

Best Practices in Performance Management at Auburn University





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Why Performance Management is Important

Five benefits to committing to a full performance management process

Every year, as performance management season approaches, it is common to hear, "Why do we even bother with performance reviews? They don't actually mean anything do they?" Performance reviews are just one part of the entire performance management process. The process is good for individuals, teams, and even departments. We'll discuss some of these positives below.

- Working toward common organizational and departmental goals. Individual performance drives team, departmental, and
 ultimately, organizational performance. It's important that the whole team understands the mission and vision of their own
 team as well as that of their department. Ultimately, tying individual performance to organizational performance increases
 employee engagement.
- Builds accountability. Accountability means being responsible for whether or not a job duty or goal is accomplished.
 Sometimes people associate accountability with negative consequences. However, when accountability is built and executed correctly, it can improve performance, increase employee involvement, garner feelings of competency, and encourage creativity and innovation.
- Clear understanding of specific job duties/responsibilities, goals, or previously identifed developmental needs. Clarity eliminates any uncertainties in individual employees and within the department. Supervisors and employees working together to set clear goals and expectations helps employees to clarify their role at Auburn. When people know what is expected of them, they are much more apt to perform at a higher level.
- Regular feedback. Regular feedback facilitates communication and builds relationships. If supervisors and employees
 aren't talking throughout the year, the performance management process is ineffective. Giving and receiving feedback
 is a great motivational tool that must be employed throughout the year for it to work. Regular feedback fosters better
 communication which increases the chance of reaching a successful outcome.
- Preparation for and developing career goals. It's a manager's job to help develop their people. Employee development
 is a wonderful benefit to having a clear performance management process. Effective performance management
 helps employees and supervisors identify ways to enhance performance. It provides the opportunity to discuss career
 direction and prospects. If supervisors and employees are not setting objectives and planning together to further
 develop an employee's career, then the performance management process is missing opportunities. Good performance
 management will help employees gain additional training or mentoring that can act as a basis for developing future
 professional plans.



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Auburn University Human Resources

The Performance Management Process

There are four phases that make up the Auburn performance management process.

Performance management is about achieving expected outcomes and results in our jobs. Successful use of our performance management process will help us to reach our organizational goals, increase employee engagement and productivity, and be better stewards of all the valuable resources we have at Auburn University. There are four phases that make up the Auburn performance management process; Planning, Coaching and Feedback, Planned Check-in, and Year-End Review.



PLANNING- In a performance oriented culture, work is planned out in advance using the employee's position description, previously identified areas in need of development, as well as measurable goals the supervisor and employee would like to see accomplished.

COACHING & FEEDBACK- Job duties/responsibilities, goals, and developmental needs should be monitored continually. Coaching and ongoing feedback throughout the year means that employees and teams are routinely making progress toward reaching their goals. Continuous, informal conversations create opportunities to adjust how the work is getting done.

PLANNED CHECK-INS- The planned check-in or mid-year review is a more formal approach, but includes coaching and feedback. The purpose of the mid-year check-in is to commend performance efforts for making progress toward planned goals and projects, re-direct performance efforts and discuss reasons why progress is not being made, and adjust duties/responsibilities, goals, or development

opportunities based on changing priorities. Some new objectives may need to be added and original goals may need to be altered.

YEAR-END REVIEW- In a performance oriented culture, employees and supervisors are held accountable for whether or not goals and duties are accomplished throughout the year. Once a year, it is useful and valuable to summarize employee performance. Organizations need to know who their best performers are as well as who might be falling behind. If a supervisor has followed the steps of the Performance Management Process (Planning, Coaching, Check-In's) the year-end review will have no surprises and be a productive discussion.



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Performance Ratings

Ratings means evaluating employees against the elements and standards in their performance plan and assigning a summary rating of record.

It is based on work performed during an entire appraisal period. Auburn is now using a five-point rating scale on both the Performance Review Form created in 2019 and traditional Performance Management Planning and Review Form. This new scale will be used to determine how well an employee is meeting or exceeding requirements for the respective job duty/responsibility/position goal/previously identified development need. There is no expected target for any ratings distribution and each supervisor should use their professional judgment on ratings.

