

**FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY**  
**Human Resources Office**

**SUBJECT:** Employee Performance Management System Policy

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## **EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM POLICY**

***THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS POLICY DOES NOT CREATE A BINDING EMPLOYEE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE EMPLOYEE AND THE UNIVERSITY. THE UNIVERSITY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENTS OF THIS POLICY, IN WHOLE OR IN PART.***

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

All performance appraisals shall be conducted and documented by the employee's supervisor (the rater) who has direct experience or knowledge of the work being performed. The appraisal shall be reviewed by the next higher-level supervisor (the reviewer), unless the rater is the agency head, prior to the appraisal being discussed with the employee.

The reviewer may attach additional comments to the appraisal, and in the attachment may take exception to any of the rater's appraisal points. In addition, the reviewer has the authority to change the appraisal completed by the rater; however, this must be done before the employee signs the document. If the reviewer elects to change the rating, the change and associated justification should be noted on the appraisal document. Whenever an employee's job responsibilities change significantly, the appraisal document should be revised to reflect that change.

The final appraisal must bear the signature of the rater, the reviewer, and the employee, if possible. If an employee will not sign an appraisal, a notation shall be made on the performance appraisal of this and, if possible, the notation shall be witnessed by another supervisor.

All performance appraisals shall become a permanent part of the employee's official personnel file. Upon request, the agency shall furnish the employee with a copy of the Position Description and Performance Evaluation Form and copies of all pertinent attachments.

The Human Resources office addresses the appraisal process of both probationary and covered employees through the provisions of this criteria. Although not mentioned specifically in this criteria, employees exempt from coverage under the State Employees Grievance Procedure Act should also be given annual performance appraisals.

## **COMPONENTS OF THE EPMS (Position Description/Employee Performance Evaluation)**

The components of the EPMS are planning stage, ongoing performance management, and the evaluation stage combined into one document. Each employee should have a planning stage conducted at the beginning of each rating period. During the planning stage the performance expectations should be determined, communicated to the employee, and documented on the appraisal form.

### **PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL POLICY**

- A. This document sets forth the policy and procedures by which the job performance of classified employees and unclassified administrative staff for Francis Marion are appraised, pursuant to regulations of the State Human Resources Office. The University has combined the Position Description and the Employee Performance Evaluation into one document for classified employees.
- B. The performance appraisal policy is designed to:
  - 1. increase efficiency through the planning of job duties on an annual basis thereby helping employees improve his/her performance through prior knowledge of the expectations of his/her rater and reviewer;
  - 2. provide information to employees, raters and reviewers for use in work-related decisions such as recommendations for salary increases, promotions, reassignments, demotions, and terminations.
  - 3. provide assistance to management in assigning work and delegating responsibility based on mutual understanding of the employee's skills and abilities;
  - 4. encourage the continued growth and development of all employees;
  - 5. identify training needs;
  - 6. maintain a documented history of employee performance.
- C. Training

Training shall be mandatory for all employees within each agency in regard to EPMS. New employees shall be briefed on the performance appraisal system within two weeks of the first day of employment. An employee who becomes a first time rater is trained on the EPMS process by the Human Resources office.

### **COMPONENTS OF THE APPRAISAL FORM**

The components of the appraisal form are job functions (which include job duties and success criteria). These components should be discussed and documented during the planning stage. The employee's job functions (which include job duties and success criteria) shall be determined by reviewing the employee's position description. The statement outlining the job function(s) or objective/s should include descriptive information about the performance expectations (success criteria) of the rater. The descriptive statement should specify the expectations of the rater for the employee to meet performance requirements. Each job function shall be rated in the evaluation stage based on the four levels of performance.

## PROCEDURE FOR PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

A. The Appraisal Form (Combined Position Description and Performance Evaluation)

All employees must use an agency approved computer generated EPMS form that has been approved in accordance with the State Printing Guidelines established by the State Budget and Control Board.

B. Performance Planning Stage

At the beginning of each rating period and no later than six weeks after the beginning of the review period or entry into a position, a performance planning stage shall be completed. After conferring with the reviewer (next higher level supervisor), the rater shall meet with the employee and they determine the job functions (job duties and success criteria) or objective/s (objective/s and success criteria) on which the employee will be evaluated at the end of the review period.

