Management Best Practices

University Employee Relations

Revised 2/2025

Contents

This is a resource guide that includes a variety of documents and templates to support leadership efforts in guiding a successful employee experience at Virginia Tech.

The Division of Human Resources and the Office for Civil Rights Compliance and Prevention Education have many resources available to provide guidance leading to you and your employee's success.

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University Employee Relations

Employee Relations provides a place where both employees and supervisors can share private, personal, and work-related information in order to receive assistance or advice that will support their performance growth.

Contact the University Employee Relations Team for assistance with:

- ✓ Building Collaborative Relationships
- ✓ Centralized Exit Interview Questionnaire/Consultations
- ✓ Employee Disciplinary Standards
- ✓ Employment Policies
- ✓ Expectations of Employees and Managers
- ✓ Grievances
- ✓ Inspiring Employee Engagement and Morale
- ✓ Management Consultations and Best Practices
- ✓ Performance Growth
- ✓ Personal Issues Affecting Your Job
- ✓ Probationary Employment
- ✓ Remote Work Challenges
- ✓ Work-Life Stress
- ✓ Workplace Conflict

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER!

Visit the University Employee Relations site for contact information and more resources.

ONBOARDING

"Hire people who are better than you are, then leave them to get on with it. Look for people who will aim for the remarkable, who will not settle for the routine." - David Ogilvy

Research has shown that employees often decide in their first 90 days whether they want to stay with an organization long term. You have spent a lot of time choosing the right person to join your team, and now it falls on you to ensure they stay. Do this by investing in them - from day one - to make sure they have the necessary resources AND motivation to be successful in their new role.

"Thorough onboarding programs increase employee retention rates by 82%!" – Build Empire

Sending them to the mandatory Human Resources New Hire Orientation is an important first step to starting your employees out on the right step—and starting yourself out right as their manager—but it is not the only step.

A few "best practices" to follow:

1. **Make sure you are in the office** and have a light work day on their first day of employment: be available to ensure they are settling in okay and to answer any questions they may have.

2. **Take them to lunch.** Let them know you are grateful they are there and that you aren't taking them—or their experience—for granted. Make sure you introduce them to your team and explain everyone's roles and how those roles interact with and are dependent on each other. It's important to allow your new employee to view him/herself as part of the team—with you the leader—from day one.

3. **Give them an early-win/challenge assignment.** Have a project that they can start on immediately and complete quickly, but that provides enough of a challenge that they feel confident regarding the new role and their contributions to the team.

4. If they are in a management role, **put them in touch** with the resources and people who can assist them in learning how to manage their employees effectively.

5. **Follow up with them frequently** over the next few weeks, and make sure to sit down with them and touch base on any performance concerns (or concerns they raise) every 30 days at least. At 90 days, give them a quick, unofficial 90-day evaluation so they know where they stand in regards to your expectations for them. This is when it is also lucrative to address any performance concerns and to offer your employee the opportunity to raise any questions or concerns, they may have regarding their employment. This meeting often sets the tone for the next year of performance.

This program provides a framework for ensuring that all new hires transition into productive and engaged members of your team as quickly as possible. Feeling welcome and having information presented in a systematic and logical order is vitally important for a smooth transition. Research has shown that effective onboarding has a significant long-term impact on a new hire's overall success in their new role.

"69% of employees are more likely to stay with a company for three years if they experienced great onboarding." – Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

What Is Onboarding?

➢ A method of getting newly hired talent up to speed quickly with policies, processes, culture, expectations, and day-to-day responsibilities.

➢ A support process designed to manage a variety of tasks and requirements initiated once a new hire has accepted a position.

➢ A way of making newcomers feel welcome and excited, confirming their reasons for joining Virginia Tech.

"Without (or with bad) employee onboarding, companies lose 25% of all new employees within a year." – Allied Workforce Mobility Survey

An Effective Onboarding Process:

➢ Builds Virginia Tech's reputation for having clear leadership and for being a thoughtful employer and a strong organization.

➢ Helps retain staff by increasing engagement and building better team relationships across the organization.

➢ Supports new colleagues and moves them to efficient productivity levels quickly.

Responsibility for the onboarding schedule rests with each supervisor, **who should always be present on the new employee's first day.** The time frames and action items presented are guides, not requirements, to ensuring a well-rounded onboarding process. Supervisors should use discretion in implementation based on the specific needs of the new hires and the department.

Example Onboarding Program | First day | First week | 30 days | 90 days | 180 days | One year | Beyond |

Prior to Employee's First Day on the Job: Welcome employee before his/her first day. Plan to create a welcoming experience and provide for a smooth day one for the new employee.

- Conduct welcome call and email information needed to prepare employee for first day.
- Provide employee with information on how to set up PID and get parking pass and Hokie Passport prior to first day.
- Ensure new employee's work area is ready: Space should be clean, void of old files, and set up with office supplies.
- Create onboarding schedule to include:
  - Introductory meeting with supervisor.
  - New hire paperwork not already completed online.
  - Computer set up with IT.
  - Time to get parking pass and Hokie Passport (if not done already).
  - Scheduled head-shot with Media Relations (if required).
  - Tour and introductions.
  - Time to acclimate self to space, set up email, voicemail, and review job description/etc.
- Schedule introductory meetings with chain of command/stakeholders, etc.
- Confirm or schedule date for HR Orientation.
- Determine overall training plan for job specific knowledge/management skills, etc.
- Schedule key meetings and weekly meetings with supervisor (first 30 days).

First Day: Welcome employee and ensure they have the necessary tools to be successful in their new role.

- Greet and escort the new employee to their office.
- Conduct tour of building and orient new employee to work area. Make sure equipment works and supplies are available.
- Introduce the new employee to co-workers and explain working relationships. Send hiring announcement via email to team and relevant stakeholders. Send a personal reminder to colleagues to come by and introduce themselves if they do not meet during the typical introduction time. Make sure they know the person's name and role.
- Review with the new employee the onboarding memo and other items on the agenda for the day. Set up email signature and voicemail (provide guidance as needed).
- Discuss unit and organizational goals, mission, values; office culture and expectations, as well as important departmental and university policies.
- Welcome lunch with team members (or, in the least, with manager).

- Review job description and discuss roles and responsibilities. Discuss performance standards, expectations, performance evaluation process, including quarterly and annual reviews.
- Check in with new employee before the end of the day; ask if they have any questions and get their impressions of their first day.

First Month: Begin new hire's acclimation to Virginia Tech via campus tour, meetings with staff, leadership.

- Provide overview of the department and its relationship to the rest of the organization.
- Ensure new employee is aware of regularly scheduled team and one-on-one (Touchpoint) meetings.
- Work with new employee to complete performance plan and individual work plan for the year. Note: HR policies require this be completed within initial 30 days.
- Explain time clock (if applicable), leave approval and reporting.
- Discuss management trainings, if applicable, and other appropriate trainings offered/required.

90 Day Check-In: Determine if there are additional needs for support, learning, and education to be effective.

- Schedule meeting to discuss employment experience up to this point and any topics you want to raise.
- Ensure new hire is feeling comfortable with transition. Are they getting the support they need? Do they have any concerns?
- Review performance and update short- and long-term performance goals.
- Continue training/education as needed.

Six Month Check-In: New hire is still in transition period, but should already be a productive member of your team. Determine any additional needs for support, learning, and education.

- Check-in frequently with new employee regarding questions and progress.
- Determine appropriate annual goals and update as needed; review performance. If **University Staff Probationary or First Year employee**, conduct six month review using the PageUp Performance Management System.

Nine Month Check-In: Determine if there are any additional needs and encourage continued performance.

- Check-in with new employee frequently regarding performance and acclimation to the organization.

➢ Determine/review performance goals. Maintain communication as it related to employee's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, and stellar performance.

➢ Continue training/education with employee.

One Year Check-In: Recognize a successful year of employment. Continued demonstrations of inclusiveness and appreciation are vital.

➢ Celebrate/acknowledge anniversary. Check-in on employee's thoughts. Are they still happy in their role?

➢ Do they have any concerns? Where do they see themselves in the coming year? What can you do as their supervisor to support their ongoing growth and success?

➢ Review and update performance goals and trainings. If **University Staff Probationary or First Year employee**, conduct 6-month and 12-month reviews in the PageUp Performance Management System.

EVALUATIONS

Performance Evaluations *exist to make better employees –*
Self-Evaluations *give employees their time to shine!*

There are three parts to the performance evaluation process:

➢ Performance Evaluation (Supervisor)

➢ Self-Evaluation (Employee)

➢ Performance Plan (Employee AND Supervisor)

(**RECOMMENDATION:** Maintain a current job description in the Applicant Tracking System for alignment to the PageUp Performance Management System)

Evaluations should be completed using five perspectives:

➢ Be *self-aware*

➢ Seek *opportunities for growth*

➢ Seek *guidance from others*

➢ Seek *feedback from others*

➢ Share *feedback with others*

Use this feedback to:

➢ Fairly and honestly evaluate yourself (**good** and **bad**)

➢ Determine any necessary adjustments

- To performance/behavior

- To training needs
- To career goals and opportunities for career development

Answer the following questions:

➢ "What are my most significant accomplishments this year?"

