DePaul Full and Part-Time Staff Performance Management
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – 2013-2014

The following frequently asked questions (FAQ’s) will help managers and employees prepare for the annual performance appraisal process for full and part-time staff. If your question is not answered below, please feel free to contact hr@depaul.edu.

Please note that the performance appraisal is different for students. For more information about student employee performance appraisal, please contact the Office of Student Employment at 312-362-5599 or visit the Office of Student Employment website.

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I. Performance Appraisal Process

Q: What is the goal of the performance management and appraisal process?
A: The objective of performance management is to improve performance through:

- Specific and meaningful goals
- Clarity about ongoing job responsibilities
- Understanding behavioral expectations at DePaul
- Ongoing, motivational dialogue to understand personal progress
- Evaluation of results
- Reflection on future development needs

Q: What are the benefits of the performance management and appraisal process?
A: The performance management process gives us an opportunity to demonstrate the intent of DePaul’s Employee Relations Philosophy. It is one of the ways we recognize the commitment and contributions made by our employees to further our mission and vision in a manner that supports our values.

When done well, performance management and appraisal fosters increased employee engagement through:

- Increased commitment to DePaul through a stronger alignment to goals and values
- Increased commitment to the manager through a belief that the manager cares about the employee and their development
- Increased commitment to the job due to clearer and shared expectations
- Increased commitment to the department or unit through appreciation of the importance of shared contributions
Q: When should performance appraisal take place?
A: Performance management is an ongoing process. Throughout the year, managers are encouraged to engage with employees to establish goals, notice progress, provide feedback, seek feedback, appropriately reward and recognize excellent performance, and agree upon plans to correct any deficiencies.

The university has defined the annual performance appraisal cycle as a focal point for documenting performance expectations, feedback, and development planning. Managers and employees have a shared responsibility in completing the appraisal. The tool is designed to capture the employee’s self-appraisal first and then feedback from the manager. The process culminates in an appraisal meeting and discussion, held between July 1 and October 1, 2014.

Q: What are the different types of performance appraisal?
A: There are two types of performance appraisal: the introductory period performance appraisal and the annual performance appraisal. Both use the Performance Appraisal Form (PAF), and are described below.

Introductory Period Performance Appraisal
DePaul’s performance appraisal process begins as soon as an employee starts their new job at the university. Employee job responsibilities and goals should be clarified as soon as possible from the start date. Ongoing discussions concerning the expectations, tasks, and performance should occur throughout the introductory period. A written performance appraisal must be completed prior to the conclusion of the six-month introductory period. New employees, rehired employees and transfers to full-time from part-time or student positions also participate in this process. The Introductory Period Policy states, in part:

*Managers must conduct a performance appraisal prior to the completion of the introductory period. If a performance appraisal is not completed prior to the end of the introductory period, the employee will be considered to be in good (successful) standing as of the introductory period end date. If the completion of the six month introductory period coincides with the annual common review period, the six month introductory period performance appraisal will also serve as the annual performance appraisal.*

If the introductory period appraisal would occur within a reasonable amount of time of the annual appraisal, the manager may elect to complete the annual appraisal only. The employee’s first annual appraisal would then also serve as his or her end of introductory period appraisal. Contact Human Resources at hr@depaul.edu if you have questions about the relationship between an introductory performance appraisal and an annual performance appraisal.

Annual Performance Appraisal
After the completion of the introductory period, employees participate in the annual performance appraisal process. Each year, all managers and employees engage in a written appraisal and discussion of the employee’s performance. Completed performance appraisals are submitted to the Office of Human Resources.

II. Changes to the 2013-14 Full and Part Time Performance Appraisal Process
Q: Why has DePaul changed the Performance Appraisal Process?
A: Some things have changed in the staff year-end appraisal process to make the process more efficient, focused, and better aligned to Vision 2018. The changes to the performance management form reflect feedback received from stakeholders about its length and relevance. More importantly, these changes facilitate the transition to an online version of the form expected in 2015. The changes to the timing of performance reviews reflect the expectation that employees and managers should have most of the performance review period to achieve goals.

It’s important to remember what’s not changing in the year-end performance appraisal process. The process still reflects goal setting, feedback, and development expected to take place during the entire course of the review cycle. The final review is still expected to be a summary of experience and exchange throughout the year.

Q: What are the changes in the Performance Appraisal Process?
A: There are a number of changes in the 2013-14 performance appraisal form. The Guide to Full and Part Time Performance Appraisals details what’s expected in the new process and how to compete the form.

