NYU Performance Communication Guide for Supervisors

Effective communication and feedback about performance are critical to the success of every employee and to the success of the University overall. At its core, performance communication is an ongoing dialogue between employees and their managers/supervisors that provides the following benefits:

- Creates a shared understanding of goals, competencies, and other expectations that are critical for success
- Fosters an environment of continuous feedback and professional development
- Provides employees with the opportunity to assess their own performance
- Helps employees improve what they do and how they do it, thus enabling them to provide greater support to the goals of their school or unit and the University

“SPEAK,” NYU’s performance communication process, is divided into three types of discussions that happen at specific times during the year:

NYU Performance Communication Cycle

**Beginning of the Year:**
Manager and employee meet to discuss and establish goals and other performance expectations for the coming year

**Throughout the Year:**
Manager and employee meet regularly to discuss progress on goals and expectations

**End of the Year:**
Employee and manager assess, review and discuss the employee’s performance

**At the beginning of the year:**
Manager and employee meet to discuss and establish operational and developmental goals, any other performance expectations including any school or unit-specific competencies or leadership competencies for the coming year, and longer-term career aspirations.
Throughout the year:

Manager and employee meet regularly (weekly, monthly, quarterly) to discuss progress on goals and performance and, if necessary, realign or reprioritize goals. Note: Some schools/units may opt to conduct a more formal (documented) mid-year discussion.

At the end of the year:

Employee assesses their own performance against goals and expectations. Manager assesses employee’s performance based on their own observations, the employee’s self-assessment, and feedback gathered from other sources. Employee and manager meet to discuss, review, and reach understanding of performance on goals, competencies, and any other expectations.

These discussions are documented at the beginning and at the end of the year on the **NYU Performance Communication Form**. Operational and developmental goals, values and/or competencies (including leadership competencies) and any other school/unit specific performance expectations and performance related to these, are documented on this form. Schools/units have the option to customize the values/competencies and are encouraged to contact their HR representative or the Office of Learning & Organizational Development for help with customizing the forms or process to fit their individual needs.

Employees are encouraged to keep notes on their performance in the **Performance Journal Form** throughout the year to make it easier to track progress, and prepare for performance discussions. Likewise, managers are encouraged to keep notes on their employee’s performance throughout the year.

**The Beginning of the Year: Setting Goals and Expectations**

Setting goals and establishing clear performance expectations with employees at the beginning of the performance cycle provides the opportunity to ensure alignment between the employee’s goals and the goals of the school/unit and the University, and is an important driver of employee performance and job satisfaction.

NYU’s performance communication process provides employees and managers the opportunity to set two types of goals: operational and developmental.

**Operational goals:** These are the goals that focus on improvements, changes, implementations of new processes, etc. for a school/unit or department.

**Example:** Manage the XYZ project, meeting all deliverables by x date. Create and implement a project plan and charter for the project which includes: project scope and timeline, training, communication, human resources, and technology requirements for a successful implementation of the project. Provide updates on the results of the implementation to the project manager on a quarterly basis. Success of this project will be measured by the attainment of deliverables at key milestones in the project charter.
Operational goal setting can be thought of as a “cascading” process from the strategic level to the individual level, with goals getting more narrowly defined as they cascade. It is important for the operational goals set for an individual to support the goals set for his/her department and for departmental goals to support the goals of the University overall.

**NYU Goals**

**School / Unit / Dept. Goals**

**Individual Goals**

**Developmental goals**: These are the goals that help the employee to develop the knowledge, skills, or abilities that they need in order to maintain or improve their ability to do their work. Ideally, most development provided to an employee (about 70%) should come through on-the-job experiences, some (about 20%) should come through coaching and feedback, and the rest (about 10%) is learned through courses and training programs.

**Example**: Improve project management skills by taking the Project Manager role on XYZ project. Receive ongoing coaching from manager. Enroll in a project management workshop offered by SCPS by X date. Demonstrate improved skills by applying them to XYZ Project and provide ongoing updates on progress.

