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1. Introduction

The Performance Management guidelines are designed for university leadership, managers, employees and human resources personnel to use in conjunction with the Working @ VCU: “Great Place” HR Policies in the implementation of the performance management process for VCU University and Academic Professionals and Classified employees. The objective is to provide a common understanding of the purpose, methods, and procedures involved in the performance management process at VCU.

Performance Management begins with the establishment of clear expectations and well-defined behaviors that cascade from the university’s strategic priorities and values to the school or unit level to each employee, providing a direct line of sight from the individual’s goals to the university’s mission and vision. It includes a mechanism for discussing useful and meaningful feedback on accomplishments and competencies, including coaching discussions on career growth as well as rewarding and recognizing high performers.

2. Performance Management Accountability & Responsibility

All University and Academic Professionals and Classified Employees participate in the university’s performance management process. The successful implementation of the performance management process requires engagement of employees, managers, university leadership, and human resources staff.

The Employee is responsible for:

- Working collaboratively with the manager on performance planning, including the development, documentation, and implementation of performance and career development goals, which contribute to achievement of school/unit goals in support of the university’s mission.
- Having a clear understanding of employee role expectations.
- Discussing concerns and/or questions regarding any part of their job, including their duties and their manager’s expectations, or the performance management process.
- Addressing aspects of performance identified as needing improvement.
- Fully participating in performance discussions and review processes.
- Preparing performance reviews within established deadlines.
- Bringing any questions or concerns about these responsibilities to HR or to their manager.

The Manager is responsible for:

- Understanding and actively supporting the university’s performance management process.
- Participating in developing appropriate and accurate position descriptions.
- Seeking input from and providing support for the employee regarding performance and career development goals and monitoring the employee’s success toward meeting identified goals.
- Communicating and documenting each employee’s performance development plan.
- Engaging in ongoing communication and feedback with the employee to discuss progress toward achieving performance and career development goals.
- Addressing instances of poor performance or other significant performance issues in a timely manner and assisting employees in making the necessary improvements.
- Preparing performance reviews within established deadlines.
- Participating in the salary increase and rewards process.
- Validating work time and certifying absences.
- Bringing any questions or concerns about these responsibilities to HR.

The Vice Presidents, Deans, and Department Heads are responsible for:

- Establishing and communicating organizational goals that align with the university’s strategic priorities.
- Providing the training/resources needed to increase manager and employee effectiveness in the achievement of organizational goals and strategic priorities.
- Ensuring that the organization is complying with performance guidelines and HR policy and that all managers are knowledgeable about the processes and requirements for performance management and are abiding by them.

VCU Human Resources is responsible for:

- Providing HR leadership across the institution and developing policies and programs that ensure understanding and compliance with the performance management processes.
- Providing tools, resources, and training to the university’s senior management to be knowledgeable about roles, processes, and requirements of all HR policies.
- Monitoring and reporting on school/unit compliance with performance guidelines and HR policy.
- Collaborating with school/unit HR Professionals and providing guidance and consultation for a best practice performance management culture.
- Providing training/resources on the performance management process.
- Maintaining records and providing reports as necessary.

The HR Professional is responsible for:

- Providing guidance and assistance to employees within the school/unit as they navigate the performance management process.
- Facilitating HR decision making, task implementation, and transaction execution at the leadership level related to performance management.
- Monitoring and reporting on school/unit compliance with performance guidelines and HR policy.
- Facilitating school/unit level training on the performance process, in consultation with VCU HR, utilizing tools and resources provided by VCU HR.
3. Overview of the Performance Management Process

The process of managing performance provides opportunities for the manager and employee to assess how well the employee's performance meets the requirements of the job. Such communication is part of a manager's ongoing responsibilities rather than an annual event.

The performance management cycle begins with the establishment of job requirements, a job description outlining principal responsibilities and duties, and clear standards upon which performance is measured. This provides the foundation for creating goals.

The employee performs the job as agreed upon with their manager and works toward successfully achieving their performance and competency goals. It is the manager's responsibility to informally review the employee's performance throughout the performance cycle, offering specific feedback on how well goals are being met and where improvement is needed. During these discussions, the employee and manager should develop an action plan to improve the employee's performance as needed to meet the expectations for the position.

Performance goals and competencies are reviewed and redefined at three points:

- At least annually;
- When job responsibilities or strategic goals change;
- When a new employee assumes the job responsibilities.

Annual performance reviews are required by the university and serve as the manager's formal documentation of the employee's performance during the performance period. As a resource for facilitating the organization's performance review process, the Talent@VCU system is a tool used to document and summarize information collected during evaluation discussions between manager and employee throughout the performance period. Talent@VCU also serves as a performance journal - an online log that employees and managers may use to document their performance milestones and professional growth.
The Performance Management Process Flow

Performance Planning
1. Leadership sets their school/unit organizational goals.
2. The manager and employee meet to discuss performance expectations and goals for the year. This conversation should include VCU’s core competencies and career development planning.
3. Following the conversation, the employee will enter their goals into Talent@VCU and submit them to their manager electronically for approval.

Mid-year Review
1. The mid-year review is optional at the school/unit-level, but recommended and strongly encouraged.
2. The employee completes a mid-year self-review.
3. The manager conducts a mid-year review, and the manager and employee meet to discuss progress.

Annual Review
1. The employee completes a self-review.
2. The manager completes a manager review.
3. The reviewer approves and signs the annual review, consisting of self and manager reviews.
4. School/Unit leadership team completes calibration.
5. The manager and employee discuss the annual performance review.
6. The manager acknowledges in the system that the discussion has taken place.
7. The employee acknowledges that the discussion has taken place and electronically signs the completed review.

The Performance Management Process and Talent@VCU

The university’s performance management process is supported by Talent@VCU, a software tool that integrates performance management, career development, succession development, and learning management. Talent@VCU is meant to support and document the ongoing communication between employee and manager throughout the performance management cycle. Utilizing VCU’s Central Authentication Service (CAS) technology, VCU employees will use their VCU eID and password to sign into Talent@VCU.
4. Performance Planning

*Quest 2025: Together We Transform*, the university's strategic plan, is the guiding document from which all other university goals will cascade. Senior leadership inside each school/unit are responsible for identifying organizational goals that align to the university strategic plan. When individual employees create their performance goals for the year, those goals will align to the organizational goals of their school/unit. This process will provide a clear line of sight from the strategic plan, through school/unit goals, to the individual performance goals of each employee. This alignment allows employees to see how their day-to-day activities contribute to the success of the university.

