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Performance planning: Staff development and feedback at Ryerson University

Introduction
This guide is designed to assist leaders and staff in communicating about performance. Continuous application of these guidelines will ensure that employees know what is expected of them, how they are performing and what can be done to strengthen performance. In addition, development plans focus upon coaching and developing employees, helping them reach their full potential.

Our Time to Lead: Ryerson’s Academic Plan 2014-2019
The Development and Feedback process allows staff members to understand how their work directly links and contributes to the mission, vision and priorities of Ryerson University. Through their approach to their work, staff members can demonstrate the values of the institution as outlined in Ryerson’ Academic Plan.

Ryerson’s Mission
To serve societal need by providing career-related and professional education, and scholarly, creative and research activities.

Ryerson’s Vision
Ryerson will be Canada’s leading comprehensive innovation university, recognized for its high-quality, career-related and professional bachelor, master’s and doctoral programs and relevant scholarly, research and creative activities. It will be a global leader in interdisciplinary, entrepreneurial zone learning. Ryerson’s students, graduates and faculty will contribute significantly to Ontario’s and Canada’s social, cultural and economic well-being.

Ryerson’s Priorities
- Enable greater student engagement and success through exceptional experiences
- Increase SRC excellence, intensity and impact
- Foster an innovation ecosystem
- Expand community engagement and city building
Ryerson’s Values

Commitment to Excellence
- Excellence
- Academic Freedom
- Integrity
- Enterprising
- Sustainability

Commitment to the Whole Person
- People First
- Collegiality
- Lifelong Learning

Commitment to Community and Inclusion
- Community
- Inclusion
- Respect for Aboriginal Perspectives
- Equity
- Diversity
- Access

Performance planning: Staff development and feedback

Objectives
The four primary objectives include: Increased Communication, Improved Performance, Employee Development and Human Resource Management.

Increased communication
- Improving communication between leaders and staff
- Clarifying job responsibilities and standards
- Giving staff feedback on their performance

Improved performance
- Establishing challenging performance goals in support of organizational objectives
- Encouraging individuals and work teams to strive for continuous improvement and quality
- Identifying and eliminating obstacles to performance

Employee development
- Focusing upon and addressing staff growth and career development
- Recognizing individual performance
- Optimizing staff skills, abilities and knowledge for mutual benefit

Human resources management
- Planning for development, resources and other issues
**OPSEU performance planning year-at-a-glance**

Ryerson University’s annual performance planning cycle for OPSEU employees runs in any 12-month period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month 1</th>
<th>Months 2 – 11</th>
<th>Month 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1. Planning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Step 3. Monitoring</strong></td>
<td><strong>Step 5. End of Year Discussion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Leader and staff member</em></td>
<td><em>Leader and staff member</em></td>
<td><em>Staff member</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review the principal responsibilities of the job</td>
<td>- Meet regularly to review progress on performance goals to-date and discuss successes and roadblocks</td>
<td>- Provide comments related to the documented performance expectations and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Discuss standards of performance</td>
<td>- Redefine expectations and update the goals if performance expectations change throughout the year</td>
<td><em>Leader</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identify university priorities and department objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide feedback related to the staff member’s performance expectations and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decide upon projects within the scope of the position and assign specific goals and objectives</td>
<td><em>Leader and staff member</em></td>
<td><em>Leader and staff member</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide ongoing feedback on the staff member’s performance</td>
<td>- Support each assessment with specific results and objective examples of performance throughout the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Establish open, ongoing communication channels</td>
<td>- Meet to discuss the staff member’s performance, identifying key areas of strength and accomplishment and areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Staff member</em></td>
<td><em>Leader and staff member</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Proactively solicit feedback to ensure that performance is in line with expectations</td>
<td>- Provide objective information and examples of performance to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement throughout the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Leader and staff member</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Provide objective information and examples of performance to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement throughout the year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deliverable:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deliverables:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deliverable:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Completed plan</td>
<td>- Regular meetings between leader and staff member</td>
<td>- Completed Staff Development and Feedback form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Updated (if necessary)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**MAC performance planning year-at-a-glance**