**Writing “SMART” Goals**: Whether you are writing operational or developmental goals, well defined goals should include the following “SMART” characteristics:

- **Specific**: Describing in precise terms what will be done
- **Measurable**: Describing how you will know whether or not the goal was met
- **Achievable**: Defining a goal that is challenging but attainable
- **Relevant**: Connecting and aligning the employee’s role with the objectives of the school/unit
- **Time-bound**: Specifying the time frame within which the goal should be completed
Performance Communication Process: “SPEAK”
(Success: Performance, Engagement, Alignment & Knowledge)

Goal setting process steps:

1. Managers should meet with their own manager to understand the goals of their unit and discuss how the unit goals should translate into goals for their employees. Managers should also share the unit goals with their employees.
2. Employee and Manager meet to discuss and agree upon the employee’s operational goals and their alignment with unit goals, the employee’s developmental goals, career aspirations, and any other performance expectations for the coming year (including values/competencies/leadership competencies, and any other unit-specific expectations).
3. Operational and developmental goals, along with the employee’s career aspirations, are documented by the manager in the NYU Performance Communication Form. Employee and manager each keep a copy of the completed form for future reference. Click here for a copy of this form.

Before the Goal Setting meeting with your employee:

- Meet with your own manager to discuss the goals of your school/unit and how you and your employees will support them.
- Review the employee’s previous performance evaluation, the position description, goals of your department and your school/unit.
- Ask the employee to review the same materials.
- Identify the key responsibilities of the employee for the coming year, including critical duties, projects, and goals. Consider what you and your customers expect of the employee.
- Familiarize yourself with the performance communication form. Consider how the competencies/values apply to the employee’s roles and responsibilities.

During the Goal Setting meeting:

- Discuss and agree upon performance expectations and goals for the upcoming year.
- Identify the key responsibilities using the job description, specific assignments, tasks, projects, and operational & developmental goals.
- Discuss the competencies/values and ensure a common understanding of expected behaviors.
- Schedule a time for regular performance progress follow up meetings (Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly).

After the Goal Setting meeting:

- Input the agreed upon operational and developmental goals along with any additional performance expectations into the Performance Communication Form.
- Provide a paper or electronic copy of the completed form to the employee.
Throughout the Year: Ongoing Feedback and Dialogue

Progress meetings should take place throughout the year, so it’s a good idea to schedule several follow-up progress meetings after the initial Goal Setting meeting. These meetings give you a chance to:

- Provide coaching and feedback—let the employee know if he or she is “on track”
- Provide positive reinforcement and recognition
- Correct behavior before problems get out of hand
- Adjust your task or goal expectations as conditions and priorities change
- Listen to the employee’s responses to your feedback on their progress

You can use the Performance Journal form to make notes on progress toward achieving goals and other performance expectations, and how the competencies/values were displayed during the year. Click here for a copy of this form.

Note: Progress meetings are a time to formally discuss the employee’s performance. They are not a substitute for the regular, day-to-day feedback and guidance that you give to an employee. When a specific problem occurs, or to reinforce desired behavior, it is best to give the feedback as soon as possible after the behavior is demonstrated.

Delivering Feedback Effectively:

Whether you are giving feedback in a progress meeting or on an informal, day-to-day basis, the principles are the same. Remember that employees need both positive and constructive feedback. The process for delivering positive feedback is listed below.

Give positive feedback when you want to reinforce and encourage a particular behavior or result:

- Identify the specific behavior
- Describe the behavior’s positive impact
- Look for ways to build on the behavior
- Emphasize the future and how you can help the employee to reproduce the positive results achieved already
- Encourage the employee to share his or her views
Give constructive feedback when an employee needs to understand when their results or behaviors are having a negative impact on their performance.

Discussing performance problems can sometimes be a challenging aspect of supervision; however, delivering “constructive” feedback should not be avoided. If your employees are used to receiving regular feedback (both positive and constructive) it makes it much easier to discuss a problem if it arises. It also helps the employee to build and maintain a high level of performance and therefore makes your school/division and the University stronger. The process for delivering constructive feedback is listed below:

- Identify the specific result or behavior that needs to change
- Avoid attributing motive to behavior. Focus on the issue, not on the person
- Describe the negative impact of the result or behavior
- Ask the employee what they think is causing the problem
- Practice active listening by using paraphrasing to convey your understanding of what the employee is saying
- Ask the employee what they think might work to improve the situation. Evaluate solutions and reach agreement upon the best approach
- Strive for understanding, not necessarily agreement
- Agree upon next steps, including a timeline for action and follow up

**Mid-Year Check In**

The Mid-Year Check In is an optional step that can be added to document the discussion of the employee’s progress at mid-year, and make any adjustments to goals or expectations for the remainder of the year. It is meant to be a short recap and is less detailed than the Year End Performance Review.