During the performance planning conversation, the manager and employee will discuss goals and expectations for the upcoming year, review the university’s core competencies, and create a career development plan. At the beginning of the goal setting conversation, the manager should share the relevant university and school/unit goals. Then the manager and employee can work collaboratively to draft the performance goals. An employee should have no more than 6 or 7 goals per year. The employee is then responsible for entering those goals into Talent@VCU and submitting them to their manager for electronic approval. Managers are responsible for approving the goals in the system.
Guide to Writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Developing sound goals is critical to managing employees’ performance. Each year managers work with employees to set goals for the upcoming year/evaluation period. Goals should be S.M.A.R.T. – specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused and time-bound.

Example: By mm/dd/yyyy, implement a new performance management system for Classified Staff and University Employees using clearly defined processes and guidelines so employees and supervisors can more competently evaluate performance and develop their careers.

Below is a definition of each of the S.M.A.R.T. goal criteria referencing the example above.

Specific: Goals should be simplistically written and **clearly define what will be accomplished**. Specific is the What, Why, and How of the S.M.A.R.T. model.

Explanation of Example:
“Implement a new performance management system for Classified Staff and University Employees = **What**

“Using clearly defined processes and guidelines” = **How**

“So employees and supervisors competently evaluate performance and develop their careers” = **Why**

Measurable: Goals should be measurable so employees have tangible evidence that they have accomplished the goal. Usually, the entire goal statement is a measure, but there are usually several short-term or smaller measurements built into the goal.

Explanation of Example: The essential metric is whether the system is operational as of mm/dd/yyyy. What measures will define “operational” response time, working as configured, % of time available to users?

Achievable: Goals should be achievable; they should stretch the employee slightly so they feel challenged, but defined well enough so they can achieve them. Employees must possess the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to achieve the goal.
When the goal is clearly defined, sufficient resources exist and a timeframe is established that allows the employee to carry out those steps. Achievable goals motivate employees. Impossible goals de-motivate them.

**Explanation of Example:** In order for an employee to reach the goal, they must have a skill set. In this case, proficiency in the area of performance management is the skill set that allows them to understand the nature of the goal. The goal must present a large enough challenge for the employee to remain interested in and committed to accomplishing it.

**Results-focused:** Effective goals measure outcomes, not activities.

**Explanation of Example:** The result of this goal is a process that allows employees and supervisors to more competently evaluate performance and develop their careers, not the individual activities and actions that occur in order to make the goal a reality.

**Time-bound:** Goals should be linked to a timeframe that creates a practical sense of forward movement to close the gap between the current state of the goal and the desired outcome of the goal.

**Explanation of Example:** A specific date for completion provides the employee with a time-bound deadline.

The concept of writing S.M.A.R.T. goals is very important for accomplishing individual goals, which in turn are linked to department, unit, and university goals. It is also critical for ensuring good communication between employees and supervisors so there are no surprises during annual performance reviews.
S.M.A.R.T. Goal Questionnaire

The S.M.A.R.T. Goal Questionnaire that follows assists managers and employees in creating S.M.A.R.T. goals. Begin by writing the goal as clearly and concisely as possible. Then, answer the related questions and conclude by revising the goal, in the space provided.

Goal:

Specific. **What** will the goal accomplish? **How** will it be accomplished? **Why** will it be accomplished?

Measurable. How will the goal be measured (list at least two indicators)? What evidence will indicate accomplishment of the goal?

Achievable. Does the employee possess the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources required to accomplish the goal? Will meeting the goal present a challenge without being overwhelming?

Results-focused. What is the reason, purpose, or benefit of accomplishing the goal? What is the outcome (not activities leading up to the result) of the goal?

Time-bound. What is the established completion date and does that completion date create a practical sense of urgency?

Revised Goal:
Cascading/SMART Goals Example: Manager

University
Theme: Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment.

School/Unit Goal
School of Education: Prepare effective, highly-skilled teachers, counselors, school administrators, higher education faculty and other education professionals committed to making a difference in the lives of children and adults and their communities, particularly in high-need learning environments.

Individual Goals
Manager, Student Services Center:

Title: Service Center Goals Implementation
Provide direction, oversight and support to the service center team to ensure all students are assigned faculty advisors; all student applications are processed for teacher preparation programs and clinical placements and all records are created and maintained in accordance with School of Education policy, procedures and timelines to enable students to successfully progress through their School of Education experience.

Title: Process Improvement
Provide guidance to applicable service center staff in designing and implementing process improvement techniques to reduce application-processing time by 8% for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Title: Performance Management for Direct Reports
Coach and support all direct reports, provide clear goals and expectations for performance, meaningful feedback and fair mid-year and annual performance reviews aligned with the university Performance Management policy and guidelines.
Completed S.M.A.R.T. Goal Questionnaire Example: Manager

Manager Goal:
Title: Service Center Goals Implementation
Provide direction and support to the service center team to ensure administrative (all records are accurately maintained), advising (all students are assigned advisors) and technical support (all student applications are processed for teacher preparation programs and clinical placements) is delivered to students in accordance with School of Education policy, procedures and timelines. This will enable students to successfully progress through their School of Education experience.

Specific.
What will the goal accomplish? Administrative, advising and technical support to students
How Providing direction and support to the service center team
Why To enable students to successfully progress through their School of Education Experience.

Measurable. How will the goal be measured (list at least two indicators)? What evidence will indicate accomplishment of the goal?
All:
- Records are accurately maintained
- Students are assigned advisors
- Student applications are processed for teacher preparation programs and clinical placements

Achievable. Does the employee possess the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources required to accomplish the goal? Determined when providing direction and support to the team and inventorying resources available for execution of the services. Will meeting the goal present a challenge without being overwhelming? Determined by the knowledge, skills and abilities of the team and available resources human and material.

Results-focused. What is the reason, purpose, or benefit of accomplishing the goal?
What is the outcome (not activities leading up to the result) of the goal? To enable students to successfully progress through their School of Education Experience.

Time-bound. What is the established completion date and does that completion date create a practical sense of urgency? In accordance with School of Education policy, procedures and timelines
Cascading/SMART Goals Example: Employee

University Theme: Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment.

School/Unit Goal
School of Education: Prepare effective, highly-skilled teachers, counselors, school administrators, higher education faculty and other education professionals committed to making a difference in the lives of children and adults and their communities, particularly in high-need learning environments.

Individual Goals
Coordinator, Clinical Placements and Licensure:

Title: Application Processing Teacher Preparation Programs
Process all applications received for admission to teacher preparation programs accurately and within the timeline established by the dean’s office to facilitate timely decision making and notification of admission to all applicants.

Title: Student Recruitment
Enhance prospective student interest in applications through proactive development and sharing of general and program course information during scheduled recruitment events and upon request from internal and external audiences throughout the performance period.

