

Writing and Conducting Successful Performance Appraisals

Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors



‘Performance reviews are like compasses
They give your exact position and provide direction’

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Part 1

- About Performance Appraisals
- The Four Phases
- Tips for Successful Appraisals
- Types of Appraisals
- What Does the JIQ Have to Do with Performance Appraisal?

About Performance Appraisal

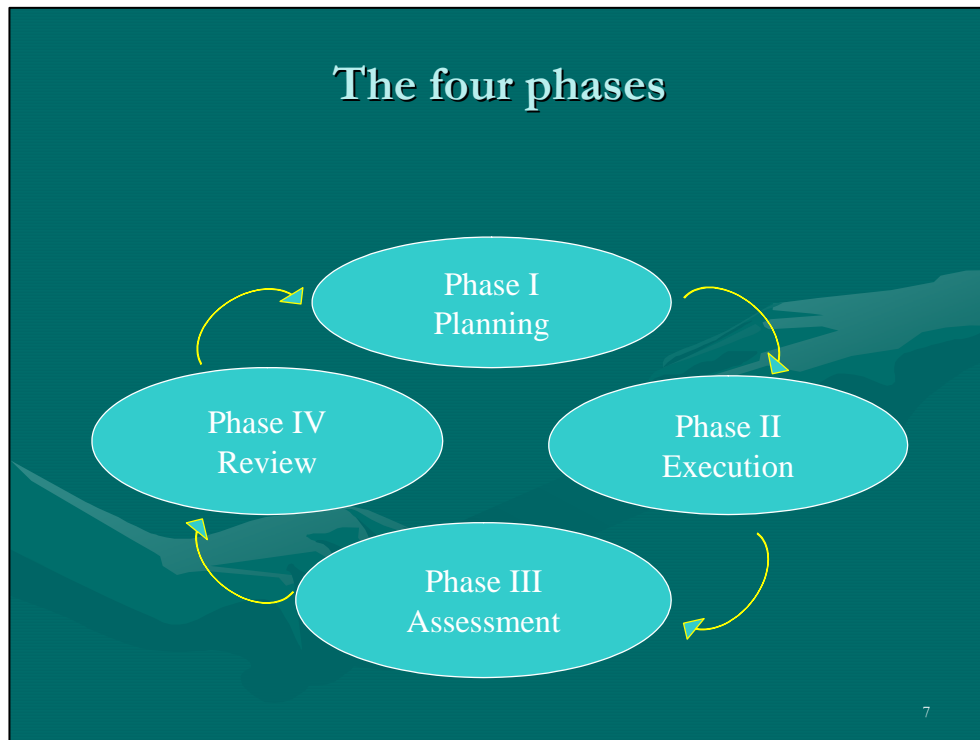
Performance appraisal is a formal management system that provides for the qualitative evaluation of an individual's performance in an organization. There are several reasons performance appraisals are conducted. Some of them are:

- Recognizing good performance
- Jointly establishing measurable expectations for the next review period
- Outlining a plan to facilitate improved performance
- Providing an accurate legal record of each employee's job performance
- Providing an opportunity to discuss career development needs
- Providing information for merit increases
- Providing information for promotion

This guide will help Montgomery College managers understand the performance appraisal process and assist them in writing successful performance appraisal.

The Four Phases

In organizations that take performance appraisal seriously and use the system well, performance appraisals are an ongoing process and not merely an annual event. In these organizations, performance appraisal follows a four-phase model:¹



Phase I—Performance Planning

Performance planning is a discussion. It is the first step of an effective performance management process. The agenda for this meeting includes four major activities:

1. Coming to agreement on the individual's key job responsibilities
2. Developing a common understanding of the goals and objectives that need to be accomplished
3. Identifying the most important competencies that the individual must display in doing the job
4. Creating an appropriate individual development plan

¹ Grote, Dick, *The Performance Appraisal Question and Answer Book*, American Management Association, 2002.

Phase II—Performance Execution

Once the performance planning phase has been completed, it is time to get the job done—to execute the plan. For the individual, the critical responsibility in Phase II is getting the job done—achieving the objectives. For the supervisor, there are two major responsibilities:

1. Creating the conditions that motivate, and
2. Confronting and correcting any performance problems

In an effective performance management system, performance execution also includes midterm or quarterly reviews to ensure that performance is on track.

