

Southern Oregon University

**A QUESTION & ANSWER GUIDE TO GIVING  
AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK**

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**Why should we conduct formal performance reviews?**

When employees and supervisors take the time to meet and review the employee's work, they both have an opportunity to:

- Define and agree on performance expectations, accountabilities, and outcomes.
- Identify ways to enhance skills and plan for professional development.
- Plan activities and goals for the upcoming year.
- Identify improvements within the department or unit.
- Keep each other current in their respective roles.
- Give each other feedback.
- Identify obstacles to success and how to overcome them.
- Identify areas needing attention or improvement and methods for addressing them.
- Present an opportunity to assess workload.
- Measure progress and help find ways to improve service delivery.
- Check on progress towards meeting goals.

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**Why is the formal performance review documented?**

- It provides a record for employee's work history and performance.
- It may serve as a guide for future employment decisions.
- It may help to determine eligibility for performance-based increases.
- It may be the basis for giving an employee a reference for future employment opportunities.
- It demonstrates that the supervisor is fulfilling his/her responsibilities in giving feedback.
- It demonstrates to the Oregon State Board of Higher Education and accrediting agencies that the University is fulfilling its responsibilities to guide the development of employees through formal feedback.

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**What if I, as an employee receiving a formal review, disagree with what is written?**

Your first step is to discuss it with your supervisor. Be prepared to state why you disagree and what you recommend as an alternative. If you still disagree with the final written review, you have the right to respond in writing and request to have it filed with your review in your personnel file in addition to giving it to your supervisor.

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**When should a formal performance review be conducted?**

At least once a year. The supervisor and/or department dean or director decides upon the annual cycle for the department or unit. Performance appraisal dates may be established by a Collective Bargaining Agreement.

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**There are three formats available for documenting the formal performance review. Which form does a supervisor use?**

A supervisor and/or department dean or director selects the form and format that he/she is most comfortable using and that will best serve as a tool for guiding the performance review discussion between the employee and the supervisor. Two of the forms (General Performance Categories and Job Responsibilities and Goals) may be tailored to reflect specific performance or service standards in a unit or department; however, the following information is required on all performance review documents: (1) employee information and the review period; (2) an assessment of supervisory responsibilities if applicable; and (3) a summary of the employee's overall performance.

The form is merely a tool to help the supervisor and the employee prepare for the performance appraisal meeting. It is a means of documenting and summarizing the feedback that is communicated and discussed during the performance review meeting.

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**Does a supervisor or department have to use the same performance review form for all employees?**

No. That decision rests with the department dean or director. The department may vary the use of forms depending on the positions held by employees or an employee's specific development needs at a particular time in the employee's career.

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**Does an employee have to complete a self-assessment as part of the performance review process?**

No. Supervisors and departments may ask an employee to complete a self-assessment; however, to do so is at the employee's option. SOU has a Self-Assessment Questionnaire available to supervisors and employees to use as part of the performance review process. Supervisors and departments may also develop their own employee self-assessment forms/questionnaires.

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**Does a supervisor have to "rate" an employee?**

Performance ratings are optional for the majority of employees. However, the supervisor is required to include a statement that summarizes the employee's overall performance.

Information technology classified employees must have performance ratings for merit increases.

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**What common rate errors does a supervisor need to watch for?**

- **Halo Effect:** The tendency to rate a person who is exceptionally strong in one area, high in all other areas. One factor has undue influence on the other ratings.
- **Horns Effect:** This is the opposite of the Halo Effect – a tendency to rate a person who is especially weak in one factor, low on all other factors.
- **Central Tendency:** Tendency to avoid both high and low extremes, lumping all ratings in the middle category.
- **Leniency:** This occurs when the rater gives all high ratings or a disproportionate amount of high ratings.
- **Severity:** The opposite of Leniency – a tendency to give all low ratings or a disproportionate number of low ratings.
- **Similar-to-Me:** Some raters have a tendency to give persons who are similar to them higher ratings on the basis of biographical backgrounds, attitudes, etc.
- **Contrast Effect:** The tendency of raters to evaluate persons relative to each other, rather than on the basis of individual performance evaluation criteria.

