

MSU Extension Academic Performance Development/ Evaluation System Guide

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A Note about This Guide

This publication is a guide. The Performance Evaluation System for Academic Staff Members is a tool that can be effective only when people communicate with one another to establish positive working relationships. This guide can help users focus on performance, but it cannot replace honesty, integrity and sincerity. These attributes come into play when Extension employees and supervisors communicate effectively with one another. This guide is intended to facilitate that interaction in the area of performance evaluation.

Philosophy & Goals of the Performance Development System

People are an organization's most important resource. For an organization to accomplish its mission, its employees must have a clear understanding of their roles, know how well they are performing those roles and be given opportunities to develop. These factors lead to positive outcomes for individuals, teams and the organization.

The MSU Extension performance evaluation system is intended to assess performance and foster growth among MSU Extension employees. The appraisal itself is based on the goals established between the academic staff member and the staff member's Institute Leadership (e.g. Institute Director, Associate Institute Director, etc.)/supervisor with input from the appropriate District Director. The goals and outcomes are documented in the Program Evaluation and Reporting System (PEARS) and/or other reporting systems, as appropriate to the individual's role. The performance evaluation system also includes consideration of core competencies and performance behaviors, including deliberate planning of professional development activities that align with professional needs, and then reflection upon the completion of those activities. It is characterized by and its success depends on the principles of empowerment, professional development, interpersonal communication and teamwork, and the use of modern technology.

The performance evaluation system is an important tool in reaching Extension goals for employees and organizational development. The system offers a framework for Extension employees and their supervisors to participate in open communication for individual employee assessment, planning, recognition and development. At the same time, it takes into account the broader concerns of developing educational programs, achieving effective group processes and enhancing team building. Observation of staff members is one factor that allows supervisors to assist Extension employees in their professional development.

Because the continuous development of Extension employees to meet current and future clientele needs is critical to the health of Extension, this performance evaluation system cannot conclude with merely evaluating the employee's performance once each year. It is also not solely the task of the supervisor but a coordinated effort between employee, co-workers, work team members and supervisor. This system relies on three steps: performance planning, reflection/progress, and annual review. By their very nature, they connote collegiality, collaboration and support. This is essential because the end product of the system is feedback intended to reinforce positive performance and supply meaningful assistance when improvement is needed.

Performance Planning

Extension employees are integrally involved in developing plans for their work through team and individual planning. During the planning phase, Institute Leadership, with input from District Directors, and Extension employees agree on both team and individual performance efforts.

These team and individual work efforts are expressed in the reporting system as part of the planning process.

The supervisor reviews a draft of the employee's plan so the supervisor and employee can come to agreement about the plan and expectations. Expectations describe desired behaviors relevant to effectively accomplishing the objectives of MSU Extension.

Efforts toward support of a positive culture, and efforts showing access to various communities and groups should

be noted in objectives and methods. Purposeful efforts to promote access and belonging, and pluralism should be evident throughout most elements of the plan and, in particular, within major initiatives.

The documentation of an employee's programmatic plan in the reporting system is important for several reasons:

- It represents an outline of the professional Extension employee's planned allocation of time and program resources.
- It provides a means to communicate with others about what the educator is doing. It may be a tool to inform advisory committees, Extension councils, and other stakeholders.
- It serves as a quarterly reference for the Extension employee and the supervisor regarding planned goals.
- It provides a record and benchmark for building on important educational programming and professional development goals.
- It reflects the Extension employee's commitment to access in all factors of educational programs.

The Extension employee consults with the supervisor to discuss carrying out the educational initiatives plan. The net product is a cooperatively designed package of significant educational programs and other programming efforts.

Reflections/Progress

The reflection/progress phase consists of ongoing documentation by the employee in the appropriate reporting system(s) and seeking input from Institute leadership and District Director to assess progress and receive coaching and feedback.