Phase III—Performance Assessment

Performance assessment is the third phase of an effective performance appraisal system. Basically, performance assessment involves evaluating just how good a job the individual has done and filling out the form.

Before sitting down with a staff member, it is important to review all documentation from the previous year.

1. Take a look again at the objectives that were agreed to and documented at the beginning of the year as well as any changes to those objectives that were added or deleted and recorded during the year.
2. Review any notes from meetings that may have occurred with the staff member.
3. If the staff member has completed a self-review, include this as part of the documentation as well.

Phase IV—Performance appraisal

A performance appraisal is the final phase of an effective year-long performance management system. For managers and supervisors, reviewing the performance of staff members may be perhaps one of their most valuable tools. Reviews that are well-planned and conducted with sensitivity will help accomplish three critical tasks:

1. Developing staff members
2. Offering an opportunity to perform as a leader within the team and
3. Guiding work performance

Tips for successful reviews

Preparation

As a manager, you can prepare by first evaluating yourself: “What kind of manager have I been?”

More self-evaluation questions to ask include:

- Do I role model the qualities I want and expect of my staff members?
- Have I made sure all instructions have been clearly understood?
- Have I provided feedback all year? What worked and what did not?
- Have I updated goals and objectives during the year to reflect changes in work expectations?
- Have I made myself available to the staff to hear their concerns, problems, and suggestions?
- Have I kept my staff informed about changes in the organization that might affect the team?

Before you start to evaluate your staff member ask yourself:

- What results do I want from this review?
- What contributions is this staff member making?
- What contributions should this staff member be making?
- Is the staff member working to his or her potential?
- What training does this employee need?
- What are this employee’s strengths (make a list)?

Assessment

An important responsibility for managers is assessing and giving timely feedback to their staff on performance. Feedback on performance that is given as soon as possible has proven to be the most effective. Regular feedback that is provided throughout the year eliminates any “surprises” during the performance review.

Appropriate setting

- Gather all of your information and materials.
- Decide on the best time of day—schedule more time than you think will be necessary.
- Decide on the best place—it should be private and comfortable.
- Give the staff member advance notice of the meeting.
- Start on time and guarantee no interruptions.

Delivery

Deliver the performance appraisal in simple language. Don't use jargon or mince words. Tell the employee what they have done well and where they need to improve.

Encouragement

Your job is to encourage! You want to motivate the employee to continue doing that which he or she does well and to improve in the areas where there is room for growth. This is the best way to make these meetings productive and positive. Even if the person's appraisal has not been as high as he or she might have hoped, remind the employee that he or she is still valued and that you will provide support in this development.

Types of appraisal

Montgomery College conducts two types of formal appraisal: the semi-annual (six-month) appraisal and the annual appraisal.

What is a semi-annual appraisal?

Six-month probation is completed by all staff members that are either new to the college or have changed positions within the college either by transfer or promotion. An exception may be given to staff members who transfer within the same job family and classification. The purpose of the six-month appraisal is to determine if regular status will be granted to the staff member. If regular status is not recommended, the supervisor must provide the appropriate documentation required by the Office of Human Resources and the employee will be terminated. If regular status is granted, certain rights are guaranteed to the employee.

Regular status is automatically granted if the six-month appraisal is not conducted *prior* to the date ending the six-month probation.

What is an annual appraisal?

Six months after the semi-annual appraisal the staff member is appraised again. This begins the annual performance appraisal cycle. Staff members receive a merit increase at this time unless the increase is not recommended. Managers must provide the appropriate documentation required by the Office of Human Resources if merit is not recommended.

Remember: staff members should not receive any surprise feedback—informal, continuous discussion and feedback between staff and manager throughout the year prevents surprises.

Note: The merit increase is automatically granted to the staff member if the annual review is not conducted *prior* to the staff member's anniversary date.

What is the manager's responsibility?

As a manager you have the responsibility to complete performance appraisals in a timely fashion. You also have the responsibility of informing the staff member of the deadline his or her performance review is due in the Office of Human Resources. The Office of Human Resources provides ample notification to ensure that the process is timely. If there are unavoidable circumstances that will cause a performance appraisal to arrive in the Office of Human Resources after the due date, the Human Resources Records Office must be contacted and an extension must be requested.

