

**ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION** HR Division of Human Resources  
**POLICY NUMBER** HR 1.36  
**POLICY TITLE** Performance Evaluation for Classified and Unclassified Staff  
**SCOPE OF POLICY** University System  
**DATE OF REVISION** July 18, 2025  
**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER** Vice President for Human Resources  
**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE** Division of Human Resources

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#### **PURPOSE**

This document describes the policy and procedures for the evaluation of the job performance of classified and unclassified staff (herein referred to as employees) of the University of South Carolina. University and Academic Unit Leadership Positions as defined in University Policies ACAF 1.01 Recruitment and Appointment of Academic Administrators are not included in this policy.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

**Covered Employee:** A full-time or part-time employee occupying a part or all of an established full-time equivalent (FTE) position who has completed the probationary period and has a “meets” or higher overall rating on the employee’s performance evaluation and who has grievance rights. Instructional personnel are covered upon the completion of one academic year. If an employee does not receive an evaluation before the performance review date, the employee must be considered to have performed in a satisfactory manner and be a covered employee. This definition does not include employees in positions such as temporary, temporary grant, or time limited employees who do not have grievance rights.

**Established Review Date:** The employee’s review date as established in accordance with State Human Resources Regulations.

**Full-Time Equivalent:** A position authorized by the General Assembly which is expressed as a numerical value as a percentage of time in hours and of funds.

**Short-Year Planning Stage:** Any performance evaluation planning stage document covering period of time less than twelve (12) months.

**Short-Year Review:** Any performance evaluation that rates an employee's performance for a period of time less than twelve (12) months. (Exceptions: "performance improvement plan" reviews.)

**Universal Review Date:** The date selected by a division, college, or campus prior to which all employee performance reviews are due. (Exceptions: "probationary" employees.)

**Weighted System:** Each job duty and performance objective will be assigned a weight (percentage) that reflects the importance of the job duty/objective in terms of overall criticality to job success.

## **POLICY**

Periodic review of employee performance serves the following functions:

- Increases efficiency by advising employees of the expectations of their supervisors through the annual planning of job duties, objectives and performance characteristics;
- Provides information to employees, supervisors and administrators for use in decisions concerning salary increases, promotions, reassignments within the university, demotions and terminations;
- Provides assistance to supervisors and administrators in assigning work and delegating responsibility based on a mutual understanding of the employee's skills and abilities;
- Encourages the continued growth and development of all classified and unclassified non-academic staff;
- Identifies training needs;
- Maintains a documented history of employee performance.

### **A. General Information**

1. All performance evaluations shall be in writing by the employee's supervisor (rater) who has direct experience or knowledge of the work being performed.
2. The performance appraisal document shall be reviewed by the next higher level supervisor (the reviewing official) prior to the performance appraisal document being discussed with the employee.

3. The next higher-level supervisor (reviewing official) may attach additional comments to the performance appraisal document and in the attachment may take exception to any of the supervisor's (rater's) appraisal points. However, the next higher level supervisor (reviewing official) may not change the performance appraisal document completed by the supervisor (rater).
4. The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period.
5. Whenever an employee's job duties change significantly, the performance appraisal document and position description should be revised to reflect that change.
6. The final performance appraisal document must bear the signature of the supervisor (rater), the next higher level supervisor (reviewing official), and the employee (if possible).
7. If the employee refuses to sign the performance appraisal document, a notation shall be made on the performance appraisal document. If possible, a witness should sign to acknowledge that the employee refused to sign the performance appraisal document.
8. All performance evaluations shall become a permanent part of the employee's official personnel file.
9. Upon request, the university shall furnish the employee a copy of the performance appraisal document with copies of all pertinent attachments including the form completed at the time of the planning stage and the final performance appraisal document.
10. The university provides training to supervisors (raters) and employees in the application of the Performance Evaluation Policy.
11. The provisions of this policy address the performance appraisal process of both probationary and covered employees. Although not governed by this policy, employees exempt from coverage under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act (i.e. temporary, time-limited/grant, rehired retirees) should be given feedback using the Performance Feedback Assessment for Non-Covered Employees form or other feedback tool.
12. Once a performance evaluation rating has been fully executed and submitted to the Division of Human Resources, the rating cannot be changed. Under extenuating circumstances, a "successful by default" rating may be changed upon approval from the Vice President of Human Resources or their designee.

## B. Universal Review Date

Each division, college, or campus of the university has adopted one of the following universal review dates:

1. February 1
2. May 1
3. August 1
4. November 1

All staff, except those in probationary period status, will have their performance period established according to the universal review date adopted by their division, college, or campus. Short-year planning or performance reviews will be conducted for all employees who have completed probationary periods in their positions in order to move the employee to the adopted review date.