Title: Application Processing for Student Experience Programs
Process all applications received for clinical placements for practica, student teaching, internships, externships and state licensure accurately while adhering to all internal and external program deadlines to maximize opportunities for student selection and participation.
Completed S.M.A.R.T. Goal Questionnaire Example: Employee

Employee Goal:
Title: Application Processing Teacher Preparation Programs
Process all applications received for admission to teacher preparation programs accurately and within the timeline established by the dean’s office to facilitate timely decision making and notification of admission to all applicants to enable students to successfully progress through their School of Education experience.

Specific.
What will the goal accomplish? Timely decision making and notification of admission to teacher preparation programs to all applicants.
How Processing all applications
Why To enable students to successfully progress through their School of Education Experience.

Measurable. How will the goal be measured (list at least two indicators)? What evidence will indicate accomplishment of the goal?
All applications are processed:
• accurately
• within the timeline established by the dean's office
• to facilitate timely decision making and notification

Achievable. Does the employee possess the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources required to accomplish the goal? Identified through conversation between the employee and manager regarding necessary employee skills, competencies and resources. (Example KSAs: Technical ability, knowledge of process software, knowledge of procedures and timelines, ability for attention to detail) Will meeting the goal present a challenge without being overwhelming? Determined by the knowledge, skills and abilities of the employee and available resources human and material.

Results-focused. What is the reason, purpose, or benefit of accomplishing the goal? What is the outcome (not activities leading up to the result) of the goal? Maximize SOE students admission to teacher preparation programs.

Time-bound. What is the established completion date and does that completion date create a practical sense of urgency? In accordance with School of Education policy, procedures and timelines.
S.M.A.R.T. Goal Checklist

☑️ (S) Does the goal focus on a specific area?

☑️ (S) Is the goal written using concrete language?

☑️ (S) Does the goal begin with an action verb? (to + verb)

☑️ (M) Can progress be measured for the goal? Is the progress:
  o Numeric or descriptive?
  o Quantitative?
  o Qualitative?
  o Financial?
  o Constrained by time?

☑️ (A) Is the goal a “stretch”, yet still within the employee’s control?

☑️ (A) Is the goal sufficiently and reasonably limited in scope?

☑️ (R) Does the goal measure actual outcomes or results, not activities?

☑️ (R) Do the results include products, deliverables, or accomplishments?

☑️ (R) Is the goal supportive of and directly relevant to the University and the school/unit’s mission and goals?

☑️ (T) Has a reasonable timeframe been identified?

☑️ (T) Is it necessary to identify interim steps or have a plan to monitor progress?
Performance Planning Conversation Model for Managers

Planning

- Schedule time on the calendar to have the discussion
- Prepare to share university and school/unit strategic goals and develop SMART individual employee goals
- Share university core and leadership competencies

Discussion

*Establish the Agenda*

- State the purpose and format for the meeting

*Explain the Cascading/SMART Goals Concept*

- Briefly identify the VCU strategic priorities
- Make the connection between the university goals and the school/unit mission/vision/goals

*Share Your Ideas*

- Share specific employee goals critical to success in the position
- Communicate to create professional development goals
- Ask for the employee’s reaction
- Surface obstacles and issues
- Offer information and assistance
- Summarize key goals and action steps mutually agreed to
- Make the connection between the university goals and the school/unit mission/vision/goals
- Highlight core and leadership competencies that will be applicable to achieving the goals

*Agree on Action Plans*

- Check for employee’s commitment to the action plan
- Express confidence and offer support
- Ask employee to summarize understanding (if necessary)

Follow-up

- Observe
- Measure
- Coach (discuss strengths and opportunities for growth/improvement)
Performance Planning Conversation Model for Managers

Suggested Conversation Guide

Explaining the Cascading SMART Goal Concept
- Developing sound university, school/unit and individual goals, is critical to employee and university success.
- Each year we will work together to set and clarify goals for the upcoming year/performance review period.
- Having clear alignment of goals allows everyone to work in support of a larger goal, and helps everyone see how their day-to-day activities contribute to the success of the university and establishes a framework for individual career growth and success.
- Goals should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, results focused and time-bound.

Ways of Asking for Input
- As you consider the goals for your work over the next year, what is missing from your perspective?
- What questions do you have regarding the specific goals I’ve shared and how what you do contributes to the overall success of the university?

Ways of Building an Action Plan
- What is one thing that you think it would be beneficial for you to work on to help you achieve your goals?
- How can I be helpful?
- What is one thing that you can begin to do as an action step tomorrow to be more effective?
- Would you be open to listing to some ideas I have for moving forward?
- Of the suggestions I shared, which ideas sound best to you.

Ways of Summarizing
- What I heard you say was…was my interpretation on track?
- How do the ideas we just discussed sound to you? Does this sound like something you may be able to use? Why, why not?
- How may I be of assistance to you?
- What questions can I answer for you?

Ways of Checking for Commitment
- How would you characterize your level of commitment to the plans we developed?
- It is important that we conclude our conversation by making certain that we have a mutual understanding of the next steps, recap the highlights of our discussion today in your own words.
Adjusting Goals
Managers and employees must engage in effective, ongoing communication to keep each other informed of goal status and achievement. Listed below are trouble spots that may occur and suggested remedies for handling them.

1. When unexpected events occur that indicate the attainment of the goal is unfeasible, irrelevant or impossible:
   ● Stop implementing the goal.
   ● Select alternatives (new or modified goals) and set up a time schedule to discontinue the existing goal and/or implement the new or modified one.
   ● Communicate change to all employees involved/impacted.

2. Established goal is pursued even though an unexpected opportunity arises:
   ● Re-analyze the payoff of the existing goal in light of the new opportunity.
   ● If usefulness and value will be substantially greater set new goals in lieu of prior goal.

3. Goals are expected in a short, or unattainable, amount of time:
   ● Hold frequent progress conversations to clarify difficulties.
   ● Managers occasionally may need to reduce expectations if they are unfair or unattainable.

4. Goals are not attained due to circumstances beyond everyone’s control:
   ● Such a circumstance can provide useful guidelines for the next round of goals.
   ● Place greater emphasis on the level of attainability and the probability of occurrence.
   ● Document the employee’s efforts and briefly describe the external circumstances.

Adjusting goals in Talent@VCU:
   ● Using the edit functionality, all goals can be adjusted in Talent@VCU.
   ● Any change to a goal needs to go through the electronic approval process.
   ● If goals are closed out or significantly altered during the performance cycle, use the comment functionality to explain the changes.
5. Feedback and Ongoing Communication

Basics of Feedback and Ongoing Communication

- **Ongoing**: Feedback and communication between managers and employees should be integrated throughout the performance management cycle.

- **Productive**: Ongoing feedback and communication should be proactive, positive, and designed to help people be successful.

- **Constructive**: Ongoing feedback and conversations should enable individuals to correct mistakes, align actions with processes, identify problem or nonproductive behaviors and interactions, and seek alternative, productive behaviors.

