

**Policy 1305**  
**Classified Employee Performance Evaluation**

**Date of Current Revision: March 2023**  
**Responsible Officer: Director of Human Resources**

**1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a high standard of job 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 plan 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**

**360-Degree Evaluation**

A performance tool that solicits confidential feedback from the people that work closest with an employee, such as managers, co-workers, and direct reports

**Below Contributor**

This rating recognizes job performance that fails to meet the criteria of the job's essential functions throughout the performance cycle. 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 compensation decisions.

**Contributor**

This rating recognizes job performance that fully meets, and occasionally exceeds, the criteria of the job's essential functions throughout the performance cycle.

**Departmental Values**

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

**Essential Functions**

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.

**Extraordinary Contributor**

This rating recognizes exemplary job performance that consistently and considerably exceeds the criteria of the job's essential functions throughout the performance cycle. An Extraordinary Contributor is frequently observed exceeding supervisory expectations. 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 job performance that often exceeds the criteria of the job's essential functions throughout the performance cycle. A High Contributor performs at an elevated level with frequent accomplishments.

**Interim Performance Evaluation**

A performance evaluation completed during the performance cycle to assess and document the employee's progress toward meeting performance expectations during the evaluation period. This may also be used as an optional evaluation conducted near the mid-point of the performance cycle or on an as-needed basis.

**Measures**

Qualitative and/or quantitative standards against which each essential function, 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 job performance that minimally meets the criteria of the job's essential functions throughout the performance cycle. While employees at this level are achieving most of the essential functions 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 Plan**

Key design features of the university's performance management plan 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 plan 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 the PD Application in the Human Resource Management System (HRMS), that includes a brief work description, essential functions, 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 discretion of the appointing authority, without access to the [State Grievance Procedure](#). The normal probationary period is 12 months; however, it may be extended up to 18 months for reasons described within this policy.

### **Probationary Progress Review**

Formal reviews held at 3, 6, 9, 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 the employee's position description, performance plan, performance rating, and who responds to the employee's appeal 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 position description, and who also reviews the employee's performance at appropriate intervals, assigning a performance rating and providing feedback through the performance evaluation.

## 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 plan, 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, the basis for the university's performance management plan, identifies the essential elements of an employee's job. The description is created in the PD Application within the HRMS system by the supervisor when a new classified position is to be established for the department.

Essential functions of the position are based on the type of work performed by an employee and remain relatively constant during the performance cycle. Measures are descriptions of what outstanding performance will look like in the execution of the core responsibilities. Measures are observable performance and behavioral outcomes that define success.

The position description also identifies any special assignments the employee may be assigned, as well as the overriding departmental values. The physical, cognitive, and environmental requirements section speaks to baseline mental, physical, and sensory demands appropriate for the position.

As the essential functions change, the supervisor updates the position description and reviews it for accuracy during the performance evaluation process.

### 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-degree 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 plan 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. Employees are strongly encouraged to complete a self-evaluation and submit it to the supervisor, using their position description as a basis for the self-evaluation. The supervisor must review and consider the self-evaluation when completing employee performance evaluations.

The performance evaluation contains a section for development of professional goals for the upcoming performance cycle as well as a section for evaluation and assessment of the previous performance year-end goals. Professional development goals should ultimately support both the organization's objectives and the employee's growth. Supervisors are encouraged to work with their employees to determine goal accomplishments for the current evaluation year, professional development goals for the upcoming year, and action steps to accomplish the goals.

### 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. 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.

An [interim performance evaluation](#) should be completed if, after 6 months into the performance cycle, an employee transfers, promotes, or demotes into a new position with a different supervisor within an agency or between state agencies. Before the employee's departure from the position, the supervisor should complete the Interim Performance Evaluation. The employee's new supervisor should consider this information in assessing the employee's performance at the end of the performance cycle.

### 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 essential function 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 should 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.

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. If these forms are used to support an overall performance rating of Extraordinary Contributor or Below Contributor, then the forms must be retained within the employee personnel file in Human Resources.

## 6.6 Completing the Performance Evaluation

The supervisor must complete the [Annual Performance Evaluation Form for Non-Probationary Classified Employees](#) and submit to Human Resources by the last workday in September. Completed annual performance evaluations may be submitted to HR anytime between July 1 and September 30. All performance ratings are contingent on continued performance at the same level during the duration of the performance cycle, which officially ends October 24. If an employee is given a particular rating and the evaluation is submitted prior to the September deadline, but the employee's performance degrades before the end of the cycle, the supervisor may change the evaluation and rating before the evaluation is finalized.

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 to plan for future performance objectives. The evaluation meeting requires careful planning and preparation on the 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, they 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 leadership 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 should discuss an employee's appeal with the supervisor and employee.

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

#### 6.12 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-Month Evaluations

Using the [Probationary Progress Review form](#), supervisors provide regularly scheduled feedback to their probationary employees. The final probationary review typically occurs three weeks prior to the end of the probationary period. Supervisors are notified by an e-mail from Human Resources when these reviews are due.

The probationary period gives new employees the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine whether the new position meets their expectations. JMU uses this period to evaluate employee capabilities, work habits, and overall performance. Either the employee or JMU may end the employment relationship at any time during the probationary period, with or without cause. Except for allegations of unlawful discrimination, employees will not be provided an appeal if terminated during the probationary period.



All new and rehired classified employees serve a probationary period for one year after their date of hire. An employee's probationary period may be extended up to a total of 18 months either for performance reasons or to allow for periods of leave with or without pay. Any significant absence (more than 14 consecutive days) will automatically extend a probationary period by the length of the absence. Employees must be notified in writing if their probationary period is going to be extended.

Should the employee's probationary period end between July 1 and October 24, submitting the completed Probationary Progress Review form will suffice for the overall evaluation for the current performance cycle. Employees whose probationary period ends on or before June 30 must have the Annual Performance Evaluation completed and submitted to HR by the evaluation submission deadline of the last workday in September.

(Also see Policy [1322](#)- Classified Employee Probationary Period)

a. 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 plan 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 position description.

All departments, offices and employees that generate, receive, or maintain public records under the terms of this policy are also responsible for compliance with Policy [1109](#) - Records Management.

## **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. Student employees, 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