

An aerial photograph of a university campus. In the center is a large, rectangular green lawn with a circular flower bed and a flagpole at one end. Radiating from the center of the lawn are several wide, reddish-brown paths. Surrounding the lawn are numerous brick buildings of varying architectural styles, some with multiple stories and many windows. The campus is surrounded by trees and greenery. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark red rectangle that contains the title text.

Staff Performance Management Update

August 2025

CHARGE



01

Evaluate best practices from other institutions that could be a part of the evaluation process and develop recommendations from these for MSU.

02

Recommend adjustments to any relevant university policies regarding staff performance evaluations.

03

Develop a comprehensive but flexible performance evaluation document that fits the needs of staff across the university.

University-Wide Survey

The taskforce deployed a survey to the entire campus community to assess:

- Current strengths and weaknesses of the existing performance appraisal system.
- Assess employee perceptions of fairness, engagement, and trust as it relates to the performance process.
- Determine if the employees feel the existing appraisal tool accurately measures job performance.
- Give employees a voice in shaping the revised evaluation process.



Response Rate

1206 employees responded to the survey, which is a 34% response rate with representation across all divisions and the majority of departments.



Competencies

When asked if there was a competency employees wanted added to the evaluation format, INTEGRITY was the most often requested additional competency.



Trends in the Data

Survey responses indicate a strong desire for process clarity, timely and actionable feedback, and robust training for employees and managers alike.



Open-Ended Feedback

The open-ended feedback indicated that employees would like to see better integration between development goals and competencies and a more holistic evaluation rating.



NEW EVALUATION FORM

ENHANCEMENT 1: SOLIDIFIES A 3-STEP PROCESS – PLANNING, COACHING, EVALUATING

PLANNING

Planning for the new review cycle and annual evaluations for the previous year should begin in January/February using the revised planning worksheet.

COACHING

Supervisors should engage with employees throughout the review period and provide regular coaching and mentoring.

EVALUATING

Supervisors will evaluate performance relative to job duties, annual objectives, and competencies. Completed forms are due to HRM by April 30.



2025 Evaluation Year

01

Supervisors will utilize the “old” performance appraisal form to assess performance for evaluation year 2025.

02

Employees will complete the annual objectives planning form to establish goals for the 2026 evaluation period. This will include a review of the competencies and acknowledgement by both supervisor and employee regarding their collective commitments for the review period.

03

HRM will provide performance management training monthly beginning in August 2025 for both supervisors and employees on how to utilize the new evaluation form for goal setting.

2026 Evaluation Year

01

Beginning in January 2026, HRM will provide additional training on the revised tool with special emphasis on setting SMART goals.

02

Employees will complete the annual objectives planning form to establish goals for the 2026 evaluation period.

03

Supervisors are strongly encouraged to utilize the mid-year check-in form as part of the revised performance management process.

04

Supervisors will evaluate employee performance for evaluation year 2026 using the new evaluation form.



Department Head/Supervisor Action Items

01

Divisional/Department Mission Statement Alignment

- Provide mission statement
- Identify who the department's customer is

02

Divisional/Department Core Values Alignment

- Provide core values to department if applicable

03

Identify Strategic Planning Priorities

- Ensure entire department understands what the departments priorities are

04

Assess Unit Goal Completion

- Where the unit goals met throughout out evaluation period?

05

Prioritize Unit Goal Setting

- What are the unit's goal for the next evaluation period?

Role of Supervisor & Employee

01

Supervisor shares University, division, and department/unit goals.
<https://www.msstate.edu/transformation/strategic-plan>

02

Employee documents their proposed goals on the Performance Goals Worksheet and completes Self-Appraisal Form prior to annual performance review.

03

Employee and supervisor will work together to come to an agreement on performance goals during annual review.

04

Supervisor reinforces the value of professional growth by coaching employees to create plan for development.

SMART Goals

- S** Specific
- M** Measurable
- A** Attainable
- R** Realistic
- T** Need specific time frames

A photograph of a baseball stadium during a game, with a large red semi-transparent overlay covering the center. The text "Smart Goal Worksheet" is written in white over the red area. The stadium seating is visible on the left, and the field is on the right.

Smart Goal Worksheet

Goal

Reduce average time to equip new employees with laptops from current 15 business days to 5 business days.



SMART GOAL

Reduce average time to equip account executives with fully functioning laptops loaded with standard desktop system, email, and customer relationship management system from current 15 business days to 5 days by end of 2nd quarter by:

- Establishing new communication plan with HR.
- Maintaining a pool of laptops with software loaded.
- Running standard tests to ensure functionality.