Ryerson University’s annual performance planning cycle for MAC employees runs from July – June annually.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July</th>
<th>August – April</th>
<th>May – June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1. Planning</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader and staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Review the principal responsibilities of the job&lt;br&gt;☐ Discuss standards of performance&lt;br&gt;☐ Identify university priorities and department objectives&lt;br&gt;☐ Decide upon projects within the scope of the position and assign specific goals and objectives</td>
<td><strong>Step 3. Monitoring</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader and staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Meet regularly to review progress on performance goals to-date and discuss successes and roadblocks&lt;br&gt;☐ Redefine expectations and update the goals if performance expectations change throughout the year</td>
<td><strong>Step 5. End of Year Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Provide comments related to the documented performance expectations and goals&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Provide feedback related to the staff member’s performance expectations and objectives&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader and staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Support each assessment with specific results and objective examples of performance throughout the year&lt;br&gt;☐ Meet to discuss the staff member’s performance, identifying key areas of strength and accomplishment and areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2. Goal Setting</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader and staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Review university and team objectives for the coming year&lt;br&gt;☐ Define performance expectations that align with team and university objectives&lt;br&gt;☐ Create SMART goals that will help to achieve team objectives and address professional development</td>
<td><strong>Step 4. Coaching and Feedback</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Provide ongoing feedback on the staff member’s performance&lt;br&gt;☐ Establish open, ongoing communication channels&lt;br&gt;<strong>Staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Proactively solicit feedback to ensure that performance is in line with expectations&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader and staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Provide objective information and examples of performance to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement throughout the year</td>
<td><strong>Step 6. Recognition and Rewards</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Recognize and reward performance frequently throughout the year. This can include simple verbal recognition and other forms of nonmonetary acknowledgement of good work&lt;br&gt;<strong>Leader and staff member</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Support the staff member’s performance and recognize areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deliverable:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Completed plan</td>
<td><strong>Deliverables:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Regular meetings between leader and staff member&lt;br&gt;☐ Updated (if necessary)</td>
<td><strong>Deliverable:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Completed performance review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Six phases of the performance planning process

1. Planning
Planning is the first step in the cycle which the leader and staff member spend time planning for the coming year.

Planning includes a review of university and department/ team objectives to ensure that the staff member’s individual performance aligns with the university’s objectives and needs. In addition, the staff member and leader review principal responsibilities, determine projects and milestones to be achieved in the coming year and discuss standards of performance.

If the staff member is new, planning should take place during their first month of employment.
**Principle responsibilities**

**Leader and staff member**
- Review the principal responsibilities of the job (e.g., job description)
- Discuss standards of performance (e.g., Standards & Expectations)
- Identify university priorities and department objectives
- Decide upon projects within the scope of the position and assign specific goals and objectives
- Identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that need to be developed to achieve the goals and objectives

**Link to Ryerson’s Academic Plan**

A major goal of planning is for the leader and staff member to explicitly identify the link between the staff member’s job responsibilities and performance and the objectives and mission of the department/team and university. This alignment helps the leader and staff member prioritize work and establish measurements and performance standards that will be monitored throughout the year.

**2. Goal setting**

After the leader and staff member review the job responsibilities, establish performance standards and align the staff member’s performance objectives to the mission and objectives of the university and department/team, the next step is to establish specific, measurable performance and development goals.

**Principle responsibilities**

**Leader and staff member**
- Define performance expectations that align with team and university objectives
- Define developmental objectives
- Create SMART goals that will help to achieve team objectives and address professional development

**Performance goals**

The performance goals define what is expected of the staff member during the year. They support the basic areas of responsibility and specific university, department or team goals. These goals may be addressed throughout the year or they could be associated with specific projects that involve a shorter timeframe. The purpose is to align the staff member goals with the goals and strategies of the university.

**Developmental goals**

Development plans offer your staff the opportunity to identify the strengths and development areas that merit their attention and yours. Not all development plans are created equal, however. A good development plan focuses on the development of a few skills, balances the need to develop both strengths and development areas that are tied to your performance objectives, has concrete action steps, and sets gradual, realistic, and achievable success measures.

As you and your employees think about their development plans, remember the following:
• **Performance and learning are linked to each other:** Your staff can build the skills they need by focusing on the work experiences and assignments that are most closely tied to their performance objectives.