5 Exemplary	4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Marginal	1 Unsatisfactory
Performance is consistently superior and significantly exceeds the expectations for this job duty/ responsibility/ position goal/ previously identified development need.	Performance frequently exceeds the expectations for this job duty/ responsibility/ position goal/ previously identified development need.	Performance consistently meets the expectations for this job duty/ responsibility/ position goal/ previously identified development need.	Performance meets some, but not all of the expectations for this job duty/ responsibility/ position goal/ previously identified development need.	Performance consistently fails to meet the minimum expectations for this job duty/ responsibility/ position goal/ previously identified development need.
Characteristics				
 Superior, highly distinguished contributors Performs at the highest levels Sought after by colleagues for expertise and experience Daily performance goes far beyond job duties and responsibilities 	Goes beyond doing a good job Exceeds well above expectations Behavior models what is expected for others Key to a unit's success	Meets job expectations Contributes to team success Does what is expected Works at skills Supports teammates	Performs duties less than successfully Does not complete assigned work on time Makes excuses for lack of productivity Lacks desire to develop	Does not work effectively with others Poor attitude Does not complete assigned work Demonstrates a lack of basic job knowledge Has not shown improvement despite coaching and feedback Needs constant oversight



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Personal Perceptions & Bias in Performance Management

It's important to be consistent in one's approach to performance reviews.

Personal perceptions and biases can sometimes influence how supervisors rate an employee's performance. Often, supervisors are unaware that these biases even exist. It is important for supervisors to be aware that these biases exist, understand them, and take steps to reduce them. There are six types of bias to be aware of.

LENIENCY

The tendency to evaluate all employees as "Exemplary" to give inflated ratings rather than true assessments of performance. It is also important to note that inflating ratings as a compensation tool is not the rating scale's intended use.

CENTRAL TENDENCY

The tendency to evaluate every employee as "Meets Expectations" regardless of differences in performance.

STRICTNESS

The tendency to rate all employees at the "Marginal" or low end of the scale, and be overly critical of performance.

CONTRAST EFFECT

The tendency for a supervisor to evaluate an employee relative to other individuals rather than on the planned job duties/responsibilities, goals, and development needs.

FIRST IMPRESSION EFFECT

The tendency for a supervisor to make an initial favorable or unfavorable judgment about someone, and then ignore subsequent information that does not support this impression.

SIMILAR-TO-ME EFFECT

The tendency to more favorably judge those people perceived as similar to the supervisor.

Since bias can seriously undermine the value of the Performance Management Process, supervisors should work to eliminate it. There are some simple questions supervisors can ask themselves in order to avoid bias. For example:

- Am I basing my rating on documentation of my observations or am I making judgment based on my perceptions?
- Am I looking at each of this employee's accomplishments and behaviors separately or have I generalized their performance?
- Have I looked at the whole scope of work for the year and their behaviors over time or have I generalized according to my initial perceptions of them?
- Have I rated this employee on their actual accomplishments and behaviors or have I rated them compared to other employees?
- Have I recognized any biases I may have so I don't let them influence my judgments?

Avoiding bias is another reason to engage in the year-long performance management process. Documenting and recording achievements and challenges allows supervisors to look back and remind themselves of performance highlights, ultimately improving the accuracy of their reviews.



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Planning
in Performance Management

The Planning Phase is the WHAT, WHY, and HOW of the Performance Management Process.



The summer months mark the Planning portion of the Performance Management Process at Auburn University. This is a time for supervisors and employees to begin preparing for the new performance year.

Planning is one of the most important phases of any Performance Management Process. The desired outcomes of the Planning phase set the tone and expectations for an employee's performance for the entire year. Employees need to know, with clarity, what is expected of them, and it is the supervisor's job to clearly communicate those expectations.

Put simply, the Planning phase of performance management is the what, why, and how of the process. WHAT needs to be done. WHY it needs to be done. HOW it gets done- including behaviors.