These interactions/discussions focus on the employee's progress in implementing the plan, support the supervisor can provide, changes needed, and reinforcement for work activities done well.

Documentation in the reporting systems is critical to the review of performance by Institute leadership. Staff are expected to maintain accurate, timely reporting on at least a monthly basis. A staff member who would like to consult with Institute Leadership and/or the appropriate District Director on the progress of their plan throughout the year should contact these individuals to request time to meet.

Annual Evaluation

As part of the annual evaluation, extension employees will consider and respond to key questions about their performance during the review period (self-evaluation). Institute leadership and District Directors will independently review documentation in the reporting system as part of the overall evaluation process. The employee, Institute leadership and District Director will meet to discuss the employee's performance and record feedback on the evaluation form. Development opportunities are also documented at that time as "Opportunities for Development."

During the review phase, the supervisor and employee will complete the respective portions of the performance evaluation document. The form reflects the supervisor's judgment of the extent to which the employee met the goals set forth in the plan. If an employee receives a Partially Meets Expectations or a Does Not Meet Expectation rating, Institute leadership, the District Director and the employee may establish a performance improvement plan (PIP). The performance improvement plan is a tool used to assist the employee in areas of further development and/or improvement.

Performance Levels

Institute leadership (or supervisor, for employees not aligned with an Institute) in collaboration with the District Director (for employees working within Districts) determine a performance level based on whether the employee met work goals at one of the four performance levels noted below.

Exceeds Expectations

Job effectiveness consistently exceeds expectations on most, if not all, duties and goals during the review period. Employee achieves results well beyond established criteria for work performance and makes exceptional contributions. The employee uses sound process in carrying out job functions and errors are rare or non-existent. Employee demonstrates exceptional performance in quantity and/or quality of work; increases efficiency and effectiveness; takes initiative to expand depth and breadth of knowledge; and enhances existing work relationships with peers, administrators, stakeholders and/or customers, seeking opportunities for new collaborations. Demonstrates a commitment to incorporating and taking action toward positive culture in the workplace and programming, and access across a variety of communities/ groups throughout all programming efforts and interactions with others

Meets Expectations

Job effectiveness consistently meets expectations on most, if not all, duties and goals during the review period. The employee achieves the expected results relative to established criteria of work performance, using sound process in carrying out job functions. Occasions when expected results are not achieved are infrequent and utilized as learning experiences. Employee gives focused attention to suggestions for improvement in quantity and or quality of work. Employee makes efforts to incorporate positive culture in the workplace and programming, and access across a variety of communities/ groups .

Partially Meets Expectations

Job effectiveness is uneven and generally below performance expectations during the review period. Employee produces some results that meet the stated criteria of work performance and some results are below performance expectations for the review period. Errors are occasional and sometimes repeated. Few efforts related to positive culture in the workplace and programming, and access across a variety of communities/ groups are apparent. Improvement in the quality and/or quantity of work in multiple areas of performance is necessary. **A written performance plan to improve process and/or results is required.**

Does Not Meet Expectations

Job effectiveness is consistently below expectations on most, if not all, duties and goals during the review period. Employee fails to be successful in one or more of the following areas: produce results consistent with the established criteria for work performance; demonstrates role knowledge; the process in which the employee follows to carry out job functions is sound; dependable in meeting commitments and deadlines; and/or maintaining effective work relationships with peers, administrators, stakeholders and/or customers, No demonstrable efforts toward positive culture in the workplace and programming, and access across a variety of communities/ groups is apparent. One or all of these characteristics are present in performance. Substantial improvement is required in quantity and/or quality of work. **A written performance plan to improve process and/or results is required.**

Steps of the Performance Evaluation

1. Employee completes the “self-evaluation” questions and submits to Institute Leadership (supervisor) and District Director by given deadline.
2. Institute leadership/supervisor and District Director discuss the overall goals and objectives and the employee’s contribution at the local and organizational level. Written feedback is provided to the employee prior to the performance review meeting. Specific methods to address developmental opportunities are jointly discussed and documented. Changes may be made to the form based on the discussion.

