

Rubrics and Rutabagas: *Only One is Useful for Assessing Staff During Evaluations*

By using rubrics, the review process can go much faster and easier because the criteria for success are laid out to assess staff performance in comparison to prescribed standards, and they take much of the subjectivity out of the review process.

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

When expectations/criteria are agreed upon in advance, staff have the chance to excel when they know what performance is considered superior, what is meeting expectations, and what is below the acceptable level. Having unclear performance expectations (which in some instances means having no assessment expectations at all) is unfair to the employee, as it does not provide a framework within which the employee can work and set goals.

DIETARY STANDARDS

ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education (2011) Principle 8, Indicators 8.2, 8.3

COOKING TIME

Prep time (making the rubric), 1–2 days

Cooking time (applying the rubric—writing an evaluation, meeting with the employee to discuss), 1 week

Serves administrators, supervisors, and human resources

COOKING TECHNIQUE

Comparison of performance to established criteria for success

MAIN INGREDIENT

Rubrics

PREPARATION

Rubrics essentially translate qualitative information (descriptions of levels of performance) into assessable and quantifiable evidence. A great example of a generic rubric is the University of Colorado's "Apple Pie Recipe" rubric, which delineates standards for the crust, baking, and filling (link below).

THE ASSESSMENT

Beginning of year

- Using a rubric in staff assessment starts at the beginning of the review year. As close to the beginning of the year as possible, send your employees the proposed rubric, then meet with them to go over it. Ask if they have questions and see if they have anything to add or changes to make. Talk about the specific job duties and explain the criteria.
- Including the employees in revising your rubric gives them buy-in to their performance expectations and makes things easier to justify at review time.

Throughout the year

- Have periodic check-ins with your employees, with frequency depending on their performance. Some employees require more reminders about expectations than others. Go through the rubric again and explain why their performance in all of the elements falls in certain areas.
- Do this with high-performing staff also. We sometimes neglect to praise when we are tied up dealing with non-performers.
- Also, if job duties have changed, the rubric elements should be adjusted.

Review time

- Before meeting with the employees, go over your rubric element-by-element, truly reflecting on their performance in each area. Make notes to justify why you chose each rating from the scale with specific examples from the year.
- Send the written evaluations and rubric to the employees at least twenty-four hours before your scheduled meeting to combat anxiety and give them a chance to prepare remarks. At your meeting, it may not be necessary to discuss every element; rather, focus on the "exceeds"

and “below” expectations. Give examples.

- Let the employees ask questions and respond. Get them to phrase things in regard to the specific criteria in the rubric to justify any disagreements.
- When submitting the official, final evaluation to administration or human resources, make the rubric available in case someone wants to review it.

Now it’s time to evaluate the rubric all over again because it is the beginning of a new review year!

ALLERGY WARNINGS

Some institutions may have a generic form created by human resources for evaluating staff. Supervisors may have some leeway in which job duties are included and may even include performance standards, but the rating system may be predefined and unclear.

Be aware of the requirements for evaluation given by administration and your human resources departments. Ensure that you get approval for the rubric by your Head Chef.

CHEF’S NOTE

The Tulsa Public Schools have a rubric for assessing librarians. It is online: https://www.tulsaschools.org/4_About_District/_documents/TLE/Observation_Evaluation_Rubric_Librarian.pdf.

Consult the RUSA “Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Services Providers” for examples of elements that you can use in your rubric: <http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/guidelinesbehavioral>.

The University of Colorado’s “Apple-Pie Recipe” rubric can be found online: http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/faculty/center-for-faculty-development/Documents/Tutorials/Rubrics/1_what_is/easy_as_pie.htm.