At the conclusion of the planning stage, the job functions are written on the performance appraisal form and signed by the rater, reviewer, and the employee. The original appraisal form should be forwarded to the Human Resources office. The Human Resources office will send the combined Position Description and Performance Evaluation Form to the respective rater three months prior to the Performance Review Date.

C. Job Functions

1. The job functions (job duties and success criteria) shall be determined by a review of the employee's position description. The rater and the employee shall select duties representing the percentage of the employee's time and develop success criteria for each job duty. It shall be mandatory for all raters to be evaluated on the timely completion of each employee's performance appraisal.
2. In those instances where the rater and the employee cannot agree upon the job functions, the rater's decisions shall be final.
3. Job functions shall be rated in the evaluation stage based on the four levels of performance.

D. Performance Objectives

Performance Objectives are optional for all employees. If a rater/reviewer elects to represent a specific objective of a special non-recurring project nature to be accomplished during the rating period, this may be accomplished by adding an attachment to the Position Description and Performance Evaluation Form. If this action is taken, no more than 10 weighted points can be used for the objective. The difference in weighted points would be accumulated in the rating of the job functions. Each objective shall be rated in the evaluation stage based on the four levels of performance.

E. Success Criteria

Success criteria specify the expected level of performance necessary to obtain a "meets performance requirements" rating. Success criteria are required for each job function.

F. Performance Characteristics

The Human Resources office will provide each rater with a list of suggested performance characteristics and their definitions. Each performance characteristic shall be defined in

the planning stage and rated as “acceptable” or “unacceptable” in the evaluation stage. The performance characteristic section shall be used as a communication tool to emphasize those performance characteristics that are important to success in performing the job functions and objectives included in the planning document. The performance characteristic section shall not be weighted in the determination of the overall performance rating.

It shall be mandatory for all supervisors (raters) to be rated on the performance characteristic of “promoting equal opportunity.” (Promoting equal opportunity includes such areas as hiring, promotion, or placement; level of personal and organizational commitment to equal opportunity; progress toward achieving a fully integrated and representative work force; and contributions toward minority programs and other social/economic equal opportunity goals.)

## LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

There shall be four levels of performance for rating job functions (or objective) for the overall performance:

- *Substantially Exceeds Performance Requirements (S)*  
Work that is characterized by exemplary accomplishments throughout the rating period; performance that is considerably and consistently above the success criteria of the job.
- *Exceeds Performance Requirements (E)*  
Work that is above the success criteria of the job throughout the rating period.
- *Meets Performance Requirements (M)*  
Work that meets the success criteria of the job.
- *Below Performance Requirements (B)*  
Work that fails to meet the success criteria of the job. This rating must be preceded by a "Written Notice of Substandard Performance" which can be obtained from the Human Resources office.

## PROBATIONARY PERIODS

### PROBATIONAL PERIOD PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

- Each new employee in probationary status shall be rated prior to the completion of a twelve-month probationary period. If that employee does not receive a performance appraisal prior to the performance review date, that employee will receive a “meets performance requirements” rating by default and obtain a covered status as a State employee and permanent status in the class.
- The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period. The probationary period may not be extended.
- If an employee is not performing satisfactorily during the probationary period, the employee shall be terminated before becoming a covered employee. Until an employee has completed the probationary period and has a “meets performance requirements” or higher overall rating on the employee’s performance evaluation, the employee has no grievance rights under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act; therefore an agency is not required to follow the “Substandard Performance Process” to terminate a probationary employee.

## **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS**

- All employees shall be given an annual appraisal no more than 90 calendar days prior to the employee's performance review date.
- If an employee does not receive an appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee shall receive a "meets performance requirements" rating by default. The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period.
- A covered employee may not be issued an overall "below performance requirements" appraisal at any time during the annual review period without following the "Substandard Performance Process."
- An employee granted leave of absence without pay shall have his/her performance review date advanced in accordance of the State Human Resources Regulations.
- Performance appraisals shall be completed by the employee's rater who has first-hand knowledge of the work being performed; however, prior to the review being given to the employee, it shall be discussed with the next higher level supervisor, the reviewer.
- The appraisal must bear the signature of the reviewing official, the rater, and the employee.
- If an employee refuses to sign an appraisal, a notation shall be made of this on the performance appraisal and, if possible, witnessed by one other supervisory employee as attested by his/her signature below the notation on the appraisal.
- Performance appraisals shall become a permanent part of the employee's official personnel file.

