that you complete each step in the order they are presented to ensure a thorough and fair performance evaluation and successful utilization of the "GUIDELINES".

Step 1 Organizing Your Thoughts

The first step in the performance appraisal process requires you to think through the duties and responsibilities assigned to each employee to be appraised and to determine the aspects of work relevant for evaluation. As you begin, you may wish to have the following in front of you:

- current job description
- established goals and objectives for this review cycle
- attendance record for the review period, if you perceive attendance to be of concern
- input from the employee as to his/her accomplishments and/or relevant job-related information which may be in the form of a self-appraisal
- input from former supervisor(s) if employee has been with you for less than one year, if available
- The Wright Way Compensation Policy #4210.1
- input from key customers, both internal and external
- performance-related documentation compiled during review cycle
- a list of job-related behaviors such as completion of projects, error rates, commitment to teamwork, disciplinary letters, etc.

As mentioned above, you may find it helpful to solicit information from the employee as to his/her thoughts concerning major accomplishments in the review period, areas of performance which should be improved, or comments on how he/she views their overall performance. This input not only involves the individual in the evaluation process, but also assists you in recalling incidents that occurred over the past review cycle.

Step 2 Selecting Applicable Criteria

“Criteria” are performance factors commonly used in performance evaluations and may include such topics as “quality of work”, “quantity of work”, “job knowledge”, etc. There is no magic to the number of criteria that needs to be used in an evaluation. However, the evaluation should include sufficient criteria that clearly present a full picture of the individual’s job performance. Keep in mind, it is not necessary to include references to all performance observations in the narrative appraisal. In fact, it is common for the narrative to include only a few job-related examples to demonstrate why you have reached a particular conclusion.

When selecting the most appropriate criteria for the employee you supervise, you may refer to:

- the list of 10 optional criteria on the Cover Sheet, section entitled “Guidelines”
- the three additional criteria which must be used to evaluate supervisors and managers (as outlined in the Compensation Policy #4210.1)
- any general criteria established by your department, division or college (this will enable you to maintain some consistency)
- any general criteria used to evaluate like/similar positions within your department, division or college

Within all criteria, consider the length of time the employee has been in the job and any extenuating circumstances that may have affected performance such as a change in supervision or reorganization of job duties.

Step 3 Getting Ready to Write

Remember that the written narrative appraisal must be shared verbally with the employee. The criteria you establish and factors you consider in reaching a conclusion about performance must seem fair, reasonable, and justifiable to the employee if the appraisal is to be constructive.

Several pitfalls you should avoid in appraising your employee's performance are described below:

- Distribution of Competence. Focus all appraisal comments on the employee's performance reflected in observable behaviors and results during the review period. Do not compare one employee to another. This comparison is irrelevant to the appraisal process and has a tendency to result in favorable bias toward employees you like and unfavorable toward employees you like less.
- Memory Failure. The influence of recent events can cause emphasis to be placed on more recent performance. Although this may be appropriate in the context of performance over the rating period, it may be inappropriate in the absence of context. For this reason, care must be taken to give fair consideration to events occurring early in the review period. In the future, a record of performance behaviors and results should be retained over the full rating period.
- Halo/Horns Effect. A single highly positive or negative performance incident can unduly influence the appraisal. It is important for you to place each event in the context of overall performance.
- Competition Within the Unit. Competition can result in one employee requesting the best assignments or seeking the spotlight to the disadvantage of other employees. You must be careful to avoid any bias, which may be created by competition.
- Range of Performance. Expectations for performance are not typically stated in absolute terms. You must be prepared to discuss performance behaviors or results observed which have a positive or negative impact on the overall performance.

Step 4 Describing Performance on Paper

Prior to this point, you've identified job responsibilities and applicable criteria. You've also reviewed the pitfalls of performance appraisals.

Now you're ready to write, right?