➢ "How have I performed in the past year? Where can I improve?"

➢ "Have I met the goals assigned to me?"

➢ "What do I want to do in this position?"

➢ "What do I want to do with my career?"

Above all, make sure everything you do has a **specific** and **positive impact** on the performance of your department.

Performance Evaluations

Effective performance management begins with constant feedback to employees regarding the things they are doing well, as well as the areas in which they need to improve. Managers/supervisors must also ensure their employees have the resources, training, and guidance needed to be successful in their roles. A formal evaluation is just one more piece of the puzzle that is effective performance management.

So how do you evaluate your employee appropriately?

University Staff employees are required to undergo a twelve-month probationary period in their first year of state employment. Performance evaluations are required twice - at six months and prior to completion of the twelve-month period.

Please refer to the Performance Management Website for more information on the evaluation process.

While all employees are evaluated annually to determine their ability to meet the responsibilities of their position and their achievement of the performance goals set for them, the following guidance refers to appropriate evaluation of University and Classified Staff Employees only, and is completed via the online PageUp Performance Management System.

Performance Ratings

Exceptional

The employee significantly exceeds expectations as noted in job duties and performance goals. They model behaviors that support Virginia Tech's values and college/unit expectations. The employee's contributions have a consistently positive impact and value to the department and to the organization. This employee is easily recognized as a top performer.

Meets

The employee consistently demonstrates effective performance by meeting expectations as defined by job duties and performance goals. They are viewed as someone who gets the job done and effectively prioritizes work. They contribute to the overall objectives of the department and/or the organization.

Does not meet

The employee does not meet expectations as defined in the job duties and performance goals. This may be due to being new to a role or new to a specific assignment; it may also reflect outcomes and/or behaviors that need attention and do not meet expectations for the role. Steps to improvement should be discussed and documented.

★ If "does not meet" evaluation is given, the employee is considered "unsatisfactory". Within 10 workdays of the employee acknowledging receipt of a performance review with an overall rating of "Does not meet," the supervisor, in collaboration with the HR Representative, is required to create a **performance re-evaluation plan** in the PageUp Performance Management System. This plan will outline performance expectations for the subsequent three months.

★ The supervisor must discuss with the employee specific recommendations for meeting the minimum performance measures contained in the re-evaluation plan during the re-evaluation period. **It is recommended that the manager schedule weekly meetings with the employee throughout this period to ensure close evaluation and support of the employee as they work to meet their goals.**

★ If the employee transfers to another position during the re-evaluation period, the re-evaluation process will be terminated. Regardless of the employee's movement to another position during this re-evaluation period, the employee will not be eligible for a performance-based pay increase.

In addition to required annual evaluations, it is strongly recommended that managers/supervisors utilize **quarterly** and **mid-year evaluations** to measure employee progress toward their goals. This practice not only makes it easier to complete the annual review, but it helps keep employee performance aligned with management expectations, and assists managers/supervisors in resolving small problems before they become big ones.

Quick Note: As a manager, it is easy to succumb to errors in evaluation such as: only remembering recent events or really big things; letting personal feelings get in the way of professional goals; thinking everything a person does is right (or wrong); holding employees to different standards (especially if they are more "like you"); or not wanting to "hurt feelings" by holding an employee accountable. You can avoid the errors and biases by recognizing and understanding them. Please visit Evaluation Dos and Don'ts and the Performance Management Evaluation Page to learn more.

VIRGINIA TECH Success

Department Success → Goals of Department are met

Management Success → Employees achieving their goals

Employee Success → Meeting Performance Goals

Self-Evaluation and Performance Plan

The self-evaluation provides a broad overview of the employee's accomplishments. This practice is optional, **but highly recommended**. It gives the employee the opportunity to engage in their evaluation and provides the manager with a clear picture of what has been achieved from the employee's perspective.

S SPECIFIC: What EXACTLY do you want to accomplish? HOW?

M MEASURABLE: How will you evaluate if you achieved this goal?

A ACHIEVABLE: Is it possible to obtain? (But stretchable also?)

R RELEVANT: How does this goal relate to DEPARTMENT goals?

T TIMED: Set yourself limits (and short, mid, long term)
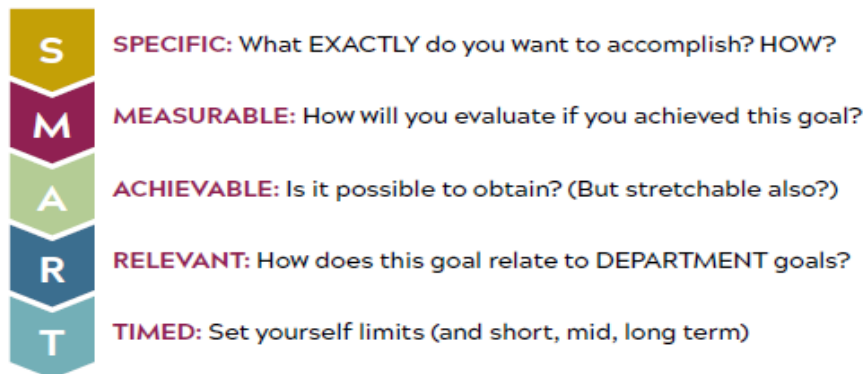
Performance Goals

Probationary Review Goal: (for newer employees who were given a goal on either their six- or twelve-month evaluations)

Example of how the goal was achieved:

Goal 1: Here is the first goal you gave me on last year's performance plan.

In this section, the employee provides a broad overview of how they have or have not (and why not) achieved this goal, as well as additional ideas to move this goal forward, adapt it, or take it to the next level. Including, areas in which they were extremely influential in accomplishing or programs they have developed and implemented that demonstrate achievement of that goal.

Metric 1: Here is the first metric to demonstrate achievement of the above goal.

Here, the employee will provide a more specific description of how/when/why/in what manner this metric was met; or, if not met, explain why not, along with any relevant suggestions or information to be successful in future endeavors.

Goal 2: Repeat practice: Broad overview of goal achievement; specifics of metrics met.

Job Specific Competencies (See competency ratings webpage):

No need to break down each individual competency in this section, but if there is an area in which the employee excels, they explain why. If there is a weak area, the employee can acknowledge it and provide a plan for change (training, practice, etc.). For example: "I believe that I have demonstrated exceptional performance in all Job Specific Competencies: specifically, my high level of customer service acumen is proven in the 14 emails I have received in the last year (attached) demonstrating my propensity to go above and beyond; however, I continue to work on my ability to consistently present information in a thoughtful and professional manner. To this end, I am scheduled for UOPD training on "Clear and Effective Communication"."

Professional Development and Career Goals Met: (this is for the past year)

➢ Certification achieved, Date

➢ Continuing courses completed, Date

➢ Award Received, Date

Professional Development and Career Goals Set: (this is for the coming year, to be later spelled out on Performance Plan)

My career development goals for the coming year include:

➢ Passing Certification, Date

➢ Gaining a better understanding of …

➢ Promotion to this position (and justification for)

★ **Make sure the employee provides justification for why/how these goals will benefit the department**

Employee should include: What the employee has done; why it's benefited the department; and why it should be taken into consideration. Also, the employee may add anything else that they want on the record (things they want to do, responsibilities to take on, any concerns) that don't easily fit into another area. This is also an opportunity to present some of their **IDEAL GOALS** for the forthcoming Performance Plan.

It is never too early to get a head start on developing ideas
to improve in all areas at Virginia Tech!

How to Set Goals for your Performance Plan:

GOAL: I want to improve my performance in XXXX

Specific: What do you want to achieve and why? Who is involved? What are the requirements/constraints?

I received low marks on my ability to XXXX on my last performance review OR I have received feedback that I need to improve XXXX. Improving my skills requires that I …

- ➢ do this training.
- ➢ make this specific effort.
- ➢ would like to achieve XYZ.

Measurable: Success: How do you track progress and measure the outcome? How much or many? How will you know when you've reached it?

- ➢ I will complete **this** specific training (that it has been determined I need).
- ➢ I will be able to demonstrate my new skill in **this** specific manner.
- ➢ By my next annual review, I will be ranked **"exceptional"** in this area.

Achievable: How will you accomplish the goal? What resources are needed? Is it realistic?

- ➢ Here is the plan I have created in order to achieve these goals.
- ➢ I believe I can do it based on…
- ➢ I will use these resources (colleagues, trainings, etc.) to meet the goals I have set.

Relevant: Is this a worthwhile goal? What is the expected impact? Does it align with our organization's goals?