What does the Job Information Questionnaire (JIQ) have to do with performance appraisal?

The Job Information Questionnaire (JIQ) describes the staff member's job duties and is the foundation of the staff member's performance appraisal! It is essential that managers have the JIQ for each position he or she supervises. The JIQ should accurately reflect the essential duties of the staff member's job noting occasional or periodic duties. Each staff member should have a copy of his or her JIQ.

Note: Continuously reviewing the JIQ for accuracy and completeness ensures that the staff member is being evaluated on actual work for the position.

What if there are changes to the JIQ?

Minor changes to a staff member's JIQ must be sent in writing to the director of personnel management, Office of Human Resources.

Major changes require that the JIQ be rewritten and submitted, with a cover letter, to the director of personnel management, Office of Human Resources for position reclassification.

Part 2

The performance appraisal form

The performance appraisal form can easily be divided into four parts:

- Unit responsibilities and expectations
- Collegewide competencies
- Objectives and the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)
- Completing the review process

The following is intended to assist managers and supervisors as you complete the form.

Unit responsibilities and expectations

This section includes:

Employee data— employee data is down loaded from the Banner System (employee name, location, position number, class title, and the supervisor’s name). The date due in Human Resources is automatically calculated and will show a date three weeks before the effective date.

Primary work responsibilities—primary work responsibilities are the key responsibilities of a job, not day-to-day tasks, chores, and assignments. These are activities. We engage in all of our daily activities because they are things for which we are responsible. Key responsibilities are identified on page two of the employee’s JIQ.

Performance expectations—primary work responsibilities combined with standards of performance clarify what is expected of the employee.² Ideally, the manager and the staff member will have discussed each of the supervisor’s expectations at the start of the year and will come to an understanding of what the supervisor considers to be successful performance. This will make it easier for the supervisor to assess the quality of the staff members work.

Supervisor comments—supervisor comments are required for outstanding and unsatisfactory ratings. It is recommended that the supervisor comment on all ratings.

Employee comments—employees may respond to their supervisor’s comments under separate memo.

Ratings—in the unit responsibilities and expectations, individuals are assessed against key job responsibilities. Supervisors should provide examples that support the ratings being given to the individual.

Ratings guidelines—an effective way to justify and explain the ratings one assigns to the individual’s performance is to correlate the rating of the performance with the message that you are trying to send the individual about the quality of his or her performance.

Rating guidelines for unit responsibilities and expectations are:

Outstanding - This employee far exceeds expectations, is an outstanding producer, and is extremely accurate. He or she achieves peak performance and completely understands the duties of the job. The staff member is totally dependable in performing work, including non-routine assignments.

² Donald L. Kirkpatrick, “*Improving Employee Performance Through Appraisal and Coaching*”, Page 37.

Above Average - This employee is considerably above job standards and is a consistently above-average producer. His or her work is consistently well done, with minimal errors. The staff member handles assignments with little direction or follow-up and is consistently dependable in accomplishing job assignments.

Successful - This employee meets all job standards. His or her output is consistent with expectations on most assignments and work is completed with a minimum amount of error. The staff member fulfills responsibilities and follows instruction with minimal supervision but may require assistance on non-routine assignments. Staff members who are new to the position may require additional time and or assistance.

Unsatisfactory - This employee is frequently below standards. He or she organizes assignments poorly and work assignments seldom meet specified quantity or quality standards. The staff member does not perform the full scope of job responsibilities.

Collegewide Competencies

This section includes:

Collegewide competencies—Collegewide competencies are the skills, attributes, traits, or behaviors that are expected of everyone regardless of job or organizational level. There are nine competencies for which all staff are accountable. They are: Communication, Decision Making, Job Knowledge, Leadership, Quality, Initiative, Service to Others, Work Standards, and Diversity.

Supervisor comments— supervisor comments are required for outstanding or unsatisfactory ratings that are given. It is highly recommended that supervisors comment on all ratings to provide clarity to the employee.

Ratings— an effective way to justify and explain the ratings assigned to the individual's performance is to correlate the rating of the performance with the message that you are trying to send the individual about the quality of his or her performance.

Ratings guidelines for Collegewide competencies are listed below. Remember an effective way to justify and explain the ratings assigned to the individual's performance is to correlate the rating of the performance with the message that is trying to be sent to the individual about the quality of his or her performance.

