Performance Management
Supervisors’ 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.

Self-Appraisal

1. When should I expect the completed Self-Appraisal form from my staff members?

   The Self-Appraisal is due by mid-March. Supervisors should review and use it when drafting their staff members’ annual appraisals.

Performance Appraisal

2. Our busiest work cycle is between late February and early April. Is it possible to change the review period?

   Yes, subject to the approval of the appropriate senior officer, a department may shift the standard review period (April 1-March 31) forward to accommodate conflicts with its normal work cycle. In all circumstances, review periods must be 12 consecutive months and may not extend past May 1. In addition, departments must still meet budget and salary increase deadlines despite shifting its review period.

3. In the core, job specific and supervisory competencies sections, my ratings of the staff member greatly varied. How do I select the most appropriate overall rating?

   Specific competencies may be weighted differently depending on a department’s work needs and/or the staff member’s position. It is most important to provide a fair, accurate and balanced overall rating based on the staff member’s work performance during the entire review period.

4. I rated a staff member’s overall performance this year as “Consistently Meets Expectations”. Last year, I rated his/her performance as “Consistently Exceeds Expectations”. How do I communicate this change in ratings?

   Most significantly, staff members should understand that ratings received in previous years are not predictive of a staff member’s ratings in subsequent years – each year’s appraisal is based on the staff member’s performance during the relevant review period. In all instances, supervisors should also use specific examples to illustrate why a particular rating was chosen. Human Resources is available to counsel you further in providing this feedback to staff, if necessary.

5. I usually have my staff members fill-out their own appraisal forms. Can I continue to do this?

   No, supervisors should complete Annual Appraisal Forms while considering staff members’ Self-Appraisal Form, current job responsibilities, the Goal Setting and Review Form and any other relevant information.
Goal Setting and Review Process

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; however, University Human Resources encourages the use of the SMART goal format 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. During my mid-year review conversation with a staff member, I would like to discuss other areas of his/her work performance. Is this meeting an appropriate forum?

Yes, in addition to reviewing the staff member’s goals, the mid-year review conversation is an ideal time to address other areas of a staff member’s performance. You should reiterate expectations if necessary, discuss significant changes in roles and responsibilities or any other matter impacting performance. You will also notice that the Goal Setting and Review Form includes a text box for additional mid-year comments for this purpose. Please note that supervisors should not wait for a designated performance meeting to discuss performance; on-going communication about work performance should occur throughout the year.

8. Three performance conversations seem excessive; is it okay to limit performance discussions to one annual event?

The University is committed to improving work performance and accountability. One performance discussion per year is not sufficient to meet this commitment. We should view the three designated performance management conversations as the minimum number of formal performance discussions per year. Strive to informally discuss work performance throughout the year; both formal and informal feedback are essential to an environment that fosters exceptional performance.