- **Timely and Specific**: Hard conversations are easier when behaviors, problems, and course corrections are addressed close to the occurrence.

- **Open and Engaging**: Feedback conversations should be two-way streets. Make observations and gather data to be sure feedback is on target and ask questions. Employees likely have insights about their choices and performance that managers do not have.

- **Practice**: Practice feedback conversations before you have them. Use the STAR Model to help construct a feedback conversation.
Performance Coaching

Managers should engage in performance coaching with the employees to acknowledge successes, provide balanced feedback, and share opportunities for growth.

Objectives of Performance Coaching
- To establish performance expectations with regard to goals, core competencies, and goals.
- To communicate clearly and in behavioral terms what good work performance looks like.
- To monitor the employee’s progress in achieving goals.
- To identify problems hindering progress, discuss strategies to remove barriers and constructively criticize work that falls short of standards.
- To ensure that the employee receives the training needed to perform successfully.
- To create an environment that will spark the employee’s motivation to perform his or her work successfully.
- To praise on an ongoing basis work that meets or exceeds the standards.
- To consult with an employee who does not meet standards for reasons other than lack of skills (e.g., attitude, motivation, personal problems, etc.) or who still does not perform to standards after receiving appropriate coaching/training.
- To encourage the employee to set goals for further improvement.
- To provide a non-threatening atmosphere in which the employee can freely express tensions, conflicts, concerns, and problems.
- To help the employee realize their potential.

Types of Coaching
- Reinforce good performance
- Correct performance
- Teach new skills and procedures
- Mentor employees

Benefits of Coaching
- Increases productivity, quality and effectiveness of the employee and the work group
- Increases employees’ motivation, initiative, and success
- Increases creativity, innovation, and engagement
- Makes the manager’s role easier when employees build their skills and independence
Performance Coaching

The Interaction Process – A Balancing Act

Interaction Skills (Key Principles)
- Maintain and enhance self-esteem
- Listen actively and respond with empathy to problems or concerns
- Ask for help and encourage involvement in solving problems
- Share thoughts, feelings and rationale for decisions
- Provide support without removing responsibility

Good Feedback is:
- Timely
- Specific
- Balanced and non-threatening
- Focused on action planning
Giving Feedback

Tips for Giving Feedback

1. Make the feedback specific and related to behavior.
   No: “James, you’re late again and you have a poor attitude.”
   Yes: “James you have been 15 minutes late for the past three mornings. Will you help me understand why?”

2. Consider the timing. Give feedback either before the event in the form of advice or immediately after as positive or corrective feedback.
   No: (criticism) “Jane, because you’ve done such a poor job in the past, I need to preview the speech you’re planning to give next week.”
   Yes: (advice) “Jane I’d like to review the content of your presentation with you before your meeting next week so we can be sure you are successful.”
   No: (positive, but not specific) “Jane, good speech last week. Keep up the good work!”
   Yes: (positive) “Jane, you did an outstanding job in your presentation. The speech was well researched and interesting. I saw many members of the audience taking copious notes while you presented!”

3. Give the feedback in calm and unemotional language.
   No: “James, isn’t it about time you improved your production with this machine?”
   Yes: “James, I’m sure your progress will be much faster now that you better understand how to use the new machine.”

4. Check to make sure clear communication has occurred.
   No: “So, John, you’ve got it now, right?”
   Yes: “John, do you understand the new protocol now? Will you explain it to me so I’m sure that I explained it correctly?”

5. Focus on behavior the employee can change.
   No: “John, why don’t you like to talk to other people?”
   Yes: “John, part of your role is to keep the team informed about the status of the project.”

6. Use “I” statements rather than “you” statements.
   No: “John, you are so inconsiderate of others when you leave your radio on!”
   Yes: “John, I lose my concentration when I am able to hear your radio in the work area. Please turn the volume down during working hours.”
7. **Define the impact on you, the team, the unit, the university.**

   No:  “Janet, can’t you ever get your reports to me on time?”
   
   Yes:  “Janet, when I don’t get your reports on time, I can’t get my reports to my manager on time. This slows up decisions about resources our department needs for the upcoming month.”

8. **Solicit feedback rather than impose it.**

   No:  “John, I saw how you handled Mrs. Smith during this crisis, and it was not good at all.”
   
   Yes:  “John, it is important that you learn to handle your difficult customers more effectively. I’m happy to share some things that have worked for me and talk with you about what you can do more effectively. Would that help?”
Giving Feedback

The STAR Model: A useful tool for structuring feedback.

Positive Feedback Example:
ST – A parent came into your office today looking upset.
A – You gave her the information she needed and explained the next steps.
R – She thanked you for your help and left with the information she needed and looked relieved.

Growth/Improvement Feedback Example:
ST – A parent complained to me about the service he received from your office.
A – Before he could finish, you interrupted him and said there was nothing you could do.
R – He left looking very upset

A – It will be helpful in a similar situation going forward if you listen more patiently, wait until you know all the circumstances before responding, explain what you can do, if you can’t help them make contact with someone who can or direct them to where they can find what they need.
R – That way, they will have a better understanding and feel better about the interaction and the university.
Receiving Feedback

Tips for Receiving Feedback - Six Steps for Success

The following information is intended to assist employees with developing an open and non-defensive posture to coaching and feedback. This information should help employees receive and respond to feedback in an appropriate and professional manner.

1. **Set goals for yourself.**
   Before you even receive feedback you should think about what goals you would like to set for yourself. Being motivated to achieve may make it easier to receive constructive criticism. Creating goals will give you a target to orient your efforts towards. These could be long or short-term goals just make sure they are challenging yet achievable.

2. **Be approachable.**
   People avoid giving feedback to people who are not approachable. Ask for feedback. Let others know you are interested in hearing what they think. Your openness to feedback is obvious through your body language, facial expressions, and welcoming manner.

3. **Ask questions.**
   This helps clarify the difference between perception and behavior. Focus on questions that help you understand what behaviors you may need to change. Ask for examples and stories that illustrate the feedback, so you know you share meaning with the person providing the feedback. Check with others to determine the reliability of the feedback. If only one person believes it about you, it may be just him or her, not you.

4. **Manage your emotions.**
   If you start to feel yourself becoming emotional it’s perfectly acceptable to ask the person providing the feedback if you can have some time to process the information and schedule another meeting. When your fight or flight mode kicks in and emotions start to run high it’s difficult to concentrate on what the other person is saying. Taking time out to calm your nerves will allow you to process your feedback as calmly and objectively as possible.

