



# Frequently Asked Questions

## General Policy Questions

### What should I know about this policy?

**Annual Cycle:** The start date of the annual performance cycle has moved to April 1 through March 31. This will be the same for all UNC institutions.

**Performance Plan:** The performance plan for each SHRA employee will have three to five individual goals defined by the supervisor and five institutional goals (plus one for supervisors) defined by the UNC System GA.

**Rating Scales:** Goals on the annual performance appraisal and the final overall rating will now be based on a three-point scale (Not Meeting, Meeting, and Exceeding Expectations).

**Probationary and Time-Limited Employee Reviews:** For new employees (SHRA only), the manager/supervisor shall provide periodic performance feedback to the employee during the first 12 months. Quarterly reviews are recommended to ensure affective communication regarding duties, tasks, and performance.

### What makes this policy effective?

- *Increases efficiency* by simplifying the tool and standardizing language for evaluation criteria.
- *Increases consistency* by standardizing performance categories to be evaluated across all positions and helping supervisory teams be consistent in setting expectations and ratings.
- *Aligns performance plans and position descriptions* by clarifying the purpose of each document and how they connect.
- *Promotes honest and clear communication* throughout the process by providing campus-wide training and web-based help documents.

### What training and resources are available to help me understand the policy?

Go to the [STAKES Performance webpage](#) for more tools and resources including guides and videos. You can also find the SHRA Performance Management Fundamentals training videos on the [Learning and Development Portal](#). **All videos are about 6 minutes long.**

- SHRA Performance Planning: Objectives and Timeline
- SHRA Planning: Institutional Goals
- SHRA Planning: Individual Goals
- SHRA Appraisal: Annual Performance
- SHRA Appraisal: Navigating NinerTalent

In-person workshops can also be scheduled through the [Learning and Development Portal](#).

### How should the institutional goals be communicated?

It is recommended that supervisors and employees review the institutional goals included on the performance plan ([the unabridged version](#)) and discuss how these values interconnect with the job duties in their position descriptions.

### What is the role in this process for an employee's next-level supervisor?

The next-level supervisor is expected to provide quality control to ensure that goals are being assigned appropriately, that performance expectations are consistent across employees, and that ratings are being assigned accurately and consistently across work units and across supervisors within the same organization.

The next-level supervisor is expected to review both the performance plan and the annual appraisal of each employee in their work unit before these documents are issued to employees.

### Is this process be online?

The is completed electronically using NinerTalent. Click [here](#) to access the NinerTalent STAKES Performance Guide for more information.

## Performance Plan & Position Description Questions

### What's the difference among job duties, job aids, institutional goals, individual goals, and the career development plan?

The **position description** defines what tasks (job duties) are included in the position. The supervisor writes the position description.

**Job aids** are procedures and other resources that give guidance to employees on how to perform their assigned duties.

The **performance plan** defines how well the employee needs to perform job duties on the position description in order to meet performance expectations. It also includes targeted individual goals for the employee.

The **institutional goals** in the performance plan define campus-wide performance expectations for all employees. These goals address a wide range of performance expectations found in all aspects of the employee's work product (quality, accuracy, timeliness, manner of delivery, policy compliance, etc.) as well as standard expectations for employee behavior and conduct. UNC General Administration sets the institutional goals for all SHRA employees in the University System.

The **individual goals** in the performance plan define the level of performance required for three to five critical job duties for the performance cycle. These goals may be specific to an individual employee or may be shared across employees in the work unit or broader organization. Goals may be based on recurring job duties or may be assignments unique to the current performance cycle. Individual goals should align with the overall mission and goals of the University and work unit. The supervisor sets the individual goals for each of their employees.

The **career development plan** in the performance plan define activities for employee growth and/or define corrective actions for performance deficiencies. Development goals include training programs, committee work, conference presentations or attendance, or related activities that maintain, develop or broaden employee skills relevant to their current position and/or their career path or to their role in service to the work unit or the broader University community. The supervisor sets the development goals.

