Performance Excellence | Employee Guide to Performance Ratings

Your annual performance rating reflects your supervisor's overall assessment of your performance across the full performance cycle. It considers your responsibilities and expectations, accomplishments and results, progress toward goals and development, contributions and impact, and how you demonstrated university, MAU and department values.

Because roles and opportunities differ across the university, ratings are not a checklist or mathematical score. They are based on the expectations of your role and the overall pattern of your performance.

Preparing to Reflect on Your Performance

Before a mid-cycle check-in or annual review, consider the full scope of your work—not only your most recent accomplishments or challenges. Questions to ask yourself:

- What were the primary responsibilities and expectations of my role during this period?
- What results or accomplishments am I most proud of?
- How consistently did I meet my responsibilities and commitments?
- How would I describe the quality and effectiveness of my work?
- What difference did my work make for colleagues, customers, students, stakeholders, my unit or the university?
- How did I demonstrate Collaboration, Equity, Excellence, Integrity and Respect?
- What goals or development activities did I complete or make progress toward?
- What circumstances, changing priorities or resource issues affected my work?
- Where have I grown, and where would additional growth or support be helpful?

Understanding the Four Performance Ratings

Exceeds Expectations

Definition: Performance consistently goes meaningfully beyond what is expected for the rating of "Successful" performance in the role, resulting in notable added value or impact.

Examples/Considerations

- A sustained pattern of results or contributions that go meaningfully beyond role expectations.
- Exceptional effectiveness, initiative, judgment, problem-solving or leadership appropriate to the role.
- Improvements that meaningfully enhance work, service, processes or outcomes.
- Positive impact beyond completion of your own responsibilities.

Keep in Mind

Exceeds Expectations does not require special projects, working outside your position or simply doing more work. The focus is on the quality, consistency and impact of performance within your role and circumstances.

Successful

Definition: You consistently and effectively fulfill the responsibilities and expectations of your role and contribute positively to the success of your unit and university.

Examples/Considerations

- Consistently producing quality work and results.
- Demonstrating the knowledge, skills and judgment needed for your role.
- Being dependable and following through on commitments.
- Building productive working relationships and adapting effectively to normal changes and priorities.
- Contributing ideas, solutions and improvements appropriate to your role.
- Consistently demonstrating applicable values and behavioral expectations.

Keep in Mind

Successful is a strong, positive performance rating. It reflects an employee who is doing the job well, producing quality work and making valued contributions.

Developing/Growth Needed

Definition: You demonstrate strengths and may successfully meet many expectations, but improvement or growth is needed in one or more meaningful areas in order for performance to consistently meet a "Successful" rating.

Examples/Considerations

- Some responsibilities or expectations are being met while others are not yet met consistently.
- Quality, timeliness, reliability, follow-through, knowledge, skills or judgment need meaningful improvement.
- Additional direction, follow-up or support is needed beyond what is reasonably expected for the role or circumstances.
- Workplace behaviors or relationships are interfering with effectiveness.
- A performance concern may have improved but sustained "Successful" performance has not yet been demonstrated.

Keep in Mind

Developing/Growth Needed is not limited to employees who are new to a role. It can apply at any career stage. You can have meaningful strengths and contributions while also having performance gaps that need attention.

Does Not Meet Expectations

Definition: Significant expectations of the role are not being met, and the performance gaps require substantial and sustained improvement.

Examples/Considerations

- Important responsibilities or expectations are repeatedly not being met.
- Quality, timeliness, reliability or effectiveness falls substantially below what the role requires.
- Significant concerns continue despite feedback, coaching or support.
- Behaviors significantly interfere with the effectiveness of others or the unit.
- The overall pattern of performance demonstrates that substantial improvement is necessary.

Keep in Mind

A Does Not Meet Expectations rating requires a Performance Improvement Plan. The goal of the process is to clearly identify expectations, needed improvement and the support and follow-up associated with the plan.

Questions to ask yourself before the conversation:

- What does strong, “Successful” performance look like in my role? (Reflect on Performance Planning and Mid-Cycle conversations)
- Where have I consistently met or fulfilled those expectations?
- Where have I made a meaningful difference or added value?
- Are there areas where my performance has not been as consistent as it needs to be?
- What feedback have I received during the year, and what have I done with it?
- What examples can I share to help my supervisor understand my contributions and impact?
- What support, resources, clarity or development would help me be more effective?
- What would I like to continue, change or develop during the next performance cycle?

If you and your supervisor view performance differently:

A performance conversation is an opportunity to understand your supervisor’s assessment and share relevant information about your work. If you are unsure how the rating was determined, focus on understanding the expectations, examples and overall pattern of performance behind the decision.

Questions you may want to ask:

- What specific examples or observations contributed to the rating?
- What does “Successful” performance look like for my role?
- What am I doing particularly well that I should continue?
- Where do you see the most important opportunity for growth or improvement?
- If improvement is needed, what specifically would “Successful” performance look like?
- What support, resources or development would help me make that improvement?
- What should I prioritize during the next performance cycle?
- How and when should we check in on progress?

Important Reminders:

- Your rating should reflect the overall pattern of your performance across the performance cycle.
- Successful is not average; it represents strong, effective performance that fulfills the expectations of the role.
- Exceeds Expectations is about meaningful distinction in contribution or impact—not simply more work or access to special assignments.
- Developing/Growth Needed can apply at any career stage and does not mean every aspect of performance is unsuccessful.
- How work is accomplished matters along with what is accomplished; values and workplace behaviors are part of performance.
- Performance conversations should happen throughout the year. You do not need to wait for the annual review to ask for feedback, clarify expectations or discuss development.
- Recognition and ratings serve different purposes. A rating is an overall assessment of performance across the cycle; recognition is one of the ways strong contributions and accomplishments can be acknowledged throughout the year.