5. **Analyze the feedback and develop a strategy to overcome obstacles and achieve your goals.**
   Remember to look for facts as opposed to opinions in the feedback. Try to recall some of the constructive feedback you have received in the past. If you see any patterns or feel you might recognize some of the behaviors they are describing write them down. Think about how these behaviors/issues could become barriers to the goals you came up with in step one. Plan what steps you could take to address these points.

6. **Share your plan and ask for advice and support.**
   This shows that you’re taking steps to remedy the issues pointed out. They may also have suggestions that you may not have considered. Finally, ask your manager or colleague for support in making these changes. If they see that you genuinely want to put their advice into action, they’ll be sure to offer you encouragement along the way and be more receptive when you give them feedback in return.
6. Completing the Performance Review

The performance review is an opportunity for a formal check-in at either the mid-point or the end of the performance cycle. Mid-year and annual reviews are completed in Talent@VCU. Annual reviews are mandatory. Mid-year reviews are recommended but not mandatory. Check with your HR Professional about whether or not a mid-year review must be completed.

**Mid-Year Review Process (Recommended)**

1. The employee completes a mid-year self-review.
2. The manager completes a mid-year review and meets with each employee to discuss progress.
3. The manager and employee electronically sign-off on the review.

**Annual Review Process (Required)**

1. The employee completes a self-review.
2. The manager completes a manager review.
3. The reviewer approves and signs the annual review.
4. School/unit leadership team completes calibration.
5. The manager and employee discuss the annual review.
6. The manager and employee electronically sign-off on the review.

Performance Reviews at VCU: What are they?

Whether you are a manager reviewing your direct reports, or an employee completing a self-review, all reviews at VCU have three main components: SMART Goals, VCU Core Competencies, and Comprehensive Ratings.

1. **SMART Goals** - a narrative description of progress on each SMART goal, including a rating for each goal and a rating for overall goal achievement.

2. **VCU Core Competencies** - a narrative section to describe which competency behaviors areas of strength and opportunities for growth for the employee. The competency section also contains a rating for each competency and an overall competency rating.

3. **Comprehensive Rating** - takes into account both goal achievement and competency behaviors.
Ratings Descriptions for Goals and Competencies

Exceptional –
*Performance*: significantly and consistently exceeds goals
*Competency*: consistently demonstrates exceptional behaviors; serves as a role model and mentor

Advanced –
*Performance*: consistently achieves and often exceeds goals
*Competency*: consistently demonstrates effective behaviors and often demonstrates exceptional behaviors

Successful –
*Performance*: consistently achieves goals
*Competency*: consistently demonstrates effective behaviors

Developing –
*Performance*: proactively making progress in learning and adapting to new responsibilities and goals
*Competency*: demonstrates proactive growth in exhibiting effective behaviors

Needs Improvement –
*Performance*: achieves some, but not all goals; needs improvement
*Competency*: demonstrates some behaviors but not others, or uses behaviors inconsistently

Below –
*Performance*: rarely achieves established goals; requires significant and immediate improvement
*Competency*: rarely demonstrates competency behaviors; requires significant development
Tips for Employees: Building a Self-Review

VCU’s performance management process is focused on the employee; therefore, it is very important for employees to be engaged in the entire process. The self review is the foundation of a successful performance review. It is an opportunity for employees to objectively reflect on their performance and showcase their accomplishments.

**Time.** Allow enough time to complete the self-review. That includes time you may need to review documentation that you’ve kept throughout the year relating to your goals and competencies.

**Quiet.** Complete the self-review in a quiet place without interruptions so you can devote your full attention and reflection to the process.

**Relax.** Try to relax and reflect upon individual goals, experiences, and incidents. No one is perfect, and it is very likely that you will recall both good and bad experiences. The purpose of the review process is to highlight strengths, correct performance challenges, and develop unused skills and abilities. In order to do this, you must be willing to recognize areas that need improvement or development.

**Highlight the highlights.** Don't be shy about letting your manager know where you excelled during the review period. The self-review is the place to boast with grace and diplomacy and, naturally, without putting any of your colleagues down. Don't be modest; state your accomplishments objectively and accurately.

**Don't forget about achievements made early on in the performance period.** Your manager cannot possibly remember all of your projects and your participation throughout the year. Go back over documents and emails to help you remember your earlier accomplishments.

**Don't be stuffy.** One of the benefits of a self-review is its tendency to lead to constructive dialogue between you and your manager. Therefore, try to write in a conversational style, one that is as natural as the verbal back-and-forth that occurs throughout the year.

**Be objective.** It's sometimes tempting to give yourself high marks across the board, but it's a little unlikely that you've performed every goal and/or competency at the highest level. Instead of evaluating yourself based on how you wish you had performed, offer the results and quantify them as much as possible by using facts, figures, and specific dates. The more you can point to the tangible benefits you offer the University, the more invaluable you will be. Ask yourself some specific questions: What difference did my efforts make to VCU? What did I do to contribute to my school/unit’s goals and success? Did my efforts further the University’s mission? Did I take a leadership role when the opportunity arose?

**Don't use the self-review as a bargaining chip.** This is the time to show, not tell. So, it's not the time to talk about your compensation. Be clear about your accomplishments and save salary discussions for later.

**Use appropriate language.** Choose words that demonstrate some objectivity and distance.
Yes, you’re writing about yourself, but you can still stand back and offer a little perspective. For example, instead of mentioning your sparkling personality, document specific behaviors like your ability to get along well with others. Rather than saying how much you like your job, include the ways that you have grown and improved during the review period.

**Suggest specific improvements.** The self-review is a good opportunity to identify specific ways to improve your performance. Don't be afraid to mention ways that you can do your job more effectively. Making suggestions like this is not the same as admitting weakness. Indeed, it is a mark of strength and professional maturity for employees to identify ways to grow and improve.

**Complete the Career Development Plan.** Choose, complete, and apply knowledge you gain from development activities to support your performance goals, your competency development and your career direction.

**Write more than one draft.** The self-review is part of your employment record so you’ll want to “get it right”. Make certain you are thorough and professional in your approach and language. And, that you write, review, and revise your self-review to ensure you send forward your best work.
Tips for Managers: Avoiding Common Rating Errors

In order to build trust in the performance management process it is important that ratings accurately reflect employee performance. Avoiding rater bias can be achieved through a better understanding of the university’s rating scale. Below is a list of common rating errors to keep in mind:

**Attribution:** Tendency to attribute performance to external causes.

**Central:** Majority of individuals rated in the middle. Managers who display central tendency tend to ignore or suppress differences. This tendency, which produces ratings that do not distinguish between employees, damages morale and makes decisions for pay for performance, promotions, or training difficult to justify. Avoid this tendency by:
- Documenting observable behavior over the entire performance cycle;
- Ask yourself if you are seeing the person’s behavior objectively. Seek behavioral examples from others.