## C. Levels of Performance

1. The Performance Evaluation Policy provides for three levels of performance to rate each job duty and objective and to rate overall performance.
  - a. Exceptional: Work that is characterized by exemplary accomplishments throughout the rating period; performance that is considerably and consistently above the requirements of the job function.
  - b. Successful: Work that is characterized by the successful mastery of the criteria of the job function.
  - c. Unsuccessful: Work that does not meet the criteria of the job function.
2. A numerical weighting system will be used to establish the importance of job functions and objectives for the purposes of evaluation.
3. Performance characteristics will not be weighted in the determination of the overall performance, but shall be given a rating of Successful or Unsuccessful.
  - a. Successful: Meets requirements
  - b. Unsuccessful: Fails to meet requirements.

## PROCEDURES

### A. Planning Stage

1. Each employee shall have a planning stage conducted at the beginning of each rating period. The employee's job duties and success criteria, objectives, and performance characteristics for the next rating period will be discussed at this time. The supervisor (rater) and the employee should participate in drafting the planning stage document. The next higher level supervisor (reviewing officer) and the supervisor (rater) should discuss the requirements of the coming year prior to completing the planning stage.
2. The supervisor (rater) and employee will select job duties to be included in the planning stage from the employee's position description. If the position description is not up-to-date, or if there is no position description, one should be prepared and submitted for approval.
3. Success criteria will be determined for each job duty. The success criteria should specify the expectations of the supervisor (rater) for the employee to meet performance requirements.
4. If the supervisor (rater) and the employee cannot agree upon the job duties and success criteria to be included, the supervisor's (rater's) decision shall be final.
5. It shall be mandatory for all supervisors (raters) to be evaluated on the timely completion of each employee's performance appraisal.
6. Performance objectives shall be optional for all employees. An objective should be included when the employee is assigned a special non-recurring project or assignment that is not included on the employee's position description. Success criteria must be developed for each objective specifying the expectations of the supervisor (rater) for the employee to meet performance requirements.
7. Performance characteristics on which the employee will be rated may be selected from lists available on the website of the Division of Human Resources or may be developed by the supervisor (rater) and the employee. The performance characteristics should be used as a communication tool to emphasize those qualities that are important to success in performing the job duties and objectives included in the planning document.
8. At the conclusion of the planning stage, the job duties, success criteria, performance characteristics, and objectives are written on the performance evaluation form. The form is signed by the supervisor (rater), the next higher

level supervisor (reviewing officer), and the employee. The original form is retained by the supervisor (rater) for use at the time of the actual review, with a copy given to the employee for reference during the review period.

#### B. Ongoing Performance Management

The supervisor (rater) should provide ongoing performance feedback to employees throughout the review period. An unofficial mid-year review is recommended to assess progress, to correct any misunderstandings about expectations, and to encourage ongoing communication between the supervisor and employee.

#### C. Probationary Period Performance Appraisal

1. Each new employee in probationary status shall be rated prior to the completion of a 12-month probationary period.
2. If a probationary employee does not receive a performance appraisal document prior to the performance review date, the employee will receive a “Successful” rating by default and obtain covered status as a state employee (covered by the provisions of the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act) and permanent status in the class.
3. The probationary period may not be extended.
4. After satisfactory completion of the probationary period, an employee may receive a short-year planning stage and a short-year review in order to move the employee to the universal review date.
5. If an employee is not performing satisfactorily, the employee should be terminated before the end of the probationary period before becoming a covered employee.
6. Until an employee has completed the probationary period and has a “Successful” or higher overall rating on the employee’s evaluation, the employee has no grievance rights under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act; therefore, the university is not required to follow the “Substandard Performance Process” to terminate a probationary employee.
7. The “Successful” rating is the equivalent to the “Meets” performance rating referenced in the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act.

#### D. Annual Performance Appraisal

1. All employees will be given an annual performance evaluation no more than 90 days prior to the employee’s performance review date.

2. If an employee is on approved leave with or without pay for more than 30 consecutive workdays, the employee's performance review date may be advanced up to 90 days.
3. An employee who receives a "Performance Improvement Plan" may have the performance review date advanced to coincide with the "Performance Improvement Plan" dates.
4. If an employee does not receive an evaluation prior to the performance review date, the employee shall receive a "Successful" rating by default. A covered employee may not be issued an overall "Unsuccessful" appraisal or an "Unsuccessful" rating on any essential job function or objective which significantly impacts performance, without following the "Substandard Performance Process."
5. Should the review date advance, the employee may require a short-year planning stage and a short-year review period in order to move the employee back to the universal review date.