Competency One: Communication

Consider the employee's communication between co-workers, other college staff, students, and the community. Does the employee listen attentively? Speak and write clearly and concisely and maintain an open mind? Does the employee provide feedback, and keep supervisors, peers, and other stakeholders fully informed?

Outstanding – The employee exhibits the ability to communicate ideas and information both in writing and orally so that they are readily and clearly understood. The communication involves the preparation of written materials such as narrative reports, brochures, and pamphlets. Oral communication involves formal presentations before groups or interacting with individuals or groups as a facilitator or group leader.

Above Average - The employee's communication is with College personnel at any level as well as customers and is intended to convey information requiring careful attention to ensure that the communication is understood.

Satisfactory – The employee's communications involve obtaining or exchanging routine information between co-workers and customers, and responding to inquiries and similar matters. He or she listens and is courteous when conveying and receiving information.

Needs Improvement – The employee ineffectively communicates with co-workers and customers when responding to inquiries. He or she does not listen and must be reminded to be courteous when conveying and receiving information.

Competency Two: Decision Making

Consider the employee's level of decision-making, the scope and variety of tasks, and the information considered when making a decision. Elements to be considered are the degree to which an employee is responsible for making sound decisions and his or her ability to synthesize diverse information.

Outstanding - The employee makes decisions that require specialized or technical judgments regarding what actions to take. The outstanding employee considers the requirements of the situation and makes decisions that positively affect the efficient and effective operation of programs and services.

Above Average - The employee makes sound judgments regarding what actions to take based on information available or developed by the employee. The above average employee considers alternatives and makes choices based on an assessment of the situation, resources, and the policies, rules, and procedures that apply.

Satisfactory - The employee researches, verifies, or follows up with other persons on matters that are not immediately clear to complete his or her assignments. The satisfactory employee is expected to act on familiar recurring situations, but unusual or non-standard situations are normally referred to his or her supervisor.

Unsatisfactory - The employee has difficulty making decisions when choices are clearly evident either upon observation or by checking and comparing.

Competency Three: Job Knowledge

Consider the employee's knowledge of job-related information and its application to performance. Elements to be considered may include education, training, skills, related experience, and knowledge of internal and external operations.

Outstanding - The employee demonstrates a broad range of expertise, information, and technical skill. He or she continually strives for self-improvement encompassing additional education, training, and general knowledge. The employee serves as an information and training resource to others. The overall work environment and effectiveness of College operations is enhanced by his or her utilization of knowledge and skills.

Above Average - The employee exhibits a high level of job-related expertise, information, and technical skill. He or she seeks additional training toward job improvement. The employee follows instructions with minimal supervision.

Successful - The employee effectively and properly utilizes requisite skills and information in fulfillment of job responsibilities. He or she follows instructions with minimal supervision but may require assistance on non-routine assignments.

Unsatisfactory - The employee is ineffective and improperly uses skills and information. He or she requires frequent supervisor intervention.

Competency Four: Leadership

Consider the employee's leadership through clear direction and sufficient inspiration and motivation. Element to be considered include if he or she serves as a role model within the department, campus and community

Outstanding - The employee selects the methods and procedures needed to complete assignments. He or she provides direction, prioritizes tasks, and gives instructions to others to see that work is performed properly. The employee fosters the development and implementation of new approaches and methods.

Above Average - The employee performs recurring assignments without receiving specific instruction, taking steps to start and complete his or her work, and following up on matters on using his or her own initiative. He or she determines priorities, responds to requests, and initiates appropriate follow-up.

Successful - The employee performs recurring assignments and may require specific instruction by his or her supervisor.

Unsatisfactory - The employee requires constant correction and specific instruction by his or her supervisor.

Competency Five: Quality

Consider the employee's consistent level of high standards in performance delivery. Elements to be considered are accuracy, completeness, and frequency and seriousness of errors.

Outstanding - The employee exhibits the highest degree of accuracy, completeness, and follow-through. He or she exhibits professionalism. Errors are rare, used as learning opportunities and not repeated. This employee's level of performance provides a standard by which others may be measured.

Above Average - The employee is highly competent in all aspects of his or her job. He or she achieves and often exceeds standards for accuracy, completeness, and follow-through. Errors are generally self-caught at an early stage.