There are two significant changes in the 2013-14 process. One is moving from a 3-point rating scale of: (Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Below Expectations) to a 5-point rating scale of: (Outstanding, Exceeds Expectations, Successful, Below Expectations, and Unsatisfactory). Another is eliminating the second-level reviewer approval on all reviews. The second-level reviewer signature is still required for reviews with ratings of “Below Expectations” and “Unsatisfactory.”

Q: Why did we change the rating scale?
A: Some of the feedback we received from managers was a desire to have more choices to differentiate performance among employees and, as a result, provide more fair and accurate feedback. Our benchmarking with 16 other institutions of higher education showed that best practice was the use of a 5-point rating scale.

Q: Why do we recommend eliminating the second level manager’s signature?
A: The person with the most experience and insight into an employee’s performance during the entire course of the performance cycle is the direct manager. The role of a second-level manager is to ensure consistency of ratings among employees and to guard against bias. This role is most appropriately placed prior to the review, when the second level manager can provide perspective and coaching so the direct manager is better prepared to share feedback with greater focus and clarity. The approval of ratings prior to reviews means that only the performance reviews that require additional attention (i.e. those reviews with ratings of below expectations and unsatisfactory) are submitted for a second level manager’s signature. This offers the additional benefits of reducing time and administrative burden from the overall performance review process.

III. Preparing the Appraisal

Q: Who participates in the performance appraisal process?
A: All full-time and part-time exempt and non-exempt staff participate in the performance appraisal process.

Q: If I’m a faculty member supervising an employee, do I need to complete a performance appraisal for them?
A: Faculty members complete performance appraisals for the full-time or part-time staff they
supervise.

Q: How can I, as an employee, prepare myself to conduct a performance appraisal?
A: The first step is for the employee to clarify any uncertainty about overall job responsibilities then agree upon up to 5 specific goals for the performance cycle with his or her manager. For the year-end performance review, the employee completes a self-appraisal by filling in the appropriate sections of the Performance Appraisal Form (PAF) and providing supporting comments as needed. Once their part of the PAF is completed, the employee sends it to their manager for review, ratings, and comments.

A few tips for employees to prepare a self-appraisal:

- Review the performance goals established with your manager at the beginning of the performance cycle. If you and your manager did not set goals, reflect upon the most important contributions you were expected to make to the University or department’s success. Be certain to set goals with your manager at the beginning of the next performance cycle.

- Not everything you did in the performance cycle was related to a goal. Review your job description or key job responsibilities. Consider aspects of your overall job responsibilities that affect how you feel about your overall performance. When did you go “above and beyond” in a way that enhanced the performance of your department and/or unit? Were there missed opportunities when your results limited the overall success of others in your department or unit?

- Consider professional development opportunities for the next performance cycle. What strengths can you use more frequently on the job? What competencies might you develop to improve your performance or prepare for future roles? What opportunities do you notice to use strengths more frequently or improve development areas? How can your manager support your development?
Q: Where do I get a current position description?
A: Start by contacting your manager. Managers are responsible for maintaining position descriptions. If a position description is not on file in your department, your manager may check with the Office of Human Resources. Your manager may contact a Compensation team member via compensation@depaul.edu. The performance appraisal cycle is a time for you and your manager to ensure that your position description is accurate, up to date, and on file in your reporting area and in Human Resources.

Q: Where can I find the Performance Appraisal Form (PAF) and other materials related to the performance appraisal process?
A: The PAF and other materials are located on the Performance tab at hr.depaul.edu

Q: What is the rating scale used at DePaul?
A: The performance appraisal uses a 5-level rating scale: Outstanding, Exceeds Expectations, Successful, Below Expectations and Unsatisfactory. When selecting a rating, consider the performance and behavior over the course of the review period.

Q: Can managers develop their own rating scale for the performance appraisal process?
A: No. The rating scale used in the performance appraisal should not be altered. It provides provide consistency across the university. Creating alternate or additional rating scales is not acceptable.

Q: How do I determine what rating to assign to myself or a direct report?
A: Creating performance goals based on measurable results will simplify this process. Each performance goal should contain one or more clear metrics that will delineate a measure of success for the goal. Examples include: Dollar amounts, deadlines, customer or student evaluation data, unique users or website visitors, response times, time/money saved, etc. Using these guidelines will clearly indicate whether a performance goal has been exceeded, met, or missed.