Understand that everyone's writing style is different, and there is no science to the length of the appraisal document itself. Typically there will be less than 10 criteria used to evaluate each employee. What is important is that the narrative accurately and fairly assesses the employee's performance. Also, it is important that employees performing like/similar jobs are evaluated using similar criteria.

To help you in putting together the narrative appraisal, and to produce as much consistency across division lines as possible, we have included in these "GUIDELINES":

- each of the 10 optional criteria listed on the Cover Sheet;
- a listing of the three required criteria which must be used when evaluating supervisors and managers;
- a definition of the 10 optional criteria listed on the Cover Sheet;
- questions to ask yourself, the supervisor, in order to document information about the 10 criteria;
- examples of levels of performance for each of the 10 criteria; and
- suggestions on how to prepare for the next review cycle.

Optional Criteria

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- 1. Job knowledge** – includes skills, the ability to apply those skills, the quality of the work performed.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- How informed is the employee about his/her job and related jobs in the unit as well as current trends in the profession?
- Does the employee take responsibility to become and remain competent?
- Does the employee use his/her knowledge to make sound and reasonable decisions?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to JOB KNOWLEDGE:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Delays or avoids providing substantive or technical input on issues.
- ▶ Routinely is unable to provide adequate advice in areas of responsibility.
- ▶ Is unreliable in computation of critical work that forms the basis for important decisions.
- ▶ Fails to evaluate ideas before rejecting them.
- ▶ Does not keep abreast of changes in areas of expertise.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Acts as a resource person and provides the professional leadership necessary for the technical subject matter.
- ▶ Implements new techniques, when necessary.
- ▶ Designs and implements new systems by explaining to all who will use them, considering their concerns and suggestions.
- ▶ Anticipates technical development needs.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Designs new systems or modifies existing ones to meet technical needs of the field as they emerge rather than waiting until the need is overwhelming.
- ▶ Develops new techniques through encouraging and using new ideas of staff.
- ▶ Anticipates need for new policies and takes appropriate action to ensure its development.
- ▶ Develops new approaches to problem-solving and follows through with plan for effecting improvements.
- ▶ Is recognized as a subject “expert” in various facets of the job.

2. **Work Habits** – includes attendance, punctuality, dependability, reliability.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Does the employee arrive at the designated time each day?
- Has the employee’s attendance impacted or hindered the department or college in getting the job done? Please note that reference to a specific illness/condition should not be mentioned.
- Once the assignment is given, does the employee follow through to an acceptable level in a reasonable time frame?
- Does the employee require constant reminders to complete assignments?
- Is the employee’s work consistent and error-free?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to WORK HABITS:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Puts personal interest first to the detriment of the job.
- ▶ Fails to complete the task without constant reminder.

- ▶ Displays emotion and loses control in work situations.
- ▶ Does not pitch in to help out in critical work situations.
- ▶ Does not follow through on work-related commitments.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Continuously tries to improve own work performance.
- ▶ Displays adherence to time and attendance rules.
- ▶ Assists others with projects when asked.
- ▶ Attempts to work out problems as they arise without involving supervisor.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Maintains an affable, friendly manner even when under severe provocation or pressure in the work situation.
- ▶ Is respected by others for the examples of work behaviors he/she sets in the organization.
- ▶ Welcomes constructive criticism that challenges him/her to improve.
- ▶ Recognizes very quickly when his/her expertise is needed, and jumps in readily to help get the job done.
- ▶ Completes work assignments ahead of schedule.

3. **Effective Use of Time** – includes quantity of work performed, meeting deadlines, completing projects, being productive.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Does the employee take seriously the responsibilities associated with completing his/her job?
- Is the employee dedicated to achieving the goals of the department and the university?

