



Policy Title:	Employee Performance Management System (EPMS)
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Policy Management Area(s):	Human Resources and Equal Opportunity

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#### **SUMMARY:**

This document sets forth the policy and procedures by which the job performance of probationary and covered employees of the University are appraised.

#### **POLICY:**

- I. This document sets forth the policy and procedures by which the job performance of probationary and covered employees of the University is appraised, pursuant to regulations of the SC Division of State Human Resources (DSHR). The provisions of this policy address the appraisal process of both probationary and covered employees. Although not mentioned specifically in this policy, employees exempt from coverage under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act should also be given annual performance appraisals.
  - A. The performance appraisal policy is designed to:
    1. Increase efficiency through the annual planning of job duties, objectives, and performance characteristics, thereby helping employees improve their performance through prior knowledge of the expectations of their supervisors;
    2. Provide information to employees, supervisors, and managers 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 a mutual understanding of the employee's skills and abilities;
  4. Encourage the continued growth and development of all employees;
  5. Identify training needs; and
  6. Maintain a documented history of employee performance.
- B. All employees who have completed probationary or trial periods will receive a review prior to November 1, the University's universal review date.
- D. Definitions
1. Established Review Date – The employee's review date as established in accordance with State Human Resources Regulations.
  2. Probationary Period – The performance of each new employee will be appraised prior to the completion of the initial twelve months of service in the position.
  3. Rater – The employee's immediate supervisor who has direct experience or knowledge of the work being performed.
  4. Reviewer – The employee's next higher-level supervisor; generally, the rater's supervisor.
  5. Short Year Planning Stage – Any performance appraisal that evaluates an employee's performance for a period of time less than twelve (12) months. Exceptions: "trial" period reviews and "warning notice" reviews.
  6. Short Year Review Period – The performance of each covered employee who completes a probationary or trial period will be appraised using a short year planning stage prior to the universal review date of November 1.
  7. Trial Period – The performance of each covered employee who has been demoted, promoted, or reclassified to a position in a different class will be appraised prior to the completion of a six-month trial period in the position.
  8. Universal Review Date – November 1 marks the beginning of a new review period for all covered employees. (Exceptions: "Probationary" and "Trial" periods.)
- E. The University will provide training to supervisors and employees on the Performance Appraisal Process.
- F. The Performance Appraisal Policy provides three levels of performance to rate job functions, objectives, and overall performance:
1. Exceptional – work that exceeds the criteria of the job function throughout the rating period.
  2. Successful – work that meets the criteria of the job function.
  3. Unsuccessful – work that fails to meet the criteria of the job function.
- G. Performance Characteristics will not be rated by the three levels of the Performance Appraisal Policy, but will be given a rating of pass or fail.
1. Pass – meets requirements.
  2. Fails – fails to meet requirements.

## II. PROCEDURE

- A. Performance Planning Stage – At the beginning of each rating period, a performance plan will be completed. After conferring with the reviewer, the rater and the employee will determine the job functions, characteristics, objectives, and success criteria on which the employee will be evaluated at the end of the review period.
- B. Job Functions – The job functions (which include job duties and success criteria) will be determined by the employee’s position description. If the position description is not accurate, an updated one should be prepared and submitted to Human Resources and Equal Opportunity (HREO) for approval. The statement outlining the job function should include descriptive information about the performance expectations or success criteria. Success criteria should be measurable, well-defined and specify the expected level of performance necessary to receive a successful rating.
  - 1. In instances where the rater and the employee cannot agree upon the job duties, the rater’s decision will be final.
- C. Objectives
  - 1. 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 and is expected to be accomplished during the rating period.
  - 2. Performance objectives on which the employee will be rated may be chosen by the rater and the employee.
  - 3. Success criteria (descriptive information about the performance expectations) must be developed for each objective. The success criteria should be measurable, well-defined and specify the expectations of the rater for the employee to be successful.
  - 4. Objectives are optional.
- D. Performance Characteristics
  - 1. The employee will be rated on a set of universal performance characteristics predetermined by the University. Management personnel will be rated on additional predetermined performance characteristics. The rater may assign additional performance characteristics from a list provided by HREO.
  - 2. All supervisors must be rated on promoting equal opportunity in their responsibilities of hiring, promoting, placing, supervising, purchasing, or contracting.
  - 3. Success criteria are not required for performance characteristics.
  - 4. The performance characteristics section will not be weighted in the determination of the overall performance rating.
  - 5. At the conclusion of the planning stage, the job functions, performance characteristics, and objectives are included in the performance review and signed by the reviewer, the rater, and the employee. The original plan document should be retained by the rater for use at the time of the actual rating. A copy should be given to the employee for reference during the appraisal period.