The Planning phase includes supervisors and employees meeting one-on-one to discuss expectations for job duties and responsibilities that are a priority, set goals, and identify development needs from the previous year. Each goal, duty, responsibility, or development need must be measurable so a supervisor can determine if they are being met throughout the year.

Best Practices:

BEFORE THE MEETING: · Planning sessions should occur during between July 1 and September 1. · Spend ample time to plan before the Planning meeting occurs. Consider your employees and their role within the department. Review job descriptions Write a list of current projects Spend time planning: Send employees the Employee Performance Management Planning Form which includes questions designed to assist employees as they prepare for the Planning meeting. Send an Outlook calendar request to each direct report for separate one-on-one meetings and allow for uninterrupted time. **DURING THE MEETING:** · Set a comfortable and friendly tone. Set the tone: Discuss the purpose of the meeting and what happens during the Planning phase • Employees and supervisors should listen to each other and discuss the upcoming year.

Review job duties, position goals, and development needs. Identify and agree on as few as five and up to ten that are priority. Open the Performance Review Form. • This is the same form you'll use the entire year for Planning, Planned Check-Ins, and **Review Expectations:** for the Year-End Review in June. It simply builds throughout the year. • Once the form is open, date and list the job duties, position goals, and development needs identified on the Performance Review Form. • We discuss developing S.M.A.R.T. goals with employees in one of our QuickDive videos. Check it out to learn more. Consider development and career potential. Look at AU Human Resource Development classes, professional guilds and conferences, **Consider Development:** or publications. · Date and add recommendations to the Performance Review Form. Job duties and responsibilities are important in establishing performance expectations and reviews. But it's not just about meeting the expectations of a job. It's about how the job is performed. Behaviors matter. Discuss Have a focused conversation about the specific behaviors that will assist the employee to **Observed Behaviors:** achieve the desired outcomes. Utilize the Observed Behaviors website to aid in the conversation. The website can be found by going to aub.ie/observedbehaviors. Here you will find 31 behaviors listed with definitions and varying performance level examples. AFTER THE MEETING AND THROUGHOUT THE YEAR: Save the Performance Review Form with the updated planning information and send a copy to the employee. Proceed to the second phase of the Performance Management Process which is Coaching and Feedback. This is really not a phase, but an action that takes place throughout the year. Effective and timely feedback is a critical component of a successful performance management Coaching & Feedback: • Frequent feedback provides clarity and eliminates surprises. Employees should not be caught unaware when they sit down for their Planned Check-in in a few months time. Employees need to know where they stand. Offer clear feedback in a timely manner on how they're doing, what's working, and what's not.

The Planning Phase along with the rest of the Performance Management process is discussed in our online courses, MG500e: Introduction to Performance Management and MG510e: Performance Management Fundamentals for Supervisors.



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Coaching & Feedback in Performance Management



Coaching & Feedback takes place throughout the year.



The second phase of the Performance Management Process is Coaching and Feedback. This is really not a phase, but an action that takes place throughout the year. Effective and timely feedback is a critical component of a successful performance management process.

Frequent feedback provides clarity and eliminates surprises. Employees should not be caught unaware when they sit down for their Planned Check-ins or Year-End Reviews. Your employees need to know where they stand. Offer clear feedback in a timely manner on how they're doing, what's working, and what's not.

Best Practices:

Coaching and Feedback, along with the rest of the Performance Management process, is discussed in our online courses, MG500e: Introduction to Performance Management and MG510e: Performance Management Fundamentals for Supervisors.

Note any accomplishments or needs.

- Point out when you observe people doing things right, and take the opportunity to correct behavior when needed.
- · Praise or correct work and behavior at the time that it occurs.
- Be clear and specific about the situation.
- Praise or correct behaviors that have been observed.
- Communicate the impact the success or problem has on the team.

Ask questions and seek to learn about the ins and outs of their jobs from employees.

