VCU

Human Resources

Talent@VCU
Performance Management Guide

Table of Contents

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. These guidelines and HR Policies are used in the implementation of the performance management process for VCU University and Academic Professionals and Classified employees. The objective of this guide is to provide a common understanding of the purpose, methods, and procedures involved in the performance management process at VCU.

The foundation of performance management at VCU is ongoing, regular communication between employees and managers with the purpose of achieving SMART goals that support the university's strategic priorities. 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, and finally to each employee. This process provides a direct line of sight from the individual's goals to the university's mission and vision. Performance management includes mechanisms for discussing useful and meaningful feedback on accomplishments and competencies, including coaching discussions on career growth as well as rewarding and recognizing high performers.

Stakeholders can reference the [performance management website](#) for basic information about VCU's performance management approach and process.

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 from employees, managers, university leadership, and human resources staff.

Employee Responsibilities
- Working collaboratively with their 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 their role and associated expectations
- Discussing concerns and/or questions regarding any part of their job with their manager, 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 employee responsibilities to HR or to their manager

Manager Responsibilities
- Understanding and actively supporting the university's performance management process
- Participating in the development of appropriate and accurate position descriptions, including keeping the position descriptions current and up-to-date
- Seeking input from, and providing support to, the employee regarding performance and career development goals (including offering suggestions and examples of appropriate goals) and monitoring the employee's success toward meeting identified goals
- Communicating about and documenting each employee's performance goals
- Engaging in ongoing communication and feedback with the employee to discuss progress towards 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 necessary improvements

- Preparing performance reviews within established deadlines
- Participating in the salary review and rewards process
- Validating work time and certifying absences
- Bringing any questions or concerns about these manager responsibilities to HR

VP, Dean, and Department Head Responsibilities
- Establishing and communicating organizational goals that align with the university's strategic priorities
- Providing the training and 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 policies, as well as making sure all managers are knowledgeable about the processes and requirements for performance management, and they are abiding by them

VCU Human Resource Responsibilities
- Providing leadership across the institution while also 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 make them 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

HR Professional Responsibilities
- 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 policies
- Facilitating school/unit level training on the performance process, partnering with VCU HR, utilizing tools and resources provided by VCU HR

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. Communication on these topics is part of a manager's ongoing responsibilities rather than an annual event.

The performance management cycle begins with the establishment of job requirements, an overview of the job title outlining principal responsibilities and duties, and defining the 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 of the position.

Performance goals and competencies are reviewed and redefined at three points:
- Annually (semi-annually is recommended)
- 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 formal documentation of the employee's performance during the performance period. The Talent@VCU system is used to document and summarize information collected during evaluation discussions between managers and employees 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.

Performance Management Timeline

The annual performance cycle for Classified staff and University and Academic Professionals runs **January 1 – December 31** each year. The annual performance review begins with employee self-reviews for the previous performance cycle. Employees and managers then work together to complete the previous performance cycle's reviews in Talent@VCU by the end of March each year, as well as set SMART performance goals and a career development plan for the upcoming year.

Performance Management Annual Timeline	
January	- Employee completes previous performance cycle's self-review in Talent@VCU - Employee and manager meet to discuss the current performance cycle's SMART performance goals and career development plan - Employee enters SMART performance goals and career development plan in Talent@VCU for the upcoming year
February	- Manager completes the previous performance cycle's review for the employee - Manager approves SMART performance goals for the new performance cycle
March	- Employee and manager meet for the annual performance review conversation - Employee signs off on the review in Talent@VCU after this meeting
June - July	Midyear reviews are conducted (optional - school/unit decision)

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.
8. To view your annual review, follow the instructions in the [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Employee - Employee Sign-Off](#).

System sign-off and completion
For instructions on completing system sign-off, consult the resource above.

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, 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](#).

Performance Planning

[Quest 2028](#), the university's strategic plan, is the guiding document from which all other university goals will cascade. When individual employees create their performance goals for the year, those goals will align with Quest 2028 and with the organizational goals of their school/unit. Senior leadership within each school/unit are responsible for identifying organizational goals that align with the university strategic plan and communicating those goals to their teams. 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. The manager and employee can then work collaboratively to draft the performance goals. An employee should have no more than 3 to 5 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 in a timely manner.

Tip: Additional information about writing SMART goals can be found in the appendix section of this document including worksheets, checklists and example documents.

Performance Planning Conversation Model for Managers

Planning
- Schedule time on the calendar to have the discussion with your employee
- Prepare to share university and school/unit strategic goals and develop SMART individual employee goals to share with your direct reports
- Share university core and leadership competencies
- Consider the requirements of the employee's position and what is necessary for the employee's success. Prepare to share this with the employee, as this will help the employee formulate goals.