### Should I be reviewing my employees' position descriptions?

We are asking that supervisors review the current position descriptions of their employees during this performance cycle to ensure that the position description is consistent with the current job duties in each position. Supervisors should submit any update of duties or reclassification requests as applicable into the NinerTalent Management System. If you submit a request to reclassify a position your request will be reviewed by a Human Resources Representative from the Position Management unit to determine if the request can be approved. It is recommended that supervisors review position descriptions annually to ensure that they are accurate.

### Where do I get a copy of my employees' position descriptions?

Supervisors can locate current position descriptions of their employees in the NinerTalent Management system under the Position Management module. Employees can also get to their position description by logging into NinerTalent, going to the current review cycle, and clicking your job title which is under your name in the top left corner of the screen.

### How do the performance expectations connect to my position description?

The campus-wide institutional goals are included in all employee performance plans to provide a common set of performance expectations employees throughout the University. All of the job duties on the position description are rated using the institutional goals. However, instead of ratings being given for each job duty in the position description, the ratings are given goals across all job duties (for example, a rating for accountability across all job duties, a rating for policy compliance across all job duties, etc.).

Supervisors are expected to set three to five individual goals for each employee. The individual goals are key expectations based on the critical business needs of each position this performance cycle. *They are not meant to cover the totality of the work that the employee performs.*

### If it isn't in my performance plan, can my supervisor require me to do it?

Yes. The "Team-Oriented" institutional goal on the performance plan sets a standard expectation that all employees perform "additional duties when team members are absent, during times of increased workload, or as otherwise requested by management to meet business needs."

The performance plan has never been expected to include every possible performance expectation for employees. It would be impossible to spell out every aspect of performance (quality, quantity, timeliness, delivery, compliance, etc.) for each task performed by the employee.

The individual goals section of the performance plan defines only the most significant job expectations for the current performance cycle. The institutional goals section provides performance expectations required campus-wide for all aspects of an employee's work.

Most position descriptions include language that other duties may be assigned as needed, and supervisors are encouraged to include that language in each position description.

### Is the career development plan required?

Yes. Each employee must have at least one development goal each performance cycle. The supervisor determines with each employee the appropriate development goal(s) for the cycle. These goals are to help you maintain or gain knowledge, skills, and abilities for your position or career path. This goal may be rated in your institutional goals if your supervisor chooses to do so.

In addition, supervisors are expected to set development goals to address performance deficiencies for employees who received any rating of Not Meeting Expectations on their last performance appraisal.

### What are institutional goals?

UNC General Administration has established five institutional goals that appear in the performance plans of every SHRA employee. There is an additional institutional goal for supervisors regarding their supervisory responsibilities.

- Expertise
- Accountability
- Customer-Oriented
- Team-Oriented
- Compliance & Integrity
- Supervision (for SHRA supervisors only)

The supervisor will rate the employee's overall work product using the expectations listed for each of these goals.

### How do institutional goals relate to job duties?

The institutional goals create University standards for work in all staff positions and provide the supervisor and employee a way to discuss performance expectations for all of the work included in the job duties.

Each job duty in the position description comes with performance expectations that are described in the institutional goals (for example, level of accuracy, quality of analysis, efficiency of process management, the impact of absenteeism, how interactions with others affect the work produced, adherence to policy and procedure, etc.).

### What are individual goals?

The supervisor sets 3 to 5 individual goals for each employee for the performance cycle. These goals are not meant to address every aspect of the employee's work. Instead, these goals are meant to focus on 3 to 5 work assignments that are particularly important this performance cycle.

Individual goals may be *critical-function* goals that highlight some of the most critical work needs in the employee's position. These are usually compliance-related (for example, annual research or budget reports).

Individual goals may also be *project-oriented* goals that may be regular work that is particularly significant during the time of this performance cycle (for example, implementing new software, completing a phase of a research project, reaching a fundraising goal, etc.).

Most individual goals should be *forward-focused*. That means that they should align with both the work unit's and the University's strategic goals and mission, if possible. For example, if the Chancellor sets an initiative for increased policy compliance on campus, then supervisors might develop individual goals toward increasing policy knowledge and awareness in the work unit or goals to ensure that the work unit is in compliance, such as revising procedure guides or audits of files. If the individual goal is accomplished, then it should help the organization move forward in some way to make things more efficient, less hectic, more understandable, etc. to help make the work unit work better for employees, supervisors, and customers.