- Can the employee work independently, when appropriate?
- Does the employee complete tasks, assignments, and projects on time?
- Do others (peers, colleagues) pick up the slack for this employee in order to get the job done?
- Does the employee spend inappropriate amounts of time away from the desk/office/department, on the telephone, or visiting with co-workers?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to EFFECTIVE USE OF TIME:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Does not differentiate between priorities and as a result operates in a perpetual crisis atmosphere.
- ▶ Frequently changes work-related goals and/or objectives, thus never permitting completion.
- ▶ Consistently requests use of overtime due to failure to properly schedule activities.
- ▶ Frequently exceeds the expected time frame to complete assigned tasks.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Devotes adequate time and thought to work assignments and resource allocation.
- ▶ Handles assignments with regard to priority.
- ▶ Makes plans for short-range goals, and when appropriate, develops long-range goals.
- ▶ The quantity of work produced meets or occasionally exceeds job expectations.
- ▶ Wasted time/downtime is kept to a minimum.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ After agreement on general objectives, allows staff to develop plans for achieving them, which are then reviewed, modified and approved by a joint process.
- ▶ Schedules work priorities to assure optimal utilization of resources.
- ▶ Develops and maintains realistic goals and anticipates trends or changes which may have an impact upon the goals.
- ▶ Gives explicit description of work priorities accompanied by a clear rationale.

4. **Flexibility/Adaptability** – includes ability to change or to help others accept change; move from one task to another as priorities change.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Has the employee demonstrated a willingness to do more with less?
- Has the employee willingly learned new technology in order to become more productive?
- Does the employee accept coaching from supervisors or peers in order to improve performance?
- Is the employee reluctant to move away from accepted standards that have governed office procedures in the past?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to FLEXIBILITY/ADAPTABILITY:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Refuses to re-prioritize.
- ▶ As change occurs, asks “What’s in it for me?”
- ▶ Does not willingly help others when change occurs.

- ▶ Looks for reasons why assignments cannot be accomplished rather than going forward with the work.
- ▶ Does not seek to learn or apply new technology.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Demonstrates the ability to meet special needs or address special situations within guidelines or policies.
- ▶ Once the team decides to move in the direction of change, readily accepts and supports the change.
- ▶ Provides assistance when called upon, regardless of the level of the task to be performed – “jumps in when needed.”

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Effectively juggles numerous priorities, tasks, and user requests.
- ▶ Adjusts work style to fit the needs of others, the work unit, or the WSU community.
- ▶ Consistently adapts well to changing and/or difficult situations.
- ▶ Anticipates change and proactively seeks to help others deal with impending change.

- 5. Innovation** – includes the ability to find new ways of doing the job, new techniques, new technologies. Also, ability to do more with less in creative ways.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Does the employee take initiative to learn new aspects about his/her job?
- Does the employee demonstrate a broad perspective, or approach, to the job?
- Does the employee see the “total picture” and incorporate that information into problem-solving and decision-making?
- Does the employee keep current on developments within the profession and bring forth those ideas in order to keep WSU on the cutting edge?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to INNOVATION:

- ▶ Does not routinely identify ways of doing more with less.
- ▶ Is unreceptive to new ideas or trends in the profession.
- ▶ Continues to perform the job “the way it has always been done.”
- ▶ Content with outdated procedures and processes.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Remains up-to-date and current on trends in the profession.
- ▶ Receptive to learning and applying new ideas.
- ▶ Creatively solves problems.
- ▶ Suggests improved approaches to the job.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Continually improves programs rather than to be content with their present state.
- ▶ Frequently approaches supervisor with improved approaches to the job.
- ▶ Have on-going professional contacts with others in the field, discussing new technical improvements.
- ▶ Incorporates new theories into hands-on solutions to work-related concerns and issues.

6. Commitment to diversity – includes understanding diversity, treating others with respect and dignity, encouraging differences in employees, students, and customers, fostering others' awareness of diversity, and influencing others to celebrate diversity.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Does the employee welcome diverse opinions from others?
- Does the employee solicit input without prejudice, intimidation or discrimination?
- Does the employee attend activities and events in order to foster their learning about the world's diversity?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the Wright State University DIVERSITY STATEMENT, which follows:

Wright State University celebrates diversity. Our daily life is made rich by the diversity of individuals, groups, and cultures. The interplay of the diverse stimulates creativity and achievement in all facets of our existence.