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
  ◆ Discuss potential obstacles and issues
  ◆ Offer information and assistance
  ◆ Summarize mutually agreed upon goals and action steps
  ◆ 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 (ongoing collaboration and updates on goal progress)
- Measure (how is performance being impacted by progress of goal achievement)
- Coach (discuss strengths and opportunities for growth/improvement)

Tip: Additional guidance for [holding a performance management conversation](#) can be found in the appendix section of this document.

Adjusting Goals

Managers and employees must engage in effective, ongoing communication to keep each other informed of goal status and achievement. Listed below are examples of challenges that may occur and suggested remedies for handling them. Whenever changes are made to goals, Talent@VCU should be updated to reflect those changes.

1. Unexpected events occur that make the attainment of the goal unfeasible, irrelevant or impossible:
   - Stop implementing the goal
   - Select alternatives (new or modified goals) and set a new date range to discontinue the existing goal and/or implement the new or modified one
   - Communicate the change to all employees involved/impacted

2. 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 goals

3. Goals are expected in a short, or unattainable, amount of time:
   - Determine whether timelines are realistic or need to be updated
   - Hold frequent progress conversations to clarify difficulties
   - Managers occasionally may need to re-calibrate expectations if they are unfair or unattainable

4. Goals are not attained due to circumstances beyond one's control:
   - Document the employee's efforts and briefly describe the external circumstances
   - Taking into consideration previous circumstances, create new goals that are attainable in the next performance cycle

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.

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 employees be successful
- **Constructive:** Ongoing feedback and conversations should enable individuals to correct mistakes, align actions with processes, identify problems or nonproductive behaviors and interactions, and seek alternative, productive behaviors. Make sure to document conversations in writing (such as via email) to summarize the discussion.
- **Timely and Specific:** Hard conversations are easier when behaviors, problems, and course corrections are addressed close to when they occur. Providing examples of specific problematic behaviors or issues gives employees concrete evidence for what needs to be adjusted or changed
- **Open and Engaging:** Feedback conversations should involve both managers and employees. Managers make observations and gather data to ensure feedback is on target. Employees likely have insights about their choices and performance that managers do not have, and managers should ask questions
- **Practice:** Practice feedback conversations before you have them. Use the STAR Model to help construct a feedback conversation

  - Tip: More in depth trainings about giving feedback and coaching employees can be found through **LinkedIn Learning:**

    - Performance Management: Conducting Performance Reviews
    - Using Feedback to Drive Performance
    - Virtual Performance Reviews and Feedback
    - Having Difficult Conversations: A Guide for Managers
    - Delivering Employee Feedback
    - Coaching and Developing Employees
    - Coaching Skills for Leaders and Managers
    - Motivating and Engaging Employees
    - Employee Engagement

- ○ Tip: Try searching additional key words like 'Coaching', 'Performance Reviews', 'Feedback', or 'Career Development' in [LinkedIn Learning](#) for additional training resources and opportunities.

- ○ Tip: Additional information about [giving](#) and [receiving](#) feedback as well as the [STAR Model](#) can be found in the appendix section of this document.

Performance Coaching

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

Objectives of Performance Coaching

- To establish performance expectations with regard to goals and core competencies
- To communicate clearly and to provide concrete examples of work performance
- To monitor the employee's progress in achieving performance goals
- To identify problems hindering progress, discuss strategies to remove barriers, and provide constructive feedback for 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 their 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 beyond a lack of knowledge, skills, and abilities, i.e., negative attitude, lack of motivation, personal problems interfering with their performance, etc.
- To consult with an employee who still does not perform to standards after having received 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 issues
- To help the employee realize their potential

Goals of Coaching

- Reinforce good performance
- Correct performance issues
- Teach new skills and procedures
- Mentor employees

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

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 (HRP) about whether or not a mid-year review should be completed.

Mid-Year Review Process (Recommended)	Annual Review Process (Required)
1. The employee completes a mid-year self-review 2. The manager completes a mid-year review and meets with the employee to discuss progress 3. The manager and employee electronically sign-off on the review	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 and Leadership Competencies, and Comprehensive Ratings.

SMART Goals

This section of the review describes job and performance expectations for employees over the performance year (SMART goals were identified at the beginning of the year as part of the performance management process). As part of the review, employees note

progress towards achieving goals and managers provide an overall rating for each approved SMART goal.

