

Performance Management

A guide to the process for managers and staff

Performance Management

Performance Management at Dartmouth is an ongoing collaborative process to establish goals, monitor work performance, and provide feedback and coaching to staff members*.

At Dartmouth, performance management practices include planning, evaluation, ongoing feedback, and developmental activities to enable staff to be highly effective in their roles and achieve their goals.

*Non-union staff and union staff where applicable in their bargaining agreement.



Performance Management Timeline

November

March

Plan

Staff initiate the planning process, providing details about their goals, performance outcomes, and career development.

Evaluation

Supervisors evaluate the plan, discussing their feedback with the staff.

Review

Supervisors and staff review the details and collaborate on the final product

Submission

The annual plan and evaluation is submitted to HR in March each year.

Ongoing conversations and developmental activities

Process Phases

The four phases of
Performance Management

Plan (Staff Member)

Goals, Performance or Accomplishments and Challenges, Career Development

Evaluation (Supervisor)

Evaluation and Feedback about Goals, Performance Accomplishments and Challenges, Career Development

Ongoing Conversations

Regular cadence of ongoing feedback

Developmental Activities

Individual Development, Stay Interviews

Plan: Goals

Where appropriate for the position, staff members will work with their supervisor to develop and articulate their goals. Goals are focused on excelling in their position, planning projects, and collaborating with colleagues to accomplish shared tasks and activities.

How goals support staff members

- Excel in their work, start something new, or stop things that no longer make sense;
- Plan and implement successful projects and initiatives;
- Collaborate with their supervisor and colleagues with greater transparency and shared understanding; and
- Remain resilient when roadblocks arise and learn from these setbacks.

Setting effective goals* includes examining the following:

Rationale	The goal is clearly tied to current needs and priorities, with a well-defined case for why it is important now and what value it will bring.
Intended Results	Success is defined by clear, measurable outcomes and indicators that show progress and impact.
Institutional Alignment	The goal aligns with and advances broader institutional initiatives, strategies, and activities.
Resources	The resources required to achieve the goal are identified, secured, and appropriately budgeted.
Possible Roadblocks	Anticipated challenges are acknowledged, with strategies in place to address and overcome them.

**See the appendix for more goal setting framework details*

Plan: Performance Accomplishments and Challenges

Staff members are prompted to reflect on their performance on a regular basis as part of the planning process. Capturing their performance includes documenting the outcomes of their goals, capturing the accomplishments and challenges. The planning process also provides the opportunity to reflect on the information and resources needed to be more effective and being honest about barriers to success.



Plan: Career Development

Career development is a proactive approach that empowers staff members to take ownership of their growth while ensuring the institution has the talent needed to succeed. During planning, staff members will outline career goals, distinct from their work-related goals. Open dialogue on career goals supports discussions about aligning talent with strategic priorities.



Benefits of career development planning

Improved engagement and retention

Staff members are more likely to stay when they see a future for themselves.

Increased performance and productivity

Clear goals drive focus and motivation.

Stronger talent pipeline

Prepares staff members for future roles and leadership.

Alignment with strategic priorities

Ensures individual growth supports organizational success.

Evaluation

Supervisors will leverage the input and feedback from their staff member's plan to complete an evaluation. Discussions about the supervisor's feedback are focused on accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities for growth. Evaluation details and discussions should be supported by specific details and examples.

Supervisors may include the following details in the evaluation:

- Recognition of accomplishments
- Suggestions or support for addressing challenges
- Evidence of goal achievement results
- Direction or input regarding any adjustments to performance expectations



Ongoing Conversations

While the plan and evaluation portions follow an annual timeline, regular meaningful conversations are the primary focus of performance management. Supervisors engage regularly with their teams, ideally during a brief weekly or biweekly one on one conversation. Typical one on one discussions are at least 30 minutes in duration. Supervisors and staff members may choose to have a set agenda or preserve an open forum.



Make the most of the annual plan

The annual plan and evaluation may be used as an open document where regular adjustments are made to capture any shifting priorities throughout the year. Opportunities for updates to the plan and evaluation:

- The end of a term or project
- One discussion per term
- Once per month during a regular one on one

Developmental Activities

Helping staff members reach their potential includes a variety of activities that align and enhance the individual's current knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics. After understanding career development goals, supervisors may support their staff members' aspirations by providing support for developmental activities.

Supervisors and staff members may consider the job requirements of future potential roles and responsibilities when creating development plans. Here you will find a list of suggested growth opportunities that may be considered.

A combination of experience-based learning, exposure to information or others with expanded roles, and education opportunities will set your teams up for the best chance of success and the achievement of their potential.

Experience	Exposure	Education
• Stretch assignments - such as a challenging project outside of the current skill set • Work shadowing • Special projects	• Assessment or feedback tools • Professional Coaching • Mentoring • Leading committees or professional communities	• Leadership program • Workshops • External conferences or speakers • Online skill development

Avoiding common pitfalls

Ensuring objectivity

Ensuring objective assessment of performance includes considering clear, objective criteria.
The examples below can help you discern objectivity in performance management.

Examples of objectivity

- **Strong performance:** evidence of meeting or exceeding expectations from a performance review
- **Builds future -ready talent:** demonstration of providing or enabling growth opportunities for others
- **Inspires through mission and authenticity** : demonstration of work outputs clearly connects work to Dartmouth's mission, demonstration of motivating others across the institution
- **Builds trust and influence broadly** : demonstrates the ability to collaborate and influence outcomes effectively without relying on authority.
- **Demonstrates growth** : evidence of actively enhancing their skills, knowledge, experiences, or education
- **Scales impact** : demonstrates appropriate delegation, evidence of balanced workload on their team

Examples of subjectivity

- **Team fit** : the individual has a working style that is the same as those they work with
- **Likeability** : the individual is friendly and likable
- **Perception** : using secondhand information to inform opinions
- **Assertion** : leader asserts that everyone thinks they are a good person

Avoiding language bias

To ensure the use of objective language when discussing potential the grid below identifies common biases and offers strategies to mitigate them, supporting managers in providing clearer and more constructive feedback.

Language to use

- **Accurate language**
  - Twice in the past year
  - This has happened three times
- **Observable behaviors**
  - Missed deadlines
  - Strong reaction to a discussion
- **Concrete examples tied to expectations**
  - Specific behaviors
  - And the specific impact they had on outcomes or others
- **Stick to facts and impact**
  - Highlight what happened, not **why** you think it happened
- **Actionable suggestions**
  - Connect feedback to improvement

Language not to use

- **Exaggerated language**
  - Always / Never / Extremely
- **Personality traits**
  - Difficult / Lazy / Emotional
- **Vague descriptors**
  - Unprofessional
  - Inappropriate
  - Not a team player
- **Assumptions about intent**
  - They don't care
  - They don't listen
- **General complaints**
  - Things aren't working

Appendix

The SMART Model for Goals

The SMART model for goals covers the considerations for effective goals, but framed as an easy to remember acronym.



Specific

What would we gain from achieving this goal?

What would we lose if we don't achieve it?



Measurable

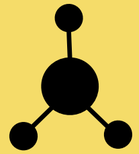
When and how will we and others know we succeeded?



Achievable

What resources are needed and at what cost?

Should the goal be broken down into subgoals that can be resourced and achieved incrementally?



Relevant

How does this goal align with or advance broader initiatives or collective goals?

How will others be involved, influenced, or affected?



Timely

What is the timeline for achieving it?

What possible roadblocks could arise?

What can be done now to prevent those roadblocks or address them if and when they arise?

Thank you