- Use open-ended questions that avoid "yes" and "no" answers.
 - · For example, don't ask, "Are things going okay?" This questions doesn't open a door to dialogue. Consider asking instead, "What is a typical day like when you're busy?"
- Use follow-up questions to keep the dialogue moving.
 - For example, say, "Tell me more." or, "What's something I can do to help?"

Share feedback heard from others.

- Feedback should be used to improve employee performance rather than focus on where the information came from.
- Ask open ended questions like, "Tell me what happened in the meeting," or, "Tell me about the interaction with the project team on Tuesday. What was your take on the discussion?"



Consider asking for feedback on you, the supervisor.

- Feedback is a two-way street. If we understand and value the feedback we prepare and give to those we supervise, there also is value in learning what we can about ourselves.
- Asking for feedback models openness and shows learning is our job as much as it is our direct reports'.
- Questions can be simple, such as, "Are you getting what you need from me?" or "If you were in my shoes, what else would you like me to do for you and the team?" Another might be, "How are our one-on-ones working for you? Anything I can do differently?"

Learn More:

AU Human Resource Development has two classes to cover coaching and feedback in greater detail. Consider taking our online classes.

- MG410e: Feedback in a Flash. This is a great, online tool to utilize in order to learn more about giving
 effective and timely feedback using the SBI method.
- MG420: Coaching Fundamentals. This instructor-led course introduces the how-to of coaching others
 and how to plan for coaching sessions. Aimed primarily at supervisors, attendees explore the difference
 between giving feedback and actually coaching. The class content includes:
 - Learning how to create the right atmosphere for coaching
 - Examples of guestions and agendas for initial and ongoing coaching sessions
 - Practice scenarios to prepare for coaching

Is There Performance Training for Employees?

MG505e: Performance Management Fundamentals for Employees



Performance management is more than just an appraisal once a year. It is an ongoing and interactive process that includes Planning, Coaching and Feedback, Planned Check-ins, and a Year-End Review. The purpose of Auburn University's Performance Management Process can be summed up in one word: clarity. The process clarifies an employee's performance expectations for the year and it clarifies what behaviors should be present in order to achieve those expectations. If you are an employee, consider taking MG505e: Performance Management Fundamentals for Employees after completing MG500e: Introduction to Performance Management. MG505e is a training with a detailed description of the entire Performance Management Process and how it relates to the supervisor/employee relationship.



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Auburn University Human Resources



Planned Check-in Phase of Performance Management

The Planned Check-in Phase is a time for Supervisors and Employees to assess progress.



The fall and winter months mark the Planned Check-in portion of the Performance Management Process at Auburn University. This is a time for Supervisors and Employees to assess progress. These Check-ins are important because they give the supervisor and the employee a chance to see how well the employee is meeting the duties, goals, and development needs set during the Planning phase and to make adjustments to goals, assess problematic areas, or update the Performance Review Form if there has been a shift in priorities.

The Planned Check-in usually takes place approximately six months after the completion of the Planning phase and is often called a Mid-Year Review. However, Planned Check-ins can be arranged through mutual agreement when feedback is needed or accomplishments are

met and not just at the six-month mark. Some departments at Auburn touch base quarterly with their employees.

Best Practices:

The Planned Check-in Phase along with the rest of the Performance Management process is discussed in our online courses, MG500e: Introduction to Performance Management and MG510e: Performance Management Fundamentals for Supervisors.

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- **Spend time planning:**
- Planned Check-in sessions should occur between October 1 and December 15.
- · Spend ample time to plan before the Planned Check-in meeting occurs.
- Review each employee's Performance Review Form that was saved from the Planning meeting.
- Send an Outlook calendar request to each direct report for separate one-on-one meetings and allow for uninterrupted time.

DURING THE MEETING:

- Set the tone:
- · Set a comfortable and friendly tone.
- Remind your employee about what was planned in the previous Planning meeting.

Review job duties, position goals, and development needs.

- Commend successes and performance efforts. Praise your employee when progress has been made toward goals, duties, responsibilities, or development.
- Hold the employee accountable. Discuss the reasons why progress may not be occurring.
 - It might be a good idea to re-direct performance efforts if there are duties, goals, or developmental areas that have had no progress.
 - Adjustments may need to be made so that improvement can happen.
- Make adjustments to the form by adding the date and changes to existing duties, goals, or development needs to the Performance Review Form as needed.
- It is also okay to add new duties, goals, or development needs to the Performance Review Form.

