



Performance Excellence Program (PEP)

Goal Setting Guidelines

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GOAL SETTING GUIDELINES

Paving the Way for Peak Performance

Austin Community College began using a new performance appraisal system known as the Performance Excellence Program, or PEP, during fiscal year 2001-2002. Training for the program will be ongoing.

ACC administrators believe that performance evaluation is an effective management tool. They asked the Administrative Services Council to develop a new and improved evaluation program. This program ties the employee's performance to the overall [mission and vision](#) of our organization and helps the employee feel valued as a member of the [ACC team](#).

The Performance Excellence Program has four components. These are to:

- establish job expectations and set goals;
- establish a plan for professional development;
- foster discussions about growth and development between employees and their supervisors; and
- appraise performance.

Setting goals is a key part of this process. It's important to understand the roles of the supervisor and the employee before thinking about goals more thoroughly. The role of the supervisor is to be a good coach for his or her employees. As the coach for the entire team, each supervisor must ensure that each employee understands the expectations of their position, has the tools to meet those expectations, and is fairly evaluated on the quality of the work they perform. The supervisor is responsible for tracking the employee's progress and establishing effective methods for measuring performance. It is the employee's role to map out steps to assure that goals will be met.

It is important for the *supervisor* to:

Set goals, expectations and standards	Prepare for the formal performance evaluation
Provide regular, specific feedback	Discuss the evaluation with the employee
Determine training and development needs	Motivate the employee to improve their skills and knowledge
Identify and deal with areas of poor performance at once	Set new goals as needed
Periodically review milestones, timetables and goals with employees	Give employees the opportunity to attend professional development activities
<i>Celebrate successes!</i>	

It is important for the *employee* to:

Be part of the goal-setting process	Improve performance, as identified
Be certain that they are clear about their supervisor's expectations	Prepare for the formal performance evaluation
Develop a plan and timetable for reaching their goals	Meet with the supervisor to discuss the evaluation
Participate in goal revision and setting new goals when necessary	Complete professional development that supports their goals
<i>Celebrate successes!</i>	

The first step in the performance evaluation process is to set clear, identifiable goals that are tied to organizational goals. Both employee and supervisor should agree upon these. Goals provide direction to the employee and represent desirable outcomes. Goal setting is a means of getting an employee from where they are now to where they want to be and where the supervisor would like them to be at the end of the year.

Goals have a starting point and an ending point. They also have points along the way to help gauge the employee's level of success in reaching desired results. The employee and supervisor start with a vision of what the employee needs to accomplish in order to have peak performance on the job. This vision leads to the development of specific, realistic goals with milestones and a timetable for completion. Milestones are checkpoints along the way that help measure how well the employee is progressing toward the goal. For example, if it is now July 15 and one of your goals is to add newly-required components to heating units college-wide by October 15. You will need to develop a timeline that identifies steps you need to take to make that happen. Then stay on track and check at pre-set points along the way to make sure you are completing the necessary steps.

What Are Goals?

Goals are statements that clearly and precisely identify an end point toward which an effort is to be directed. They can be seen as aims, intentions, or purposes. Goals should be **SMART**.

S

pecific

A goal should be clear, easily understood, and should state the specific result. Fuzzy goals cause differing opinions about the final product. It is up to the supervisor to make sure that goals are clearly stated. Using positive language in goal statements will serve as a motivator.

Examples:

- The goal is to produce an annual report of program activities.
- The goal is to set up a record-keeping system.
- The goal is to create a spreadsheet for the budget.

- The goal is to hire three new staff members.
- The goal is to improve the handling of hazardous materials.
- The goal is to develop a testing schedule for students in the labs.

M_{easurable}

Goals should be measured by quantity AND quality. Simply counting a product does not necessarily mean that the product has quality. The supervisor should identify milestones to help ensure that the quality of the outcome meets expectations. The goal is to produce an *accurate* annual report *detailing* the program activities.