Successful - The employee generally meets standards for accuracy, completeness, and follow-through. He or she is competent in the performance of all aspects of the job and errors are rarely repeated.

Unsatisfactory - The employee is inconsistent in accuracy, completeness, and follow-through. He or she requires supervisor intervention and or correction. The employee makes frequent and repeated errors. He or she is unreliable in accuracy, completeness, and follow-through.

Competency Six: Initiative

Consider the employee's resourcefulness in handling a variety of situations and solving problems. Elements to be considered include his or her flexibility and independent thinking, amount of direction required, and sense of responsibility.

Outstanding - The employee consistently anticipates problems, foresees unusual situations, and develops solutions or alternatives. The supervisor holds a high degree of confidence in the employee's ability to act independently. The employee is highly resourceful with good follow-through and initiates work and special projects.

Above Average - The employee identifies and solves most problems without assistance. He or she readily responds to challenges and is a self-starter. The employee shows a high degree of initiative, resourcefulness, and motivation.

Successful - The employee solves problems with normal supervision and readily responds to initiatives. He or she demonstrates resourcefulness on occasion. *Supervisors may include in this rating employees who are new to the position who may require additional time and assistance.*

Unsatisfactory - The employee follows routines without problem solving or resourcefulness. He or she is constantly in need of direction and fails to solve routine problems.

Competency Seven: Service to Others

Consider the employee's effectiveness in providing and maintaining excellent and enthusiastic service to students, employees and the community. Elements to be considered include his or her level of professionalism, respect, tact, and courtesy when dealing with others.

Outstanding - The employee consistently provides the highest level of quality service to students, employees, and the community as it relates to job responsibilities. He or she exhibits the highest level of professionalism in communications and interactions with others.

Above Average - The employee exhibits a high level of service to students, employees, and the community, as it relates to his or her job responsibilities. He or she demonstrates tact and courtesy in dealing with others.

Successful - The employee is generally effective in providing service to students, employees, and the community. Inconsistent behavior occurs rarely.

Unsatisfactory - The employee is not effective in providing service and has problems interacting with others.

Competency Eight: Work Standards

Consider the employee's approach to his or her work environment. Elements to be considered are attendance, punctuality, organization, time utilization, dependability, cooperation, behavior, and adherence to safe practices.

Outstanding - The employee exhibits the highest degree of dependability in a variety of situations. He or she has well-developed organization skills and consistently performs at an exceptional level. The employee demonstrates positive behavior and cooperation and influences others in doing the same. He or she is always flexible and adaptable in a changing environment.

Above Average - The employee is very dependable and exceeds expected requirements. He or she is well organized, cooperative and very flexible. He or she adapts well to change and demonstrates positive behavior.

Successful - The employee is dependable and exhibits positive behavior and cooperation. He or she is punctual, organized and utilizes time wisely. The employee is cooperative and adheres to safe practices

Unsatisfactory - The employee exhibits poor work habits, which negatively impact the department and college operations. His or her work habits require significant improvement. The employee is not effective in doing the work.

Competency Nine: Diversity

Consider the employee's understanding of the College's policy, values, and objectives as they relate to diversity. Elements to be considered are fairness and respect toward others.

Outstanding - The employee exhibits the highest degree of fairness and respect toward co-workers and external customers. He or she continually strives for self-improvement encompassing participation in diversity programs, which address his or her needs for information and skills. The employee sets the example and becomes a role model for others while serving as an information and training resource. The overall work environment is enhanced by the individual's utilization of knowledge and skills. Documentation must be provided to support this rating.

Above Average - The employee exhibits a high degree of fairness and respect toward co-workers and external customers. He or she seeks additional training in diversity programs and understands how culture can be a determining factor in work processes. The employee understands and values the differences in every person and uses those differences to enhance teamwork.

Successful - The employee works willingly and cooperatively with people who are different from him or herself. He or she can communicate with those of other cultures and accepts the uniqueness of others. The employee helps to create team spirit through inclusion.

Unsatisfactory - The employee requires supervisor intervention or other outside resources to assist in dealing with diversity.

Objectives, IPDP, and Self-Review

This section includes:

Review of previous year's objectives—the supervisor and the individual should review the previous year's objectives. This is an opportunity for supervisors to review and assess each completed objective and the outcomes. If the objective was not completed, an explanation must be provided.