Supervisor Tips

01

Review Position Description For Employees

- Consult with your HRM Business Partner if you are unable to locate current position descriptions

02

Review Prior Years Evaluations and Goals

- Referring to previous evaluation and goals can help make the evaluation process more credible from the employee perspective

03

Identify Sources of Performance Data (self-assessments, team metrics, peer input, etc.)

04

Focus on delivery

- Organize what you want to convey
- Understand the impact of good intent with communication

Coaching



Practice Prevention

01

Mid Year Review

- Create time for you and employee to have a 6-month review

02

Early Intervention

- Orientation
- Training

03

Regular Discussions

- Establish a culture of review

04

Request Feedback

- Sincerity is key when requesting feedback
- Actively Listen
- Manage your reaction

05

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Facilitation

- Support vs disciplinary action

Structure of Conversation

01

Prepare

- Give yourself enough time to reflect on each competency
- Review before providing to employee
- Ensure your evaluation is fair

02

Deliver

- If you are preparing for a difficult evaluation, practice what you are going to say
- Specificity helps the overall structure of the conversation

03

Discuss

- The goal is that the employee discusses as well
- Realize and understand your areas for growth as a Manager

04

Plan

- How do you go forward together?
- Identify any barriers (personal, departmental, or institutional)

Environment

01

Location Matters

- Privacy and confidentiality should be prioritized throughout this process
- Think of meeting room locations, areas known for thin walls, offices with numerous windows, etc.

02

Have Evaluation Paperwork Prepared and Complete

- Lost evaluation impacts credibility
- Refrain from a checklist mentality

03

Be Organized

- Review and edit document ahead of time
- Be familiar with the document

04

Value Everyone's Time

- Have documents printed out ahead of time
- Don't take calls or check cell phone throughout the discussion
- Plan for pop up emails

05

Providing the Evaluation Ahead of Time Can be Helpful

- This gives employees time to reflect and bring valuable questions

Delivering Negative Feedback

01

Provide Examples

- Ensure examples are within the position responsibilities and follows general guidelines for employee conduct

02

Focus on Behavior/Performance

- Justify evaluation with relevant examples
- Be specific

03

Reference Departmental Need, University Operations, and Position Descriptions

- The evaluation process gains credibility as the manager connects performance with position descriptions, and departmental need

04

Be Aware of Personal Preferences, Tone, and Body Language

- Getting your point across is a priority, but understanding the employee's thought process is also beneficial

05

Be Solution Minded, Not Reactive

- The goal is to guide employee forward, not solely rehash issues

Delivering Positive Feedback

01

Be Sincere

- Refrain from positive feedback for likability

02

Do Not Exaggerate

- Employees are not perfect
- Evaluations need to reflect the individual's performance

03

Be Specific

- Explain what they are doing well at
- Provide examples

04

Link Feedback to Position Deliverable or Departmental Mission

- Providing a bigger picture ensure feedback is not personal but part of a larger impact

05

Highlight the Benefit

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Mastering Performance Evaluations: *Clarity, Consistency, & Impact*

August 2025

Key Principles of Effective Evaluation

01

Clear Performance Expectations

02

Objective, Evidence-Based Ratings

03

Constructive & Future-Focused
Performance Narratives

04

Collaborative Exchange Between
Employee & Supervisor

Clear Performance Expectations

Annual evaluations formalize expectations, personalize them by role, and create a roadmap for success.

Clarify Job Responsibilities & Priorities

Annual evaluations reinforce what's expected in an employee's role, especially when responsibilities evolve over time.

Translate Broad Organizational Goals into Role-Specific Expectations

Evaluations help cascade organization's goals down to each employee in a way that makes sense for their job.

Establish Measurable Performance Criteria

Evaluations are a time to define what success looks like for each employee. This might include KPIs, quality standards, efficiency targets, or behavior-based expectations.

Promote Consistency Across Roles & Teams

Using a consistent evaluation framework, organizations ensure that all employees are held to clear and fair standards.

Objective, Evidence-Based Ratings

Annual evaluations foster objectivity by grounding performance ratings in **facts, evidence, and shared standards.**

Regular Documentation of Performance

Throughout the year, supervisors are encouraged to track key accomplishments, challenges, and examples of behavior.

Defined Rating Criteria

Supervisors should familiarize themselves with the university's standardized rating scales.

Comparison Over Time & Across Roles

Annual evaluations allow performance to be assessed year over year or in relation to team-wide expectations using similar evidence-based standards.

Accountability for Managers & Employees

Managers must justify their ratings with supportive examples for fair and accurate assessments.

Constructive & Future-Focused Performance Narratives

Annual evaluations foster objectivity by grounding performance ratings in **facts, evidence, and shared standards.**

Shift the Focus from Judgement to Development

Constructive feedback focuses on what was done well, what could be improved, and how to move forward.