Examples: *The goal is to:*

- set up an efficient record-keeping system to track attendees in the program.
- create a spreadsheet for the budget to track expenditures on a monthly basis.
- hire three new skilled and experienced staff members.
- use required safety precautions at all times when handling all hazardous materials.
- develop a routine testing schedule for students in the labs.

A_{ttainable}

Goals should be realistic and within the employee's capabilities. Employees should be challenged to "grow" within their skills and talents. The goal should not be out of reach for the employee or below performance expectations and standards.

R_{elevant}

Goals should be tied to organizational goals so that the employee knows the goals are worthy and will support ACC's mission. Many employees want to contribute to the College. Their commitment to goals that will meet personal, professional and departmental goals will strengthen their commitment to the vision and mission of the College. Completing these goals may also help prepare employees for positions of greater responsibility.

T_{imely}

Deadlines and timetables help the employee meet both milestones and final outcomes by preventing delay of activity toward the goal. This schedule should be realistic. The goal is to produce an *accurate* annual report *by June 1st of each year* detailing the program activities.

Examples: *The goal is to:*

- set up an efficient record-keeping system by September 1st of each year to track attendees in the program on an annual basis.
- create a spreadsheet for the budget by August 31st to track expenditures on a monthly basis for the next academic year.
- hire three new skilled and experienced staff members by October 1st.
- track my use of required safety procedures every day I handle each hazardous material I come in contact with in my work.
- develop a routine testing schedule by September 1st for students in the labs and to post the schedule in view of the students no later than September 5th.

Once goals have been created and agreed upon, a plan for reaching each goal and a timetable that includes milestones should be developed. These tools help the employee identify how far he or she must travel to meet overall performance expectations. Goals without a plan are just that: goals - in a vacuum.

How Should Goals Be Set?

The supervisor and employee should meet to discuss goals for the year. Time should be set aside for this in order to avoid interruptions. Both should be prepared with a draft of 5-10 possible goals for the year. Four is the minimum number and most people lose effectiveness in working toward more than seven goals. Goal setting is a two-way process and it is critical that the employee understands and agrees upon the goals and expected outcomes.

Thinking about goals may not come easily for employees who have never been asked to do so. Some tend to think of goals too broadly and don't spend enough time thinking through ideas that first come to mind. A good way to begin thinking about goals is to examine the main job responsibilities of a position or the projects that the employee needs to complete within the year. Identify things you need to accomplish in each of these areas. Think about how you'd like to be doing your job differently a year from now. Would professional development activities be of benefit? It might also be helpful to think of questions like these:

- a) What am I doing well that I'd like to build upon? What strength could I enhance?
- b) Do I need to learn any new information for new tasks or projects?
- c) What tasks or procedures could be improved? revised? streamlined? upgraded?
- d) What resources will I need? Are they available?
- e) Can I anticipate any barriers and how can I plan for them before they happen?

Some goals may be personal, some departmental, and some professional. All goals must be relevant to your position. Keep the time frame of goals in mind. Once you've developed a certain goal, look at it closely and decide if it should be broken down further. Does it have short-term and long-term elements? Your supervisor will be able to help with this.

Once goals have been developed and mutually agreed upon, the form (*see next page*) should be completed. If you've written more than six goals, attach an additional page to the document. The

form should be kept in the departmental file until goals need to be revised or until time for the performance review. At the time of the performance review it will be sent to Human Resources along with the other evaluation forms.

It may be helpful to rank the importance of your goals before you attempt to create a plan for accomplishing them. That way you'll know which ones might take more effort. Then build regular review and revision of goals into the milestones identified. You can also develop a plan for working on goal-related activities on a daily basis and track your progress toward goals.

Supervisor's Name		Title	
Department	Review Date	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Probationary	<input type="checkbox"/> Self Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor's E

Must be completed in ink. Attach additional pages, if needed.