In order to make it easier to remember accomplishments and results achieved during the year, managers and employees are encouraged to keep notes about their performance all year long in the **Performance Journal Form** (click [here](#) for a copy of this form) or on the **Self Assessment Form** (click [here](#) for a copy of this form).

**Mid-Year Check In process steps:**

1. Employee enters progress to date on operational and developmental goals, along with any other comments into the **Performance Communication Self Assessment Form** and sends a copy to the manager (click [here](#) for a copy of this form)
Performance Communication Process: “SPEAK” (Success: Performance, Engagement, Alignment & Knowledge)

2. Manager reviews input from employee and other sources on results to date and enters comments into the Performance Communication Form (click here for a copy of this form)

3. Manager and employee meet to review progress to date and make adjustments if necessary to goals for the remainder of the year. Any other notes or changes as a result of this discussion should be added and both manager and employee keep a copy of the form.

At the end of this discussion, both the manager and employee should walk away with a clear understanding about what the employee has accomplished so far and what he/she plans focus on for the reminder of the year.

Annual Performance Review: The End of the Year

The Annual Performance Review provides an opportunity for both the employee and manager to look back over the past year to discuss the employee’s performance results, accomplishments, and development. It should be a conversation that summarizes the ongoing feedback and communication that has happened all year long between the manager and employee.

Annual Performance Review process steps:

1. Employee enters results for operational and developmental goals along with any other comments on values or competencies and summary comments into the Performance Communication Self Assessment Form (click here for a copy of this form).

2. Manager incorporates self assessment input from the employee and any other sources of feedback, along with feedback on goals, values or competencies, and summary comments into the NYU Performance Communication Form (click here for a copy of this form).

3. Manager and employee meet to review and discuss the employee’s performance over the previous year. Any additional information coming from the discussion is added to the NYU Performance Communication Form by the manager, and both manager and employee sign and retain a copy of the form (please check with your HR representative on whether or not they also require a copy of the form).

Tips for conducting a successful performance review:

Prepare:
- Arrange for a private location and allow approximately one hour.
- Review the guidelines above for Delivering Feedback Effectively.
- Ask the employee to bring his or her self-evaluation and recommendations for areas of development.
- Provide a copy of the review to the employee a few days in advance of the discussion.
- Gather your documentation (e.g. position description, past evaluations, key responsibilities, etc.).
Open the discussion with a high level overview of the employee’s performance

- Use your Summary Comments to guide your opening overview.

Review each of the operational and developmental goals, and competencies individually

- Ask the employee to comment on their performance and then add your own perspective.
- Be sure to recognize and acknowledge successes to reinforce positive messages.
- Focus your comments on results and behavior and their impact on performance.
- Talk fairly and objectively about the employee’s performance; use specific examples to illustrate your points.
- Be clear about areas of improvement and offer alternatives for how things might have gone better.
- Ask the employee to offer ideas about what they can do to build upon strengths and improve upon areas needing further development.
- Reinforce positive results by discussing performance strengths.

Summarize performance and document next steps

- Use your Summary Comments to guide your closing comments.
- Review the overall performance level.
- Review the employee’s career aspirations and ask them to begin thinking about setting developmental goals for the coming year. Use the appraisal to help guide the discussion.
- Give the employee the opportunity to add any additional comments to the form.
- Sign the form and ask the employee to sign – Note: Signing the form does not necessarily indicate agreement with the information presented but does indicate that the information was reviewed.

After the meeting:

- Be sure to follow through on your commitments: for example; schedule any milestone meetings that have been agreed upon.
- Keep a copy of the completed, signed performance communication form along with the employee’s self-evaluation for your records.
- Give a copy of the final form to the employee.
- Ask your HR Representative if they require a copy of the form.

If you require additional assistance, please contact your HR representative or the Office of Talent, Learning & Organizational Development at x-81250.