VCU Core Competencies

This review section allows managers to evaluate behaviors and how they align with VCU's Core Competencies. All competencies are assessed on whether the employee 'demonstrated' or 'did not demonstrate' these behaviors over the review year. View the [VCU core and leadership competencies](#) here.

Comprehensive Rating

This is the final, overall rating for the performance review and takes into account both goal achievement and competency behaviors.

Tip: More information about [building a self-review](#) can be found in the appendix section, additional trainings, on many topics, are available on [LinkedIn Learning](#). Try using key words like 'Goal Setting', 'Preparing Your Review' or 'Receiving Feedback' to find a training that is right for you.

Rating Descriptions for Performance Goals

Exceptional
Significantly and consistently exceeds goals
● ***Typically a combination of situation and performance allowing for extraordinary results, not received in consecutive years, a low percentage of the overall rating group***
Advanced
Consistently achieves and often exceeds goals
● ***Exceeds most goals and consistently demonstrates advanced level performance of VCU competencies***
Successful
Consistently achieves goals
● ***Achieved performance goals and demonstrated successful level of competencies - had a good year and contributed at the level agreed upon at the beginning of the performance cycle***
Developing
Proactively making progress in learning and adapting to new responsibilities and goals
● ***Inconsistent in goal achievement and competency demonstration***

Needs Improvement
Achieves some, but not all goals; needs improvement
● *Not performing at the level identified*
Below
Rarely achieves established goals; requires significant and immediate improvement

Request for Exceptional Performance Rating Form

Each year, for a manager to assign an Exceptional rating to a staff member, the manager must fully complete and submit the [Request for Exceptional Performance Rating Form](#) and supporting documentation *on or before* the deadline for completion of manager performance reviews. The Exceptional rating is justified only when a combination of situations and performance allow for extraordinary results beyond the typical duties of an employee's job in a given year. Staff who have not completed mandatory training or who do not have goals in Talent@VCU should be ineligible for Exceptional and Advanced ratings. Managers should contact their HR Professional for more information on this required process.

VCU Performance Rating Scale Definitions
Please refer to [VCU Performance Rating Scale Definitions](#) for examples of employee behaviors for each rating.

Performance Ratings Crosswalk for Classified Employees

Calibration

What is Calibration?
Calibration is the process used to ensure that the rating scale is applied accurately and consistently in its evaluation of all employees' performance across a school/unit.
Calibration is a confidential discussion that relies on honest feedback from the following participants in the performance management process:

1. Managers who write employee reviews
2. Reviewers who examine evaluations 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 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
- 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 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 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 this 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. For further instructions, consult the [Talent@VCU User Guide - Reviewer - Reviewer Review](#).

Step 3: Ratings Calibration Meeting

Before all performance reviews are finalized, key calibration stakeholders will meet 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 an employee. Request for Exceptional Performance Evaluation forms will be reviewed and approved during the calibration process.

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 release the reviews so they are 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 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). The employee should have the opportunity to review the evaluation prior to the performance meeting.
- 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.

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 midpoint of the performance cycle. The review contains the following sections:

1. A progress update 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. For further instructions about the self-review, consult the [Talent@VCU User Guide - Employee - Self 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 behavior 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 departmental 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

- For further instructions, consult the [Talent@VCU User Guide - Manager - Manager Review](#).

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 the cause and solutions to performance issues/problems
- Ask how you can help the employee succeed
- Discuss whether changes justify restatement 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

Mid-year Goals and Job Changes

Employees may encounter circumstances, such as a change in job duties, that necessitate a mid-year change in performance SMART goals. Employees may enter performance goal modifications and new performance goals in Talent@VCU at any time during the annual performance cycle. Managers are notified by Talent@VCU of new performance goals or changed performance goals with an email request to review and approve them.

At other times, employees may have concerns with the scope of their role and the amount of work responsibilities they are given that consistently requires long working hours over the course of the entire year, which is negatively impacting their work/life balance. In this situation, employees are encouraged to meet with their manager to discuss their concerns and ideas for improvements in their workload. If this meeting does not resolve the situation, other avenues include:

1. Discussing concerns with their [HR Professional](#)

2. Contacting VCU HR Employee Relations (emprel@vcu.edu)

The VCU Organizational Effectiveness Consulting Team offers a process to assist managers and HR Professionals by reviewing workload distribution among teams to identify imbalances and propose changes for increasing efficiency in a division. The manager or HR Professional is encouraged to contact OE for a consultation if solutions are needed for their school/unit.