Consider development:

Review expectations:

- Consider development and career potential.
- · Date and add completed classes to the Performance Review Form.
- You can also date and add new recommendations to the Performance Review Form.

Discuss observed behaviors:

Job duties and responsibilities are important in establishing performance expectations and reviews. But it's not just about meeting the expectations of a job. It's about how the job is performed. Behaviors matter.

- Have a focused conversation about the specific behaviors that will assist the employee to achieve the desired outcomes.
 - Utilize the Observed Behaviors website to aid in the conversation. The website can be found by going to <u>aub.ie/observedbehaviors</u>. Here you will find 31 behaviors listed with definitions and varying performance level examples that can be copied and pasted directly into the Performance Review Form.

AFTER THE MEETING AND THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:

Coaching & Feedback:

- Save the Performance Review Form with the updated check-in information and send a copy to the employee.
- Don't forget that Coaching and Feedback occurs throughout the year.
 - Effective and timely feedback is a critical component of a successful performance management process.
- Frequent feedback provides clarity and eliminates surprises. Employees should not be caught unaware when they sit down for their Planned Check-in in a few months time.
 Employees need to know where they stand.
- Offer clear feedback in a timely manner on how they're doing, what's working, and what's not.



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It's not just meeting the expectations of a job. It's about **HOW** the job is performed.

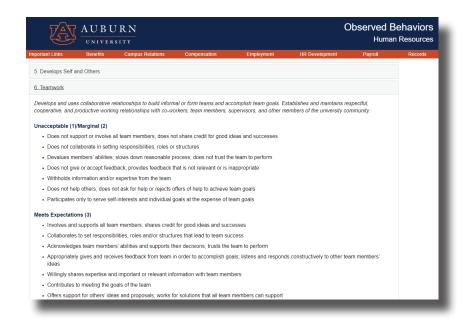
Job duties and responsibilities are important in establishing performance expectations and reviews. But it's not just meeting the expectations of a job. It's about how the job is performed.

Behaviors matter.

They help distinguish between exceptional performance, unsatisfactory performance, and everything in between.

Behaviors, when discussed between supervisor and employee, significantly add to the likelihood of successful performance outcomes. Identifying the right behaviors while planning, observing them throughout the year, and adding them to the Performance Review Form provides clarity and direction to both employee and supervisor.

In 2019, the 31 behaviors found at *aub.ie/observedbehaviors* replaced the Universal Performance Dimensions and Job Specific Competencies from past review forms. Just like the 4-point scale, the Universal Performance Dimensions are no longer in use. These behaviors integrate what was observed which contributed to the employee's resulting performance for a specific job duty, responsibility, or position goal.



The reference tool on the website not only defines observed behaviors, it shows examples of what would and should be seen in ratings of (1) Unacceptable, (2) Marginal, (3) Meets Expectations, (4) Exceeds Expectations, and (5) Exemplary.

Click on one of the 31 behaviors to find definitions and examples of observed behaviors by varying performance levels.

The examples can be copied and pasted into the Performance Review Form. It's easy.

Here's an example.

Teamwork may be a behavior that is valued in your department.



Make sure your employees know that Teamwork is an important behavior and expectation during the Planning Phase of the performance year.



As the year progresses, observe your employees. Are they being team players? Are they supporting fellow teammates and keeping to team agreements?



Provide feedback throughout the year on ways they can improve or praise when they display the expected behavior.



At the end of the year, use the Observed Behaviors tool at *aub.ie/observedbehaviors* to copy and paste the example that best matches the employee's behavior and rating throughout the year into the Performance Review Form.



Go to <u>aub.ie/PMP-Behaviors</u> or use the QR code to the left to review this video. For more information, contact us at <u>autrain@auburn.edu</u> or at <u>aub.ie/performance</u>.







