

Policy 1305
Performance Evaluation for Classified Employees

Date of Current Revision: September 2017
Primary Responsible Officer: Director of Human Resources

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a high standard of work performance for every classified employee and to provide for a more fulfilling work experience. In addition, this policy is designed to foster communication between supervisors and classified employees, which includes a clear statement of performance expectations and a workable performance plan. The university's Performance Management Program is an integral part of the Compensation Management System, as is regular and consistent communication between the supervisor and the employee.

2. AUTHORITY

The Board of Visitors has been authorized by the Commonwealth of Virginia to govern James Madison University. See Code of Virginia § 23.1-1600; § 23.1-1301. The Board has delegated the authority to manage the university to the president.

STATE OR FEDERAL STATUTE AND/OR REGULATION

Virginia Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) Policy [1.40-Performance Planning and Evaluation](#) establishes guidelines for the performance evaluation of classified employees. This policy adheres to those guidelines and provides clarification as necessary.

3. DEFINITIONS

Below Contributor

This rating recognizes job performance that fails to meet the criteria of the job function. To receive an overall Below Contributor rating, an employee must have received at least one documented [Notice of Improvement Needed](#) or [Written Notice](#) within the performance cycle.

Compensation Advisory Council

Chaired by the AVP for Human Resources, Training, and Performance, this council provides compensation-related advice that considers the opinions of JMU employees and allows the vice presidents to render fair and equitable decisions.

Contributor

This rating recognizes work that is at or occasionally above the performance standards by achieving the criteria of the job's core responsibilities and measures throughout the performance cycle.

Core Responsibilities

Job responsibilities that are primary and essential to the type of work performed by an employee and normally remain relatively consistent during the performance cycle.

Departmental Values

Evaluation factors which represent the behaviors, objectives and competencies that departments value as employees perform their work.

Employee Work Profile (EWP)

The combination of an employee's position description, performance evaluation and Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

Extraordinary Contributor

This rating recognizes work that is characterized by exemplary accomplishments throughout the performance cycle and performance that considerably and consistently exceeds the criteria of the job function. An Extraordinary Contributor is observed regularly doing the unusual and the unexpected. To receive an overall Extraordinary Contributor rating, an employee must have received at least one documented [Acknowledgement of Extraordinary Contribution](#) within the performance cycle.

High Contributor

This rating recognizes work that is characterized by a consistently higher level of accomplishment; the employee meets and often exceeds performance targets of core responsibilities, provides significant support that contributes to achieving the mission of the organization and on a regular basis, demonstrates highly-proficient knowledge, skills, and abilities, performs all required work and meets behavioral competencies.

Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)

An individualized record of an employee's current training needs or desires and short and long-term career goals. It is a written plan for developing knowledge, skills and competencies that support both the organization's objectives and the employee's needs and goals.

Interim Performance Evaluation

A performance evaluation completed during the performance cycle to assess and document the employee's progress toward achieving contributor-level performance. This may also be used as an optional evaluation conducted near the mid-point of the performance cycle or on an as-needed basis. Interim performance evaluations are not considered official documents and are retained in the supervisor's confidential file for use in completing the Annual Performance Evaluation.

Measures

Qualitative and/or quantitative standards against which each core responsibility, special assignment and overriding departmental value is assessed. Measures describe major duties, assignments, objectives and behaviors in terms of complexity, accountability and outcomes and must be specific, measurable, attainable and relevant.

Moderate Contributor

This rating recognizes work that meets the minimum standards required of the position. While employees at this level are achieving most of the core responsibilities and measures, the employee is still developing competency, or did not consistently achieve expectations and may require further development.

Performance Cycle

The 12-month period from October 25 through October 24 of the following year, during which an employee's performance is evaluated.

Performance Evaluation

The official determination of the degree to which an employee has met the established performance expectations and measures, as indicated in the Position Description.

Performance Increase

A monetary increase, based on results of the annual performance evaluation and guidelines issued by DHRM and JMU, when funding is available.

Performance Management Program

Key design features of the university's Performance Management Program include five performance-rating levels, a 12-month probationary period for new employees, an opportunity for employee self-evaluation, interim evaluations as necessary, and development opportunities for supervisors through employee feedback. Although the university's Performance Management Program includes five performance-rating levels, the Commonwealth of Virginia has specified only three performance categories (Extraordinary Contributor, Contributor, and Below Contributor). Therefore, the university's 'High Contributor' and 'Moderate Contributor' ratings described above will equate to the Commonwealth's 'Contributor' level for conversion and compensation purposes.

