



# Performance Excellence

Tips for Review and Rating

## Structuring the Review

The written supervisor review should contain manager observations of accomplishments, any shortfalls, and desired improvements or areas for growth.

Best practice is to begin the review with a “primary message,” backed up by specific examples. The primary message may be considered the main theme of the review. What’s the main performance message that you want your team member to walk away with? Spend time considering what this message is. Deliver this message, backed up by examples, as the first paragraph of the written performance review and the main part of the performance conversation.

After you’ve determined the primary message, document additional observations about accomplishments, shortfalls, and ideas for development/growth to round out the picture. The recommended length for a performance review is 2-3 paragraphs.

### Primary message formula: three ways to structure

[NAME] created [IMPACT] by [ACTION].

[NAME] is [THIS KIND OF LEADER, CONTRIBUTOR] who demonstrates this by [ACTION].

[NAME] created [IMPACT] and needs development in [AREAS] to grow into their role.

## Assigning a Rating

Northwestern’s rating framework has five, qualitative ratings. Supervisors are encouraged to begin by assigning an **Achieving** rating to their staff members, and then to think specifically about why they may have earned a higher or lower rating.

**Achieving** indicates solid performance. Someone who fulfilled their job responsibilities and generated results as anticipated. As you look back at the written review you have drafted, do you see evidence of impact that was a higher than expected? If significant impact is clearly demonstrated, consider an **Excelling** rating. The **Role Model** rating is meant to be used sparingly, for staff members whose work was transformational and made a profound impact. This rating may be appropriate if a staff member stepped in to lead an unexpected project, or for a staff member whose efforts created a meaningful and sustainable improvement in team or department outcomes.

**Development Needed** is a rating designed to support a primary message that identifies a specific and essential skill



or behavior gap. This gap in skills or behavior must be addressed for this staff member to fulfill the expectations of their role. **Corrective Action** is a formal process experienced by few staff members with significant performance issues. For those already in that process, this rating is an appropriate choice.

If the staff member is new in their role, please evaluate their performance relative to the learning curve of their role. Are they progressing as expected (**Achieving**)? Faster than expected (**Excelling**)?

## Templates and Examples

### Role Model

Template Text

[NAME] created [IMPACT] by [ACTION]. Specific examples include: [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE]. The value [NAME] has brought to our team through these efforts has transformational in the following ways: [DETAIL OF LONG-TERM IMPACT OR IMPACT BEYOND SCOPE OF TEAM].

Other accomplishments and strengths that I have been pleased to observe include [EXAMPLE: job competency], [EXAMPLE: NU value/behavior]. One area of development that I would like to see [NAME] work on is [JOB COMPETENCY OR NU VALUE/BEHAVIOR]. Improving in this area would help [NAME] achieve even greater success in the years to come.

[NAME]'s potential is very high, and I am grateful to have them on my team. I look forward to being a partner for growth.

### Role Model Sample

Elizabeth Brown has shown exceptional leadership in the development of the new patient documentation system in our division. This system has dramatically shortened the time it takes to find patient records and increased the ways that patient data can be stored for future use. Elizabeth recognized a need, and took full ownership of creating a solution, reaching across our team and beyond to find the expertise and resources we needed. She worked closely with other divisions to understand their best practices and build collaborations. She did extensive research in the medical literature to determine the most effective trends in the field. She then worked to engage team members and cross-functional partners in building the system, working within our capacity and in alignment with individual development interests. Elizabeth's efforts have created transformational positive impact on our team's outcomes and reputation, while building internal capabilities.

Another accomplishment that I observed is her increased public speaking to discuss our division's work and outcomes. I would like Elizabeth to continue working with team members to share the workload and grow professionally. Improving in this area would help Elizabeth achieve even greater success in the future.



## Excelling

### Template Text

[NAME] has created [IMPACT] by [ACTION]. Specific examples include: [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE]. The value [NAME] has brought to our team through these efforts has been significant.

Other accomplishments and strengths that I have been pleased to observe include [EXAMPLE: job competency], [EXAMPLE: NU value/behavior]. Areas for improvement that I have noticed include [EXAMPLE: job competency], [EXAMPLE: NU value/behavior]. One area of development that I would like to see [NAME] work on is [JOB COMPETENCY OR NU VALUE/BEHAVIOR]. Improving in this area would help [NAME] achieve even greater success in the years to come.

[NAME]'s potential is great, and I look forward to being a partner for growth.