At the beginning of the performance cycle, supervisory teams will meet to discuss goal-setting for the new cycle. In some cases, all employees in a work unit or all employees in a particular position type may have the same individual goals.

For more information on individual goals, please see the [NinerTalent STAKES Performance Guide \(click here\)](#).

### What happens if an individual goal is established for me at the beginning of the cycle, but then goes away. Will I still be evaluated on it? Will it negatively affect my rating?

It depends. Some individual goals may not be established until later into the cycle. Some may be for projects with a shorter timeframe rather than for the entire cycle.

An individual goal may end if: the work unit's priorities have shifted, so the goal is no longer required or critical; the work duties associated with the goal operationally have been assigned to another person or group; the employee's work performance is not meeting expectations, so the work has been assigned to another person.

If the reason for the goal ending is primarily the fault of the employee, then the goal should still be reflected in the employee's performance appraisal. If the reason for the goal ending was not primarily the fault of the employee, then the supervisor can choose either not to rate the goal or remove it (provided the employee has at least three rated goals remaining), replace it with a new goal, or rate the work product that the employee was able to complete prior to the goal ending.

### What happens if I change jobs?

When an employee changes positions, the former supervisor should complete an exit/transfer review Google Form and send the review to the new supervisor. The new supervisor can factor in the current progress of the employee during the performance cycle into the final overall rating.

## Performance Appraisal Questions

### When is the performance appraisal due?

The annual performance appraisals will be due by May 15<sup>th</sup> each cycle unless notified to the contrary by Human Resources. This is to give Human Resources the opportunity to review the appraisals and, if necessary, return for updates prior to the state's May 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.

The end of the cycle is March 31, so the annual appraisal process in NinerTalent will open on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The first step in the process is the Employee Self-Appraisal. After that has been completed, the supervisor may begin drafting the performance appraisal. If all the individual goal tasks or projects have been completed and/or there aren't any other tasks in the remainder of the cycle that could affect the employee's ratings, the supervisor may complete the appraisal process in the month of March if desired. Otherwise, the appraisal should not be completed prior to April 1<sup>st</sup>, the first day of the new cycle.

### What are off-cycle reviews?

Off-cycle reviews are formal check-ins between supervisors and employees that happen during the performance cycle. Supervisors also can conduct off-cycle reviews as often as they find necessary. There are several types of offcycle reviews.

**Interim reviews** are completed near the middle of the cycle (October).

**Probationary reviews** are completed quarterly (July, October, January, and March)

**Transfer reviews** are completed in the notice period prior to a supervisor/employee transferring to another position.

**Employee-requested reviews** can occur anytime during the cycle if the employee has not received one in 60 days.

The supervisor is expected to meet with the employee, review the employee's progress on the individual goals on the performance plan, and discuss how well the employee is meeting the expectations in the institutional goals. The supervisor documents the conversation (at least a paragraph summarizing the employee's performance so far in the cycle) in NinerTalent, and it will be sent to the employee for acknowledgment.

### Do I have to do an interim review?

All SHRA employee should receive interim reviews (or Talent Conversation #3) in October so they know where they stand halfway through the performance cycle. However, for employees who received a disciplinary action during the current performance cycle or employees who received any rating of "not meeting expectations" in the last performance cycle more detail will be required if the employee is still "not meeting expectations". The supervisor will need to describe the issue, the future expectations, and any deliverables the employee is expected to meet to perform at the "meeting expectations" standard.

Supervisors should be having what we call quarterly talent conversations with their employees each cycle, to include:

- Talent Conversation #1 (Mar-Apr) – Performance Appraisal & Performance Plan discussion
- Talent Conversation #2 (Jun-Jul)
- Talent Conversation #3 (Sep-Oct) - the interim review
- Talent Conversation #2 (Dec-Jan)

### Why do we have to do quarterly reviews with probationary employees?

The state recommends that probationary employee receive periodic feedback. Quarterly reviews are a good way to ensure your employee is getting the feedback they need to be successful. Supervisors should use the “Off-Cycle Review” feature in the NinerTalent Management system to document the probationary reviews. This feature allows you to document any off-cycle reviews and includes fields to provide the date, the type of review, the rating, and a comments section for an appraisal summary.