Position Description

The electronic document (available in [PositionLink](#)) that includes a brief work description, core responsibilities, performance measures, special assignments and departmental values.

Probationary Period

The introductory period of employment that allows the employee and JMU to determine if the employee is suited for the job. During the probationary period, employees may be terminated at the pleasure of the appointing authority, without access to the [State Grievance Procedure](#). The normal probationary period is 12 months; however, it can be extended for up to six additional months, not to exceed 18 months, for performance reasons, if an employee is absent for an extended period of time, or if an employee transfers into a new position during the last six months of the 12-month period.

Probationary Progress Review

Formal reviews held at three, six, nine and 12-months in the employee's probationary period. Supervisors use the [Probationary Progress Review](#) to assess and document the employee's performance during their first year of employment.

Reviewer

The supervisor of an employee's immediate supervisor, or another person designated to review an employee's position description, performance plan, performance rating and who responds to appeals of performance ratings.

Salary Administration Plan (SAP)

The plan that reflects JMU's philosophy and policies in support of the mission to ensure consistent and fair employment and compensation practices. Link to [SAP](#).

Self-Evaluation

The self-evaluation enables classified employees to communicate an assessment of their own performance to the supervisor.

Supervisor

The person to whom the employee directly reports and who is responsible for ensuring the employee has a clear, accurate and up-to-date EWP.

4. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all classified employees, as well as supervisors and reviewers of classified employees.

5. POLICY

All classified employees must be evaluated according to schedules and procedures set out in this policy. Employee performance is a key component of retention of classified employees and how pay will be administered, not only in the Performance Management Program, but also with the university's pay practices, as outlined in the [Salary Administration Plan](#).

6. PROCEDURES

6.1 Development of Position Description

The position description in [PositionLink](#) is the central document to the university's Performance Management Program. The position description is created by the supervisor and approved by the reviewer. Following the reviewer's approval, position descriptions are discussed with the employee within the first 30 days of employment. Supervisors should use this as an opportunity to discuss the employee's responsibilities, expected job performance and clarify any aspects of the job. Changes to core responsibilities and measures must be updated by the supervisor and reviewed with the employee as they occur.

6.2 Information Gathering for the Performance Evaluation

In order for performance evaluations to be effective and reflect the actual performance of the employee, it is imperative to collect and document information on a continuous basis. Supervisors should use a variety of sources when gathering evaluation information.

Sources may include direct observation of employee behaviors and work products by the supervisor and information solicited from peers, customers, subordinates and other supervisors who interact and work with the employee. Working in conjunction with an [HR Consultant](#), departments may also develop supplemental evaluation tools such as a 360 evaluation or team-based objectives and measures.

Additionally, a valuable source of information for performance evaluations can be obtained from the employees themselves. The university's Performance Management Program requires employees to actively participate in the performance evaluation process. Employees must be given the opportunity to provide their supervisor with a self-evaluation of their performance for the evaluation period. Using their position description, employees complete a self-evaluation and submit it to the supervisor. The supervisor must review and consider the self-evaluation when completing employee performance evaluations.

6.3 Feedback during the Performance Evaluation Cycle

Supervisors should mentor, coach and reinforce progress toward expected results and outcomes and address areas of concern and acknowledge positive contributions *as they occur*. Effective management of performance involves providing *continuous* formal and/or informal feedback to employees throughout the entire performance cycle. The content of the annual performance evaluation should never come as a surprise to the employee.

Another source of information that is particularly valuable for management development purposes is employee feedback on their supervisor's performance, commonly referred to as Upward Feedback or 360-degree feedback.

6.4 Interim Performance Evaluations

Interim performance evaluations provide an opportunity to give structured feedback to employees on their progress toward meeting performance expectations during the evaluation period. Interim performance evaluations may be conducted at any time during the performance cycle.

When an employee's supervisor changes during the performance cycle, the outgoing supervisor should complete an [Interim Performance Evaluation](#) at that time. This is helpful to the incoming supervisor to assist in the evaluation of the employee at the end of the performance cycle. The new supervisor should review the performance expectations, make any necessary modifications and incorporate the former supervisor's assessment in the overall evaluation.

An Interim Performance Evaluation should be completed prior to departure if, after six months into the performance cycle, an employee transfers into a new position with a different supervisor or between state agencies. The employee's new supervisor should consider this information in assessing the employee's performance.

6.5 Acknowledgment of Extraordinary Contribution/Substandard Performance

Acknowledging an employee's performance in a timely manner will reinforce exceptional behaviors and will identify employee performance that is unacceptable and needs improvement. All performance, whether extraordinary, acceptable or unacceptable must be acknowledged and recognized throughout the performance cycle.