Respect, tolerance and goodwill are the keystones to enjoying the diversity of our world. We are all linked to each other in a world created for all of us to share and enjoy. Each member of humanity has a potential contribution to make to the whole. It is our duty to encourage and promote that contribution.

Wright State University is committed to achieving an intellectual, cultural, and social environment on campus in which all are free to make their contribution. We will achieve an environment in which every student may think, and learn, and grow without prejudice, without intimidation, and without discrimination. We will achieve an environment in which personal dignity and respect for the individual are recognized by all.

Wright State University promotes the acceptance and appreciation of every individual regardless of race, gender, age, ethnicity, ability or disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, or national origin. We encourage appropriate activities and events which foster learning about the diversity of our world.

Wright State University will be a model for our geographic region, exemplifying that a human community can exist which celebrates diversity, enjoys the richness that diversity brings to our lives, and grows stronger with every new member.

7. **Analytical skills** – includes the ability to identify problems, apply logic and reason, and make decisions that are timely and appropriate; ability to apply technical skills to the job.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Does the employee thoroughly consider all aspects of a situation before rendering a decision?
- Does the employee demonstrate reliable skills in comprehending assigned tasks?
- Does the employee apply logic and reason in identifying problems and solutions?
- Does the employee react to situations, issues, etc. in a rational manner?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to ANALYTICAL SKILLS:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Decisions must often be reversed by supervisor to correct unanticipated negative results.
- ▶ Has difficulty handling routine work assignments.
- ▶ Does not reason logically or clearly.
- ▶ Decisions are not thought through and are acted upon quickly without logic.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Logic and reason are applied successfully when making decisions.
- ▶ Errors due to oversight and misunderstanding are infrequent.
- ▶ Suggestions to problems are reasonable and handled in an appropriate time frame.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Is regularly consulted by others for guidance when making decisions.
- ▶ Consistently makes sound decisions that are timely and appropriate.
- ▶ Has successfully demonstrated the ability to apply technical skills in responding to the diverse needs of the WSU community.

- 8. Customer service** – includes identifying the employee’s strengths and weaknesses in dealing with all internal and external WSU’s customers, possessing interpersonal skills necessary to handle issues expeditiously while maintaining a positive image for the unit, the division, and the university.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Does the employee understand who the customer is?
- Does the employee place a high value on providing quality service?
- Is the employee committed to maintaining and enhancing the image of the university through interactions with internal and external contacts?
- Does the employee prioritize response time to the customer?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Makes intentionally nonsupportive statements about own organization’s decisions to inside or outside groups.
- ▶ Talks and behaves abrasively and offensively.
- ▶ Makes misleading commitments or statements.
- ▶ Sends representatives to outside meetings who are not familiar enough with Wright State University.
- ▶ Often does not respond to customer questions or requests in a timely or accurate manner.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Provides basic information to inside or outside groups, and fields or refers questions appropriately.
- ▶ Takes initiative to pursue opportunities that will improve coordination of activities between groups.
- ▶ Provides latest information on WSU programs and activities, taking the time to stay current on issues.
- ▶ Responds to external and internal queries in a professional manner.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Always makes ample preparation before addressing an outside or internal group.
- ▶ Insists on high quality information and mechanisms for dissemination to the general public or target audiences, including faculty, staff and students.
- ▶ Presents self and WSU in a manner that consistently draws comments that reflect well on the organization.
- ▶ Extends self to ensure that the customer receives timely, accurate and professionally presented information.