Employee Goals and Objectives for the next year (list goal, desired outcome and timeframe for completion of goal):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

List of Professional Development Activities for the next year:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

GOAL SETTING AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PITFALLS TO AVOID

When we evaluate the performance of others it's easy to fall into some traps without meaning to. Some of these are described here so you'll be aware of them.

1. **Halo effect** – This happens when an employee is so good in one or more areas that poor performance in another area is ignored. Excellent employees do exist and supervisors should help them build upon their strengths. It is easier, however, to compliment an employee than to sit down and have a serious discussion about deficiencies. This is especially true when the employee is a good and dependable employee. The supervisor is responsible for the growth and development of the employee and should view performance deficiencies as opportunities to help the employee become a peak-performing employee in every area of their work.

The halo effect may enter the goal setting process also. The supervisor may tend to create goals only in the area of the employee's strengths and not focus on goals in the employee's area of weakness. This does not help the employee reach their full potential; goals should be related to both strengths and weaknesses.

2. **Pitchfork effect** - This is the opposite of the halo effect. This is an instance when poor performance overshadows the good performance of an employee and the supervisor tends to notice only the negative. This results in setting goals in areas the employee may have difficulty with to support the supervisor's assessment of poor performance.
3. **Stereotyping** – This is when the supervisor believes the employee won't be able to perform well and is not objective about the employee's capabilities. When this happens, the supervisor tends to set low goals that do not help the employee to grow and develop. If employees are to develop, some of their goals must challenge him/her or allow them to learn something new.
4. **Comparing** – This occurs when a supervisor rates two employees at the same time. Performance should be measured against individual standards of excellence. Employees should not be compared to each other. Each employee brings different skills and abilities to a position so goals should be established to enhance the employee's strengths and help them develop in areas where they're lacking.
5. **Mirroring** – Some supervisors tend to hire, support, and give projects to employees that have a style and values that are similar to their own. This tendency to select and work more closely with people like ourselves gives us more of the same skills and talents in the workplace rather than contributing to diversity.

We value diversity. Each individual brings something special to the workplace and supervisors should recognize the gifts and talents that his or her employees bring to the job. In setting goals, the employee's strengths should be taken into account in assigning tasks and projects that will permit employees to excel.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GOAL SETTING

What are the advantages of setting goals?

By setting goals and developing a plan for reaching them, you will know exactly what you need to focus on. Many people enjoy reaching their goals and discovering what they're capable of. People who use goal setting well sometimes report that they suffer less from stress and anxiety, concentrate better, perform better and are more satisfied in their work and in their lives.

What if my supervisor sets unrealistic goals for me?

If, after discussing the goals, the employee feels that they can't be reached, the employee should meet with the supervisor again to discuss the goals. The supervisor should be able to explain how the employee's goals will help meet the goals of the department or ACC in general. If there is no agreement, the employee may ask to meet with the supervisor and next level of management.

Will all of my goals be linked to professional development activities?

Some, but not all, goals will be supported by participation in such activities. If a goal involves building upon a skill or knowledge, or prepares you to undertake new tasks or responsibilities, you should find professional development activities that will help you reach the goal. For more information on professional development workshops go to www.austincc.edu/hr/profdev/.

I've noticed that the form requires that I create a Professional Development plan. How can I do this if I don't know what programs will be offered?

You can indicate what types of programs you will need to take to enhance your skills or prepare you for new responsibilities. You do not need to list specific dates, times and titles unless you have that information at hand.

When should goal setting be completed this fiscal year?

It is expected that goals for employees will be created, documented and agreed upon, each year by October 31st, so that employees will have sufficient time to achieve their goals.

How will these goals be used in my performance evaluation?

Goals are the basis of the PEP process. They provide the road map for determining whether expectations are met. The supervisor will measure how well they've been met when the evaluation takes place.

What if my goals change?

PEP recommends that you and your supervisor review and revise your goals regularly. Goals may change due to circumstances over which you have no control. For example, new policies and procedures or new departmental goals and activities could make changes necessary. If you do revise goals simply write these on another form and attach it to the original.