- ➢ This is why it is important that I do this.
- ➢ This is how THIS goal meets the goals of the department/my position.

Timbound: When will you accomplish this goal?

- ➢ It is realistic for me to accomplish this goal by…

FINALIZE THE GOAL STATEMENT:

_____ WILL _____ _____
       (WHO)   (ACTION WORD)   (OBJECT OF GOAL)

BY _____ FOR THE PURPOSE OF_____.
       (TIME)   (EXPLAIN RELEVANCY)

Individual Professional Development Plan

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the value of completing an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)?

A lot of studies claim that people who write down their goals and create a plan to achieve them are more likely to do so. Regardless of whether or not this is true, we can all agree on two things: a/ It is good to have a plan of action and b/ your career is your responsibility. The IPDP helps you look closely both at your career and around the university to see where your goals may fit with the needs of Virginia Tech—and what you want or need to do to achieve these goals.

How should the IPDP be used?

This is a goal and a plan- for you and your career. It is not set in stone and it is not a requirement. Revisit your IPDP every few months (or annually) to determine if it is still the vision you have for yourself and your career—or if it is still feasible. If it is, keep working toward that goal. If it is not, change it.

Can I change it?

Yes. Anytime. This is a tool for you to use to guide your career. You can change it anytime your plans change.

Does my supervisor/ manager have to approve my IPDP?

No. Again, this is for you. However, it may be good to share it with your manager or management chain and gain their insight. They may have advice on how to reach the next steps or what training or certifications you should achieve. Additionally, it may be good for your management to understand what your career aspirations entail and what you are willing to do to achieve them.

Does it go in my personnel file?

No. However, it may not be a bad idea to include it as part of your self-evaluation, and you will definitely want to include your career goals in conversations with your management about your career development.

Am I evaluated on this?

No. This is for your personal career development only.

INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Created on _____ for _____.

Current Position: _____

****

Goal/ Career Opportunity: _____ **Timeline**: _____

What will I do to achieve this goal?	*Who will I connect with to help me achieve this goal?*
1. _____ *By when?* _____	1. _____
2. _____ *By when?* _____	2. _____
3. _____ *By when?* _____	3. _____
What training/certifications/education will I complete to make me more prepared for this next step? 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____	*What obstacles stand in my way to achieving this goal?* _____ _____ *What will I do to overcome them?* _____ _____

Next Goal/ Career Opportunity: _____ **Timeline**: _____

What will I do to reach the next goal/career step?	*Who will I connect with to help me achieve this goal?*
1. _____ *By when?* _____	1. _____
2. _____ *By when?* _____	2. _____
3. _____ *By when?* _____	3. _____
What training/certifications/education will I complete to make me more prepared for this next step? 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____	*What obstacles stand in my way to achieving this goal?* _____ _____ *What will I do to overcome them?* _____ _____

What is my Ultimate Career Goal or my "Ideal Position"? _____

What timeline have I given myself to achieve this goal? _____

Is there anything specific I have to accomplish in order to achieve this goal?
_____
_____

****

Completed Date/Notes_____

Updated/Notes_____

PROBATIONARY PROGRESS REVIEWS

University Staff employees in their first year of state employment are required to undergo a **twelve month probationary period**, within which their managers are required to evaluate them twice, as per DHRM Policy 1.45 Probationary Period.

The first evaluation should occur at **six months**. The second must occur prior to the end of the **twelve months** and signifies the end of the probationary period. To complete the probationary progress review, the supervisor must meet with the employee to review the employee's performance and to give feedback and guidance.

Using the PageUp Performance Management System, supervisors must rate their employees as:

➢ **Exceptional –** *The employee significantly exceeds performance expectations for a new employee. Managers should take into consideration their expectation for a new employee at that stage of training/experience.*

➢ **Meets –** *The employee consistently demonstrates effective performance by meeting expectations as defined by job duties and performance goals. They are viewed as someone who gets the job done and effectively prioritizes work. They contribute to the overall objectives of the department and/or the organization.*

➢ **Does Not Meet –** *The employee does not meet expectations as defined in the job duties and performance goals and is at an unacceptable level. If a manager determines that an employee has unacceptable performance at either their six- or twelve-month mark, they should reach out to their Human Resources Representative prior to meeting with the employee in order to discuss appropriate next steps.*

Probationary periods may be extended, but not to exceed a total probationary period of 18 months for reasons beyond the employee's control: such as lack of essential training provided, changes in supervision or job responsibilities, or transfer to a different department. Probationary periods may not be extended for poor attendance, poor attitude, or poor performance that is not a result of a lack of training.

• Probationary periods are automatically extended by Human Resources when probationary employees are on leave, with or without pay (including VSDP), for more than 14 consecutive days. If the employee is in a university academic year appointment, probationary periods must be extended by the amount of time not worked (winter and summer breaks).

• If an employee has transferred to a different department prior to the completion of the twelve-month Probationary Progress Review, the new department may request an extension of probation. The employee should be made aware that the new hiring department plans to request an extension of the probationary period prior to signing the terms of offer.

- New employees who are transferring from another state agency or from another Virginia Tech department without a break in service and have already served a twelve-month probationary period do not serve another probationary period.

- Interim Reviews are recommended (using the PageUp Performance Management System) when there has been a significant change in performance over a short period. Interim reviews serve to document conversations with employees and demonstrate a manager's attempts to support performance improvement.

- Employees must have received their six-month probationary review with a rating of "Meets" to be eligible to be considered for transfer or promotion to other salaried positions outside their original hiring department.

For more information on the Probationary Period or Probationary Progress Reviews, please see DHRM Policy 1.45 Probationary Period.

Please visit the Employee Relations Website for more information regarding Performance Management, or you may contact the University Employee Relations team with any questions.

Time-Bound:

➢ In three months, I will have completed **this** training.

➢ At my midterm evaluation, I will be able to demonstrate my knowledge in **this area.**

➢ By my next annual review, I will be ranked "exceptional" in **this area**.
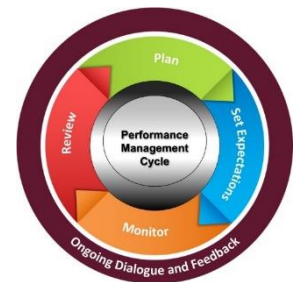
CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Continuous performance management is essential in building collaborative relationships and strong teams. It is only successful with a collaborative supervisor-employee relationship where both parties build trust and provide constructive feedback. Ongoing constructive feedback that is honest, well-intended, and delivered with tact, whether from supervisor to employee or employee to supervisor, can help facilitate positive change, motivate engagement, and achieve optimum performance.

It is highly recommended to practice **every day** performance management. Frequent constructive feedback keeps goals and expectations aligned; identifies roadblocks in real time; avoids miscommunications that can affect performance and growth; and strengthens collaborative relationships while providing guidance and coaching along the way. Therefore, there are no surprises when the evaluation meeting takes place.

Continuous performance management can be practiced through frequent check-ins, one-on-ones, or Touchpoints.

TOUCHPOINTS

Touchpoints are ongoing, one-on-one conversations between supervisors and employees about work progress, goals, performance to date, and plan of action going forward.

> Meetings should be held on a recurrent schedule, at least once per month.

Share Responsibility for Performance

Touchpoints are **simple**, quick, and informal, allowing time and attention to develop a strong working relationship and ensure progress is being made towards goal attainment.

Keep Priorities and Goals Aligned

Improve Communication

Employee and *Supervisor* feedback is prepared in advance. Resources are available to help guide the collaborative discussion and sharing that will foster trust and build relationships.

Reinforce Your Team

Inspire Engagement and Morale

Take time to meet and stay on track to success with TOUCHPOINTS!

Please contact the University Employee Relations Team for more information or training.

V̅T̅ | HUMAN RESOURCES
VIRGINIA TECH.

Touchpoints Frequently Asked Questions

What are Touchpoints and why do we have them?

Touchpoints are an ongoing, one-on-one, conversation between supervisors and employees about work progress, goals, performance to date, and plan of action going forward, held at regular intervals throughout the year. They are quick and informal, allowing time and space to develop a strong working relationship and ensure progress is being made towards goal attainment.

How do Touchpoints work?

1. Employee and supervisor confirm a meeting time to exchange feedback.
2. Feedback is prepared by the employee and supervisor in advance of the conversation.
3. Employee and supervisor discuss successes, lessons learned, growth opportunities, short and long-term goals and priorities.
4. Employee and supervisor document the insights, guidance and feedback, as well as any important reflections.
5. Employee and supervisor agree and arrange to meet again.

For both supervisors and employees, the focus is on conversations and meaningful connections to help you maximize your contributions at work and help you feel fully satisfied by the work you do.

To have meaningful conversations, it is good to focus on:

- having a positive mindset about your working relationships;
- having a sense of shared responsibility for performance conversations;
- asking questions, seeking examples, and clarifying meaning.