6. It is recommended that the rater and the employee review performance at the midpoint of the rating period to assess progress, to clarify expectations, and to foster open communication between supervisors and employees.
- E. Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Employees are expected to demonstrate a commitment to actively building their capacity to support a more inclusive climate at work. Commitment to diversity and inclusion will be rated as a performance characteristic. The rater should document actions taken by the employee during the review period in the comment section associated with this performance characteristic.
- F. Professional Development Goals
1. Professional development goals may be included when the employee participates in relevant career development activities that support professional growth. Professional development goals are to be rated as objectives.
  2. Professional development goals on which the employee will be rated may be chosen by the rater and the employee.
  3. Success criteria (descriptive information about the performance expectations) must be developed for each professional development goal. The success criteria should be measurable, well-defined and specify the expectations of the rater for the employee to be successful.
  4. Professional development goals are optional
- G. Mid-Year Check In/Progress Notes
1. The rater should conduct a mid-year check-in meeting with the employee. The meeting is an informal opportunity to discuss the employee's performance.
  2. The rater and employee may submit progress notes throughout the review period. Progress notes in the EPMS system are intended as a communication tool to share information related to performance but is not part of the formal evaluation document unless it is recorded by the rater on the performance evaluation.
- H. Probationary Period Performance Appraisal
1. The performance of each new employee will be appraised prior to the completion of the initial year of service in the position. The first twelve months of service make up the probationary period, and the period may not be extended.
  - 2.. If an employee is not in a covered status and changes classifications during the probationary period, the probationary period of twelve months will restart.
  3. Employees in probationary periods will attain covered status upon completion of the probationary periods. Until an employee has completed the probationary period and has a successful or higher overall rating on the evaluation, the employee has no grievance rights under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act.
  4. If an employee is not performing successfully during the probationary period, the employee will be terminated before becoming a covered employee.
  5. If the employee does not receive a performance appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee will receive a successful rating by default and obtain covered status as a state employee and permanent status in the class.

6. After successful completion of the probationary period, an employee may receive a short year planning stage and a short year review in order to move to the universal review period.
7. The “successful” rating is the equivalent to the “meets” performance rating referenced in the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act.

I. Trial Period Appraisal

1. The performance of each covered employee who has been demoted, promoted, or reclassified will be appraised prior to the completion of a six-month trial period in the position. If a state job classification action occurs during a probationary period, refer to I.H.2. for guidance on the appropriate performance appraisal cycle.
2. The trial period may be extended up to a maximum of ninety (90) calendar days prior to the end of the six-month trial period provided there is written notice to the employee.
3. If an employee does not receive an appraisal prior to the end of the trial period, and the trial period has not been extended, the employee will receive a successful rating by default and obtain covered status in the new classification.
4. After successful completion of the trial period, the employee may require a short-year planning stage and a short-year review in order to move back to the universal review period.
5. An employee who has completed a successful trial period and obtained covered status in a classification retains covered status in the classification throughout their continuous service.
6. The Substandard Performance Process 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 Substandard Performance Process 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 a trial period may not grieve such demotion.
7. An employee in the trial period may not be terminated or demoted for performance reasons to a class in a lower pay band than that from which he was promoted without following the Substandard Performance Process.

J. Annual Performance Appraisal

1. The performance of each employee who has met performance requirements during the probationary, trial, or short-year periods will be appraised annually prior to November 1- CCU’s universal review date.
2. The performance appraisal can be completed no earlier than ninety (90) days before the review date except in the case of a substandard performance. If an employee does not receive an appraisal prior to the review date, the employee will receive a successful rating by default. The review date marks the beginning of a new performance period.
3. An employee on approved leave with or without pay for more than 30 consecutive workdays may have the performance review advanced up to 90 days after those first 30 workdays.