The supervisor does not need to complete a full performance appraisal for these quarterly reviews, but should provide a brief summary of the status of the employee’s performance. It is recommended that quarterly reviews are held in the same months each year (April, July, October, and January) regardless of the actual start date of the employee. Shifting the quarterly review date does not change the actual 12-month expiration date of the probationary period.

### I’d like more feedback from my supervisor. Can I request an interim or other off-cycle review?

Yes. Employees can request one off-cycle review per performance cycle. If it has been more than 60 days since the employee’s last evaluation, then the supervisor must honor the request. Supervisors are encouraged to have regular individual check-in meetings with employees to discuss work issues and to give other informal feedback to employees throughout the performance cycle.

### I’ve done everything as required on my performance plan, so why am I not getting “Exceeding Expectations” on my performance ratings?

Individual goals and institutional goals are written at the “Meeting Expectations” level of performance. If employees perform their work most consistently at that level, then their ratings would be “Meeting Expectations.”

Employees should discuss with their supervisors what level of performance would result in ratings of Exceeding Expectations (or Not Meeting Expectations) so that the employee has some markers for achievement.

The office of Human Resources can offer further guidance on distinguishing between Meeting, Exceeding, and Not Meeting Expectations.

### My supervisor said that they are not allowed to give out Exceeding Expectations, or at least, not as many anymore. Is that true?

No. Supervisors are charged with providing accurate and honest assessments of employee performance. The University does not have a quota system for the number of ratings allowed at each level.

Performance expectations may “get out of whack” over time due to changes in the job (budget, systems, technology, procedures, staffing levels, etc.) that in turn may change the level of performance required to meet the business need.

At the beginning of each performance cycle, supervisory teams are expected to meet to discuss performance expectations based on current business needs to see if performance expectations have shifted over time. If so, supervisors should discuss with their employees early in the cycle what level of performance would result in meeting, exceeding or not meeting expectations so that employees have time during the rest of the cycle to adjust to any new expectations.

At the end of each performance cycle, supervisory teams are expected to meet to discuss performance ratings to make sure that they are making consistent decisions on ratings.

An overall rating of Exceeding Expectations may be rare as the employee would have to be consistently exceeding performance expectations on basically every performance goal on their performance plan.

### Do I have to sign the performance appraisal?

Yes. Employees will be required to “acknowledge” the performance appraisal in NinerTalent. This is equivalent to you signing a document. At the completion of the performance review session with your supervisor, the appraisal will be submitted to you for acknowledgement or dispute. If changes in the document were agreed upon during the review session, then employees are required to acknowledge the revised performance appraisal once it is provided to them.

Note: Acknowledgment does not necessarily imply agreement with the ratings given or the comments included. If you would like to document any disagreement you have the option of entering your comments and clicking the “dispute” button.

### What are my options if I don't agree with the ratings I received on my evaluation?

Employees are encouraged to discuss the ratings and comments with their supervisor either during the performance review session or shortly thereafter. The employee can make suggestions for changes and provide additional information that may be useful to the supervisor in deciding if any changes should be made.

Employees can attach a response to the appraisal document providing additional information that they believe is important to include with the appraisal in their personnel file. There is a box on the tool to show that the employee is adding comments. There is no deadline for attaching a response, but normally this should be completed within two weeks of the review session.

Employees can also request a facilitated conversation through Human Resources to address concerns. In a facilitated conversation, a Human Resources Representative meets with the employee and the supervisor to discuss what changes or clarifications might be agreeable regarding the appraisal. Both parties must be willing to participate in the conversation.

The performance plan, off-cycle reviews, individual goal ratings, and written comments on the appraisal are not grievable.

Employees can file a grievance for a final overall rating of “Not Meeting Expectations” on the annual performance appraisal. See the University System SHRA Employee Grievance Policy for more information.