Amherst College
Office of Human Resources

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
PROCESS GUIDE

March 2015
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INTRODUCTION

The Performance Management Process is one of the most important interactions between supervisors and employees. It assists in establishing mutual understandings of the responsibilities and the performance expectations associated with a position. It also provides a mechanism for employees to contribute to the achievement of Amherst College’s strategic goals and vision.

This process is also an opportunity to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas requiring improvement, and establish goals and development plans for the coming year. This ongoing process ends with a written record, which provides a basis for salary decisions.

The Performance Management Process has five components:

- Performance Evaluation
- Job Description
- Performance Plan
- Merit Program
- Ongoing Performance Dialogue

The success of this process depends on our mutual understanding and use of the performance management components as an opportunity to improve our job performance and to develop our full potential. A successful performance review involves ideas, questions, and open communication from all parties involved.

This guide contains descriptions of the components of the Performance Management Process, tips to prepare for the performance evaluation dialogue, and resources to support you in your continuous development. We hope you find it useful.
PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION DIALOGUE

The performance evaluation meeting provides the opportunity for a two-way dialogue between supervisor and employee. The dialogue should focus on the employee’s strengths and contributions, areas for improvement, and development plans. We should keep in mind that the performance evaluation form is only a tool. It is designed to assure that the evaluation process is conducted in an objective and consistent manner. The form is a means to this end, and to guide the employee in achieving maximum potential.

The real value of this dialogue is the feedback and detailed performance and professional development information provided throughout the process. Preparation is key to a successful performance review. As supervisors and employees prepare for this assessment, we all can benefit from the following tips:

For employees:

- Prepare for the performance dialogue by completing the self-assessment
- Think about special projects, tasks or additional responsibilities you worked on during the last evaluation period, and the outcome of those activities
- Think about your strengths and areas of opportunity, and how you can take a more active role in your own professional development
- Think about how your performance has supported your department, the College’s goals and the community
- Prepare a list of development activities, goals or areas in which you would like to contribute
- Ask for a copy of your position description and review it before the meeting
- Ask questions and offer ideas for projects or training/learning activities

For supervisors:

- Set aside sufficient time before the review meeting to thoroughly prepare, carefully reflecting on the events of the past year
- Keep documentation (notes, emails, etc.) throughout the year, both on accomplishments and needs for improvement
- Refresh your knowledge of current goals, initiatives and priorities, skills and competencies, department goals and objectives, and the College’s strategic goals
- Browse through job descriptions for skills and essential functions
- Inform employees of the date and time of the meeting in advance, if possible
- Allow adequate time for the meeting, approximately one hour
- Ensure that there are no interruptions; do not answer the phone or check email
- Select an appropriate location and avoid “barriers”, such as desks, noise, excessive heat or cold
- Explain the overall process and purpose of the performance evaluation dialogue before going into details; be honest and specific with evaluation remarks
- Keep the focus on the performance feedback, employee development and future plans
- Ask the employee to add comments and to provide ideas for goals, projects and training or learning activities

Note: If you are attaching a narrative to the evaluation form, please make sure that the performance factors are considered in your assessment and that you check the box indicating the overall performance rating in the evaluation form.
Employee’s thoughts about performance are an important part of the Performance Management Process. The Self-Evaluation Form provides a tool for you to participate in the evaluation process. The purpose of the Self-Evaluation Form is to obtain your comments regarding job strengths, developmental needs, and actions that might be taken to improve performance. Completion of the Self-Evaluation Form is voluntary.

Your supervisor may encourage you to complete the form with specific comments. Your comments should familiarize your supervisor with your thoughts, perceptions, and expectations. Your comments should also provide an opening to discuss performance development, including areas of needed improvement and resources available for improving those areas. It should also provide your supervisor with insight regarding things affecting your work environment, contributions you feel you have made, and your suggestions for changes and improvements.

You can provide your supervisor with a copy of your self-assessment in advance of the performance evaluation dialogue. You can also bring a copy to the meeting, or use it as your own guide for the conversation. The Self-Evaluation Form will be attached to the completed Performance Evaluation Form and submitted to the Office Human Resources, along with any other materials discussed during the meeting. Please make sure that you keep a copy of your Self-Assessment Form for your records.