How do I prepare for Touchpoints with my supervisor?

Here are some tips for making the most of your Touchpoints:

- Bring an agenda of things to talk about.
- Pick some great questions. (Visit the [Continuous Performance Management Website](#) for Touchpoint discussion templates.)
- Consider where your professional development is right now and where you would like to take it in the short and long term.

In the beginning, you will likely work more on getting rid of roadblocks and issues that are keeping you from doing your best work. Later, that will transform into more coaching time as you collaborate on priorities and goals.

Keep all this in mind when planning your Touchpoints and deciding what to focus on.

How do you do a Touchpoints meeting?

If you are new to having Touchpoints, it really just takes a few basic steps:

- **Create an agenda** – Provide some key talking points (five questions or less) to discuss that will help build the collaborative supervisor-employee relationship. Invite employee buy-in.

- **Ask questions during the meeting** - Good open-ended questions are a key component of effective meetings, especially in the beginning. Open-ended questions will help unearth important insights. (Visit the **Continuous Performance Management Website** for Touchpoint discussion templates.)

- **Listen for insights** - Listening is an important part of Touchpoints because you are looking to uncover valuable information that will allow you to grow and excel. Ask follow-up and clarifying questions.

- **Follow up** - Ensure progress is made by committing to priorities: Before the meeting ends, take at least five minutes to reflect, and agree on what each participant is responsible for taking action on. Cover what needs to get done between now and the beginning of your next Touchpoint. If necessary, follow – up with an email to make sure both participants are on the same page.

Over time, your Touchpoint (one-on-one) meetings should change as your relationship with your supervisor enhances and you develop new skills. So, keep in mind that this is just a good starter framework and should be adjusted over time.

What do you talk about in Touchpoints?

You can focus on everything from career development, to building rapport, to learning how to improve certain skills, your team, or your department. (Visit the **Continuous Performance Management Website** for more Touchpoint discussion templates.)

Here are some good Touchpoint questions to ask:

- How could I improve as an employee?

- How can I help my coworkers succeed?

- How could I have handled a recent situation differently?

- What can I add to my plate for a greater challenge?

- What advice do you have on improving my work-life balance?

Effective questions will help get the conversation started and keep it going in the right direction. The feedback and insights you uncover will help improve your performance and standing in on the team.

Touchpoint standard

- How are you? What is going on inside and outside work?

- What accomplishments are you proud of?

- Is anything blocking you?

- What are your top priorities right now? (Are we aligned?)

- What can I do to support you?

- Anything else you would like to talk about today?

Remote work

Remote employees face unique challenges and may need time to find their remote working style. It is part of a remote supervisor's job to guide this journey.

- What do you like and dislike about working from home?

- How are the tools we are using working for you?

- What can other people in our department or I do to make remote work easier for you?

- How has remote work impacted the team dynamics – positively and negatively?

Relationship building

Building a strong relationship with a direct report is more challenging when you are not in the same office. Chatting about non-work topics can replace those vital water cooler moments.

- How has working remotely impacted your family routines?

- What vacation (or staycation) plans do you have coming up?

- Can you recommend any good podcasts or books?

- What was one of your funniest moments at work?

- Any cool movies you watched recently?

Well-being

Remote work can impact your team member's physical and mental health. Ask these questions to help keep their well-being high.

- Does work feel energizing or draining to you right now?
- What adjustments can we make that would improve your well-being?
- Have you been able to find clear boundaries between work and personal life?
- Do you feel like you are able to maintain a healthy, active lifestyle?
- Do you ever feel lonely or isolated at work?

Communication

Frequent, effective communication is a pillar of successful remote collaboration. *Touch* with team members to help them meet their communication needs.

- How do you feel about the amount of communication in our team and department? Would you prefer more or less?
- Are you getting enough feedback from your colleagues and me?
- How well do you feel informed about what is going on in the rest of the department?
- What is something I can improve in my communication style and habits?

Productivity

Remote workers can be more productive than office workers, but only if they have a supportive work environment.

- How productive have you been feeling lately?
- How is your workload? (Anything we should delegate or deprioritize?)
- Do you have enough clarity about your role and responsibilities?
- How challenging is it for you to stay focused when working from home?
- Do you have access to all the resources and information you need?

Bonus Questions

- What's one win we had as a team this past week?

- What's your work and non-work highlight of the past month?

- If there was one thing I could do differently to help you more, what would it be?

- On a scale of 1-10, how happy are you with your work-life balance? How can we get closer to 10?

- How can I best support the team as a manager?

- What's one skill you'd like to improve this quarter?

- What, if anything, feels harder than it should be in your day-to-day work?

For both Supervisor and Employee – VIEW THE OTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

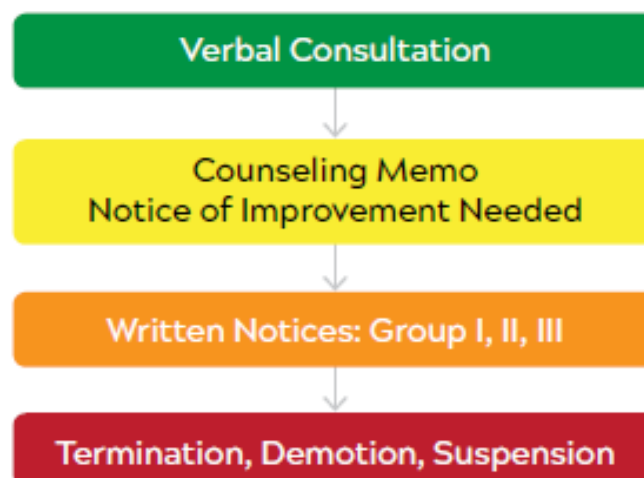|	
What does success look like?	What are the challenges?
Are you pulling the other up or bringing them down?	What is one thing you can do to support the other?

Please visit the [Continuous Performance Management Website](#) for more information and Touchpoints resources.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

The GOAL of discipline is to IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

➢ Act immediately.

➢ Be specific: provide examples that demonstrate the poor performance.

➢ Explain the negative impact on the business operations.

➢ Attack the *problem*, not the *person*.

Verbal Consultation
↓
Counseling Memo
Notice of Improvement Needed
↓
Written Notices: Group I, II, III
↓
Termination, Demotion, Suspension

Three meetings when moving forward with disciplinary action:

Meeting 1: "Intention Meeting" Explain problem to employee and issue the Due Process Letter (Letter of Intent).

Meeting 2: "Due Process Meeting" (at least 24 hours/1 business day later) This is the employee's opportunity to explain why they feel the suggested discipline is not appropriate for this situation.

Meeting 3: "Discipline Meeting" (recommended within a week) Explain final decision to employee and issue the Written Notice.

Recommendations for Staff Employees

This chart is for reference only. As every situation is different, please contact your Human Resources Representative or University Employee Relations to determine appropriate discipline.

Staff (Classified or University) [*]
Verbal Counseling: Sit down with the employee to discuss the situation, including concerns and requirements moving forward. Always make a note of conversations of this nature.
Written Counseling: Have another conversation with the employee, but this time, follow up with written documentation detailing the concerns AND your requirements for the future. Complete a: ▷ **Counseling Memo** for behavioral concerns ▷ **P-142 Notice of Improvement Needed** for performance issues Give one copy to the employee, keep a second for your records, and send a third to the Division of Human Resources to be added to the employee's record (Submit documents using this link)
Written Notices: There are three levels of Written Notice (Group I, Group II, and Group III) that can be issued. Which level is issued–and whether any other discipline is imposed in conjunction with it (demotion, transfer, termination)–is dependent on three standards: ▷ Offense being disciplined (and severity of it) ▷ Impact on business operations ▷ Prior discipline Please contact Employee Relations to determine which is appropriate for the situation. **A Due Process letter must be issued prior to a written notice, and a Due Process meeting must be held.** [**]
Demotion, Suspension, or Termination[†] If communication and written discipline have not corrected the problem, and you have exhausted all other options, it may be necessary to consider other disciplinary options. **Such decisions should only be made in conjunction with your HR Representative or** University Employee Relations**.**
Retain one copy of disciplinary actions, including due process letter, in management's employee file, and forward another signed copy to the Division of Human Resources (Submit documents using this link) for inclusion in the employee's personnel file.

[*]Wage employee and Staff employees who are still within their probationary period are not privy to the Progressive Discipline Process and may be terminated at any time without notice for performance or behavioral concerns. Please contact your Human Resources Representative or University Employee Relations to discuss your options.

Due Process is REQUIRED. Prior to issuing a Written Notice, management is requirement to meet with the employee to discuss the intention to issue discipline, providing a minimum 24 hours for the employee to determine their defense. After hearing the employee's defense, the management may decide:

➢ Not to issue any disciplinary action.

➢ To issue a lesser or different disciplinary action.