Q: What can I do if an appraisal meeting has not been scheduled for my performance appraisal?
A: Work directly with your manager to schedule a time. Often, our hectic schedules interfere with even the most important tasks. Some managers may handle scheduling differently. One option may be to offer to schedule the meeting time. If that is appropriate, it is important to give your manager enough time to complete their part of the appraisal.
Q: How much time should be allotted for the appraisal meeting and discussion?
A: An appropriate amount of time – at least one hour – should be allotted for the meeting and discussion. The meeting should give both the manager and the employee time to discuss expectations, performance and development opportunities. However, some discussions may be brief, particularly if performance discussion is a regular part of the manager-employee relationship.

Q: How much time should managers give employees to review the completed Performance Appraisal Form (PAF) before scheduling the performance discussion?
A: Human Resources recommends that managers give employees a minimum of one week to review the completed form.

IV. Completing the Appraisal

Q: Does my signature on the Performance Appraisal Form (PAF) mean that I agree with the reviewer ratings and comments?
A: No, your signature indicates only that the performance appraisal discussion has taken place. You have the option to submit a separate written statement for your human resources file within two weeks of the completion of the performance appraisal.

Q: Do I need to keep a copy of the completed appraisal form?
A: Yes, both the manager and the employee should keep a copy of the completed and signed appraisal form for their records.

Q: Where do I send the original of the completed appraisal form?
A: Completed performance appraisals are sent to the Office of Human Resources, Attn: HR Central

V. Special Circumstances

Q: My staff member is currently out on leave, or was out on leave for a period of time during the performance cycle for which she is being evaluated. How do I complete the appraisal given their leave?
A: If an employee is on a continuous paid or unpaid leave of absence, scheduled performance review and salary increases (if any) are postponed until the employee has returned to active work. It is recommended that the performance appraisal is completed and submitted within the first 30 days back on the job. Employees are evaluated only on work performed while on the job during the performance period.

Q: I am currently out on leave. Do I conduct a performance appraisal for myself while on leave?
A: No, employees should complete performance appraisals when they return to work. Scheduled performance review and salary increases (if any) are postponed until the employee has returned to active work. It is recommended that the performance appraisal is completed and submitted within the first 30 days back on the job. Employees are evaluated only on work performed while on the job during the performance period.
VI. Performance Improvement Plans

Q: If I am currently on a performance improvement plan, do I need to complete the annual performance appraisal?
A: The performance appraisal is completed by all employees (not in an introductory period), including those currently on a performance improvement plan. The performance appraisal should reflect the job expectations, progress made to date, and development plans.

Q: What if I have an employee expected to be rated “Below Expectations”?
A: A “Below Expectations” rating simply expresses that the employee’s overall performance is not up to the expected standards for the job. Several factors can lead to a “Below Expectations” rating. The employee may have poor results on a goal or may be inconsistent in meeting established expectations of overall job responsibilities. Behavior may not reflect the expectations expressed in DePaul’s core behaviors, or the rating could be a combination of these items. Depending on the reasons for the “Below Expectations” rating, a Performance Improvement Plan may be required. (A Performance Improvement Plan is not always required). Please contact HR Employee Relations prior to the review to discuss the reasons for the rating, and to determine if a Performance Improvement Plan is warranted.

Q: What if I have an employee expected to be rated “Unsatisfactory”?
A: An “Unsatisfactory” rating indicates that the employee does not meet the minimum expectations for the job in terms of results, work quality, or behaviors. Significant improvement is expected in the identified areas. If you expect to issue an “Unsatisfactory” rating, please contact HR Employee Relations prior to the review to discuss the reasons for the rating and the best course of action. A Performance Improvement Plan may or may not be warranted in the case of an “Unsatisfactory” rating depending on the circumstances.
VII. Changes, Feedback, Questions

Q: Will there be changes to the performance appraisal process in the future?
A: From time to time, the Office of Human Resources may make changes to the performance appraisal process or tool. To facilitate ongoing discussion, every attempt will be made to communicate those changes to the DePaul community as soon as possible.

Q: Who should I contact if I have recommendations for improving the performance appraisal process or tool?
A: Recommendations or suggestions should be submitted to Jason Wells in the Office of Human Resources. Additions to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be collected and answered to improve the overall understanding of the performance appraisal process. Updates will be posted to support the process.

Q: Who should I contact if I have questions not addressed here?
A: For performance management questions, please contact Jason Wells, Director of Organizational Development & Learning.