## **TRIAL PERIODS**

- Each covered employee who has been demoted, promoted, or reclassified shall be appraised prior to the completion of a six-month trial period in the position. If an employee does not receive a performance appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee will receive a "meets performance requirements" rating by default and obtain permanent status in the new class. Once an employee has completed a successful training period and obtained permanent status in a class, the employee retains permanent status in the class throughout the employee's continuous service. The six-month trial period may be extended up to 90 calendar days upon written notice to the employee prior to the end of the six-month trial period.
- The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period. The trial period may be extended up to 90 calendar days upon written notice to the employee prior to the end of the trial period.
- The "Official Warning Notice of Substandard Performance" is not required to demote or reclassify downward an employee in trial status to the same class from which promoted, if the demotion or reclassification occurs within the trial period.
- The "Official Warning Notice of Substandard Performance" is also not required to demote or reclassify downward an employee in trial status to a class in an equal or higher pay band from which promoted, if the demotion or reclassification occurs within the trial period. The employee in trial status may not be terminated or demoted to a class in a lower pay band than

that from which promoted for performance reasons without following the “Substandard Performance Process.”

## **SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE PROCESS FOR COVERED EMPLOYEES**

- Employees, whose performance fails to meet or is below performance requirements, shall be given adequate notice and the opportunity to improve prior to termination or demotion and prior to the performance review date.
- If the performance of an employee is considered below performance requirements on any job function, which significantly impacts performance, the rater shall provide the employee with a “Written Warning Notice of Substandard Performance”, which shall include the following:
  - a. The notice must be in writing, addressed to the employee and labeled as a warning notice of substandard performance and must be on the form provided by the Human Resources office.
  - b. The notice must list the following: performance deficiencies, job functions included on the planning document that are considered “Below Performance Requirements”, an explanation of the deficiencies, ways the deficiencies may be overcome, the period of time the employee will be given to improve (minimum of 30, maximum of 120 calendar days), the possible consequences if improvement is not satisfactory, i.e. reassignment, demotion or termination.
  - c. The notice shall include a plan for regularly scheduled meetings to discuss employee progress during the warning period. Documentation of sessions should be maintained in the official personnel file.
  - d. The notice shall be signed by the employee or witnessed if the employee will not sign and a copy sent to the employee’s personnel file in the Human Resources office. Copies shall also be retained by the rater and the employee. The reviewer’s decision is final.
- During the warning period the employee and the rater shall have regularly scheduled meetings during which they shall discuss the employee’s progress. The rater and employee should participate in drafting a work improvement plan. The work improvement plan should include a list of ways to improve the deficiencies and other appropriate performance related recommendations. In those instances where the rater and employee cannot agree upon the content of the work improvement plan, the rater’s decision shall be final. These meetings shall be documented and included in the employee’s official personnel file in the University Human Resources office and a copy given to the employee.
- Prior to the end of the warning period, if the employee’s performance is rated “Meets Performance Requirements” or above on all job functions/s which significantly impact performance as noted in the warning notice, notice of the improvement shall be made on the copy of the evaluation and attached to the Notice of Substandard Performance document and employment shall continue.
- If the employee’s performance on any job function, which significantly impacts performance as noted on the warning notice, has not improved to a satisfactory level prior to the end of the warning period, the employee shall be rated “Below Performance Requirements”. After receiving a rating of “Below Performance Requirements”, the employee shall be removed immediately from the position through demotion, reassignment or termination.
- Once a time frame for improving substandard performance has been given, the employee must receive a written appraisal prior to the end of the warning period or the employee will receive a “Meets Performance Requirements” rating by default and attached to the Notice of Substandard Performance.

- If a rating of “Below Performance Requirements” is contemplated prior to the annual performance appraisal, the written notice of substandard performance can be given any time during the review period. Ordinarily, the warning notice may not extend beyond the employee’s performance review date. However, if the warning notice is issued less than 30 days before the employee’s performance review date, the performance review date will roll forward a day for each day the warning notice is in effect.
- **Note:** *(If an employee has been issued two warning notices within 365 calendar days and drops to a substandard level on any job function which significantly impacts performance for the third time within a 365 calendar day period, the employee shall be terminated or removed from the position. The employee shall be terminated or removed from the position by issuing a “Below Performance Requirements” appraisal. A warning notice is not required on the third occurrence.)*