### Excelling Sample

Jane Doe has increased our team's credibility and impact across the university by consistently exercising her excellent critical thinking and project planning skills. Project X, that launched in the winter and wrapped up recently, was a success because of how Jane worked with stakeholders to think through potential roadblocks at the beginning and solicited input on the scope of work document. Throughout the project, she planned by carefully defining/documenting roles, responsibilities, and milestones, and continually communicated with everyone to keep it on track. I see her applying this same critical thought and organizational skill to her smaller projects, which she defines and tracks carefully in our online project files. This tracking will enable our team to communicate our collective impact more thoroughly, which will be significant as we move forward.

Other accomplishments that I have been pleased to observe include Jane's willingness to support and mentor another team member which has improved the overall communication and camaraderie on the team. And she has initiated a virtual "What's on your Mind?" throughout the \_\_\_\_ group to give colleagues a place to talk and share best practices monthly, building stronger cross-departmental communication, evident in numbers of group members and attendance. One area of development that I would like to see Jane work on is more frequent updates on her projects so that the team has a better sense of what is happening. Improving in this area would help Jane achieve even greater success in the years to come.

Jane's potential is great, and I look forward to being a partner for growth.



## Achieving

### Template Text

[NAME] has created f[IMPACT] by [ACTION]. Specific examples include: [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE]. [NAME] has brought great value to our team through these efforts.

Other accomplishments and strengths that I have been pleased to observe include [EXAMPLE: job competency], [EXAMPLE: NU value/behavior]. Areas for improvement that I have noticed include [EXAMPLE: job competency], [EXAMPLE: NU value/behavior]. Of these, there are a few areas for development that I believe would specifically help [NAME] achieve even greater success in the years to come. One area of development is [JOB COMPETENCY OR NU VALUE/BEHAVIOR]. Improving in this area would help [NAME] have [IMPACT]. Another potential area of development [JOB COMPETENCY OR NU VALUE/BEHAVIOR]. Improving in this area would help [NAME] have [IMPACT].

I look forward to being a partner for [NAME]'s growth in the years to come.

### Achieving Sample

Erin Mallory is a committed team member whose creativity and idea generation have helped the team expand their perspective about several projects or issues which have frequently led to going in a more productive direction. She does this by regularly contributing ideas and insights to team and project meetings. An example of this was a project to balance the team's capacity without multiple meetings. Erin suggested several workflow and spreadsheet ideas which led to a new solution. Erin seems to enjoy brainstorming about whether an idea is accepted or rejected and has encouraged other team members to think about problem solving in a different way. Erin has brought great value to our team through these efforts.

One area for improvement would be Erin's documentation and follow-up. She has great ideas and is always willing to help but doesn't always generate the follow-through documents that the team needs. Improving in this area would reduce the need to start a brainstorm session again and build more trust with the team. Another area for improvement would be to take more initiative when she sees a need or issue that needs to be resolved. In conversations together this year, she shared concerns about the Winter quarter program launch and her hesitancy to address these issues directly with those involved. Improving in this area would help Erin be seen as more proactive and a stronger team player.

I look forward to being a partner in Erin's growth going forward.



## Development Needed

### Template Text

[NAME] has created [IMPACT] by [ACTION], and needs development in [AREAS] to be considered achieving in their role. Specific examples include: [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE], [EXAMPLE]. Improving in these areas would help [NAME] have [IMPACT].

Other accomplishments and strengths that I have been pleased to observe include [EXAMPLE: job competency], [EXAMPLE: NU value/behavior]. I hope that [NAME] continues to bring these strengths to bear on their work, as they have brought great value to our team in the past year.

To create success in the year to come, I am committed to clarifying and documenting performance expectations and to helping [NAME] create a plan for development. I look forward to being a partner for [NAME]'s growth.

## Development Needed Sample

John Smith is a leader in technical expertise within our team and needs to increase collaboration skills so that we can achieve our collective goals. As we launched the software platform for \_\_\_\_\_, John has not consistently delivered his input in a timely manner, which has negatively impacted project timelines – 1 week late in November and two weeks late in January. John improving in his timeliness and collaboration is essential for the team to be credible and successful.

Accomplishments and strengths that I have been pleased to observe include deep technical knowledge on all our platforms, and his consistent interest in expanding this knowledge through online courses and self-study. I hope that John continues to bring these strengths to bear on his work, as they have brought great value to our team in the past year.

To create success in the year to come, I am committed to clarifying and documenting performance expectations and to helping John create a plan for development. I look forward to being a partner for John's growth.