➢ To issue the written notice as planned.

†An employee has the right to GRIEVE any disciplinary decision, up to and including termination, provided the grievance is filed within 30 days of the action taken. Contact University Employee Relations with questions related to the grievance process.

For employee issues relating to A/P Faculty and other Faculty employees, contact University Employee Relations **or the Provost's office** for guidance related to that unique situation.

Letter Templates

All Employee Relations Letter Templates can be found online.

Sample Counseling Memorandum - Performance

Instructions are in boldface type

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 1, 2023

From: Mary Jane Supervisor **(Sign or initial here)**

To: Wanda Doe Employee

Subject: Documented Counseling

---

1. Describe the behavior. Cite specific examples. Keep in mind that your objective is to lay out a clear and factual foundation of all information that led to your decision to take this action.

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of concerns regarding your performance and to set forth expectations regarding necessary improvement. My intention is to give you a fair opportunity to correct the problems that have been observed, so that disciplinary action will not be necessary.

On DATE, I emailed you asking for copies of the financial records for the Betty Johnson Scholarship fund. The copies were needed for a meeting with the vice president of the department on DATE. You did not respond to my email, and on DATE, I asked you again except this time in-person to provide me with the copies of these documents. You apologized for not responding to my email and said you were busy trying to coordinate the Scholarship Expo and asked me if it would be alright to give the copies on Monday, DATE. I told you yes and re-emphasized to give me the copies on Monday and no later. As of today DATE, I still have not received copies of the documents I requested from you.

2. Clarify your expectations. You may want to use specific examples in order to ensure that the employee understands. State what correction you want made and when. For most types of behavior or performance problems, you will want correction "on an immediate and sustained basis."

In the future you are to provide any documents or complete job task(s) in a timely manner of their requested due date. I expect to see improvement in your performance on an immediate and sustained basis. I want you take the DATE Time Management workshop offered here at the university to help you with tips and strategies on how to prioritize your work assignments. I will follow up with you on DATE to see if you have attended the workshop.

3. State the probable action to be taken if the offense is repeated or deficiency persists.

I am optimistic that you will use this memorandum to improve, and further action will not be necessary. Failure to meet my expectations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

4. Offer the employee an opportunity to sign the memo. If the employee refuses/declines to sign during the meeting, write "employee refused to sign" on the signature line, initial and date. The employee gets the original, you keep a copy.

I acknowledge that the above document has been discussed with me and I have received a copy of this same document.

_____   _____

Employee's Signature   Date

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

NOTICE OF IMPROVEMENT NEEDED/SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

Name:	Employee ID# or SS#:
Position Number:	Agency & Division:
Work Title:	

This form documents that you must make immediate improvement in the performance of your duties. Continued poor performance as described below may result in an overall "Below Contributor" rating on the annual performance evaluation conducted in this performance cycle.

Description of specific performance deficiencies and improvements needed:

Improvement plan:

Supervisor's Signature:		Date:
Reviewer's Comments:	Signature:	Date:
Employee's Comments:	Signature:	Date:

Note: An employee who receives at least one Improvement Needed form during the performance cycle may receive an overall "Below Contributor" rating on the performance evaluation conducted in the same performance cycle. Receipt of one or more of these forms does not automatically warrant a "Below Contributor" rating.

Offense Group Types

Group I Offenses

➢ Relatively **minor impact** on agency operations, but requires management intervention

➢ Active two years

➢ May issue a Group II Written Notice for Group I offense **if** active Group I Written Notice for same offense

➢ Four active Group I Written Notices = termination/demotion or transfer (5% decrease) /suspension without pay (>30 days)

➢ Offense categories:

- 01–Attendance/excessive tardiness
- 11–Unsatisfactory Performance
- 35–Abuse of state time
- 36–Obscene or abusive language
- 37–Disruptive Behavior
- 38–Conviction of a minor moving traffic violation while using a state-owned vehicle

Group II Offenses

➢ Misconduct of a more serious nature that **significantly impacts** agency operations

➢ Active three years

➢ May suspend without pay (>10 days)

➢ Second Group II Written Notice = termination, demotion or transfer (5 percent decrease), suspension without pay (>30 days)

➢ Offense categories:

- 02–Leaving work without permission
- 03–Failure to report to work without proper notice
- 13–Failure to follow instructions and/or policy
- 14–Safety rule violation (where no threat of bodily harm exists)
- 51–Unauthorized use or misuse of state property
- 56–Insubordination
- 57–Refusal to work overtime as required

Group III Offenses

➢ Misconduct of most serious nature that **severely impacts** agency operations

➢ Active 4 years

➢ One Group III Written Notice may result in termination, suspension without pay (>30 days), demotion or transfer (5 percent decrease)

➢ Offense categories:

- 04–3 days absent without authorization

- 14–Violating safety rules (where threat of bodily harm exists)

- 71–Sleeping during work hours

- 72–Theft or unauthorized removal of state records/property

- 73–Threats or Coercion

- 74–Falsification of records and/or any misuse or unauthorized use of state records

- 75–Gambling on state property or during work hours

- 76–Criminal convictions for illegal conduct occurring on or off the job that clearly are related to job performance or are of such a nature that to continue employees in their positions could constitute negligence in regard to agencies' duties to the public or to other state employees

- 77–Willfully or recklessly damaging state property or records

- 79–Unauthorized possession of weapons

- 81–Abuse or neglect of clients

- Physical Violence

- Participating in work slowdown

Draft Due Process Letter (place on letterhead)

[DATE]

Dear [EMPLOYEE NAME]:

You are a [job title] in [College/Department/Facility]. In this position you are responsible for [INSERT A VERY BRIEF JOB SUMMARY SHOWING THE EMPLOYEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PERFORMING THE DUTY AT ISSUE]. For example: *In this position you are responsible for providing administrative and secretarial support for the vice president and department. Your duties include typing, filing and scheduling, financial record keeping, payroll, coordination of meetings and conferences, ordering supplies, coordinating direct mailings and dealing with a diverse group of important external callers and visitors as well as internal contacts at all levels of the university.*

DESCRIBE INCIDENT/BEHAVIOR PROVIDING DATE(S) AND DETAILS] Shows employee failed to perform relevant duties. For example: *On 2/11/23 I emailed you asking for copies of the financial records of our petty cash account. The copies were needed for a meeting with the vice president of the department on 3/4/23. You did not respond to my email, and on 2/18/23, I asked you again except this time in-person to provide me with the copies of these documents. You apologized for not responding to my email and said you were busy trying to coordinate the EVO Expo Conference and asked me if it would be alright to give the copies on Monday, 2/23/23. I told you yes and re-emphasized to give me the copies on Monday and no later. As of today 3/9/23, I still have not received copies of the documents I requested from you.]*

Your behavior, as outlined above, is a violation of the Virginia Department of Human Resources Management Standard of Conduct Policy 1.60,[*-Unsatisfactory Performance*]. Therefore, I am considering issuing to you a [Group I/II/III] written notice [with suspension/termination (optional)].

I have scheduled a follow-up meeting with you on [DATE] at [TIME, PLACE]. At that meeting, you will have an opportunity to provide information you want me to consider before I make a final decision with respect to issuing the [Group I/II/III] written notice [with suspension/termination (optional)]. If you do not come to the meeting on [date], I will proceed with this action on the basis of the best information I could obtain without your verbal or written response, including the facts as stated above and your employment record.

[ONLY USE THE FOLLOWING IN PLACE OF THE ABOVE PARAGRAPH IF THE EMPLOYEE IS NOT AT WORK AND THEIR RETURN IS DOUBTFUL]

I have scheduled a follow-up meeting with you on [DATE] at [TIME, PLACE]. At that meeting, you will have an opportunity to provide information you want me to consider before I make a final decision with respect to issuing the [Group I/II/III] written notice [with suspension/termination (optional)]. If you do not come to the meeting on [DATE, TIME, PLACE] I will issue the Group [I/II/III] written notice [with suspension/termination (optional)] to you via US mail.]