**Comparison:** Tendency to rate people in comparison to other individuals instead of documenting performance goals and competencies. This tendency can be particularly unjust when comparing a person to someone else who is an extraordinarily high performer. Avoid this tendency by:
- Establishing clear SMART performance goals at the start of each performance cycle, and
- Evaluating performance against those goals.

**Halo/Horn:** High (or low) rating given to an individual based on a single performance goal or competency. This effect is also demonstrated if you let an overall global impression of the employee influence the ratings. It often occurs with employees who are friendly or unfriendly toward the manager or who are especially strong or weak in one skill. Avoid the Halo/Horn effect by:
- Establishing clear and specific standards;
- Maintaining good documentation of employee performance over the review period;
- Keeping things in perspective in terms of frequency, significance in the overall picture, and representation of the person’s overall performance;
- Identifying specific behavioral examples which support your ratings; and, Asking yourself if you have overemphasized aspects of the person’s performance you find particularly admirable or irritating.

**Leniency:** Majority of individuals rated at the high end of the scale. In order to avoid this bias, measure performance against established standards and expectations that are reasonable and attainable. Compare your ratings with peers. Are your ratings significantly higher than the ratings of others? Don’t be afraid to provide honest, fair, constructive ratings.
Primacy: Ratings reflect only initial observation of behavior. It is often hard to overcome our first impressions of someone’s behavior and we must challenge ourselves to notice behaviors that support other impressions. Avoid this tendency by:
- Documenting observable behavior over the entire review period and giving it balanced consideration; and
- Checking to see if anything you have documented presents a view different from your initial impression. If not, ask yourself if you are seeing the person’s behavior objectively. Seek behavioral examples from others.

Recency: Ratings reflect only the most recent observations of performance or behavior. Recent observations tend to be more in the forefront of the manager’s mind and therefore more “memorable.” Avoid this tendency by:
- Documenting observable behavior over the entire performance cycle and giving it balanced consideration; and
- Asking others for their observations of the employee over the course of the year to see if they have different views than you.

Similar-to-Me Effect Tendency to rate people who have qualities that you perceive in yourself. There is a common tendency for managers to rate those who are different from them lower than those similar to themselves. Avoid the Similar-to-me Effect by:
- Becoming aware of your own biases and challenging them;
- Having clearly defined and agreed upon goals and competencies identified;
- Regularly collecting documentation of observable performance covering the entire review period;
Checking to see if your ratings are significantly different across groups, e.g., different for men and women, different across racial lines.

Stereotyping: Tendency to generalize across groups and ignore individual differences.

Strictness: Opposite of leniency; ratings at low end of the scale.
- Ask yourself if your ratings distribution compares to that of your peers.
- Are your ratings significantly lower than the ratings of the others?
General guidelines for avoiding bias and evaluating employee performance objectively:

- Work with each employee at the beginning of the review cycle to develop S.M.A.R.T. performance goals and corresponding competencies.
- Focus on observable behaviors related to goals and competencies throughout the evaluation period; document observations and provide feedback and coaching to the employee;
- Compare observed behaviors to the established goal or competency, not to other people or the employee’s past performance.
- Consider factors which may have changed the nature or scope of the job, including circumstances beyond the employee’s control your own role in the employee’s performance;
- Focus on the employee’s work and not on tangential personal matters, unless those personal matters affect the work of the employee; and,
- Check your perceptions for accuracy, fairness, balance, reasonableness, and consistency.
 Calibration

What is calibration? Calibration is the process of accurately and consistently applying the ratings scale across all employees in a particular school/unit.

Calibration relies on an honest and confidential dialogue among the following participants:
1. Managers who write employee reviews.
2. Reviewers who examine reviews completed by their managers.
3. Senior leadership in the school/unit.
4. HR Professional who guides the process.

The Value of Calibration

● Ensures managers are well versed in the definitions and application of the rating scale;
● Helps managers establish thoughtful reasons for assigning a particular rating to an employee;
● Helps prepare managers to have better performance discussions with their employees;
● Provides managers with more confidence in their ratings;
● Ensures a more consistent and fair evaluation of an employee’s performance by identifying potential manager and reviewer biases; and,
● Aids the university’s pay for performance process by increasing the confidence in our differentiation of performance levels.

The Calibration Process

Step 1. Goals & Competencies Calibration Meeting

At the beginning of the performance cycle when school/unit leaders create strategic goals for the school/unit, key calibration stakeholders will meet to discuss those goals, how goals for each employee can align up to those goals, and what goal achievement looks like in relation to the ratings scale. Managers are responsible for communicating this information to their employees, ensuring employees have a clear understanding of the measures and behaviors (competencies) on which their performance will be reviewed. This conversation is a critical step to ensuring all employees in the school/unit understand what leadership’s performance expectations for the year.

Step 2. Reviewer Calibration

During the annual review process, reviewers are responsible for ensuring all the reviews completed by their managers are thorough and consistent with expectations communicated at the beginning of the performance cycle. The reviewer is usually the manager’s manager, but that may vary in certain schools and departments. If the reviewer decides a manager should alter a particular review, the reviewer sends the evaluation back to the manager with a request for revision.

Step 3. Ratings Calibration Meeting

Before all performance reviews are finalized, key calibration stakeholders will meet again to
ensure review results match the expectations they communicated at the beginning of the performance year. This is an honest, confidential conversation where the HR Professional provides a rating distribution report for all participants to view and discuss. The group may ask questions about specific ratings and may suggest adjustments based on their experience with the employee.

If any changes are identified in the calibration meeting, the HR Professional will send the review back to the manager to make the necessary edits. After those changes have been made, the HR Professional will then release the reviews so they can be visible for both the manager and employee to view before the review discussion.

Tips for a Successful Calibration Process

- **Communicate School/Unit Goals.** Goals for each area should be communicated thoroughly and in advance so employees understand how their daily work contributes to the success of the school/unit, and so that employees understand the measures on which they will be evaluated.
- **Include your HR Professional.** Having a neutral third party adds balance to the meeting and provides an important objective viewpoint, which can lead to the identification and possible elimination of biases.
- **Educate managers.** Managers need to understand what calibration is, why it is necessary, how it works, and what their roles are.
- **Don’t hide the process from employees.** A calibration process seen as secretive could discourage employees. Be open about the process, but maintain confidentiality outside of the calibration meeting.
- **Don’t expect perfection.** The calibration process is imperfect because the people using it are imperfect. Each calibration meeting should have checks and balances built in so that leaders are held accountable for their evaluation decisions.
- **Get the right people involved.** Make sure that the reviewer can adequately represent the employees being discussed by articulating what those employees have accomplished. The reviewer must be able to respond appropriately to questions or challenges from the group. If questions arise, make sure the manager is available to clarify them.
- **Set appropriate ground rules for meetings.** Participants must feel open to share and receive feedback. They must also feel comfortable asking their peers for advice if they need help in determining or communicating a rating.
- **Leverage the information gathered during the process.** The power of calibration goes beyond performance ratings. These discussions yield important insight into the university’s talent pipeline and overall development needs.
The Review Conversation: A Guide for Managers

The review conversation should serve as a summary discussion of the ongoing communication and feedback that has occurred throughout the performance year. The conversation should be a thorough discussion by both parties of the strengths and contributions made by the employee throughout the review period. It should also include a discussion of the areas in which the employee needs to improve.