• **While the skills may change, the strengths staff draw upon do not:** The strengths that have made a staff member successful in the past do not go away. Although they may need to address development weaknesses, do not forget to continue to build their strengths.

• **Staff success depends on the people asked to help them:** By sharing their development goals with you, their peers, and/or a mentor, your staff can check in at various points to make sure that they are making a strong plan.

**Writing SMART objectives**
For objectives to be effective, they need to be clear, specific, realistic and measurable.

**SMART Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>Describes what the end result will look like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measureable</td>
<td>ExpRESSED in quantifiable terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievable</td>
<td>The objective is realistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>Job-related and linked to the university’s and department’s goals (within job duties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-bound</td>
<td>Provide target dates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample SMART objective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;To recommend, ...</th>
<th>Achievable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...at the June...</td>
<td>Time bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...department meeting, the three...</td>
<td>Specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...vendors that best meet the defined criteria, at a cost that is at least 10% less than our present annual contract.&quot;</td>
<td>Realistic and Measurable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How do you write a SMART objective? Ask these questions.**

1. **Do what?**
   • Identify what visible action is to be taken – use action verbs: conduct, analyze…
   • Describe what or whom the action will affect or whom it will involve

2. **To what extent?**
   • Indicate qualities, timeframes, frequencies and other measurable results to be achieved
   • How much is needed, by when and/or how often

3. **For what results?**
4. How will the staff member know whether they’ve achieved the objectives?
   - Develop key measures for each objective to help the staff member determine if they achieved what they set out to do
   - Measures are the specific outcome expected, allowing the staff member and leader to monitor/evaluate success

Non-SMART objectives versus SMART objectives

| Maintain department website | Ensure accuracy of the department website by conducting a comprehensive audit of the department’s website every two weeks. Work with leaders, staff and faculty in the department to edit information provided on the website. Make requested edits within two workdays. |
| Respond to all email and phone inquiries | Improve customer service by responding to all email and phone inquiries within 24 hours. Create a quarterly report detailing the number and types of inquiries received by the department. |
| Write department handbook | Create a departmental orientation for new employees, introducing them to the technology, resources and policies and procedures of the department. Develop a departmental employee handbook and checklist for on-boarding new employees to our department. Present new materials to the department at the February staff meeting. Implement department orientation beginning March 1. |
| Database project | Improve the efficiency of logging and reporting inquiries to the department by creating a tracking system using Excel spreadsheets. Complete the tracking system by August 1. Train all front desk staff in how to use the system by September 1. Monitor and maintain the system and begin using it to generate quarterly reports by December 31. |

Note: For OPSEU employees, leaders should refer the Development and Feedback form. For all other employees, refer to the Performance Planning & Review form.

3. Monitoring

Monitoring is an ongoing effort throughout the year and a responsibility of both the leader and staff member.

Principle responsibilities

Leader and staff member
   - Meet regularly throughout the year to review progress on performance goals to-date and discuss successes and roadblocks
• Redefine expectations and update the goals if expectations change throughout the year

**Information management**
Communication between the leader and staff member must be open, honest and ongoing. Staff can and should initiate the communication, particularly when any significant changes or obstacles occur that management should be aware of. Oftentimes responsibilities, projects, objectives and performance plans need to be modified as a result of changing circumstances and shifting priorities. Leaders and staff members are expected to keep each other apprised and current.

**Self-monitoring**
Since staff are aware of their own responsibilities, projects, objectives and skills, they are expected to monitor their own performance. Each staff member is best able to measure their own performance against expectations and is encouraged to periodically keep their leader informed of progress and/or problems. Staff should keep track of their performance by documenting major activities and results whenever possible.

When staff have trouble making progress toward the achievement of objectives or responsibilities, they are responsible for taking suitable action to remedy the situation and close performance gaps. They may take action on their own or they may need assistance from their leader. It is incumbent upon each staff member to keep focused on their effectiveness.

**Monitoring by leader**
Throughout the review period, the leader monitors performance by reviewing and documenting work activities, milestones, costs, obstacles and results. They are aware if adjustments are necessary.