3. Signatures indicate that the appraisal meeting has been completed, but does not imply employee concurrence with the evaluation. Upon completion of a discussion with Institute Leadership/supervisor and the District Director, if the employee has concerns regarding the evaluation, an appeals process is available to the individual being evaluated.
4. Assuming budgetary allowance, salary increases are provided to individuals who meet or exceed expectations.
5. For all individuals who partially meet or do not meet expectations on the performance review summary, Institute Leadership/ supervisor in conjunction with the District Director (when applicable), will provide a performance improvement plan (PIP) within 10-business days of the performance evaluation meeting.
6. At the time in the calendar year when the director is notified of available salary increase dollars, Institute Leadership/supervisors will develop proposed salary increases based on the performance evaluation.

Employees that receive a “partially meets expectations” or “does not meet expectations” rating will not receive salary adjustments.

7. To provide consistency across the organization, Institute Leadership/supervisors will meet with the MSUE Director and Associate Director to discuss performance levels of employees from their Institute and proposed merit pay increases.

Additional Steps for “Partially Meets” or Does Not Meet” Expectations

The following procedure is implemented for an employee who receives a “partially meets” or “does not meet” performance rating. See Partially Meets notes following these steps for further information.

When an employee’s performance is rated as “partially meets” or “does not meet” expectations, when the time for Performance Summary appeal has elapsed or the director sustains a “does not meet” recommendation from a performance appraisal appeals committee, the employee’s Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) will be finalized within 10 business days.

1. To the extent possible, the immediate supervisor (i.e. appropriate IL member), and District Director, work in conjunction with Extension Human Resources to develop the PIP. This plan includes goals, expected outcomes, and steps to achieve the goals, the involvement of others in aspects of the PIP, and a timeline. A meeting of the employee and the immediate supervisor and/or District Director is held to finalize and sign the plan.

A PIP expresses a supervisor’s discernment of needed performance improvements and does not require the employee’s agreement. Though it is better to have the employee’s agreement, the performance improvement plan will proceed regardless.

2. Institute leadership and/or District Directors will meet periodically with the employee to assess progress, provide feedback and provide support. Institute Leadership and District Director should retain documentation of these meetings and discussions.

The PIP is constructed with a dismissal sanction. The employee is informed at the beginning, in writing, that failure to meet the performance goals will result discipline, up to and including discharge.

3. For **continuing employment** employees (those who have been granted continuing employment at least four months written notice of dismissal is required. However, the PIP does not have to continue through this four-month period.
4. For **fixed-term** employees, the same PIP process is applied. However, the employer is not obligated to extend an appointment to accommodate the PIP, nor is a fixed-term employee subject to the four-month employment notice requirement.
5. If the employee meets the performance goals of the PIP, the employee returns to the annual cycle of PDS and appropriate documentation concerning successful improvement will be made. Although successful in the PIP, there is no raise associated with this step.

Partially Meets

The same performance improvement plan procedure is implemented for an employee who receives a “partially meets” performance rating. If at the end of the initial PIP period, the employee meets most but not all of the goals of the PIP, an additional PIP period may be established. This “extended” PIP must include written communication to the employee, outlining the lack of progress, and noting that continued failure to achieve the performance goals will result in dismissal.

There is no salary increase given when an employee receives a “partially meets” rating. With successful completion of the PIP, the employee returns to the annual PDS cycle and it is expected that the improvements made will be continuous and ongoing. Without a mostly successful completion (see above paragraph), the employee is notified of his/her dismissal.

Appeals Process

If an employee does not agree with the content of the performance evaluation, the employee may pursue an appeal under the MSU Extension Academic Appeal policy. This policy can be found in the MSU Extension Administrative Handbook located on the MSU Extension Organizational Development website under Human Resources/ Administrative Handbook.