Sincerely,

[Supervisor/Manager]
[TITLE]

cc: Appropriate others, Human Resources

Form 129-01-004 (Revised 03/25/19)

Written Notice

Section I

Employee's Name   Agency

Offense Date(s) _____ Issued Date_____ Inactive Date*_____

Issued by:

         Print name   Title   Signature

> *Inactive date is the issued date:*
> - *plus 2 years for a Group I,*
> - *plus 3 years for Group II, or*
> - *plus 4 years for Group III.*

Section II - Offense

Type of Offense: Check one and include Offense Category (See Addendum for Written Notice Offense Codes/Categories)

☐ Group I   ☐ Group II   ☐ Group III

Nature of Offense and Evidence: Briefly describe the offense and give an explanation of the evidence. (Additional documentation may be attached.)
Documentation attached? Yes _____, # of pages _____; No _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section III – Disciplinary action taken in addition to issuing written notice

☐ Suspension from   through   Return to Work   #Days Suspended **

         Date   Date   Date/Time

Transfer or demotion (check below as appropriate)

☐ Reduced Duties with _____ % disciplinary pay reduction*** effective _____

         Date

> **Note: FLSA exempt employees may be suspended in whole days

☐ Disciplinary Transfer – Same Pay Band with _____% disciplinary pay reduction*** effective _____

         Date

☐ Demotion to lower Pay Band with _____% disciplinary pay reduction*** effective _____

         Date

New Role Title   New Position #   New Location

> ***Note: Salary reduction of at least 5% is required. Also requires HR approval

☐ Termination _____

         Effective Date

Section IV – Circumstances considered

Describe any circumstances or background information used to mitigate (reduce) or to support the disciplinary action above.
(Additional documentation may be attached.) Documentation attached? Yes _____, # of pages _____   No _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section V - Notice to employee

It is expected that the situation described above will be corrected immediately in accordance with the Standards of Conduct for employees and/or the performance measures outlined in your Employee Work Profile. **A Written Notice may be used in place of a Notice of Improvement Needed Form, and may affect your overall performance rating.** In the event that this situation is not corrected, or another offense occurs, you may be subject to further disciplinary action as outlined in the Standards of Conduct Policy. **If you wish to appeal this disciplinary action, you may do so under the provisions of the Employee Grievance Procedure within 30 calendar days of your receipt of this Written Notice.** For more information about the Employee Grievance Procedure contact the Department of Human Resource Management's Office of Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) at (804) 786-7994, toll-free at 1-888-23-ADVICE (1-888-232-3842), by FAX at (804) 786-1606, or by e-mail at edr@dhrm.virginia.gov.

Section VI – Employee's signature

Employee Signature   Date

Your signature only acknowledges receipt of the notice and notes the date of receipt. Your signature does not imply agreement or disagreement with the notice itself. If you refuse to sign, someone in a supervisory position within the agency will be asked to initial the form indicating that you received a copy of the form and date of receipt.

☐ Employee refused to sign/unavailable to sign   Witness Initials _____   Date _____

Written Notice Offense Codes

01	Attendance/excessive tardiness
02	Leaving work without permission
03	Failure to report without notice
04	Three days absent without authorization
11	Unsatisfactory Performance
12	Uniform violation/personal grooming
13	Failure to follow instructions and/or policy
14	Safety rule violation
31	Violation of Policy 1.05, Alcohol and Other Drugs
32	Violation of Policy 1.80, Workplace Violence
33	Violation of Policy 2.05, Equal Employment Opportunity
34	Violation of Policy 2.30, Workplace Harassment
35	Abuse of state time
36	Obscene or abusive language
37	Disruptive behavior
38	Conviction of moving traffic violation while using a state vehicle
51	Unauthorized use of State property or records
52	Computer/Internet misuse
53	Failure to report misdemeanor (if required)
54	HIPAA violation
55	Fraternization with patient/inmate/client
56	Insubordination
57	Refusal to work overtime as required
71	Sleeping during work hours
72	Theft
73	Threats or Coercion
74	Falsifying records
75	Gambling
76	Criminal conviction
77	Damaging state property or records
78	Interference with state operations
79	Unlawful weapons possession
81	Patient/inmate/client abuse
99	Other (describe)

Attachment A: Examples of Offenses Grouped by Level – Policy 1.60

Level of Offense	Types of Offenses Not intended to be all inclusive.	Normal Disciplinary Action*	Active Life from Issuance Date	Effects of Accumulated Offenses
Group I	This level of offense generally includes offenses that have a relatively minor impact on agency business operations but still require management intervention. Examples: Tardiness; poor attendance; abuse of state time; use of obscene language; disruptive behavior; conviction of a minor moving traffic violation while using a state-owned or public use vehicle; unsatisfactory work performance.	First Offense: Typically, counseling is appropriate although an agency has the discretion to issue a Group I Written Notice. For Repeated Violations of the Same Offense: An agency may issue a Group II Written Notice (and suspend without pay for up to ten workdays) if the employee has an active Group I Written Notice for the **same offense** in his/her personnel file.	2 Years	Upon accumulation of three active Group I Written Notices an agency should normally suspend the employee for at least five workdays but may not exceed ten workdays. The fourth active Group I Written Notice normally results in discharge. In lieu of discharge, the agency may: (1) suspend without pay for up to 30 workdays, and/or (2) demote or transfer with disciplinary salary action.
Group II	This level generally includes acts of misconduct of a more serious nature that significantly impact agency operations. Examples: Failure to follow supervisor's instructions or comply with written policy; violation of a safety rule or rules (where no threat of bodily harm exists), leaving work without permission, failure to report to work without proper notice; unauthorized use or misuse of state property; refusal to work overtime.	First Offense: Group II Written Notice. In addition to the Group II Notice, the agency has the option of suspending the employee without pay for up to ten workdays. Second Offense: Discharge. In lieu of discharge, the agency may: (1) suspend without pay for up to 30 workdays, and/or (2) demote or transfer with disciplinary salary action.	3 Years	The second Group II or a Group II in addition to three active Group I Written Notices normally results in discharge. In lieu of discharge, the agency may: (1) suspend without pay for up to 30 workdays, and/or (2) demote or transfer with disciplinary salary action.
Group III	This level generally includes acts of misconduct of a most serious nature that severely impact agency operations. Examples: Absence in excess of three workdays without authorization; falsification of records and/or any misuse or unauthorized use of state records; willfully or recklessly damaging state records/property; theft or unauthorized removal of state records/property; abuse or neglect of clients; gambling on state property or during work hours; physical violence; threatening others; violating safety rules (where threat of bodily harm exists); sleeping during work hours, participating in work slowdown; unauthorized possession of weapons; criminal convictions for illegal conduct occurring on or off the job that clearly are related to job performance or are of such a nature that to continue employees in their positions could constitute negligence in regard to agencies' duties to the public or to other state employees.	First Offense: Written Notice and discharge. In lieu of discharge, the agency may: (1) suspend without pay for up to 30 workdays, and/or (2) demote or transfer with disciplinary salary action.	4 Years	If the employee is not discharged upon the issuance of the Group III Written Notice, the employee should be advised that any subsequent Written Notice during the active life of the Written Notice may result in discharge.

*Note that in certain extreme circumstances, an offense listed as a Group II Notice may constitute a Group III offense. Agencies may consider any unique impact that a particular offense has on the agency. (For instance, the potential consequences of a security officer leaving a duty post without permission are likely considerably more serious than if a typical office worker leaves the worksite without permission.) Similarly, in rare circumstances, a Group I may constitute a Group II where the agency can show that a particular offense had an unusual and truly material adverse impact on the agency. Should any such elevated disciplinary action be challenged through the grievance procedure, management will be required to establish its legitimate, material business reason(s) for elevating the discipline above the levels set forth in the table above.

Also, an agency may always mitigate discipline if circumstances compel a reduction in the level to promote the interests of fairness and objectivity. However, management should be mindful to treat similarly situated employees in a like manner.

Finally, violations of Policies 1.05, Alcohol and Other Drugs, 2.35, Civility in the Workplace, or 2.05, Equal Employment Opportunity, may, depending on the nature of the offense, constitute a Group I, II, or III offense.

GUIDELINES FOR TERMINATING EMPLOYMENT FAIRLY, SAFELY, AND EFFECTIVELY

Termination is a last resort for when all other efforts to improve performance or behavior have failed.

Terminating an individual's employment is one of the most difficult things a supervisor must do; however, careful planning and documentation can limit misunderstandings and hostility. If considering termination of an employee, supervisors should consult with their Human Resources Division Director or University Employee Relations**, and University Legal** to confirm that the action is consistent with policy and to ensure that the events leading up to the termination have been properly documented and appropriately evaluated.

In most cases, the employee to be terminated must meet one of the following criteria:

1. A **probationary employee** who is not meeting the expectations of the position.

2. A **wage employee** or emergency hire who is no longer needed in that position.

3. A **staff employee** who has been progressively counseled or disciplined or whose behavior or performance has had a significantly negative impact on the university such as to justify termination may be terminated with a Written Notice.

Best Practices:

1. **Involve your management chain**, Human Resources Division Director/Representative or University Employee Relations, and University Legal Counsel in the decision. Be sure that there is a well-established and documented basis for the need to terminate and that all other approaches to improve performance and/or behavior have been attempted.

2. **Safety concerns?** Consult with the Virginia Tech Police Department and evaluate the need to have a police officer present for the termination meeting or standing by in the area. It is important to also consider the potential risk to the university's electronic data and computer systems. If applicable, instruct your department's IT support to disable the individual's network access and email in conjunction with the termination meeting. Should you need to access the employee's electronic files, emails, voice messages, etc., communicate that to IT.