#### E. Substandard Performance

A covered employee (covered by the provisions of the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act) whose performance is substandard shall be given adequate notice and the opportunity to improve prior to receiving an "Unsuccessful" rating and being removed from the position.

1. If an employee's performance becomes substandard, the supervisor (rater) will provide the employee with a written "Performance Improvement Plan."
2. The supervisor (rater) shall issue a "Performance Improvement Plan" prior to issuing an "Unsuccessful" rating to a covered employee. If during the performance period an employee is considered "Unsuccessful" in any essential job function or objective that significantly impacts performance, the supervisor (rater) shall provide the employee with a written "Performance Improvement Plan." The plan shall provide for an improvement period of no less than 30 days and no more than 120 days.

The performance improvement plan may be issued at any time during the review period. Ordinarily, the plan may not extend beyond the employee's review date. However, the performance review date may be advanced to coincide with the "Performance Improvement Plan." Should the performance review date be advanced and the employee receives a "Successful" or above rating on all essential job functions/objectives, which significantly impacts performance, as noted in the performance improvement plan, the employee may require a short-year planning stage and review in order to move the

employee back to the universal review date.

3. The supervisor (rater) and the 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 supervisor (rater) and employee cannot agree upon the content of the work improvement plan, the supervisor's (rater's) decision is final.
4. During the performance improvement plan, the employee and the supervisor (rater) must meet regularly to discuss the employee's progress. Documentation is required to verify that these counseling sessions were held. Copies of this documentation shall be placed in the employee's official personnel file and given to the employee upon request.
5. If the employee's performance is rated "Successful" or above by the end of the plan period on all essential job duties/objectives that significantly impact performance as noted in the performance improvement plan, employment continues. If the employee is rated "Unsuccessful" by the end of the plan period on any essential job duty or objective that significantly impacts performance as noted in the performance improvement plan, the employee shall be removed from the position immediately (i.e., terminated, reassigned, or demoted).
6. Once a time for improving substandard performance has been given, the employee must receive a written performance review no more than two weeks after the end of the Performance Improvement Plan period. The timeframe to complete the review may be extended in extenuating circumstances. If a final review is not issued in this time frame, the employee will be considered to have achieved a "Successful" rating by default and the Performance Improvement Plan will end. The time for improving substandard performance may be extended if the extension does not cause the total plan period to exceed the maximum of 120 calendar days and notice of the extension is provided in writing before the original time for improvement expires.
7. If an employee has either been issued two performance improvement plans within a 365-day period or three performance improvement plans within a two-year period, and the employee's performance would warrant the issuance of another Performance Improvement Plan, the employee can be removed from the position by issuing an "Unsuccessful" rating on any essential job duty or objective. The issuance of an additional performance improvement plan will not be required.

## F. Performance Improvement Plan

Components Each “Performance

Improvement Plan” must:

1. Be in writing and addressed to the employee and labeled as a “Performance Improvement Plan.”
2. Include the employee’s signature, if possible. If the employee refuses to sign, the employee’s refusal should be documented and signed by a witness.
3. Include a list of the job duty(s) and/or objective(s) from the employee’s planning document that are considered “Unsuccessful,” with an explanation of the deficiencies for each job duty and/or objective.
4. Include a time period for improvement and the consequences if sufficient improvement is not observed (i.e., terminated, demotion, or reassignment).
5. Include a plan for meetings to discuss employee progress during the plan period.
6. Be included in the employee’s official personnel file. A copy of the notice shall be given to the employee, and a copy must be sent to the Division of Human Resources for the employee’s official personnel file.

## G. Performance Improvement Plans for Periodic Job Duty(s) or Objective(s)

If an employee exhibits substandard performance in an essential job duty or objective that is essential to their position but is not ongoing, a Performance Improvement Plan can be issued with a delayed start date.

### **RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES**

[State Employee Grievance Procedure](#)

[State Human Resources Regulations 19-704 and 19-715](#)

[ACAF 1.01 Recruitment and Appointment of Academic Administrators](#)

[HR 1.39 Disciplinary Action and Termination for Cause](#)

[HR 1.42 Grievance](#)

### **HISTORY OF REVISIONS**

<b>DATE OF REVISION</b>	<b>REASON FOR REVISION</b>
June 2017	Updated procedures to comply with revisions to state regulations
July 5, 2019	Updated to new format

September 18, 2024	Updated to comply with the new State Human Resources regulations that eliminated any new trial periods and to update the Substandard Performance process pursuant to new State EPMS provisions
July 18, 2025	Removed “Promoting Equal Opportunity” characteristic requirement. Revised policy statement so unclassified academic staff titles are included.