Consistent and accurate documentation during the review period facilitates regular feedback and end of year discussions.

Monitoring performance can be accomplished through formal and informal approaches. Some formal methods might include:

- Leader-Staff Member meetings
- Group or team meetings

When deciding your approach, you will want to consider factors that impact effectiveness, such as frequency of meetings; quality, quantity and format of information to be shared; and the desired outcomes. Formal conversations are not the only option to monitoring performance. Some situations might make informal conversations such as hallway chats appropriate for addressing very current work tasks and performance.

**Performance log**
The use of a Performance Log can help the leader in tracking performance and feedback given to the staff member throughout the year. A sample Performance Log and Template can be found in the Tools and Templates Section at the end of this manual.

**Management assistance**
While self-development tends to be the most beneficial and effective, at times even superior performers need some assistance. Staff members are encouraged to seek out opportunities for
discussion of their performance and development, including regular feedback and coaching from their leaders. Development is a shared responsibility best initiated by the staff member and supported by the leader. Leaders can use their experience, knowledge and skills to help track staff performance and provide the necessary support and opportunities for development.

4. Coaching and feedback
Throughout the year, both the leader and staff member monitor the staff member’s progress. Each has information regarding the performance to date. The coaching process provides a forum for the mutual exchange of this information. A leader’s role is similar to that of a coach in sports. An effective coach motivates, provides feedback, offers encouragement toward the achievement of goals and helps players to focus on the game plan.

Coaching involves two key leader activities:
- Providing constructive feedback to change or improve performance
- Recognizing and encouraging excellence

For a staff member to improve, develop or take on more responsibility, they need regular feedback on how they are doing. In addition, when they are performing well, their efforts should be acknowledged and supported. Coaching may be either formal or informal. Formal coaching involves setting aside time to meet privately, free from interruptions. Informal coaching is usually provided on a day-to-day basis as situations arise.

**Principle responsibilities**

**Leader**
- Throughout the year, provide ongoing feedback on the staff member’s performance
- Establish open, ongoing communication channels

**Staff member**
- Proactively solicit feedback to ensure that performance is in line with expectations

**Leader and staff member**
- Provide objective information and examples of performance to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement throughout the year

**Effective coaching**

Effective coaching takes place when the leader and employee:
- Are prepared and informed
- Cite specific examples
- Focus on behavior, not personality
- Listen to each other
- Ask clarifying questions
- Reach agreement
- Develop an action plan
- Follow up
The GROW Coaching Model

The GROW coaching model provides a structure to follow, so that the conversation can progress to a successful outcome. It is designed to be collaborative, powerful and intentional.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sample leader questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Establish a GOAL | Key Question: What do you want to achieve? You and your staff member look at the behaviour you want to change, and structure the change as a goal.  
- Positive  
- Agreed to  
- Understood | • What do you hope to achieve (in the short, medium, long term)?  
• How will you know when you get there?  
• Is it achievable?  
• When by?  
• When would you like to meet again to review this? |
| 2. Examine the Current REALITY | Key Question: What is happening now? Together, ensure the current situation is known and understood.  
- Be objective (not opinions, judgments, expectations, prejudices, concerns, hope, fears)  
- Be descriptive, not evaluative | • What is happening now (what, who, when, and how often)?  
• What is the effect or result of this?  
• Have you already taken any steps towards your goal?  
• What is getting in the way? |
| 3. Explore the OPTIONS | Key Question: What could you do? Be as creative as possible to generate the maximum number of options (options the staff member may not have thought of before).  
- Quantity, not quality or feasibility  
- Challenge negative assumptions  
- Look at the benefits and costs of each | • What are the options? What else?  
• What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?  
• What factors or considerations will you use to weigh the options?  
• How many ways are there to achieve your goal? Which appeal to you the most? |
| 4. Establish the WILL | Key Question: What will you do? Convert a discussion into a decision by constructing an action plan. | • What are you going to do?  
• What is your first step in this?  
• What support do you need?  
• On a scale from 1-10, how committed are you to doing this? What prevents your commitment from being a 10?  
• When do you need to review progress? Daily, weekly, monthly? |
5. End of year discussion

Among the final stages of the process are the written feedback and the discussion. Human Resources recommends that all new staff receive feedback prior to the conclusion of their first six months, and that all other staff receive a feedback discussion annually.