Please follow this link for our Self-Evaluation Form:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/performancemanagement
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FORM

The performance evaluation is only a part of an important ongoing process. An effective performance management process enables supervisors to make fair and equitable assessments of each employee’s performance and create plans and opportunities for continuous improvement and development. It also aligns employee’s actions to the College’s strategic goals, provides visibility and accountability related to performance expectations, and documents individual performance to support compensation and career planning decisions. All employees need feedback to understand the expectations of the job and to improve their own performance and personal satisfaction. The Performance Evaluation Form is a tool used to measure individual performance using defined factors and ratings, applied fairly and consistently to all employees. Please follow this link for our Performance Evaluation form:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/performancemanagement

Rating Scale and Criteria

The rating scale offers a high degree of structure for the evaluation of performance. Each performance factor is rated based on the individual employee’s performance towards job expectations and established goals. The criteria utilized to describe each rating in the scale explain the assignment of the overall performance rating, and provides guidance for differentiation.

EXCEPTIONAL

The employee shows extraordinary mastery of the job and substantially exceeds the requirements of the position. This level recognizes a superior level of performance and efficiency, and exceptional contributions to the department, the College and the Community. The employee’s performance ranks at the top compared to other employees. A select group of employees will receive this rating, with the approval of the division’s Senior Manager.

A. Works with a high degree of independence and accuracy
B. Overall performance is superior and significantly exceeds expectations, producing exceptional results and promoting a culture of collaboration
C. Extraordinary commitment to the job and contributions are widely recognized, representing the College in a manner that reflects well internally and externally
D. Undertakes additional responsibilities and achieves results above and beyond job expectations, and is able to drive change and inspire others
E. Demonstrates outstanding judgment, skills, initiative and creativity, and approaches the job with passion and enthusiasm
F. Recognized for exceptional expertise, communication skills and leadership
G. Serves as a role model for others and exemplifies the values and qualities that distinguish the College

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

The employee has assumed responsibilities and performed at a level consistently above the requirements of the position. This level recognizes highly accomplished performance and significant contributions to the department and the College. The employee’s overall job
performance and results exceed the objectives, requirements and expectations for the position.

A. Requires minimal supervision
B. Consistently surpasses job and performance expectations in many aspects of the job
C. Demonstrates commitment to the department and the College, and promotes a positive and productive work environment
D. Volunteers for extra work or responsibilities and is willing and able to help and support others
E. Effectively manages multiple priorities, tasks and projects
F. Demonstrates distinctive understanding of the aspects of the job and is able to effectively communicate and work with others
G. Follows policies and procedures and models acceptable behaviors

EFFECTIVE

The employee has a complete understanding of and demonstrated ability to fulfill all the expectations of the position. This level recognizes fully acceptable and consistent performance, and notable contributions to the department. This is the expected level of performance and recognizes competency.

A. Requires moderate supervision
B. Meets and occasionally exceeds job expectations
C. Is reliable in attaining expected results, timely and efficient
D. Applies logic and reason successfully when making decisions
E. Demonstrates appropriate judgment and initiative in responding to and solving problems
F. Maintains up-to-date knowledge and expertise
G. Adheres to policies and time and attendance rules

ACHIEVES MOST

The employee has not demonstrated the ability to fulfill all of the expectations of the position. This may be because the employee is new to the position or is handling new tasks, and mastery of all tasks has not yet been accomplished. The supervisor will be required to develop an action plan detailing expectations.

A. Requires considerable supervision
B. Performs in an unreliable or inconsistent manner
C. Needs to better anticipate or respond effectively to routine problems or changes in direction
D. Must show initiative or judgment in responding to or solving problems
E. Needs more training and close guidance/mentoring
F. Inconsistently adheres to policies and/or time and attendance rules
G. Insubordinate or unable to demonstrate acceptable behaviors

DOES NOT MEET

The employee generally failed to fulfill performance expectations. This may be because tasks were not completed in a satisfactory manner or required extra direction by the supervisor. The supervisor must prepare a detailed performance plan, including areas in need of immediate, significant and consistent improvement and the employee will be placed in a probationary period with periodic reviews.
A. Requires substantial supervision  
B. Negligent in carrying out responsibilities  
C. Fails to anticipate, respond to or identify routine problems or changes in direction  
D. Needs constant re-training and guidance on basic functions  
E. Habitually fails to adhere to policies and/or time and attendance rules  
F. Purposefully insubordinate  
G. Misuses or damages College’s resources  

**Performance Factors**

The performance factors represent areas of individual performance that are essential to succeed in the position, and to the success of the department. Each position has specific job expectations associated with the performance factors. We have identified twelve performance factors for all employees and seven additional performance factors for supervisors.

The twelve performance factors for all employees are:

1. Quality of Work/Work Organization  
2. Productivity/Time Management  
3. Attendance and Punctuality  
4. Dependability  
5. Initiative  
6. Communication Skills  
7. Judgment  
8. Interpersonal Relations/Customer Service  
9. Collaboration  
10. Technical Expertise/Professional Development  
11. Safety/Ergonomics  
12. Inclusiveness  

The seven additional performance factors for employees with supervisory responsibilities are:

1. Supervisory Skills  
2. Initiative  
3. Leadership  
4. Teamwork  
5. Administration  
6. Professional Development  
7. Diversity and Respectful Work Environment  

Each performance factor provides examples of accepted performance or behavior. The list is not exhaustive, and only includes some of the most common examples.

The comments box under each performance factor is used to explain the assessment of each factor and to provide examples. Performance factors rated **Exceptional** or **Does Not Meet** requires examples and a clear explanation of the assessment.
Summary Comments

The summary comments section is divided into three parts:

The first section is used to describe the employee’s strengths, overall performance and special achievements during the evaluation period. Supervisors are required to provide additional examples or information for employees rated as Exceptional. Additional sheets may be attached to the evaluation.

The second section is used to describe the employee’s areas of opportunity or improvement, and the plans for development in those areas. Additional sheets may be attached to the evaluation.

The third section is used to identify short or long term plans or projects for the coming year/s. Supervisors and employees are encouraged to use the criteria for SMART goals:

S – Specific - significant, well defined (who, what, where, why)
M - Measurable – qualitative (can be described) or quantitative (can be quantified)
A – Attainable - achievable, acceptable
R – Relevant – realistic, reasonable
T - Time-bound, trackable

Employees and supervisors may also identify special projects or tasks. These activities are expected to:

- enhance the employee’s skills or knowledge in a particular area;
- enrich the job, motivate employees and spark creativity;
- prepare employees for the next step in their careers.

Signatures and Final Approval

The last section of the performance evaluation provides employees and department heads the opportunity to add their comments. All evaluations must be signed by the direct supervisor and the employee and, in most cases, by the department head. Evaluations rated Exceptional or Does Not Meet must be approved by the division’s Senior Manager.

It is important to note that the employee’s signature confirms that the evaluation was reviewed with the supervisor, but it does not necessarily imply agreement. Employees are encouraged to add their comments and to provide examples, and to write a response to the performance evaluation if they find it necessary. All these documents become part of the employee record.

Once the discussion of the evaluation is completed, the Director of Human Resources reviews all evaluations and seeks clarification from the supervisor, as needed. In the event that the evaluation needs to be revised, the supervisor will be asked to review the evaluation and discuss it with the employee, department head and senior manager. Evaluations are not considered final until approved by the Director of Human Resources.
JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Employees need to know what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated. The job description:

- provides employees with a clear picture of the job requirements and expectations;
- outlines the necessary skills, training and education needed to be successful;
- makes sure that the duties are aligned with the College’s vision and goals.

Creating a job description often results in a thoughtful process that helps determine how critical the job is, how the particular job relates to others, and forms the foundation for many important processes such as job postings, recruitment, selection, setting expectations, compensation and training.

The job description also provides a framework for performance management. The discussion of the performance evaluation is a good time to review the job description and make sure that it accurately describes the employee’s essential job functions and responsibilities.

Job descriptions can also be used to determine areas in need of training and development when expectations or requirements of the position are not being met.

Often the essential functions of the job change to adapt to the needs of the department and the College. The Office of Human Resources encourages supervisors to discuss the job description during the evaluation meeting. Copies of updated job descriptions must be sent to the Office of Human Resources along with the evaluation.

Please contact the Office of Human Resources for copies of current job descriptions or guidance on how to conduct a review of the job description. If you need to create a job description, please follow this link for our job description form:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/commonlyusedform/staffjdq
PERFORMANCE PLAN

Sometimes employees need support developing skills or learning certain aspects of the job. A performance plan is a tool used to identify areas requiring improvement and to define the necessary steps to accomplish the performance goals.

If an employee receives a rating of **Achieves Most**, the supervisor is required to develop an action plan detailing expectations. The action plan should include specific and measurable objectives, and clear indicators for acceptable performance. The supervisor and the employee should meet frequently to assess improvement.

If an employee receives a rating of **Does Not Meet**, the supervisor is required to develop a detailed performance plan including areas in need of immediate, significant and consistent improvement, indicators of acceptable performance, and the necessary actions to ensure successful completion. The employee will be placed in a probationary period with periodic reviews. The plan could also include training or other activities to support the employee during this period, as well as the expectations for the periodic reviews.

**Supervisors must contact the Office of Human Resources to receive guidance in the development of these plans and the completion of the necessary forms.**
MERIT PROGRAM

Merit pay is a compensation methodology where base pay increases are discretionially and determined by individual performance. The goal is to provide financial recognition and positive reinforcement for continuous improvement. As a result, if an employee is an outstanding performer, they may receive more than the merit pool percentage. If the employee is not a good performer, they may receive less than the merit pool percentage.

Recognizing and rewarding high performance is a priority for the College.

_Potential Wage Pool Allocation for Fiscal Year ‘16 (All figures are illustrative only)*:_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrative Raise Distribution *</th>
<th>Typical Distribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0% - 5.0%+</td>
<td>5% - 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>20% - 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>40% - 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieves Most</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>5% - 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not Meet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
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*Notes:*
- Actual raise percentage amounts to be determined based upon wage markets and budget affordability.
- Employees rated “Effective” receive “base pool” increase amount.
- Employees rated “Highly Effective” and “Exceptional” are eligible to receive increase above the base pool.
- Possibility exists to incentivize and reward “Exceptional” results with a discretionary raise that may exceed base pool by a substantial amount.

_Other considerations:_

- Salary increases cannot be processed without a completed performance evaluation form.
- Employees who have completed six months of service as of June 30th, and who have demonstrated performance that is competent and efficient along established expectations, will be eligible for a merit increase.
- Compensation changes processed after March 31st will include the merit increase. This includes promotions, equity/market adjustments, etc.
RESOURCES

Please find below a list of books, articles and webpages, with information that will help you as you prepare for the Performance Management Process, and for ongoing conversations during the year.

**HR Café Collection**

The HR Café Collection is a joint effort by the Office of Human Resources and the Library to provide access to books, videos and other resources to promote and support professional development opportunities. The resources available in this collection cover a wide range of topics and interests, and they are available to all employees of the College. The HR Café Collection is located in the shelves across from the Cafe on the main level of the library.

1. [https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/training/trainingprofessionaldevelopment/cafecollection/performanceeval](https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/training/trainingprofessionaldevelopment/cafecollection/performanceeval)

   Preparation for the performance evaluation

2. [https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/training/trainingprofessionaldevelopment/cafecollection/recognitionmotivation](https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/training/trainingprofessionaldevelopment/cafecollection/recognitionmotivation)

   Recognition and motivation

3. *Thanks for the Feedback*

   [https://www.amherst.edu/mm/414692](https://www.amherst.edu/mm/414692)

   How to use feedback as a tool for learning and growth

4. *Crucial Conversations*

   [https://www.amherst.edu/mm/414692](https://www.amherst.edu/mm/414692)

   Skills and techniques to make difficult conversations more successful

5. *Manager’s Pocket Guide to Diversity Management*

   [https://www.amherst.edu/mm/416199](https://www.amherst.edu/mm/416199)

   Exercises to explore diversity with groups and individuals as well as definitions of diversity-related terms

6. *What if?*

   [https://www.amherst.edu/mm/416199](https://www.amherst.edu/mm/416199)

   Short stories to spark diversity dialogue

7. *Indispensable By Monday*

   Describes various ways that employees can show their value and contributions
Please follow this link for a complete list of books available at the Library:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/training/trainingprofessionaldevelopment/collection/booklistcollection

**Web links to articles**

   
   Eight “how to” steps to prepare for a review

   
   Supervisor’s role on performance appraisals

   
   Steps for a productive performance conversation

   
   How to ace your review

   
   Tips for effective feedback

   
   Keys to successful performance conversations

   
   Feedforward instead of feedback

   
   Ten secrets to an effective performance review

   
   Nine ways to manage feedback

   The importance of self-evaluations

11. http://careerplanning.about.com/od/performancereview/a/reviews.htm

   What you need to do in preparation for your review


   The benefits of self-reviews
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS CHECKLIST

For Employees:

☐ Review your copy of the last Self-Evaluation Form
☐ Review your copy of the last Performance Evaluation Form
☐ Gather notes from the last performance dialogue, as well as current notes, reports, etc.
☐ Think about goals and development plans for the coming evaluation period
☐ Prepare a new Self-Evaluation Form
☐ Review your job description
☐ Confirm your performance dialogue appointment and share a copy of your Self-Assessment Form with your supervisor

For Supervisors:

☐ Review your copies of the last Performance Evaluation Forms
☐ Gather notes from the last performance dialogue, as well as current notes, reports, etc.
☐ Review employees job descriptions
☐ Set aside sufficient time to complete the evaluations
☐ Review your notes, gather feedback, and think about goals and development plans for the coming evaluation period
☐ Schedule the performance dialogue appointment
☐ Inform employees of the date and time of the meeting, allowing time for them to prepare
☐ If you are attaching a narrative to the evaluation form, please make sure that the performance factors are considered in your assessment and that you check the box indicating the overall performance rating in the evaluation form.

Do not hesitate to contact the Office of Human Resources with any questions you may have about the Performance Management Process.