Preparing for the conversation:
- Be clear that the scheduled meeting is a performance review conversation.
- Give the employee sufficient notice to prepare for the conversation (at least 3-5 days).
- Set aside sufficient time. Often a comprehensive discussion will require one hour. Setting aside less time may communicate to the employees that they are not important enough to receive a sufficient amount of time.
- Set the expectation of employee involvement by asking for the employee’s reflection on performance and preparation to discuss not only what has been done well, but also the areas in which improvement and/or growth is needed.
- Choose a quiet setting with no interruptions. Once the conversation has started, do not allow phone calls or other disturbances. The full attention of both manager and employee is important.

Engaging with the employee:
The employee should be a fully engaged partner during the review conversation.

To promote involvement:
- Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer; for example, “What do you think have been your biggest accomplishments during this review period?” “What things would you like to improve?” “What was most challenging?” “What was most rewarding or enjoyable?”
- Ask how the relationship with the employee can be improved. The manager needs to know from the employee what can be done to provide assistance. Keep in mind that helping is not “doing for” someone, but enabling the person to do it for themselves.

Development Plan:
To improve performance, both manager and employee need to:
- Identify performance area(s) that are opportunities for growth or rated lower than “Successful” (Meets expectations)
- Examine and agree upon how the opportunities for growth will enhance performance in the employee’s current job or help prepare them for possible promotion. Take the same approach with instances of low performance.
- Develop possible solutions that will enhance performance and/or address the reasons for low performance.
- Decide upon the best solution(s)


**Ending the Conversation**

Summarize the discussion. Put the conversation into proper perspective. This is particularly true if there have been some major performance challenges. While problems need to be addressed, the employee should not have the impression that every area of performance is deficient (for some it may be, but this should have been addressed long before the formal performance review). In addition, no one should have the impression that everything they do is perfect – some areas of performance can always be strengthened. The manager should attempt to strike a balance.

End on a positive note! Comprehensive performance reviews are hard work for both manager and employee. The closing of the conversation is the final opportunity to reinforce the idea that a performance review conversation is a constructive experience. Emphasize the importance of the employee to the department and confidence in the employee’s ability to do the job.
7. Performance Management and Review Guidelines

**Mid-Year Reviews**

The mid-year review is an opportunity for managers and employees to have a formal check-in at the mid-point of the performance cycle. The review contains the following sections:

1. A progress update on each of the employee’s SMART goals.
2. A competency review to document employee’s demonstration of VCU’s core competencies.
3. A comprehensive rating, which takes into account both goal progress and competency behaviors.

Employees will be required to complete a self-review in Talent@VCU **before** their manager completes the mid-year review. After the manager has completed the review in Talent@VCU, the manager and employee will meet to discuss its contents and confirm performance expectations for the remainder of the performance cycle. The final step of the mid-year review occurs when the manager and then the employee sign-off on the review in Talent@VCU.

**Step 1: Prepare for the Mid-Year Review**

**Manager:**
- Explain that the purpose of the Mid-Year Review is to capture achievement toward performance goals and behavioral expectations, talk about “how things are going and identify any steps that can be taken to facilitate success toward achievement of the goals for the remainder of the performance cycle.

**Employee and Manager:**
- Review performance goals and competencies (behavioral expectations).
- Examine notes from conversations and comments (achievement or challenges related) made by the manager and employee in Talent@VCU on goals since the beginning of the performance cycle.
- Consider whether job or department changes may require performance goals revisions or replacement.

**Step 2: Complete the Mid-Year Review in Talent@VCU**

**Employee:**
- Log-in to Talent@VCU and complete the self-review which requires:
  - A comment/narrative update on progress towards achievement for each goal
  - Example(s) for demonstration of each core/leadership competency (as applicable)
  - An overall rating, comment, and submission to the manager, which notifies them to complete their mid-year review of the employee’s progress.

**Manager:**
An email notification is sent to the manager when an employee completes their mid-year self-review.

Log-in to Talent@VCU and complete the mid-year review for each employee which requires:
- A comment/narrative update on progress towards achievement for each goal
- Example(s) for demonstration of each core/leadership competency (as applicable)
- An overall rating and comment and submission when completed

**Step 3: Conduct the Mid-year Review Meeting**

**Manager:**
- Confirm the employee understands the purpose of the mid-year review.
- Ask the employee for a verbal self-assessment (sharing highlights from the self-review completed in Talent@VCU)
- Reinforce (positively) favorable performance and accomplishments
- Create an environment for open discussion of cause and solutions to performance issues/problems
- Ask how you can help the employee succeed
- Discuss whether changes justify restate of performance goals.
- Summarize conclusions about:
  - Progress
  - Favorable results
  - Performance issues/problems
  - Solutions
  - Agreements and commitments

**Manager and Employee:**
- **Sign-off on the mid-year review in Talent@VCU by the deadline**
- Follow through on agreements and commitments
- Schedule periodic follow up discussions
First-Year (Probationary) Employees

The probationary period allows the university department or school to evaluate the progress and skills of the first-year employee against established performance and behavior expectations, determine appropriate assignments and monitor other aspects of the employee’s performance. Please see the Working @VCU: “Great Place” HR Policies for requirements and details.

Step 1: Performance development and planning

- As part of the onboarding process, the manager receives notification of the new hire start date and prepares to meet with the employee to share and discuss performance expectations and make recommendations for training and development.
- Within the first 30 days of employment, the manager and employee meet to discuss and clarify performance expectations and training/development plans.
- Following the meeting with the manager, the employee enters the first year goals into Talent@VCU and sends them to the manager for approval. First-year employees should have approximately three first-year goals; the standard goal applicable to all first-year VCU employees (see below) and one to two additional job-specific goals.

Throughout my first year, I will integrate and familiarize myself with the VCU community, its strategic plan, VCU’s culture of diversity and inclusion, university and department policies and procedures, and my position expectations and standards. I will actively and regularly engage in discussion with my manager and management team about positional and personal expectations and milestones.

- The manager reads the goals the employee has entered into Talent@VCU to ensure that they are representative of the conversation and approves the goals.