9. **Budget management** – includes all aspects of the budgeting process; developing and maintaining the department budget.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- Is the employee's work accurate and timely?
- Does the employee take seriously the responsibility associated with the budgeting process?
- Is the employee proactive in alerting the supervisor about potential budgetary problems?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to BUDGET MANAGEMENT:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Submits expenditure justifications that are returned for revision because they are incomplete or difficult to follow.
- ▶ Shows no understanding of the relationship between budget, staffing and the work that can be accomplished.
- ▶ Shows little concern for timeliness or accuracy of administrative reports; considers paperwork or tracking an unimportant part of the job.
- ▶ Submits budgets, manpower and progress reports in which figures do not reflect current levels, add to totals, and accurately summarize progress.
- ▶ In monitoring the budget, allows for mistakes to go unnoticed.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Budget and other monetary work plans are on target and meeting the needs of the institution.
- ▶ Maintains accurate records including critical analysis before updating content and format.
- ▶ Routinely estimates resources needed by the department.
- ▶ Generally meets deadlines and provides analysis and options in reports.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Budget justifications are consistently based on comprehensive work plans identifying resource allocation target dates and manpower requirements.
- ▶ Performance data is always complete and up-to-date; reports on performance are always thorough and accurate.
- ▶ Is able to meet the needs of the unit while keeping spending under budget projections.

- 10. Communication skills** – includes the ability to effectively use verbal or written skills in dealing with supervisor, staff, peers, external or internal customers.

In evaluating the employee, ask yourself:

- How clear are the employee's written documentation, correspondence, and reports?
- Is the employee able to express ideas in a one-on-one situation, to a group and to an audience?
- Is the employee's correspondence appropriate to the mission of the university and appropriate to the audience addressed?

In order to evaluate this criterion, compare your job-related examples to the ones listed below relating to COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Listens only part of the time.
- ▶ Fails to effectively express ideas.
- ▶ Makes frequent errors in written communications.
- ▶ Frequently chooses inappropriate terms in verbal communications.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Is a good listener; writes, talks, and shares appropriate information with others.
- ▶ Is frequently successful in reaching a common understanding with others through verbal and non-verbal communication.
- ▶ Is able to present information and ideas in a clear and concise manner.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Communicates clearly, in layperson terms, highly technical, scientific terms.
- ▶ Is able to persuade others through effective communication.
- ▶ Written communication is consistently error-free and audience-appropriate.
- ▶ Responds to questions and challenges smoothly and with authority.
- ▶ Is able to convey negative or positive information equally well.

Required Criteria in Evaluating Supervisors/Managers

The Compensation Philosophy, approved by the Board of Trustees in October 1993, states that supervisory/managerial personnel shall be evaluated minimally on three required criteria. Those criteria include:

1. **Effectiveness in evaluating others** – includes the supervisor’s ability to ensure consistently fair, non-discriminatory performance evaluations for all employees whom they supervise. Also, measures the timeliness of completing performance reviews for their staff.

In cases where supervisors have not had the opportunity to complete appraisals on staff prior to this review period, this required criterion may be “Not Applicable.”

2. **Commitment to affirmative action/equal opportunity goals** – includes the supervisor’s ability to maintain effective interpersonal relationships without regard to race, sex, disability, or other cultural barriers; commitment to ensuring fair and equitable treatment in hiring, promoting, transferring, and providing career development opportunities. For more information, please refer to The Wright Way, Policy #4001.
3. **Commitment to teamwork** – includes assessing the supervisor’s strengths in working with and leading their “team”; accomplishing the departmental goals as a result of the leadership provided by the supervisor; consensus-building and empowering employees; soliciting ideas and working on solutions to problems with input from all.

Unsatisfactory Behavior Examples

- ▶ Fails to separate grossly inadequate employees before the end of the probationary period.
- ▶ Selects staff without attention to their capability to do the job.
- ▶ Fails to enforce or comply with rules for the work group.
- ▶ When employee fails to complete an assignment, will not counsel the individual, ignores the situation, and will not give individual additional assignments.

Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Prepares documentation relating to performance, both superior and inferior, and follows through with performance discussions.
- ▶ Searches for ways to reward positive work behaviors.
- ▶ Approves requests for sick and vacation leave after considering the workload of the department.
- ▶ Understands consensus building and empowerment, and stresses their usage within the department.
- ▶ Provides adequate supervision for staff, and helps employees develop professionally.
- ▶ Selects new hires by matching specific job requirements with candidate's experience and training.

Exceeds Successful Behavior Examples

- ▶ Gives credit to group and individual contributions when presenting results to superiors or outsiders.
- ▶ Meets with subordinates on a periodic basis and provides specific direction for improvement in given areas and explores new areas for continued professional development.
- ▶ Establishes a system of recruitment, selection, and training of staff that result in positions being filled with trained employees.
- ▶ Motivates employees both by personal example and by individually assisting them in strengthening their overall competence and utilizing them to their maximum potential.
- ▶ Enforces discipline without antagonizing his/her employees.

Completing the Narrative Document

When you have completed the written narrative for each employee supervised, you must prepare a Performance Appraisal Cover Sheet. The instructions for preparing the Cover Sheet are included on the form that is available in Printing Services.

Your pay increase recommendation should be consistent with and supported by the narrative. Keep in mind that others will be reading the narrative and should be able to reach a similar conclusion based on the appraisal information provided. Your pay increase recommendation should NOT be:

- ◆ arbitrary (unreasonable)
- ◆ capricious (irresponsible)
- ◆ discriminatory (prejudiced/biased)

You are encouraged to avoid making decisions about performance based on any factors outside of the appraisal data you have compiled. For example, it is not unusual for supervisors to allow the available pool of dollars to bias the evaluation. This practice or any variation of it defeats the purpose of performance appraisal. You should evaluate each employee on his/her own merits based on performance against job-related expectations.

*** OPTIONAL ***
**Selecting the Overall Rating for
Classified and Unclassified Staff**

Overall performance ratings are no longer indicated on the Cover Sheet; however, supervisors may include an overall rating in the appraisal document. If you choose to include an overall rating, here are some helpful tips in selecting an optional overall performance rating.

Classified and unclassified staff may be evaluated using a four-tier system, which includes Outstanding (Exceeds Successful Behavior), Meritorious (Successful Behavior), Adequate (a rating less than meritorious), and Unsatisfactory (Unsatisfactory Behavior). As a supervisor of a classified or unclassified staff member, you may consider evaluating employees as adequate in circumstances when, for example, most criteria is meritoriously rated, however, some very significant aspects of the position have not successfully been accomplished.

In each of the behavioral examples listed for the 10 optional criteria, as well as the required criteria for supervisors, we have included the optional four levels of performance standards.

The evaluation is an assessment of how well an individual has met job expectations, accomplished job duties and tasks, contributed to the department, adapted to changes, and so forth. As departmental and university demands and focuses change, so may performance evaluations.

When conducting performance appraisals, it is essential to measure performance consistently within a department. It is also important that supervisors evaluate their employees thoroughly and fairly. It is nearly impossible to measure performance of positions across campus with your department's positions.

The following descriptions can be used to reach an assessment of how well employees have performed the critical elements of their jobs, taking into consideration specific incidents that have occurred during the rating period. Each descriptor is written in a results-oriented fashion, thus, placing emphasis to final products and outcomes, rather than to immeasurable things such as work style, process, or attention to administrative detail.

OUTSTANDING

This category is reserved for employees who significantly and consistently exceed the meritorious level. Employees rated at this level invariably perform in the following manner:

- ▶ employee consistently achieves extraordinary results that have demonstrable benefit to WSU's mission, goals, and priorities.
- ▶ work is performed with little or no supervision and is exceptionally high in quality, quantity, and timeliness.
- ▶ job-related performance consistently exceeds expectations.
- ▶ employee anticipates and adapts to change, recognizes opportunities, and independently responds appropriately.
- ▶ employee volunteers to tackle difficult and risky assignments that others avoid and acts as a resource or team leader for others.