Objectives for the coming year—objectives for the coming year should be determined through a collaborative process with the employee. Meaningful objectives are ones that support the department and the college. Objectives should also be specific, measurable, achievable, result focused, and time-oriented.

Special projects or assignments—occasionally employees take on projects or assignments that were not anticipated in the planning phase. Supervisors and employees are encouraged to identify the special project or assignment and briefly describe the employee's work effort.

Individual Professional Development Plan—the IPDP is the staff member's action plan for the coming year. Consider the following when creating a plan:

- a. Knowledge, skills, or competence area to be developed—what is the specific skill that the staff member is going to acquire or enhance?
- b. Benefit of attending—why is it important to the department or the college that the staff member increase his or her skill in this area or develop this competency?
- c. Personal payoff—what will be the benefit to the staff member if he or she improves in this area?
- d. Measures to be used—how will it be determined whether the staff member has actually made a significant improvement in this area?
- e. Resources required—what does the staff member need to complete his or her plan? For example, does the staff member need time? Money? Management support?

Self-Appraisal—a staff member's self-appraisal can be a tool to stimulate constructive dialogue regarding work performance. Staff members who complete a self-appraisal become engaged in their review process. This includes helping to establish direction for future activities and to assist in continuous improvement of the quality of service.

Completing the process

This section includes:

Signature page—the staff member and supervisor must sign and date the performance review form to indicate that they reviewed the form together. Disagreements with the performance review must be submitted in writing within two weeks to the Chief Human Resources Officer.

Timeline—the chart on the following page provides an approximate time frame, the activity associated with the time frame and the outcome.

Time Line

TIME FRAME	ACTIVITY	OUTCOME
Six months before the performance review is due in Human Resources	Supervisors receive notification of upcoming performance reviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure timely completion of the performance review.
At least six weeks prior to the date due in Human Resources	Supervisor requests the staff member's self-review and reviews the staff member's JIQ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review staff member's JIQ for accuracy
At least four weeks prior to the formal performance review meeting.	The staff member turns in a completed self-review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supervisor uses the self-review to complete the formal review form. The staff member may use the self-review in the formal performance review meeting to support his or her assessment of performance.
At least three weeks prior to the formal performance review meeting.	The supervisor completes the written performance review form.	Use staff member's self review, JIQ and professional development plan as input.
At least two weeks prior to the date the performance review is due in Human Resources.	Formal performance review meeting conducted with the staff member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The supervisor communicates results. Specific issues are discussed. The supervisor ensures performance expectations are satisfied and recognizes positive results. Allows staff member forum to discuss his or her review. The supervisor and staff member collaborate to set objectives for the coming year and plan a professional development strategy.
At least one week prior to the date due in Human Resources.	The completed review with signatures is sent to the unit administrator for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes the staff member's formal review.
At least one week prior to the date due in Human Resources.	A copy of the performance review is given to the staff member before forwarding the form to Human Resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures staff member receives a copy.
Three weeks prior to the merit effective date.	The completed performance review with all signatures is sent to Human Resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The completed performance review is filed in the staff member's official personnel file in the Human Resources Office.

Glossary of Terms

Competencies: Competencies is the umbrella term that is used for all of the elements of performance that correlates with superior job execution and are predictive of success in organizational life. The term competencies includes: behaviors, skills, traits, technical knowledge, proficiencies, attributes, and abilities. Organizational core competencies are the ones that the organization expects of everyone.

Job Information Questionnaire (JIQ): A JIQ is a document that provides information on the duties and responsibilities of a job class. In addition, the JIQ indicates the qualifications an employee must possess in order to be prepared to perform the functions of that job.

Merit increase: Merit increments for associate and support staff employees are the result of recommendations submitted along with annual performance evaluations. Merit increments are earned by satisfactory or better performance of work, and cannot be granted without benefit of a performance evaluation and a specific recommendation. Authorization for appropriate merit increments shall be made by the Chief Human Resources Officer after review of individual performance evaluations and recommendations.

Performance appraisal: a formal management system that provides for the qualitative evaluation of an individual's performance in an organization.

Regular Status: the intent of the College to continue employment as long as the employee's performance is evaluated as at least satisfactory, as long as there exists an authorized and appropriate position, and as long as there is sufficient funding.