3. **Conduct the meeting as private as possible**, ideally at or near the end of the workday in order to reduce the employee's potential level of embarrassment. One other member of management should attend the meeting as a witness.

4. **Keep the termination meeting brief and focused.** The purpose of the meeting is to communicate the message that the employment relationship is ending. Be prepared to answer questions, but do not engage in a debate about the termination decision. Emphasize that the decision is final.

5. **Remain compassionate, respectful, firm, and clear**. Take responsibility for the decision and do not blame others for the termination. Designate a point of contact for the individual for any follow-up issues and advise them of their right to contact their Human Resources Division Director or University Employee Relations.

6. **Collect all university property in their possession** (purchasing card, keys, building access card, cell phone, laptops, uniforms, tools, manuals, etc.). Have the individual gather their personal belongings and immediately leave the premises. A supervisor should be present while the employee is collecting personal items to ensure university property is not removed or destroyed. If the individual has a number of personal belongings, consider scheduling a separate time after regular business hours, for them to retrieve their belongings. In some cases, it may be wise to physically escort the individual to and from the work area.

When you meet with the employee, be sure to have two copies of the termination letter: one for the employee and one (signed) **to be sent to Human Resources (**Submit documents using this link) inclusion in the personnel file. If the termination letter is sent certified mail, send the HR Service Center a copy of the letter and the original green card showing receipt of the certified letter.

For additional information, contact University Employee Relations.

Do not issue any termination letters without first consulting with your Human Resources Division Director or University Employee Relations.

Sample Letter Templates

All Employee Relations Letter Templates can be found online.

Sample Letter Terminating Wage Employment

Certified Mail–Return Receipt Requested–[optional]

[Date]

[Employee name]
[Address]

Dear [Employee]:

This letter is to notify you that you are being terminated from your temporary wage position with the _____ [name of office], effective close of business on [date].

Please turn in your uniforms, Hokie Passport, keys, parking permit and any other departmental equipment in your possession. (Edit as appropriate, specifying such things as electronic security passes, computers, cell phones, etc. Include a statement about access to systems if appropriate: Your access to [Banner/Hokie Mart/other systems] will be terminated immediately. You may also refer the employee to the Offboarding Program webpage for guidance. Note: PIDs are not terminated and access to Virginia Tech email is not usually terminated immediately unless there are security concerns.)

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]

cc: Human Resources

Sample Letter Terminating Probationary Employment

NOTE:
- Insert on department letterhead.
- Insert information where appropriate (see highlighting)
- Remove all highlighting (and associated text as appropriate)
- Please consult with Human Resources prior to issuance.

[Date]

[Employee Name]
[Address]

Dear [Employee]:

You are currently in a probationary employment status in the [College/Department] at Virginia Tech, working as a [Job Title]. In accordance with University Policy 4260, Probationary Period for University Staff Employees, we have decided to terminate your employment effective [DATE, TIME].

Please turn in your uniforms, Hokie Passport, keys, parking permit, and any other departmental equipment in your possession. (Edit as appropriate, specifying such things as electronic security passes, computers, cell phones, etc. Include a statement about access to systems if appropriate: *Your access to [Banner/Hokie Mart/other systems] will be terminated immediately.* You may also direct the employee to the Offboarding Program webpage for guidance. Note: PIDs are not terminated and access to Virginia Tech email is not usually terminated unless there are security concerns.)

Please contact the Department of Human Resources at 540-231-9331 for information about your benefits. You may also contact the University Employee Relations team in the Division of Human Resources for information about resources available to you.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]

cc: Director
        Division of Human Resources

Resignation Acceptance Letter

<u>NOTE:</u>
- Insert on department letterhead.
- Insert information where appropriate (see highlighting)
- Remove all highlighting (and associated text as appropriate)

[Date]

[Employee Name]
Address
Address

Re: Resignation Acceptance

Dear [Employee]:

This is to acknowledge receipt and acceptance of your resignation as a [Job Title] in the [Program/Department]. The effective date of your resignation was close of business [Date].

When leaving the university employees are required to return all Virginia Tech property. Please return your Hokie Passport to me or to the Hokie Passport office. Optionally, you may participate in an exit interview to provide valuable feedback to the university. You can request an exit questionnaire by visiting the Offboarding webpage: https://hr.vt.edu/hiring-employee-transactions/Offboarding-Transfer.html.

On the behalf of the [Department/Program/Office], I would like to thank you for your service, and wish you well in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

[Supervisor]
[Title]

cc: Human Resources

OFFBOARDING

WHAT IS OFFBOARDING?

Offboarding is the process to help prepare the employee, supervisor, team, and other representatives for the employee's separation from the department or Virginia Tech. Offboarding includes returning Virginia Tech property and other job-related items and transactional processing items, including payroll and benefit actions. The offboarding program is designed to ensure a smooth transition of duties and assets before the employee's departure and invite them to provide valuable feedback from their experience at Virginia Tech.

From opportunities such as retirement or career advancement to more unfortunate circumstances such as the work assignment ending or a reduction in workforce, there are various reasons why employees leave Virginia Tech or transfer to another position within the university.

All managers, supervisors, and separating employees should follow the interactive offboarding process steps to ensure a smooth transition of assignments and employment closure. Employees who have questions or concerns about the terms of their separation or wish to discuss their rights to file a grievance should contact their Human Resources Division Director or University Employee Relations.

The Offboarding Program Website provides guidance for supervisors and employees when an employee is separating from Virginia Tech or transferring internally.

Exit Interview Opportunity – Separation Consultation

The exit interview and/or separation consultation is an opportunity to understand why an employee is leaving a specific department or the University. It is conducted upon notice of the employee's resignation or whenever the employee is comfortable sharing their feedback with their supervisor, Human Resources Representative or University Employee Relations. Supervisors should consider asking the separating employee the following offboarding questions:

1. Has all of the knowledge transfer been completed?
2. Is there anything we should be aware of as we take over your responsibilities?
3. If we could improve in any way, how would we do it?
4. Did the job live up to your expectations?

Sometimes situations arise in which it is difficult for the employee's supervisor or HR Representative to be viewed as impartial due to their close work with management. In such scenarios, a separation consultation with University Employee Relations may offer the employee a perceived neutral option (or an additional chance) to provide feedback regarding their management, their job responsibilities, and their overall employment experience with Virginia Tech.

The data collected from the questionnaire is shared with the Human Resources Division Director/HR Representative and/or appropriate managed to discuss any concerns and used to determine ways to improve the organization as a whole and how to keep good employees from leaving for other opportunities.

Exit Questionnaire

Separating employees may choose to participate in an online exit questionnaire. It gives departing employees the opportunity to share their experience of working at Virginia Tech at their convenience.

When an employee tenders their resignation or retires from the university, the supervisor notifies the employee regarding the importance of completing the Exit Questionnaire. When possible, the employee should complete the survey before their last day of service. Employees should be informed that the Exit Questionnaire is entirely confidential; the questionnaire is not connected to an employee in any way. However, a section in the questionnaire is provided for employees that wish to identify themselves.

To initiate the exit questionnaire process, the departing employee or their supervisor will submit a request to receive an exit questionnaire via the **"Request an Exit Questionnaire"** link on the main Offboarding Webpage. The employee will receive an invitational email from a member of the University Employee Relations Team within one business day of receipt of the form with a questionnaire link. An additional option is for the employee to meet with an Employee Relations Consultant, their supervisor, or Human Resources Division Director/HR Representative.

The Employee Relations Consultant will review the data received from the questionnaires monthly and report to the VP for Human Resources. This information will be shared with the internal committee.

Completed questionnaires may be kept on file but not in employees' personnel records.

Internal Transfers

For employees transferring to another position within Virginia Tech, the supervisor will provide the employee with their department/division's Internal Transfer Questionnaire or schedule a one-on-one separation consultation. (An Internal Transfer Questionnaire template can be found on the Offboarding Website). The employee may contact the Employee Relations team if they prefer. The Internal Transfer Questionnaire is managed interdepartmentally, however, data may be shared with the VP for Human Resources and the internal committee.

GRIEVANCE PROCESS FOR STAFF

If you intend to file a grievance or are in receipt of a grievance, please contact the office of University Employee Relations **immediately.**

Employees are encouraged to resolve workplace issues directly with their management chain. However, when faced with specific management actions such as formal discipline or lack of resolution of a concern, **staff** employees who have completed their probationary periods may decide to initiate a grievance.

A grievance is a formal process through which a state employee may raise any workplace concern with his or her management. This process ensures that the issue addressed is given appropriate consideration by the management chain.

In general, a grievance may be filed against **any management action within 30 calendar days** from the date of that action. Responses to the grievance must be provided **within 5 days from receipt** in order to maintain compliance with the process.