MERITORIOUS

A rating at this level indicates that the employee is a competent, productive, and valued member of the team. A meritorious employee consistently performs in the following manner:

- ▶ employee understands and supports university goals and priorities and when directed, works towards them.
- ▶ work quality is reliable and performed within specified time and cost limits.
- ▶ job-related performance routinely meets, and occasionally exceeds, expectations.
- ▶ employee adapts to change and works with others to ensure appropriate modifications.
- ▶ employee assists others with difficult assignments when asked and participates as a team player.

ADEQUATE

Employees in this category require improvement to reach the meritorious level, but are performing above the level at which corrective action would be immediately warranted. The aspects of performance that clearly distinguish the employee's performance from meritorious should be stated in the narrative appraisal. This is often evidenced by one or more of the following:

- ▶ employee does not fully understand university mission and goals and has difficulty working towards them.
- ▶ supervision is needed to perform non-routine work in a timely and cost effective manner.
- ▶ obstacles and change are not anticipated or responded to effectively without direction.
- ▶ does not make contributions to resolving unusual problems or issues unless directed.

UNSATISFACTORY

Employees at this level clearly fail to meet all or most significant job expectations. An unsatisfactory performance rating indicates that corrective action needs to be taken. Therefore, the supervisor must be prepared to regularly provide counsel and direction on improvement. Performance deficiencies should be clearly discussed with the employee and sufficient time should be given for remediation. An unsatisfactory rating is usually evidenced by the following:

- ▶ employee does not support or work towards departmental and/or university missions and goals.
- ▶ employee consistently requires direct and immediate supervision in order to accomplish routine tasks in a timely manner.
- ▶ job-related performance typically does not meet expectations.
- ▶ employee resists change and refuses to respond accordingly even after directed.
- ▶ employee avoids routine and non-routine assignments and does not participate as a team player.

Step 5 Discussing the Evaluation

The final step in the appraisal process is communicating the evaluation results to the employee. As with other aspects of the appraisal process, the appraisal conference is an opportunity to foster open and honest communication, help promote good performance, resolve concerns about expectations and the appraisal process, and plan for employee development.

There should be no surprises at the appraisal conference. Your routine communication with each employee about his/her performance should have created reasonable expectations that, in most cases, the review conference will simply confirm.

As you near the end of the rating period, performance feedback, positive or negative, should include your admonition that the formal review period will take performance through the whole period into consideration. The employee should not conclude that any one single incident would have more influence than others on the performance review. You are encouraged to provide periodic feedback throughout the rating period to all employees, even those whose performance is meeting expectations. Do not reserve feedback to those incidents of exceptional performance or cases where performance falls short of expectations.

Your appreciation for those employees consistently meeting expectations through the year should also be conveyed to encourage continued good performance and help develop expectations for the review.

As in other aspects of a formal performance appraisal process, it is important to follow a structured approach to conducting the appraisal conference. The following sections summarize steps you may wish to follow.

Preparing for the Conference

Do not walk into the appraisal conference unprepared. This meeting should be of significant importance to you and your employees and thus, should be carefully planned. Factors to consider when planning the conference include:

- ✓ Allow sufficient time in the meeting between you and your employee in order to thoroughly discuss the appraisal contents.
- ✓ Spend time in advance of the meeting to review all material including your notes as well as the narrative appraisal. Try to anticipate how your employee will respond and mentally prepare responses that will keep the conference constructive and focused on improving performance and fostering communication.