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 note that University and Academic Professionals Designated as Executives/Senior Administrators with employment contracts do not serve a probationary period. Their employment is governed by the terms and conditions of the employment contract. Please see the Working@VCU "Great Place" HR Policies for additional information.

First Year Probationary Employee Review Cycle

First Year Probationary Employee Review Cycle	
First 30 Days	**Manager Meeting:** Manager and employee meet to discuss and clarify performance expectations, as well as **required** training and development plans **Talent@VCU:** Employee enters the first year performance goals into Talent@VCU and sends them to the manager for approval **Required Training:** Employee must complete within 45 days
6 Months	**(Recommended) 6-month Progress Review:** Manager completes 6-month progress review in Talent@VCU and shares it with employee **(Recommended) Manager Meeting:** Manager and employee meet to discuss the 6-month progress review and confirm expectations for the remainder of the probationary period **Talent@VCU:** Employee acknowledges receipt of the 6-month review in Talent@VCU
9 Months	**(Recommended) Manager Meeting:** Manager and employee meet to discuss employee's progress towards performance goals and expectations, especially if the employee is demonstrating performance, training, or behavioral concerns and probation should be extended
12 Months	**Manager Meeting:** Manager and employee meet to review the employee's performance during their first year of employment. If

	performance goals have been met, manager and employee also discuss next year's performance goals at this time. ● **Talent@VCU:** Manager completes the **required** 12-month end-of-probationary-period review in Talent@VCU

Step 1: Performance Development and Planning

- As part of the onboarding process, the manager 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 goals and clarify performance expectations and training/career 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.
    1. *"Throughout my first year, I will integrate and familiarize myself with the VCU community, its strategic plan, VCU's culture of care and **appreciation**, university and department policies and procedures, and my position expectations and standards. I will apply an open-minded approach to understanding others, effectively working and treating all people fairly and consistently, with dignity and respect. 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 career development plans
    - This [Probationary Progress Review](#) form can be used to help measure progress throughout the employee's probationary period. Manager should contact their HR Professional if they plan to issue feedback using this form
- During months 4/5 the manager receives email notification to prepare the strongly encouraged 6-month progress review in Talent@VCU
- The manager may complete the 6-month probationary period review in Talent@VCU, including all steps for continued development

- At 6-months of employment, the manager and employee meet to discuss the employee's progress at 6 months to confirm expectations for the remainder of the probationary period
- Following the meeting with the manager, the employee acknowledges receipt of either the 6-month review in Talent@VCU or the 6-month check-in
- At 9 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, extended leave of absence situations such as FMLA and short-term disability, changes in behavior, changes in training/duties/manager.

   Probationary periods for employees who use short-term disability during their first year of employment and/or during their probationary period should have their probation extended for the amount of time the employee was on leave. Managers should be able to evaluate an employee's entire year's work. Managers should contact their [HR Professional](#) or Employee Relations (emprel@vcu.edu) to request extension of the probationary period.

Step 3: Conduct the End-of-Probationary 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-probationary period review in Talent@VCU utilizing the [Talent@VCU user guide for managers of first year employees](#).
- 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 probationary 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.

If you are experiencing technical issues with Talent@VCU, such as a log-in error, please submit a ticket to the [IT Support system](#).

Probationary Employees Transition to Regular Performance Review

If the employee completes their probationary period between…	The employee…
January 1 - April 30, the employee will transition to the **current** performance cycle.	- Will enter new performance goals in Talent@VCU - Start date will be the day after the probationary period ends - End date will be December 31
May 1 - September 30, the employee will transition to the **current** performance cycle.	- Will enter new performance goals in Talent@VCU - Start date will be the day after the probationary period ends - End date will be December 31 - Will NOT participate in a mid-year review, but will participate in the current annual review process
October 1 - December 31, the employee will transition to the **next** performance cycle.	- Will enter new performance goals in Talent@VCU - Start date will be the day after the probationary period ends - End date will be December 31 - Will NOT participate in the current performance cycle annual review

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 goals' end dates and weight changes
3. See the HR Professional for your school/unit if you have further questions
4. Work with the gaining manager, as appropriate, to finalize employee's annual review during the annual review process

The Gaining Manager must*:*
1. Meet with the employee within 30 days of their new position start date to discuss goals and objectives
2. Have employee enter new goals with a start date of the first day of new position and end date on the last day of the performance cycle (12/31)
3. Work 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 contributions to the annual review in a collaborative manner. **Primary ownership of the annual review will remain with the manager who was responsible for the employee for the <u>majority</u> 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. HR Professionals can contact the Talent administrator for assistance with this process.

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 steps 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 goals 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

When the Transferring Employee is a Manager

Prior to the last day of work in their current department, transferring managers 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 should be assigned as a co-planner in Talent@VCU when it is time to complete the annual 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 or will be on an extended leave of absence during the annual performance review cycle:

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.
2. Meet with the manager to discuss progress to-date before the leave of absence begins

A Manager going on leave is strongly encouraged to follow the steps below before leave begins, if possible:

1. Update progress on all SMART goals in Talent@VCU for all direct reports.
2. Meet with each direct report to discuss progress to-date before leave of absence begins
3. Work with one's own manager and the HR Professional to determine the interim supervisor for direct reports.

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. See also the [Performance Management Appeals Process](#) infographic which explains VCU's appeals process. Please note that University and Academic Professionals Designated as Executives/Senior Administrators with employment contracts do not use the annual performance review appeals process. The dispute resolution section of their employment contract outlines procedures available to Executive/Senior Administrators to raise issues of concern related to their employment and to achieve timely and efficient resolution.

How does an employee file an appeal?
1. An employee who disagrees with a performance review must 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. The employee should copy their [HR Professional](#) and Employee Relations (emprel@vcu.edu)
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 must indicate one of the following:
   a. Manager affirms the original performance review and will make no changes
   b. Manager will revise the evaluation in its entirety
   c. Manager will 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 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:

    a. Reviewer affirms the original performance review
    b. Reviewer will revise the evaluation in its entirety
    c. Reviewer will revise the evaluation in part

The Reviewer's decision is final and 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 as part of the performance review process, the employee should contact VCU HR.

Appendix

Guide to Writing SMART 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 SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused and time-bound.

The concept of writing SMART goals is 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.

		Explanation	Guiding Questions
S	Specific	Goals should be simplistically written and explain what the employee will do	What will be accomplished, and how? Why should it be accomplished?
M	Measurable	Need tangible evidence that the employee has accomplished the goal. Entire goal statement is a measure, but there can be several short-term, smaller measurements built in	How will the goal be measured?
A	Achievable	Goals should stretch the employee slightly so they feel challenged. Employees must possess the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve the goal, and be provided with the appropriate resources to do so.	Does the employee possess necessary knowledge, skills, abilities and resources?

R	Results-Focused	Goals should measure outcomes, not activities. Is the goal aligned with desirable results for the department and VCU?	What is the reason, purpose, benefit, and outcome of accomplishing the goal?
T	Time-Bound	Goal links to a time frame that creates a practical sense of forward movement between current state and desired state	What is the desired completion date?

SMART Goal Worksheet

The SMART Goal Questionnaire below assists managers and employees in creating SMART 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 metrics/indicators of success)? 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?

Cascading SMART Goals Example: Manager

- Briefly identify the VCU Strategic Priorities

- Make the connection between the university goals and the school/division mission/vision/goals

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 current/upcoming 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 guidelines.

Completed SMART 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?** ● 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 KSAs and resources required to accomplish the goal?** Determined when providing direction and support to the team and identifying resources available for execution of the services. **Will meeting the goal present a challenge without being overwhelming?** Determined by the KSAs of the team and available resources (employee assistance, required materials, etc.)
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 policies, 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 SMART Goal Questionnaire Example: 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 teach 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 KSAs 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 to pay close attention to detail). **Will meeting the goal present a challenge without being overwhelming?** Determined by the KSAs of the team and available resources (employee assistance, required materials, etc.)
	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 School of Education student 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 policies, procedures, and timelines.

SMART Goal Checklist

		Checklist
S	Specific	● Does the goal focus on a specific area? ● Is the goal written using concrete language? ● Does the goal begin with an action verb?

M	Measurable	● Can progress toward the goal be measured?
		 ● Is the progress:
		  ○ Numeric or descriptive?
		  ○ Quantitative?
		  ○ Qualitative?
		  ○ Financial?
		  ○ Constrained by time?

A	Achievable	● Is the goal a "stretch", but still within the employee's control? ● Is the goal sufficiently and reasonably limited in scope?
R	Results-Focused	● Does the goal measure actual outcomes or results, not activities?

		● Do the results include products, deliverables or accomplishments? ● Is the goal supportive of and directly relevant to the university and the school/unit?
T	Time-Bound	● Has a reasonable time frame been identified? ● Is it necessary to identify interim steps or have a plan to monitor progress?

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, it is important to work together to set and clarify goals for the upcoming performance review period. This ensures both employees and manager have a shared understanding of the goals for the year.
● Having clear alignment of goals allows everyone to work in support of a larger goal, helps employees 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 your work contributes to the overall success of the university?

Ways of Building an Action Plan
● What is one thing that you think would be beneficial for you to work on to ensure you achieve your goals?
● How can I be helpful?
● What is one thing you can do right now to begin an action step to make you more effective?
● Are you open to listening to some of my ideas for a concrete action plan for your success?
● Of the suggestions I shared, which ideas sound best to you?

Ways of Summarizing

- What I heard you say was [example]. Is my interpretation/understanding correct?
- How do the ideas we just discussed sound to you? Does this sound like something you may be able to use? Why? If not, what are some other options you can suggest?
- How would you like me to assist you?
- What questions can I answer for you?

Ways of Checking for Commitment

- How would you characterize your level of commitment for the action plan we developed?
- It is important that we conclude our conversation by making certain that we have a mutual understanding of the next steps and that we summarize our discussion.

Tips for Giving Feedback

No	Yes
Make the feedback specific and related to behavior	
"James, you're late again and you have a poor attitude."	"James, you have been 15 minutes late for the past three mornings. Will you help me understand why?"
Give feedback as positive or corrective feedback	
(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." (Positive, but not specific) "Jane, good speech last week. Keep up the good work!"	(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." (Positive) "Jane, you did an outstanding job in your presentation. The speech was well researched and engaging. I saw many members of the audience taking copious notes while you presented!"
Give feedback in calm and unemotional language	
"James, isn't it about time you improved your production with this machine?"	"James, I'm sure your progress will be much faster now that your understanding of how to use the new machine is much improved."
Check to make sure clear communication has occurred	

No	Yes
"So, John, you're got it now, right?"	"John, do you understand the new protocol now? Will you explain it to me so I'm sure that I explained it correctly?"
Focus on behavior the employee can change	
"John, why don't you like to talk to other people?"	"John, part of your role is to keep the team informed about the status of the project."
Use "I" statements rather than "you" statements	
"John, you are so inconsiderate of others when you leave your radio on!"	"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 or use your headset."
Define the impact on you, the team, the unit, the university	
"Janet, can't you ever get your reports to me on time?"	"Janet, when I don't get your reports on time, I can't get my reports to my manager by my deadline. This slows down decisions about resources our department needs for the upcoming month."
Solicit feedback to engage the employee	
"John, I saw how you handled Mrs. Smith during this crisis, and it was not good at all."	"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 you?"

Additional resources to prepare to have performance management conversations can be accessed through **LinkedIn Learning:**

- Performance Management: Conducting Performance Reviews
- Using Feedback to Drive Performance
- Virtual Performance Reviews and Feedback
- Having Difficult Conversations: A Guide for Managers
- Delivering Employee Feedback
- Coaching and Developing Employees
- Coaching Skills for Leaders and Managers
- Motivating and Engaging Employees
- Employee Engagement

The STAR Model

The STAR Model is a structured manner of communicating feedback based on three components:
- **Situation/Task:** Explain the situation or task so everyone can understand the context
- **Action:** Give details about what you or the other person did to handle the situation
- **Result:** Describe what was achieved by the action and why it was/was not successful

Utilizing the STAR Model to provide feedback will ensure that managers are providing examples of specific situations and outcomes that are useful/constructive feedback, whether positive or negative.

When providing constructive feedback you may also present an 'alternative action' and an 'alternative result' to discuss what could have been done differently and how a different action could have produced a better result. With the STAR format, you can give feedback that turns mistakes into positive lessons.

Positive Feedback Example		
Situation/Task: A parent came into your office today looking upset.	**Action:** You gave her the information she needed and explained the next steps.	**Result:** She thanked you for your help and left with the information she needed and looked relieved.
Growth/Improvement Feedback Examples		
Situation/Task: A parent complained to me about the service he received from your office.	**Action:** Before he could finish, you interrupted him and said there was nothing you could do.	**Result:** He left looking very upset.
	Alternative Action: Moving forward, it will be helpful in similar situations if you listen more patiently, wait until you	**Alternative Result:** That way, the parent will have a better understanding of our processes and the services

	have all of the information before responding, and explain what you can do to resolve the situation. If you are unable to resolve the problem, offer to make contact with someone who can or direct them to the resources they need.	we can provide and will feel better about their interaction with you and the university.

Tips for Receiving Feedback

The following information is intended to assist employees with developing an open 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 receive feedback, you should think about what goals you would like to set for yourself. Creating strong goals will give you a target for a successful outcome. These could be long or short-term goals which should be challenging yet achievable.

2. **Be approachable**

   People avoid giving feedback to individuals who are not approachable. Ask for feedback. Let others know you are interested in hearing their feedback. You will signal your openness to feedback through your relaxed body language, facial expressions, and the welcoming manner in which you respond to the information others provide.

3. **Ask questions**

   Questions help to clarify the difference between perception and behavior. Focus on questions that help you understand what behaviors you may need to change to be successful. Ask for work examples that illustrate the feedback you receive, and check with others to determine the reliability of the feedback provided. If only one person provides a particular work example, it may be their perception and not a concern shared by others.

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 the feedback as calmly and as objectively as possible.

5. **Analyze the feedback and develop a strategy to overcome obstacles to achieve your goals**

   Remember to look for facts and not opinions in the feedback. Try to recall some of the constructive feedback you received in the past. If you see any patterns or recognize behaviors that were also brought to your attention in the past, write them down. Think about how these behaviors/conduct could become barriers to the goals you set for yourself. Plan action steps you can take to address these points.

6. **Share your action plan and ask for advice and support**

   This initiative shows that you are taking steps to remedy any issues or concerns pointed out to you. Suggestions may have been offered to you that you had not considered previously. Ask your manager or colleagues for support in making these changes. If your coworkers see that you genuinely want to put their advice into action, they may offer you encouragement along the way. Sharing your action plan may also encourage colleagues to be more open and receptive to feedback from you when it is your turn to provide them with feedback.

Tips for Employees: Building a Self-Review

VCU's performance management process is focused on the employee, and 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. Below are some tips for completing a self-review:

Time. Allow enough time to complete the self-review. This includes time you may need to review documentation that you kept throughout the year and relates 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, performance challenges you corrected, and underused skills and abilities you developed. In order to do this, you must be willing to reflect on all areas of your performance.

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. Don't be modest. State your accomplishments objectively and accurately without unnecessarily highlighting anyone else's deficiencies.

Don't forget about achievements made early in the performance cycle. Your manager cannot possibly remember all of your projects you engaged in throughout the year. Go back over documents, emails, and your calendar to help you remember all of your accomplishments.

Don't be stuffy. One of the benefits of a self-review is the constructive dialogue that can occur between you and your manager. Try to write in a natural conversational style that reflects the verbal back-and-forth that occurred between you throughout the year.

Be objective. It may be tempting to give yourself high marks across the board, but it is unlikely that you performed every goal or competency at the highest level. Instead of evaluating yourself based on how you wish you had performed, quantify your results by using facts, figures, and specific dates. The more you can point to the tangible benefits you offer, the more valuable you will be to your school/unit. 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. It's not the time to talk about your compensation. Be clear about your accomplishments and save salary discussions for a later conversation.

Use appropriate language. Choose words that demonstrate some objectivity and distance. Yes, you are 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 career development objectives and activities, complete them, and apply the knowledge you gain from these activities to support your performance goals, your core and leadership competency development, and your career direction and potential.

Write more than one draft. The self-review is part of your employment record so you will want to "get it right". Make certain you are thorough and professional in your approach and language. Compose drafts you can review and revise multiple times to ensure the self-review you submit to your manager is your best work.

Tip: Additional trainings, on many topics, are available on [LinkedIn Learning](#). Try using key words like 'Goal Setting', 'Preparing Your Review', 'Career Development' or 'Receiving Feedback' to find a training that is right for you.

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.

Rater Error	Definition
Attribution	Tendency to attribute performance to external causes ● Focus on employee performance as a whole rather than pinpoint specific scenarios to balance perspective ● Create an environment where employees feel comfortable explaining their actions and circumstances
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 about 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 one allows an overall impression of the employee to 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, overall significance and representation of the person's performance ● Identifying specific behavioral examples which support the assigned ratings, and ● Determining if aspects of the person's performance you find particularly admirable or irritating are overemphasized
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 ● Asking others for their observations of the employee over the course of the year to see if they have a different view
Similar-to-Me Effect	Tendency for managers to rate people who have qualities that they perceive as similar to their own more highly than others who are different and do not have similar qualities. 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 at the beginning of the cycle ● Regularly collecting documentation of observable performance covering the entire review period ● Checking to see if your ratings are significantly different across groups, i.e., different for men and women, different across race, etc.
Stereotyping	Tendency to generalize across groups and ignore individual differences ● Ask yourself if you have preset notions of others ● Challenge yourself to be open-minded in all scenarios ● Highlight the strengths in individual differences
Strictness	Opposite of leniency, ratings are at the 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 others?