Supervisors are encouraged to recognize exemplary performance by completing an [Acknowledgement of Extraordinary Contribution](#). It is important to differentiate between performance that is expected and performance that exceeds supervisory expectations.

Supervisors must immediately identify poor, substandard and/or unacceptable performance. Substandard performance on any core responsibility or special assignment may result in a [Notice of Improvement Needed](#). Working in conjunction with an HR Consultant, supervisors will develop an improvement plan with specific timelines, addressing the area(s) that require immediate improvement. Input will be solicited from the employee in developing the improvement plan. A timeline for improvement must be established for at least 30 days and no more than 180 days. Based on the timeline, the supervisor must re-assess the employee's performance relative to the performance improvement plan.

Policy [1317](#)-Standards of Conduct and Performance for Classified Employees addresses the concept of progressive discipline and assists supervisors in working with employees to improve their performance. Supervisors would normally address first time minor or marginal performance issues through performance counseling and coaching; however, repeated and/or more serious performance or conduct issues may result in more severe disciplinary action, such as issuance of a Written Notice.

The Acknowledgement of Extraordinary Contribution and Notice of Improvement Needed are not considered official documents and are retained in the supervisor's confidential file for use in completing the Annual Performance Evaluation. An Acknowledgement of Extraordinary Contribution, Notice of Improvement Needed or Written Notice may support an overall rating of Extraordinary or Below Contributor on the Annual Performance Evaluation; however, receipt of this documentation does not guarantee such a rating.

6.6 Completing the Performance Evaluation The supervisor must complete performance evaluations for non-probationary employees, along with the Individual Professional Development Plan ([IPDP](#)), and submit to Human Resources by the last workday in September.

In completing the performance evaluation and arriving at an overall performance rating, the supervisor will take into consideration how successful the employee was in meeting the criteria established by the performance measures and the length of time the employee performed in the job. To support the overall rating of Extraordinary Contributor, an Acknowledgement of Extraordinary Contribution from the same performance cycle must be attached to the Annual Performance Evaluation when it is submitted to Human Resources.

To support the overall rating of Below Contributor, an employee must have received at least one Notice of Improvement Needed or Written Notice during the same performance cycle. The Notice of Improvement Needed must be attached to the Annual Performance Evaluation when it is submitted to Human Resources. It is not necessary to attach a copy of the Written Notice, as it is already on file in Human Resources. An employee who receives an overall rating of Below Contributor must be re-evaluated within three months.

If a Written Notice is used in place of a Notice of Improvement Needed to support a rating of Below Contributor, and the notice is subsequently removed pursuant to the Grievance Procedure, the performance evaluation must be modified accordingly.

Employee absences due to compensatory time, overtime leave, military Leave, workers' compensation, family and medical leave, and short-term disability must not influence the employee's overall performance rating. However, if an employee was absent from work for a significant portion of the performance year, any performance increase may be impacted.

6.7 Reviewer Approval of the Performance Evaluation

The reviewer is responsible for approving the evaluation before it is presented to the employee. Reviewers have the authority to change any part of the performance evaluation based on their knowledge and/or judgment about the employee's performance or the supervisor's approach to the performance evaluation.

6.8 Conducting the Evaluation Meeting

The purpose of the evaluation meeting is to provide the supervisor and employee an opportunity to discuss job performance and achievement of professional development goals during the previous performance cycle and plan for future performance objectives. The evaluation meeting requires careful planning and preparation on part of both the supervisor and employee. The supervisor must be prepared to discuss what input/feedback was considered in the employee's evaluation and the rationale for each of the individual and overall performance ratings. In addition, the evaluation meeting is the time for the employee and supervisor to determine at least one professional development goal for the upcoming performance cycle.

If an employee disagrees with the performance evaluation, he or she will be given the opportunity to provide an explanation. The supervisor may change any ratings based on the information provided by the employee. If the supervisor decides to change a rating, the reviewer must be consulted before the change is made and must initial the change.

At the end of the evaluation meeting, the employee will write any comments and sign the form indicating that the results have been discussed. If the employee refuses to sign the evaluation, the supervisor must indicate this on the performance evaluation.

6.9 Overall Below-Contributor Rating -- Performance Re-evaluation Plan

Within 10 workdays of the evaluation meeting, working in conjunction with an HR Consultant, the supervisor must develop a performance re-evaluation plan that sets forth performance measures for the next three months, and have it approved by the reviewer.