Step 2: Ongoing discussions, feedback and communication

- The manager observes the employee and periodically provides coaching and feedback on progress toward the goals and development plans.
- During months 4/5 the manager receives email notification to prepare the required six-month progress review in Talent@VCU.
- The manager completes the six-month probation period review in Talent@VCU including all steps for continued development.
- At six-months of employment, the manager and employee meet to discuss the six-month progress review and confirm expectations for the remainder of the probation period.
- Following the meeting with the manager, the employee acknowledges receipt of the six-month review in Talent@VCU.

At nine months of employment, a review need not occur in Talent@VCU (and an email notification will not be generated to the manager), but a conversation between the manager and employee about goals and expectations is recommended, especially if the employee is demonstrating any performance, training or behavioral concerns. Note: The manager has the option to request an extension to the probationary period if there
are performance, training or behavioral concerns/issues up to the 10th month of employment. The manager must contact their HR Professional and VCU Employee Relations to request an extension. HR may not grant a request for an extension of the probationary period for any employee after the employee has been employed for at least nine months unless there are circumstances warranting the extension of the probationary period that did not exist previously, i.e. credentialing, FMLA situations, changes in behavior, changes in training/duties.

Step 3: Conduct the end-of-probation period review

- During months 10/11 the manager receives email notification to prepare the required 12-month performance review in Talent@VCU.
- The manager completes the 12-month end-of-probation period review in Talent@VCU.
- During the 12th month the manager and employee meet to review the first year of employment. If the employee has met the performance, development, and behavior expectations for the probation period, the manager and employee discuss goals and expectations for the remainder of the performance management cycle. The employee follows instructions to enter/update goals in Talent@VCU.
University and Classified Employees Transferring Within VCU

When a non-probationary employee transfers to another position within VCU:

The employee must complete the steps below prior to the last day of work in their former department:

1. Update progress on all SMART goals in Talent@VCU.
2. Change all goal end dates to the last date of work in the former department (See Talent@VCU documentation for specific instructions).
3. Change all goal weights to 0%.
4. Submit the changes to the manager for approval.
5. See the HR Professional for your school/unit if you have further questions.

The launching manager must complete the steps below prior to the last day of work for the employee:

1. Update progress on all SMART goals in Talent@VCU.
2. Approve SMART goal end dates and weight changes.
3. See the HR Professional for your school/unit if you have further questions.
4. Works with the gaining manager as appropriate to finalize employee’s annual review during the annual review process.

The gaining manager:

1. Meets with the employee within 30 days of their new position start date to discuss goals and objectives.
2. Has employees enter new goals with a start date of the first day of new position and end date he last day of the performance cycle (10/31)
3. Works with the launching manager as appropriate to finalize employee’s annual review during the annual review process.

NOTE: As the annual review is a look back for the full review period, both launching and gaining managers are responsible for providing progress, feedback and contributing to the annual review in collaborative manner. **Primary ownership of the annual review will remain with the manager who was responsible for the employee for the majority of the annual review period.** The HR Professional in the employee’s current school/unit can assist with technically assigning the appropriate co-planners as necessary.
University and Classified Employees Transferring to a State Agency

When an employee transfers to a different state agency, the employee is responsible for the following the steps below prior to their last day of work at VCU:

The employee should complete the steps below prior to the last day of work at VCU:

1. Update progress on all SMART goals in Talent@VCU.
2. Change all goal end dates to the last date of work. (See Talent@VCU documentation for specific instructions).
3. Change all goal weights to 0%.
4. Submit the changes to the manager for approval.
5. See the HR Professional for your school/unit if you have further questions.

The manager must complete the steps below prior to the last day of work for the employee when request is received in Talent@VCU:

1. Update progress on all SMART goals in Talent@VCU.
2. Approve SMART goal end dates and weight changes.
3. See the HR Professional for your school/unit if you have further questions.

Transferring Employees with Manager Duties

Prior to the last day of work in their former department they should meet with each direct report and update progress on the goals for each in Talent@VCU.

The HR Professional should work with the reviewer for the employees and/or other department leadership to assign an interim manager if a permanent replacement is not in place before the transferring/exiting manager’s last day of work.

If the manager is transferring to a different role at VCU more than 60 days into the performance cycle, the manager could be assigned as a co-planner in Talent@VCU to complete the performance review process or they could complete the offline performance review form for each employee and send it to the new manager to be included in the annual review.
Employees and Managers on Leave

University and Classified Employees who are/will be on Leave during the Annual Performance Review Process:

The employee is strongly encouraged to follow the steps below before leave begins if possible:

1. Update progress on all SMART goals in Talent@VCU and/or complete the offline self-review form and upload it into Talent@VCU as an attachment.
2. Meet with the manager to discuss progress to-date before leave begins

The manager and reviewer should complete the performance review process for the employee during the annual review open period. When the employee returns from leave the manager and employee should meet to discuss the review and follow the instructions to sign-off/complete the process in Talent@VCU.

If a manager will be on leave during the annual review period, they should follow the steps below before leave begins if possible:

1. Update progress on all SMART goals in Talent@VCU all direct reports and/or complete the offline manager-review form and upload it into Talent@VCU as an attachment.
2. Meet with each employee to discuss progress to-date before leave begins

The HR Professional should work with the reviewer for the employees and/or other department leadership to assign an interim manager as the co-planner in Talent@VCU to complete the performance review process.
Appealing the Annual Performance Review

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide information and procedures that university employees should follow if they disagree with a performance review. These guidelines also provide procedures that managers and reviewers (the person to whom the manager reports) should follow to address an appeal.

How does an employee file an appeal?

1. An employee who disagrees with a performance review must first file a written request for reconsideration within 10 business days of receiving the review. The written request must be sent to the manager who completed the review. The written request may be an email.

2. The manager may schedule a meeting with the employee to discuss the basis of the appeal. The manager will provide a written response to the employee within 10 business days of receiving the written appeal. The written response shall indicate one of the following:
   - Manager affirms the original performance review;
   - Manager may revise the evaluation in whole; or
   - Manager may revise the evaluation in part.

3. If the employee’s disagreement with the performance review cannot be resolved with the manager or if the manager fails to respond to the request for reconsideration within 10 business days, the employee may file a written appeal with the reviewer (the person to whom the manager reports) within 10 business days of receiving the manager’s response.

4. The reviewer may schedule a time to meet with the employee and the manager to discuss the basis of the appeal. The reviewer will issue a written decision to the employee, with a copy to the manager. The written response shall indicate one of the following:
   - Reviewer affirms the original performance review;
   - Reviewer may revise the evaluation in whole; or
   - Reviewer may revise the evaluation in part.

The Reviewer’s decision concludes the appeals process.

Note: Performance reviews are not subject to any further review and are not grievable. If an employee believes that the manager has violated policy or law in giving a performance review, the employee should contact VCU HR.