General guidelines for avoiding bias and evaluating employee performance objectively:
● Work with each employee at the beginning of the review cycle to develop SMART performance goals with a focus on the core/leadership competencies
● Focus on observable behaviors related to goals and competencies throughout the evaluation period. Document observations and provide feedback and coaching to employees
● Compare observed behaviors to the established goal or competency. Do not compare the employee 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 and your own role in the employee's performance

● Focus on the employee's work and not on personal matters, unless those personal matters affected the work of the employee, and

● Check your perceptions for accuracy, fairness, balance, reasonableness, and consistency.

SMART Goal Library

VCU has a [SMART Goal Library](#), which is a resource and repository of goals employees can use as a starting point for constructing their own SMART goals for the performance period. A SMART goal is defined as one that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-focused, and Time-bound. These types of performance goals help provide structure and guidance throughout the annual performance cycle, ensure constructive and ongoing communication between employees and managers, and better identify what an employee must accomplish during the year to receive a successful evaluation and performance rating.

Every university employee is assigned a university job title that matches the duties and responsibilities they are expected to perform throughout the year. To use the [SMART Goal Library,](#) employees must know their current VCU job title and job family. This information is listed in Talent@VCU on the "My Profile" tab as "Job Code".

The SMART Goal library is organized by job family and includes a list of job titles within each family. Sample goals, descriptions, and metrics are available in the library for employees to use as a starting point when creating their own goals.

Another resource is the [VCU's job summary tool,](#) which outlines VCU jobs, job series, and job families, and gives summaries and information about each VCU job title.

Employees or managers with suggestions for new goals to be included in the library should complete the [SMART Goal Submission form](#).

Talent@VCU: Help and Guides

The user guides below instruct employees and managers how to perform actions related to goals.

User Guide Links

- [SMART Goal Overview Guide for Employees and Managers](#)
- [Performance Review Overview and Guides](#)

Employee and Manager Guides

The user guides below provide instructions for employees and managers about how to enter, edit, update, and approve goals.

Employee Resources
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Employee - How to Enter and Align Goals](#)
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Employee - How to Edit Goals](#)
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Employee Goal Progress Update](#)
- [Smart Goal Library](#)

Manager Resources
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Manager - How to Approve Goals](#)
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Reports](#)
- [Helpful Reports for Annual Review](#)
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Check-ins](#)
- [First Year Employees - Talent@VCU - Manager Instructions](#)

Who is Required to Enter Goals?
All Classified Staff and University & Academic Professionals are required to enter goals annually within Talent@VCU.

SMART Goal Process

Step 1: Employee and Manager meet to discuss and decide on SMART goals for the upcoming performance cycle. Use the [Performance Planning Conversation Model for Managers](#) as a guide to this conversation.

Step 2: Employee enters SMART goals in Talent@VCU. They should reflect the conversation in step 1 and incorporate the agreed upon information. No surprises!

Step 3: Manager approves the SMART goals.

If you are experiencing technical issues with Talent@VCU, such as a log-in error, please submit a ticket to the [IT Support system](#).

Performance Review Help and Information

Below are user guides that provide instructions for Employees, Managers, Reviewers, and HRPs to complete the reviews.

Performance Review Steps

- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Employee - Self-Review](#)
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Manager - Manager Review](#)
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Reviewer - Reviewer Review](#)
- [Calibration](#)
- [Talent@VCU - User Guide - Employee - Employee Sign-Off](#)

Detail of Emails Sent During Performance Review Process

As part of the annual performance review process, emails are triggered through Talent@VCU to notify stakeholders when their input is necessary. The table below indicates when emails are sent.

EMAIL TRIGGER	EMAIL RECIPIENT	CONTENTS
When self-review is completed	Manager	Manager can start employee review
When manager/reviewer/admin re-opens self-review	Employee	Self-review reopened for 'X' reasons
When manager finishes review	Reviewer	Reviewer step is open
When reviewer/admin reopens self review	Manager	Manager review reopened for 'X' reasons

When HR Professional releases review from calibration	Employee	Review is open and visible by the employee
When employee signs off	Notification at the end of the review	Process now closed for both

Videos

Below is a list of informative videos to help managers prepare for the performance management process at VCU.

- **Introduction**
  [Performance Management - Video 1 - Introduction](#)
- **Writing performance reviews**
  [Performance Management - Video 2 - Writing Performance Reviews](#)
- **Setting performance goals**
  [Performance Management - Video 3 - Setting Performance Goals](#)

Forms

- [Probationary Progress Review Form - University Employees](#)
- [Request for Exceptional Performance Rating Form - Staff Employees](#)