Preparing for the

Year-End Review

Part 1 of 2



The spring months mark the end of the performance year. During the Year-End Review, feedback is given that summarizes an employee's progress towards achieving successful outcomes in the pre-planned duties, goals, and development needs for the entire year and an overall rating is assigned.

It is impossible to have an effective Year-End Review without the completion of the other phases of the Performance Management Process. Planning, Coaching and Feedback, and at least one Check-in must be present in order to have a complete picture of an employee's performance.

Best Practices:

The Year-End Review along with the rest of the Performance Management process is discussed in our online courses, MG500e: Introduction to Performance Management and MG510e: Performance Management Fundamentals for Supervisors.

BEFORE THE MEETING:				
Spend time planning	 Review the saved Performance Review Form from the last Planned Check-in as well as any other documentation you may have. Consider feedback received on employees throughout the year using balanced professional judgment. Send the Performance Management Employee Self-Appraisal Form to your employee and specify when it needs to be returned. 			
"How was this performed?"	 Take each item (expectation) one at a time. Make supervisor comments in the "How was this performed?" section of the form based on the Employee Self-Appraisal Form as well as the comments made during the Planning, Coaching and Feedback, and Planned Check-in phases. Be consistent in your approach and work to avoid bias. 			
Choose a rating	 Choose a rating for each expectation. It is important that rating scores for performance be assigned accurately and fairly for each employee to ensure a clear understanding of performance by the employee and supervisor. 			
Consider behaviors	 Review any behaviors identified in the Planning phase and Check-ins as well as any noted throughout the year. Search, again, through the Observed Behaviors resource for sample comments under each behavior. These comments are categorized based on our 1 to 5 rating system. 			
Overall comments and rating	 Before clicking the rating box, consider the entire year and not just recent events. Choose an overall rating. Write overall comments, and include any feedback from others. Save the form and send it to the second-level reviewer for review and signature. 			





Conducting the

Year-End Review

Part 2 of 2

The Year-End Review should be a conversation with a purpose...



A performance review meeting at Auburn should be regarded as a conversation with a purpose. The purpose of the performance review meeting is to provide clear and objective feedback to an employee about his or her performance, and to then try to identify some mutually agreed upon ways to improve.

The purpose of performance reviews is to enable an employee to engage in dialogue. They should be more like free-flowing, open meetings in which views are exchanged so that agreed conclusions can be reached.

Best Practices:

The Year-End Review along with the rest of the Performance Management process is discussed in our online courses, MG500e: Introduction to Performance Management and MG510e: Performance Management Fundamentals for Supervisors.

BEFORE THE MEETING:					
Spend time planning	 Review the form once you've received it from the second-level reviewer. There are times when your supervisor wants to provide comments on an employee's performance. Send an Outlook calendar request to each direct report for separate one-on-one meet and allow for uninterrupted time. 				
DURING THE MEETING:					
Set the tone	 Set a comfortable and friendly tone that encourages open and honest communication. Give the employee plenty of time to review the document. 				
Stay focused	 Keep the meeting focused. Guide the employee through problem areas. Encourage input and discussion and be open to suggestions. Ask your employee appropriate questions and probe into sensitive areas. Above all, show concern and sincerity. 				
Stay in check	 Remain calm and in control of emotions. Respond rationally with facts. It is important to avoid being defensive. Be willing to accept feedback on yourself from an employee. 				

Offer the employee an opportunity to add comments to the review.

- · Have the employee sign the form.
 - If an employee refuses to sign the form, share that the signature is not an acceptance of the review, but merely an acknowledgement that the meeting took place.
 - If the employee still does not sign the form, make note of this and initial in the same space as the employee signature.
 - Make sure this notation is done in front of the employee at the time of the conversation.

AFTER THE MEETING:

Submission

Finish up the meeting

- Submit all Performance Review Forms to your Human Resource Liaison for validation.
 - Each form is reviewed for completeness. It may be returned if the form is incomplete or was filled out incorrectly.

For more information, contact us at autrain@auburn.edu or <a href="mailto:

