Performance Management
Staff Members’ Frequently Asked Questions

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are provided to assist supervisors in completing each of the steps in the performance management process.

1. Why do I have to complete a Self-Appraisal Form?

Performance management is a shared responsibility. The Self-Appraisal Form is your opportunity to outline the accomplishments and contributions you made during the review period. It is also an opportunity to note any obstacles you encountered when pursuing your goals and/or fulfilling the responsibilities of your position. Your supervisor will review and consider your Self-Appraisal Form when completing your Annual Appraisal. You and your supervisor can also use the information included on your Self-Appraisal Form to plan for the upcoming review period (e.g., How to avoid the same obstacles).

2. Last year I received an overall rating of Highly Accomplished. What should I expect for an overall rating this year?

The University’s performance management system includes a new 5-tiered rating system based on the expectations for your position. In other words, you will be evaluated based on whether you are meeting or exceeding the expectations for your position. Descriptions of the new ratings can be found in the User’s Guide to Performance Management at Brown University. As such, staff members will not receive the same overall ratings for the 2011/2012 review period. More importantly, your performance is appraised annually – your work performance (and ratings) in previous years is not relevant to your appraisal for the current review period.

3. I am nervous about my performance appraisal meeting; what can I do?

Prepare, prepare, prepare. The Annual Performance Appraisal requires planning and preparation. You should review the accomplishments, challenges and training needs/development opportunities you included in your Self-Appraisal. You should note any accomplishments or challenges that you forgot to include and specific examples to illustrate your accomplishments and challenges. As with any important meeting or presentation, if you are prepared you are more likely to perform at a higher level.

4. Are performance appraisals primarily used to determine pay increases?

The University is a pay for performance employer and the annual appraisal provides the basis for determining salary increases. However, it also serves other important purposes. The annual appraisal process serves as a means to clarify work expectations; identify training needs and development opportunities; discuss your progress on your goals; and to thank you for your hard work and dedication to the University.

5. Why are staff members required to set goals?

Goal setting provides an ideal forum for you to work collaboratively with your supervisor to ensure your work is aligned with your department’s mission and/or a specific project or program. During the initial goal setting meeting, you should work with your supervisor to identify meaningful goals. You should
also develop an action plan and timetable and identify any training or development needs to successfully achieve your goal(s).

6. What are SMART goals and am I required to use this format?

SMART goals are:
• Specific: well defined, clear and unambiguous
• Measurable: define specific criteria for measuring progress toward accomplishing each goal
• Achievable: require staff members to stretch, but are not impossible, to achieve
• Relevant: related to the department’s mission and/or a specific project or program
• Timely: clearly defined time frame or progress is tracked at regular intervals

The use of the SMART goal format is not mandatory. Human Resources encourages the use of the SMART goal format, however, because it helps supervisors and staff members identify and define meaningful goals. Whether or not the SMART format is used, goals must be related to the department’s mission and/or a specific project or program. For more information about goal setting, consult the User’s Guide to Performance Management at Brown University.

7. How can I learn about my supervisor’s and department’s goals?

Managers are encouraged to share their goals as well as department goals with you. Aligning your goals with your department will help you understand why your position and your work performance are critical to the department’s success.

8. During my mid-year review of goals, my supervisor noted other work performance concerns (not related to my goals) on the form. Is that appropriate?

Yes, the mid-year review of goals is an opportunity to update, modify and/or eliminate goals you set in June based on any changing work needs and priorities. It is also an opportunity for your supervisor to offer you feedback on other areas of your work performance. In fact, the Goal Setting and Mid-Year Review forms include a section for additional comments. You should also use the mid-year review to discuss your roles and responsibilities and address any other work-related issues or concerns you have.