Reinforce Strengths & Build Confidence

Positive performance narratives highlight specific strengths and contributions, not just overall ratings.

Identify Opportunities for Growth & Improvement

Constructive narratives outline clear, actionable next steps for improvement or development.

Set the Stage for Goal-Setting & Career Growth

A future-focused narrative naturally leads into goal-setting for the next review period.

Collaborative Exchange Between Employee & Supervisor

Annual evaluations enable a collaborative exchange between the employee and supervisor by creating a structured opportunity for open, two-way dialogue.

Encourage Self-Reflection

Most evaluation processes begin with a self-assessment, giving employees a voice in how their work is evaluated.

Promote Mutual Understanding

Supervisors should familiarize themselves with the university's standardized rating scales.

Clarify & Resolve Misunderstanding

The evaluation discussion helps both parties clarify expectations, resolve misunderstandings, and align on goals.

Lay the Foundation for Ongoing Dialogue

A collaborative evaluation sets the tone for continuous feedback and coaching throughout the year.

An aerial photograph of a school campus, featuring various buildings, parking lots, and green spaces. A large, semi-transparent brown rectangle is centered over the image, serving as a background for the title text. The text is in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Delivering Impactful Feedback

Narrative Feedback



Narrative feedback holds great value in performance evaluations as it provides depth, clarity, and context that simple ratings or bullet points cannot capture.

Tips for Impactful Feedback

- Use the “SBI” Model – Structure feedback related to needed improvements using the Situation, Behavior, Impact framework. Describe the specific situation where the behavior occurred.
- Set Clear Expectations & Goals – Make sure both you and the employee understand what success looks like moving forward.
- Reiterate Your Confidence in the Employee – Employees need reassurance that you believe in their ability to successfully perform their job duties.
- Encourage Dialogue & Questions – Allow the individual to ask clarifying questions and provide their perspective.

SBI in Action – Example 1

Weak Feedback

You're not a good communicator.



Impactful Feedback

In the client call last Thursday (Situation), when questions about our timeline came up, your responses were brief and lacked detail (Behavior).

This caused some confusion, and the client followed up later for clarification (Impact). Going forward, try summarizing key points more clearly and confirming understanding with the client before ending the call.

SBI in Action – Example 2

Weak Feedback

You miss deadlines too often.



Impactful Feedback

Over the last two months (Situation), you've submitted three reports past their due dates (Behavior), which held up our monthly analysis and delayed decisions on key projects (Impact). I suggest we review your current workload and set up intermediate check-ins to help ensure progress stays on track.

SBI in Action – Example 3

Weak Feedback

You need to have a better attitude.



Impactful Feedback

In recent team meetings (Situation), you've made several comments in a sarcastic tone during discussions (Behavior). This has made some teammates hesitant to share ideas (Impact). I'd like to talk about how we can make your input feel more constructive so others stay engaged in the conversation.

An aerial photograph of a school campus, featuring various buildings, parking lots, and green spaces. A large, semi-transparent brown rectangle is centered over the image, serving as a background for the title text. The text is white, bold, and sans-serif, arranged in three lines. The background image shows a mix of green lawns, trees, and school buildings, with a prominent road and parking area on the left side.

Ensuring Fairness & Consistency

Promoting Fair, Accurate, & Consistent Evaluations

Bias in performance evaluations can distort feedback, undermine trust, and contribute to inequities in pay, promotion, and development.



Common Evaluation Biases

01

Halo/Horns Effect – Letting one trait skew the entire evaluation.

02

Recency Bias – Overemphasizing recent events.

03

Leniency/Strictness Bias – Rating all employees too high or low.

04

Similarity Bias – Favoring those who are similar to the reviewer.

05

Central Tendency – Rating everyone as average to avoid high or low ratings.

How to Avoid Biases

- **Use Structured Tools** – Utilize the competency definitions and rating factors to ensure a consistent application of those terms.
- **Document Year- Round** – Track performance consistently throughout the year, not just during evaluation session.
- **Focus on Facts, Not Perceptions** – Base feedback on specific, observable behaviors and measurable outcomes.
- **Use Multiple Data Points** – Avoid relying solely on memory or isolated events.
- **Calibrate Across Teams** – Meet with other supervisors in your unit to align ratings and review patterns of inconsistency or favoritism.
- **Get a Second Opinion** – Ask your HR Business Partner or another supervisor in your unit to review your feedback for tone, clarity, and objectivity.

Questions & Discussion

- What challenges have you faced when writing evaluations?
- How do you currently handle disagreement in the evaluation process?
- Which part of the process would you like more support with?