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**What is the best way for a supervisor and employee to address performance that needs improvement?**

<b>The supervisor...</b>	<b>The employee...</b>
Explains the performance issue and gives specific examples of what needs attention and improvement and the impact it has.	Actively listens to what is being said – does not interrupt and “plays back” what is heard to ensure understanding.
Responds to questions and gives an employee the opportunity to respond.	Asks for specific examples of the issue if none are given.
Actively listens to what is being said – does not interrupt and “plays back” what is heard to ensure understanding.	Responds to what is presented and gives specific examples that relate to the response.
Reconciles differences, but know, that both may need to agree to disagree.	Reconciles differences, but knows that both may need to agree to disagree.
Explores ways to address the performance issue, identifies obstacles to success and develops performance plan for improvement.	Explores ways to address the performance issue, identifies obstacles to success and develops performance plan for improvement.
Discusses the employee’s strengths and how they can contribute to improving performance in areas needing attention.	Discusses the employee’s strengths and how they can contribute to improving performance in areas needing attention.
Develops, if needed, a performance plan to assist the employee with addressing specific performance needs and areas for improvement.	Participates, if needed, participates in developing a performance plan to address specific performance needs and areas for improvement.

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### What are the steps in the review process?

The supervisor...	The employee...
Schedules a performance review. The meeting is face-to-face and takes place in a private location, and the time allotted allows sufficient time for discussion.	Requests a performance review meeting if none has been scheduled and it is time for the annual review.
Reviews the employee's position description.	Reviews the employee's position description.
Gives the employee the performance review form that will be used to document the discussion. The form becomes the agenda for discussion.	Reads the performance review form that will be used to document the discussion.
Prepares feedback based on the agenda for the discussion as described in the performance review form.	Conducts a self-assessment based on the agenda as outlined on the performance review form.
Informs the employee that he/she may choose to conduct a more in-depth self-assessment using the Self-Assessment Questionnaire or a questionnaire provided by the supervisor.	May choose to conduct a more in-depth self-assessment using the Self-Assessment Questionnaire or a questionnaire provided by the supervisor.
Engages in the performance review discussion, using the performance review form as a guide and agenda.	Engages in the performance review discussion, using the performance review form as a guide and agenda.
Drafts the written formal performance review.	Reviews and comments on the written formal performance review
Develops, if needed, a performance plan to assist the employee with addressing specific performance needs and areas for improvement.	Participates, if needed, in developing a performance plan to address specific performance needs and areas for improvement.
Finalizes the review and signs it.	Reviews the final review and signs it. Writes response if the employee wishes to do so.
Sends final review to Human Resource Services for employee's personnel file; retains a copy for the department file.	Retains a copy of the review and if a response is written, gives it to the supervisor and may send it to Human Resource Services for the employee's personnel file.

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### What are the various ways for a supervisor to obtain feedback about an employee's performance?

- Direct observation – observing the employee while he/she performs day-to-day activities.
- Feedback from others with whom the employee interacts or serves. This may include co-workers, students, parents, other supervisors or other University staff.
- The employee's self-assessment.

- Discussion with the employee.
- Review of the employee's tangible work product whether it be a clean room, written report, letters, etc.
- Audits of the employee's work.
- Review of last performance review and progress made towards goals.
- Review of employee's personnel files.

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**Is it OK for a supervisor to discuss performance issues for the first time during the annual formal performance review?**

No. There should not be any surprises during the review. During the time between formal performance reviews, ongoing coaching and feedback should have occurred. Waiting to provide feedback until the annual performance review misses the best opportunities to provide guidance and encouragement and develop a productive relationship between the supervisor and employee.

Feedback is most effective when it is timely – for example, during or right after the completion of an assignment or project. When guidance and feedback is ongoing, the annual performance review discussion becomes what it is intended to be – a performance *review*.

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**What are some tips for identifying and planning for successful training and development?**

The annual performance review discussion may identify areas where an employee would benefit from training and development. Supervisors are responsible for providing on-the-job training. Sometimes, more focused and formal training and development is needed to enhance or develop an employee's skills and knowledge.

Training and/or development needs are identified by:

- The employee through a self-assessment;
- Discussion between the supervisor and employee;
- Feedback from others;
- Direct observation of the employee's performance.

Once the need for training and development is identified:

- Determine the training method best suited to the employee – classroom, reading, online, etc. People learn differently – some learn by doing, others by reading, and others by observing – or a combination of methods;
- Identify a credible source for training;
- Arrange for the employee's participation;
- After the training session, conduct a follow-up discussion with the employee for both to assess what was learned and what will be applied on-the-job;
- Provide ongoing feedback to the employee about his/her performance related to the training.