4. A covered employee may not be issued either an overall “unsuccessful” appraisal or an “unsuccessful” rating on any essential job function or objective that significantly impacts performance without following the “Substandard Performance Process”.  
A covered employee who receives a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” may have the performance review date advanced to coincide with the “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” dates.
5. Performance appraisals will be completed by the employee’s rater who has first-hand knowledge of the work being performed. Prior to the review being given to the employee, it will be discussed with the reviewer (I.D.6.).
6. The reviewer may not change the appraisal completed by the rater, but may attach comments to the performance appraisal.
7. The appraisal must be electronically acknowledged by the reviewer, the rater, and the employee. If an employee refuses to electronically acknowledge the appraisal, the employee should select “dispute” online and send an email to [EPMS@coastal.edu](mailto:EPMS@coastal.edu) stating the refusal to sign the document.
8. Performance appraisals will become a permanent part of the employee’s official personnel file.
9. Although not mentioned specifically in this policy, employees exempt from coverage under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act shall also be given annual performance appraisals.

### III. SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

A covered employee is entitled to adequate notice of substandard performance and the opportunity to improve the substandard performance before receiving an “unsuccessful” rating and being removed from the position (i.e. termination, demotion or reassignment). To ensure this occurs, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. A rater shall issue a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” prior to issuing an “unsuccessful” rating to a covered employee. If during the performance period an employee is considered “unsuccessful,” in an overall evaluation or in any essential job function or objective that significantly impacts performance, the rater shall provide the employee with a written “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance.” The warning notice shall provide for an improvement period of no less than 30 days and no more than 120 days. The warning notice may be issued at any time during the review period. Ordinarily, the warning period may not extend beyond the employee’s review date. However, the performance review date may be advanced to coincide with the “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” dates. Should the performance review date be advanced and the employee receives a “successful” or above rating on all essential job functions/objectives that significantly impact performance noted in the warning notice, the employee may require a short year planning stage and a short year review in order to move the employee back to the universal review date.

- B. The notice must be in writing, addressed to the employee, and labeled as a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” and signed by the employee (witnessed, if employee will not sign).

The notice must list the following:

1. performance deficiencies;
2. ways to overcome the deficiencies;
3. the period of time the employee will be given to improve (e.g., minimum of 30, maximum of 120 calendar days);
4. the possible consequences if improvement is not satisfactory (e.g., reassignment, demotion, or termination);
5. a plan for meetings to discuss employee progress during the warning period.

- C. The rater is usually responsible 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 the employee cannot agree upon the content of the work improvement plan, the rater’s decision shall be final.
- D. The notice is generally signed by the reviewer, rater and the employee, or witnessed if the employee will not sign the notice. A copy will be placed in the employee’s official personnel file in HREO. Copies will be retained by the rater and the employee.
- E. During the warning period, the employee and the rater will have regularly scheduled meetings to discuss the employee’s progress. These meetings should be documented and included in the employee’s official personnel file in HREO and given to the employee upon request.
- F. Once a time frame for improving substandard performance has been given, the employee must be rated by the specified time or the employee will receive a successful rating by default. The time frame for improving substandard performance may be extended, provided the extension does not allow the total warning period to exceed the maximum of 120 calendar days. Notice of the extension must be given before the original time frame for improvement expires.
- G. If the employee’s performance is rated “Successful” or higher prior to the end of the warning period, notice of the improvement will be made on the “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” document, and employment will continue. If the employee’s overall performance as noted on the warning notice has not improved to a satisfactory level prior to the end of the warning period, the employee will be given a special performance appraisal and will be rated unsuccessful. After receiving a rating of unsuccessful, the employee will be removed immediately from the position through a demotion, reassignment, or termination.

- H. If, during a 365-day period, a covered employee has been issued two warning notices and performance drops for a third time to a substandard level on any essential job function/objective that significantly impacts performance, an “unsuccessful” appraisal will be issued for such substandard performance. The employee shall be removed from the position. A warning notice is not required for the third occurrence.