
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

Writing Performance Reviews

Overall tips

- **Be objective** – part of your role as a leader is to demonstrate integrity and assess performance without bias or favoritism.
- **Communicate clearly** – set expectations early and revisit them in regular 1:1 meetings. Start from a place of regular, positive, and future-focused feedback so the check-in isn't a surprise but a confirmation shared expectations.
- **Demonstrate care** – one of your most important jobs as a leader is to get to know your employees and their strengths, opportunities for growth, and preferences. Use what you've discussed with your employees to help you provide accurate feedback that they know has their professional development as its goal. Be honest and open about where they can improve, and recognize great performance as it happens (and at check-ins).
- **Keep a broad view** – don't focus too much on recent performance at the expense of achievements earlier in the year. Consider growth and development over the performance year.

What to evaluate

In addition to what the employee accomplished this performance year, your role as a leader is to highlight **how** it was achieved. Consider the following GW Values and associated behaviors when evaluating performance.

- **Integrity:** honesty, sustainability, fairness, and professionalism
- **Collaboration:** communication, teamwork, cooperation, and prioritization
- **Respect:** dedication, reliability, responsiveness, energy, and volunteering
- **Excellence:** accuracy, efficiency, learning, mentoring, and modeling best practices
- **Openness:** flexibility, listening, receptiveness, and accessibility
- **Diversity:** inclusiveness, engagement, creating safe environments, and empathy
- **Courage:** initiative, innovation, problem solving, risk-taking, delegating/stretching, and originality
- **Leadership Behaviors (if applicable):** positivity, confidence, clarity, intentionality, empowering others, decisiveness, efficiency, and good judgment

Examples of overall comments

Exceeds Expectations

Poorly written comments:

"In her role supervising Help Desk employees, Jane has fully staffed her team and ensured work is completed. Jane has provided training to her staff throughout the year. "

What should be improved: This review needs more detail, and examples of behaviors. It also doesn't support the rating of exceeds expectations, because there is no indication that expectations were exceeded.

Well-written comments:

"In her role supervising Help Desk employees, Jane has greatly improved employee morale and increased employee engagement by resolving staffing issues through strategic hiring decisions and improving processes to better respond to the changing needs of the university.

Jane has ensured new initiatives and service priorities (such as the recent upgrade of the university's wifi coverage) are communicated to her staff in a timely manner, leading to consistently excellent service from her team for our university clients. Jane has also gone above and beyond to increase the frequency of training initiatives to ensure the help desk team are better able to resolve tickets quickly and without the need to escalate to senior staff. This means tickets are resolved more quickly and the team can solve more problems every day."

What makes this well-written: This review is detailed and brings up specific examples of performance. It highlights behaviors linked to the GW Values and Leader Behaviors, such as communication, process improvement (innovation), learning (training) and improvements to efficiency. It references great improvement to engagement and morale, better service, and new initiatives, so it clearly supports the rating of exceeds expectations.

Achieves Expectations

Poorly written comments:

"Kit is our team's most seasoned Assistant Director of Admissions. They have competently executed their job duties and met their goals for the past ten years. Kit gets along well with their colleagues. They communicate regularly with me and with applicants."

What should be improved: This review needs more detail, and examples of current performance year behaviors (not just a reference to 10 years of past performance). It also doesn't support the rating of achieves expectations, because there is no indication of what expectations for Kit were.

Well-written comments:

"Kit has been an Assistant Director in the Admissions Office for 10 years and they have leveraged their knowledge of our process and of our incoming student population to help ensure they achieved target numbers for recruitment for their area this year. They have attended recruitment events on behalf of the university and competently represented the school, while using their knowledge of our institution to ensure prospective students have an accurate picture of student life at GW. They answered questions of applicants quickly and completely, with good follow-up. Their evaluation of applications was thorough and thoughtful.

Kit works well with their colleagues, who have expressed that they enjoy working with Kit. Kit communicates clearly with me, their supervisor, by regularly informing me of any problems or changes to their schedule. Kit listens to and follows my feedback on their performance."

What makes this well-written: This review is detailed and brings up specific examples of performance. In addition, it highlights behaviors linked to the GW Values, such as reliability, responsiveness, communication, and listening. It supports the rating by referencing how Kit has met their expected targets and reliably communicates with their supervisor.

Needs Improvement

Poorly written comments:

"Ivan needs development in three key areas: time management, initiative and follow-through, and technology. Ivan sometimes misses deadlines or takes longer than expected to complete projects. He has on occasion sent emails to the wrong recipient. Finally, despite having been given training, Ivan does not seem to understand the subject matter of the office."

What should be improved: This review needs more detail so that Ivan can understand why and how to improve his performance. Specific examples of when expectations were not met should be included, and suggestions for improvement should be recommended.

Well-written comments:

"Ivan is the administrative assistant for the unit, a staff of four with various responsibilities. The team and I rely heavily on him to perform a wide range of administrative tasks and to be the point person on all communications on behalf of the unit. Two essential functions of Ivan's position are to provide timely responses to calls and requests for information. Colleagues and clients have spoken highly of his communication skills, including telephone calls and emails. He is respectful and professional notwithstanding the difficulty of the circumstances.

Ivan needs development in three key areas: time management, accurate and timely communication, and taking the initiative.

In terms of time management, in August, Ivan was tasked to destroy old files. When we discussed this project, Ivan estimated that he could complete the task by October. We discussed the project during our 1:1 meetings and the completion date was pushed back to after the holidays. I provided guidance and suggestions for improving his efficiency, yet as of this review, the project is still incomplete.

Another area Ivan needs to focus on is accurate and timely communication. On at least five occasions, Ivan has sent time-sensitive and/or confidential information to the wrong internal party, despite having access to an accurate list of resources. On at least three occasions, he forgot to save correspondence in box and/or copy the correspondence or neglected to inform me of calls from a member of senior/executive leadership. I reminded Ivan on each occasion of the means by which he could communicate, email, voicemail, and written note, and that part of his role is to quickly and accurately communicate information.

Finally, Ivan needs to work on his skills. He has been with the team for over a year and has attended training to gain a general understanding of the office functions and actively participate in our staff meetings. He has the training manual on his desk, yet he will ask me or his team members before taking the initiative to research the issue and/or offer a resolution. Ivan will need to take more ownership for his work and improve job knowledge and follow-through to complete tasks in order to succeed in this position.”

What makes this well-written: This review is detailed and brings up specific examples of performance that did not meet expectations, as well as detailing what Ivan needs to focus on to improve. In addition, it highlights behaviors linked to the GW Values that need improvement, such as communication, reliability, efficiency, and problem-solving. It supports the rating by referencing how Ivan didn't meet expectations, and specifies how he needs to improve in order to meet expectations in the coming performance year. Plus, the review is fair and highlights areas where Ivan *has* met expectations and performed well.