The following chart demonstrates the Step-Respondent process:
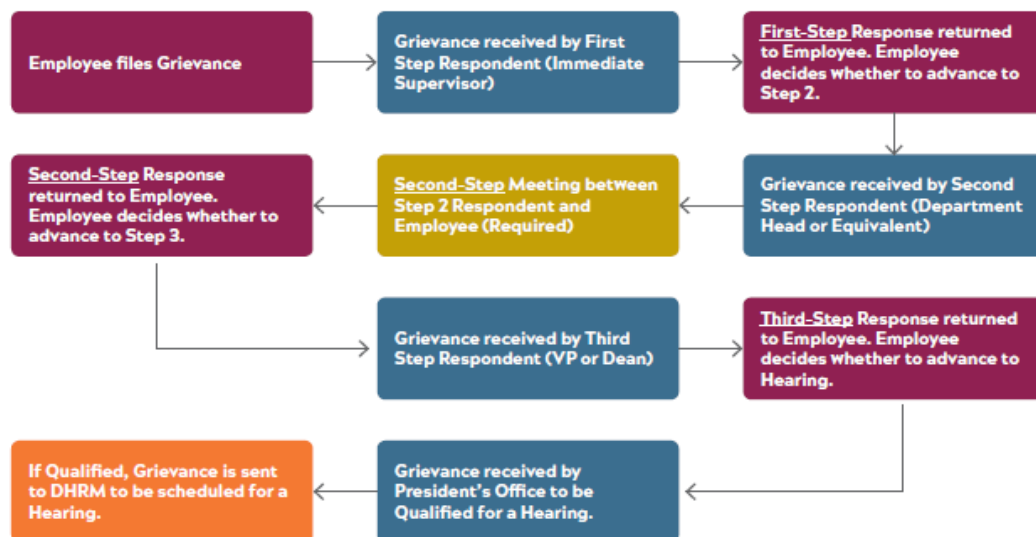
All responses to the grievance and advances of the grievance to the next step must be confirmed and acknowledged via a signature and date on Grievance Form A.

Please review the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management Office of Equal Employment and Dispute Resolution Grievance Procedure Manual for a complete review of the grievance procedure for staff employees, and in the Faculty Manual for A/P faculty.

Please reach out to University Employee Relations for additional guidance.

Grievance Information/Forms

- [Virginia DHRM-Office of Equal Employment and Dispute Resolution](#)
- [Grievance Procedure Manual](#)
- [Grievance Form A](#)
- [Grievance Form A - Expedited Process](#)
- [Grievance Form A - Dismissal Grievance](#)

Initiating a Grievance

- An employee must initiate a grievance on a fully completed, dated, and signed [Grievance Form A](#) within 30 calendar days of the action being grieved. In most cases the employee must initiate the grievance with their immediate supervisor. Exceptions to this must be approved through Employee Relations.

- A grievance involving a demotion, suspension without pay, non-disciplinary separation, or any other action **that results in a loss of wages** may be initiated directly with the VP or Dean by submitting [Grievance Form A - Expedited Process](#).

- A grievance involving **a termination due to formal discipline or unsatisfactory performance** may be initiated directly with the DHRM Office of Employment Dispute Resolution by submitting a [Grievance Form A - Dismissal Grievance](#). A grievance involving formal discipline (Written Notice) issued by someone other than the employee's immediate supervisor may initiated with the person who issued the discipline.

- A grievance challenging the application of the layoff policy should be initiated directly with University Employee Relations. Employees alleging discrimination or harassment under Title VII or Title IX should file their complaint directly with the [Office of Civil Rights Compliance and Prevention Education.](#)

Management Steps

- Once a supervisor is in receipt of the grievance, they have five work days in which to respond to the grievance—either by granting the requested relief, denying the requested relief, or suggesting an alternative form of relief.

- All responses must be documented on [Grievance Form A](#). The second step respondent **must** meet with the Grievant. In the case of an Expedited Grievance, the Dean or VP must hold that meeting.

- The Management Respondent Steps are as follows: Any exception must be approved by Employee Relations.

  - **First Resolution Step**: The First Step Respondent is usually the immediate supervisor.

- **Second Resolution Step**: The Second Step Respondent is usually the Department Head, Director, or equivalent.

    - Within 5 workdays of the second-step respondent's receipt of the grievance, the second-step respondent must hold a meeting with the employee. An individual selected by the employee and an individual selected by the second-step respondent may optionally be included in this meeting.

- **Third Resolution Step**: The Third Step Respondent must be the Dean, Vice President, or equivalent of the relevant department.

* Please confer with University Employee Relations immediately upon your receipt of a grievance and keep them apprised of any responses.

State law prohibits retaliation against employees who participate in the grievance process.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

North End Center ▪ 300 Turner St. NW ▪ Suite 2300 (0318) ▪ Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-8878 ▪ hokiewellness@vt.edu ▪ www.hokiewellness.vt.edu

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

EAP services are provided to employees who seek assistance or counseling through difficult times.

If you need assistance or want someone to talk to, Hokie Wellness is available to help.

➢ Call Hokie Wellness at 540-231-8878, or send an email to hokiewellness@vt.edu to speak to a wellness team member.

➢ If you have a loss in your department or need additional resources, Hokie Wellness can coordinate support and grief counseling for your group.

Benefited Employees

Hokie Wellness can schedule a confidential, individual appointment with you, connect you to an EAP provider, or you can call the provider directly.

Plan or Benefit	Who to Contact for Your Confidential Services Provider
COVA Care and COVA HDHP–Anthem	1-855-223-9277 or Anthem EAP at www.anthemEAP.com (Login: Commonwealth of Virginia)
COVA HealthAware–Aetna	1-888-238-6232 or www.mylifevalues.com (Username: COVA, Password: COVA)
Kaiser Permanente HMO–Kaiser	Behavioral Health Kaiser: 1-866-530-8778 Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Beacon: 1-866-517-7042

Benefited employees and their dependents are able to receive four EAP sessions with a counselor at no charge. There are a variety of issues that EAP counselors can assist you with, including:

- Alcohol
- Family
- Health
- Housing
- Mental health
- Elder care
- Spousal/child/parent abuse
- Career planning

- Drugs
- Legal
- Financial
- Retirement
- Child care
- Grief
- Workplace

TimelyCare is a no cost, virtual health and well-being platform available 24/7 to all full-time faculty, staff, and non-student wage employees at Virginia Tech.

Services offered:

- TalkNow: 24/7, on-demand emotional support to talk about anything, including anxiety, relationships, depression, and stressors.

- Scheduled Counseling: Choose the day, time, and mental health provider that works best for you.

- Health Coaching: Develop healthy lifestyle behaviors for nutrition, sleep habits, time management, and mindfulness.

➤ Self-Care Content: Visit the Explore page within TimelyCare for guided self-care content.

Go to **timelycare.com/virginiatech** or download the TimelyCare app to access care.

Other Counseling Assistance

If you are a non-benefited employee at Virginia Tech, you can contact one of these counseling options in the Blacksburg area.

Psychological Services Center at Virginia Tech

➤ https://support.psyc.vt.edu/centers/psc

➤ Phone Number: 540-231-7709

➤ Address: 3110 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, Va. 24060

➤ Additional Information: Sliding fee scale.

Women's Center at Virginia Tech

➤ www.womenscenter.vt.edu

➤ Phone Number: 540-231-7806

➤ Address: 206 Washington Street, Blacksburg, Va. 24060

➤ Hours open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm

➤ To schedule an appointment, please email: WCsupport@vt.edu

➤ To connect with the programming team about potential collaborations, please email: WCprograms@vt.edu

New River Valley Community Services

➤ www.nrvcs.org

➤ Phone Number: For crisis/emergencies, call 9-8-8 or 540-961-8400; 540-961-8300 (general)

➤ Email: info@nrvcs.org

➤ Address: 700 University Boulevard, Blacksburg, Va. 24060

➤ Additional Information: Sliding fee scale.

Behavioral Health Program

➤ www.chcnrv.org/search/behavioral-health-care/

➤ Montgomery Center: 215 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073. Phone: 540-381-0820. Hours and other locations are available online.

- Additional Information: The Community Health Center of the New River Valley's provides affordable and high quality medical, dental, behavioral and preventive health services to people of all ages and circumstances, regardless of ability to pay or insurance status.

For Immediate Assistance

Call 911

Virginia Tech Police Department

- https://police.vt.edu/
- Phone: 540-231-6411
- The Virginia Tech Police Department has a threat assessment team in place for any immediate issue or concern.

Marriage and Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech

- www.familytherapy.vt.edu/ftc.html
- Phone Number: 540-231-7201
- Address: 840 University Boulevard, Suite 1, Blacksburg, Va. 24060
- Additional Information: Sliding fee scale.

VT | **HUMAN RESOURCES**
VIRGINIA TECH.

North End Center, Suite 2300

300 Turner Street NW

Blacksburg, VA 24061

540-231-9331

hr.vt.edu