- ✓ Arrange for a meeting place where you can speak in confidence and without interruption.
- ✓ Do not view yourself as judge in the appraisal process. Your responsibility as a manager is to encourage and facilitate continuing improvements in performance. Your plans for the conference should concentrate on ways you can emphasize your role as coach.
- ✓ Anticipate your employee's concerns about the review process and be prepared to empathize by restating the purpose of the process and your commitment to keeping the process as fair and open as possible. One goal of the conference should be clearer understanding of performance expectations.

Always keep in mind, communication is a two-way process. You must be receptive to listening to the concerns of the employee just as you want them to listen to yours. In fact, it is to your benefit that you solicit feedback from the employee and provide them with an opportunity to discuss the issues with you. It is at that point that you both will truly understand the intent and strength of the performance appraisal process.

Setting the Agenda for Discussion

It is common for many thoughts and emotions to be expressed during the appraisal conference. The supervisor must take the initiative to control the agenda to assure that objectives for the conference are met. You should set the agenda to focus on the key areas of performance you wish to emphasize. Time should be allowed for open discussion and appropriate closure.

Keeping the Conference Constructive

Begin the discussion by emphasizing that the purpose of the meeting is to help the employee or the work group improve performance and summarize your goals for the session. Express your desire that the meeting be a constructive discussion, conveying your interest in the employee's success.

Be certain to cover each performance criteria, citing specific examples from the rating period. Also, ask the employee for their input. Do not be afraid to ask whether or not they feel your performance evaluation was fair. The narrative should reflect your best judgment based on the information available and your interpretation of circumstances. The employee should recognize that comments and clarification are valued and that you are interested in "fine tuning" your performance monitoring/appraisal skills.

It is to everyone's benefit to pursue why performance exceeded, met, or fell short of expectations to explore ways to reinforce good performance and avoid poor performance in the future. Seek the employee's counsel to identify ways to break down any barriers to improved performance. Don't forget to offer your personal assistance wherever possible to work with the employee to build on strengths and address weaknesses.

Closing the Interview

In closing, you should summarize the results of your discussion, focusing on the positive aspects of the meeting, employee strengths and accomplishments, and any improvement agreements made. You will want to reemphasize your confidence in the employee's abilities and potential for success and reconfirm your desire that the appraisal process remain a viable tool for effective communication. You will also want to restate your commitment to support the employee in his/her pursuits for professional development and career advancement. And most of all, make certain that the employee has a clear understanding of how to improve performance and that their questions regarding the appraisal were thoroughly answered.

Following Up

Immediately following the appraisal conference you should make notes to yourself about all topics requiring follow-up. This may include subsequent meetings to discuss particular improvement ideas, preparing requests for training/professional development, or re-evaluating the employee's performance expectation guidelines. View any commitment made during the interview as a promise that must be kept. Doing so will help to reinforce the perception that performance appraisal is a meaningful and worthwhile process at Wright State University.

Step 6 Preparing for the Next Review Cycle

Now that you have completed the narrative appraisal, discussed its contents with the employee, and sent the completed document and cover form to the Department of Human Resources, it's time to prepare for the next review cycle.

You now have a better understanding of just how detailed this process can be. Take some time to think about what materials, documents, information, etc. could have made this year's performance appraisal easier for you to perform.

In planning for next year's review, some things you may want to do at the present time include:

- updating or creating a job description for each employee reporting directly to you;
- setting goals, objectives, or expectations for the upcoming review cycle, and discussing them with the employee;
- creating a performance improvement plan if performance did not meet expectations;
- establishing the criteria which will be used to evaluate each employee during the next review cycle; and
- establishing meeting times which are designated to discuss career planning and employee development.

These suggestions can assist you in increasing consistency among those you evaluate, performing a more thorough, results-oriented appraisal, effectively documenting performance throughout the year, and providing clear goals and expectations which are periodically discussed with the employee.

Like anything else, the performance appraisal process becomes easier with experience. After several evaluation cycles you will not only understand how to efficiently and proactively conduct appraisals, but you will also recognize their benefit to you, the employee(s) you supervise, and the university.