



## LANGSTON UNIVERSITY

### Performance Management Guidelines for Supervisors

Performance management is the cornerstone of our human resources system. It is an important process because it enables Langston University to achieve several goals:

1. To measure past performance and recognize achievement
2. To reward employees commensurate with their achievement
3. To develop employees by building on strengths and targeting weaknesses for improvement
4. To ensure that results are achieved
5. To provide information to help in making decisions about the employee's future with us
6. To document performance deficiencies in case dismissal is necessary at a later date.

Langston University has established management and development of people as a high priority by assigning the highest possible value to this kind of work in the performance management system. Supervisors find that performance management is demanding and time consuming work, but our experience has been that it is well worth the effort. Employees have a right to expect a regular feedback on their performance, and supervisors who expect good performance will increase their chances of getting it if they praise employees who perform well and provide constructive criticism when performances when performance falls short of expectations

Performance management should be an ongoing process and should not be confined to the annual completion of a form. By communicating frequently on performance, supervisors and employees forge productive working relationships. A single error does not take a disproportionate importance, and supervisors are less likely to be unduly swayed by more recent events when completing the form. Many supervisors find it helpful to keep notes on their performance year round that they can refer to during the performance management process.

An important part of performance management is the performance interview. For maximum effectiveness, supervisors are encouraged to prepare well, including taking the follow steps:

1. Study the employee's self-appraisal
2. Arrange the interview a week in advance, if possible, in order to give the employee the opportunity to prepare
3. Allow ample time for adequate discussion
4. Provide for privacy and prevent interruptions by visitors or the telephone

Because the performance management interview may be the only opportunity for a supervisor to have a structured discussion with an employee about performance, it is also an appropriate time to discuss the following related matters:

1. Job description. At least annually, the job description should be reviewed to make sure it is still current and comprehensive. If you think there are significant changes, a revised version should be submitted to Human Resource Department with a request that the rating be reviewed. A revised job evaluation questionnaire may also be needed. Do not submit these with performance management forms or recommended salary increases. The Human Resources Department will not be able to process these requests until after the annual review is completed.

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2. Career development. Employees may want to discuss their career plans and how best to prepare for positions to which they aspire. Supervisors should be candid and realistic in discussing future job opportunities and the employee's qualifications. Willingness to relocate may be an issue.
3. Training. This is the time to make a recommendation if additional training may be helpful to improve performance. This training may take the form of college and university courses, workshops, and seminars conducted by professional associations and consultants, or an individual program of reading and research. The employee may apply for educational benefits to cover the cost.

One of the most valuable facets of the performance management system is the setting of objectives for the coming year. This process can be made more effective by keeping several principles in mind:

1. The employee should participate in setting objectives because people are generally more committed to the achievement of goals they have helped to set.
2. Goals should be reasonable, observable, and measurable. It is difficult to assess the level of achievement when a goal is vaguely stated, e.g., "Improve working relationship with Chapter Board Chairman." Instead, it is more helpful to state: "Enlist the assistance of the Board Chairman to secure pledges from 75 percent of Chapter Board members."
3. Setting goals establishes priorities for the coming year. Without knowledge of the supervisor's priorities, an employee may err by spending 40 percent of his or her time toward achieving a goal that is only the fifth most important objective for the year.

While some jobs lend themselves to goal setting better than others, objectives may be established for any job. Just as a fundraiser may agree to increase the goal by 10 percent, a typist or data entry operator may agree to reduce the error rate by 10 percent, and a secretary may reduce the turnaround time on dictated correspondence from two days to one. Also, special projects offer possibilities for goal setting. The need for a new file system or a renovated office suggests goals for the employees involved; writing a manual or designing an effective procedure also implies objectives.

Praising employees for good performance is the pleasant part of performance appraisal; the more difficult, but equally necessary, part of the process is being candid with employees about performance deficiencies. This part is important for two reasons:

1. Since a major goal of performance management is performance improvement, employees need to know where they are falling short of expectations so that they may improve.
2. If employees are either unable or unwilling to meet the expectations of the job, dismissal may eventually be necessary. Without documentation of performance deficiencies, dismissal is very hard to accomplish and could involve considerable risk to Langston University.

In documenting performance deficiencies, it is important to be specific and cite examples. An employee may only be confused by being told: "your attitude is a problem." A supervisor conveys more information by saying instead: "Your failure to call and tell me that you would be an hour late created a problem because a messenger arrived to pick up a package, and we could not find it." The chances of improving a performance deficiency are increased when the employee understands exactly what the problem is.

Any supervisor who would like to help with the performance management process should consult his or her own supervisor or the Director of Human Resources.

**LANGSTON UNIVERSITY**  
**Performance Management System**

## **How to Appraise an Employee**

- Base the appraisal on the typical performance of the employee during the entire period. Be careful not to overemphasize recent happenings or isolated dramatic incidents that are not typical of the employee's normal performance.
- Base appraisals on accurate data obtained from records whenever possible or from careful observation when this is not possible. Compare the performance of the employee being appraised with the performance of all individuals who have performed the same job, keeping in mind the the requirements of the job.
- Do not let your appraisal on one factor influence your appraisal on other factors. Many people have a tendency to give an employee who rates very high on one factor a higher rating on other factors than may be merited. In like manner, when an employee is weak in one respects, which may not be the case. Bear in mind that each factor should be considered independently of the others.
- Do not permit grade of job or length of service to affect the rating. Consider only the performance of the employee in relationship to the specific requirements of the job. Do not rate an employee too highly just because the employee has a number of years of service, but really performs at an average level.
- Do not let your personal feelings bias your appraisal: do not rate "sympathetically." The appraiser must be constantly on guard against the normal inclination to attribute greater proficiency to employees well liked personally or to employees because of sympathy. If there are special circumstances, appraise only on performance and explain the circumstances in the space provided under each factor.
- Do not be swayed by a previous appraisal. Each appraisal should be completed without reference to past appraisals. Substantial differences do not necessarily mean that the present or previous appraisal is incorrect.
- Guard against letting your appraisal of factors fall into a consistent or routine pattern. There are usually wide differences in individuals with respect to various factors considered.
- Do not make an appraisal on vague impressions. To rate accurately, you must have a very good knowledge of the employees performance. Always stick to facts and refer to records, where available.
- Do not appraise too quickly. Take enough time to appraise accurately.
- Do not hesitate to go on record with your true opinion. A good appraiser should be able to differentiate between the performances of his or her employees.