Principle responsibilities

Staff member

- Provide comments related to the documented performance expectations and goals
- Self-Review: The staff member is encouraged to track their own performance and to keep a list of accomplishments and/or results relating to their documented performance goals, job responsibilities, objectives and professional development goals.

Leader

- Provide feedback related to the staff member’s performance expectations and objectives
- Leader’s Review: After the leader has received the staff member’s self-review and consolidated their own observations, notes, reports and other documentation, they provide feedback to the staff member.

Leader and staff member

- Support each assessment with specific results and objective examples of performance throughout the year
- Meet to discuss the staff member’s performance, identifying key areas of strength and accomplishment and areas for improvement

Preparation

Toward the end of the year, the leader and staff member should carefully review their notes, reports, observations and other documentation to prepare an accurate assessment. Performance throughout the entire year must be considered rather than just recent activities.

No surprises

If the leader and staff member have communicated consistently and continuously throughout the year, there will not be any surprises during the end of year discussion. It should simply be a culmination of previous communications. Surprises occur when there has been little or no specific communication regarding performance during the review period, a practice that is unproductive and contrary to organizational objectives.

Prior to the actual discussion, the leader is expected to give a copy of the completed form to the staff member. This gives the staff member an opportunity to plan for the meeting and facilitates two-way communication. For the discussion to be productive, the leader and staff member need to:

- Set aside at least an hour of uninterrupted time to meet
- Prepare a list of questions
- Anticipate possible questions
- Bring a copy of the completed form to the meeting
- Focus on actual behaviors and skills
- Actively listen to each other
TIP: Schedule meetings at least two weeks in advance. This gives the leader and staff member time to make final preparations for the discussion. Additionally, if a leader has multiple direct reports, setting appointments in advance helps to manage the demand on everyone’s schedule. The Performance Review Preparation Checklist found in the Tools and Templates Section can help you prepare.

Meeting
The meeting should be a two-way conversation in which leader and staff member:

- Review and discuss responsibilities, results, progress toward objectives and core behaviors
- Identify strengths, citing specific examples
- Identify development needs, citing specific examples
- Make any necessary adjustments to final ratings
  - This applies to non-OPSEU staff only, as OPSEU staff do not receive ratings

TIP: Discussing weaknesses or developmental areas can be challenging, especially for new leaders. The Tools and Templates Section includes “Ten Tips on Delivering Performance Feedback on Weaknesses.”

Signatures and record keeping
At the conclusion of the meeting, the leader and staff member sign the last page of the form, signifying discussion of the review, and each receives a copy for their records. The original review is then forwarded to the second-level reviewer (the reviewer’s leader) for approval. A second-level reviewer signature is required to:

- Ensure that the discussions are conducted in a timely manner
- Check for possible rater bias on the part of leaders (harshness and/or leniency)
- “Red flag” any continued performance problems for further review
- Remain informed of progress and successes

6. Recognition and rewards
Recognizing and rewarding performance should occur frequently throughout the year. This can include simple verbal recognition and other forms of nonmonetary acknowledgement of good work.

Principle responsibilities
Leader
- Recognize and reward performance frequently throughout the year. This can include simple verbal recognition and other forms of nonmonetary acknowledgement of good work

Recognition
Positive feedback for effective performance can be highly motivational. Suggested steps for giving positive feedback are:

- Describe the specific performance for which the staff member is being recognized
- Explain how the performance benefits the department and the university
• Express confidence in the staff member’s ability to maintain performance
• Thank the staff member

There are many opportunities for giving recognition. Some examples are to provide recognition when a staff member:

• Consistently meets or exceeds performance expectations
• Does a good job on routine tasks
• Is learning a new job or task
• Has improved their performance
• Accomplishes an especially difficult assignment or task
• Demonstrates a significant level of a particular skill
• Volunteers for a difficult or unwanted assignment
• Displays creativity in problem solving
• Discovers a way to save (or make) the organization money

Rewards
Some examples of rewards include:

• More autonomy
• Development opportunities
• Team projects, etc.

These and other examples will vary by individual, department and situation.