At the conclusion of the re-evaluation period, if the employee's rating continues to be Below Contributor, the supervisor has several options including demotion, reassignment, reduction of duties, or termination. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that effort has been made for improvement and employee development before taking a final action such as demotion or termination.

If the supervisor, working in conjunction with an HR Consultant, identifies another position within the time allotted for improvement that is more suitable for the employee's level of performance, then the employee may be reassigned or demoted. This will conclude the re-evaluation period. If this occurs, the employee will not be eligible for a Performance Increase. For a demotion, the employee's salary must be reduced by at least 5%.

As an alternative to reassignment or demotion, the supervisor may elect to maintain the employee in his or her position and eliminate the duties that the employee was unable to successfully fulfill. This reduction in duties must be accompanied by a concurrent salary reduction of at least 5%.

If the supervisor, reviewer and HR Consultant determine that termination from employment is the proper action based on the re-evaluation, the employee will be terminated at the conclusion of the re-evaluation period.

6.10 Performance Increases

The General Assembly and the Governor annually determine the statewide average Performance Increase for the university's workforce, if state funds allow for such an increase.

The Commonwealth *may* implement a pay-for-performance program in which pay increases are tied to the employee's particular rating. The exact figure, which by percentage will be the same for all full-time employees with similar ratings, will be determined by the senior leaders working in conjunction with the Compensation Advisory Council and Human Resources.

6.11 Appeals

When an employee disagrees with the evaluation and this cannot be resolved with the supervisor, the employee may appeal to the reviewer for reconsideration. The employee must make this appeal in writing *within 10 workdays* of the initial evaluation meeting. The reviewer will discuss the appeal with the supervisor and the employee.

After discussion of the appeal, the reviewer must provide the employee with a written response *within five workdays*. The response will indicate the reviewer's conclusion of the performance evaluation.

6.12 Probationary Progress Reviews

The supervisor must evaluate and provide structured feedback periodically to the new employee during the 12-month probationary period. A Probationary Progress Review will be completed at approximately 3, 6 and 9 months of the probationary period. Supervisors will receive electronic notifications from Human Resources when these reviews are due. In addition, at any time during the

probationary period, the Probationary Progress Review may be used to document the employee's progress and to provide performance feedback.

The final Probationary Progress Review should occur approximately three weeks prior to the completion of the probationary period. A copy of the Probationary Progress Review will serve as written notification that the probationary period has been satisfactorily completed. If a probationary employee is not notified of satisfactory completion or extension of the probationary period at the end of 12 months, it is understood that the employee successfully completed the probationary requirement.

6.12.1 Extension of Probationary Period

The probationary period may be extended for up to six additional months for performance reasons or due to periods of leave with or without pay. However, the probationary period may not exceed 18 months, excluding periods of leave. Employees must be notified in writing when their probationary period will be extended.

The extension of the probationary period must be documented on a Probationary Progress Review and must be approved by the reviewer. A copy of the completed Probationary Progress Review must be given to the employee.

When a probationary employee transfers into a different position during the first six months of probation, the remainder of the probationary requirement must be completed. If an employee transfers into a new position during the last six months of the probationary period, the employee must complete the remainder of the probationary requirement, and the supervisor may elect to extend the probationary period not to exceed a total of 18 months. In all cases, the employee *must be notified in writing* when the probationary period is to be extended.

6.12.2 Performance Increases for Probationary Employees

Probationary employees are not eligible for an increase that recognizes the completion of their probationary period; however, the university may provide a performance increase to probationary employees when the state is providing annual increases. Performance increases for probationary employees will be dependent on a Contributor rating and may be pro-rated based on the employee's hire date. Employees rated Below Contributor will not be eligible for a performance increase.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

The president, vice presidents, deans, associate/assistant vice presidents, directors, and particularly supervisors of classified employees are responsible for ensuring consistent application of the Performance Management Program and this policy, and for communicating the content to classified employees.

All supervisors of classified employees are responsible for completing and submitting performance evaluations in accordance with established policies and procedures. Supervisors are also responsible for ensuring that each classified employee has a clear, accurate, up-to-date EWP.

8. SANCTIONS

Employees who violate this policy are subject to discipline commensurate with the severity and/or frequency of the offense and may include termination of employment.

9. EXCLUSIONS

Only classified employees are evaluated under this policy. Wage employees, instructional faculty members, and administrative & professional faculty are not evaluated under this policy.

10. INTERPRETATION

The authority to interpret this policy rests with the president, and is generally delegated to the director of human resources.

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Approved by the President: April 2002