



INTRODUCTION

Many managers are wondering how to assess employee contributions fairly during a year where they continued to experience pandemic-related disruptions. In an effort to afford flexibility for schools and units, performance ratings will again be optional for FY22.

For those schools/units that have determined the return to ratings is not feasible this year, managers are expected to use the “No Rating” option in the ratings dropdown menu of the Peoplesoft ePerformance system.

For those schools/units opting to return to ratings this year, managers will select one of the remaining four options (Exceptional Impact, Full/Consistent Impact, Learning/Building or Needs Improvement). Both in the interest of supporting those struggling to achieve their maximum contribution and rewarding those delivering the most exceptional results, the rating system offers a consistent way to discuss expectations and outcomes relevant to the individual and the organization.

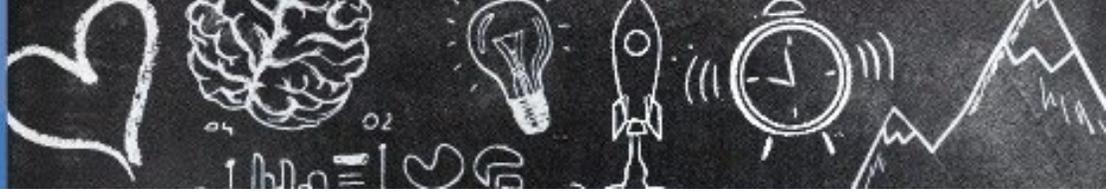
This tip sheet provides some context and guidance for engaging staff in performance conversations whether you include a final rating or not.

[Adopt a posture of appreciation and compassion.](#)

Recognize with empathy the sense of loss, both real and psychological, that has depleted staff energy and, in many cases, their sense of purpose and engagement. Understand that your manager-to-staff conversation is a human-to-human conversation. To the extent that you have also experienced exhaustion and frustration this year, let that be a source of empathy for you.

[Acknowledge differential impact.](#)

The workplace realities of every Harvard University employee continued to be altered in one way or another during FY22. Performance ratings will be used with the acknowledgement that these ratings were given during a disruptive time when



remote and hybrid schedules created new challenges and learning curves for everyone. For those who continued with on-campus duties throughout the year, they did so with concerns for their own safety, new protocols for personal and environmental hygiene to manage, and the absence of community which had given energizing life to their workday. For those requested to de-densify the campus by working elsewhere, there were the complications of adopting new technologies and balancing work and family priorities. Where each employee's experience has been different, it's important to make a good faith effort to understand and account for the impact of these extenuating circumstances, while still being equitable in assessing relative performance.

Work with peers to articulate and consider local impact factors.

To "rate with grace," consider meeting with your HR representatives and fellow managers to discuss your assumptions about how different impact factors might be weighed across the pool of staff being rated. Since every individual's circumstance and capacity for resilience are different, an effort should be made to fairly represent the various factors against which performance is being evaluated. While not a comprehensive list, some examples of impact factors might be:

- Adapting to working with remote technologies
- Spending a good deal of focus on emergency management and crisis response decision-making
- Shifting work hours to ensure coverage and care for loved ones during the workday
- Carrying the stressors and anxieties that came with being required to be on campus during the pandemic
- Picking up new duties that could no longer be covered by others



Focus on outcomes, not facetime.

In a hybrid work environment where some team members work on campus and some work remotely, it is easy to default rewarding on-campus work time. This could potentially create an inequitable experience for distributed team members. Similarly, it may seem intuitive to recognize employees who are more frequently accessible online. Instead, managers in a hybrid environment must ensure their team members know that they are focused on outcomes, and that as long as the team is achieving these outcomes, they are less concerned about where or how the work is being performed. Outcomes-based performance management supports flexibility about when and where the work happens. When assessing each individual's work, consider their performance against agreed upon organizational goals and metrics to be your first default criterion.

Check for consistency.

If your school/unit is using year-end ratings, refer to the previously listed impact factors to appropriately apply the rating guidance in the chart on the next page. When applied across a comparable pool of staff, this guidance serves as a consistent evaluative rubric.



<p>Exceptional Impact</p>	<p>Contributions have significant and consistently exceptional impact and value to the department and/or the organization. Makes unique, often one-time achievements that measurably advance progress towards organizational goals and/or result in major improvements. Easily recognized as a role model by high-performing peers. Viewed as an excellent resource to provide expertise, guidance, advice, mentorship, or support to others. Demonstrates a range of high-level capabilities and actively takes on higher levels of responsibility.</p>
<p>Full/ Consistent Impact</p>	<p>Consistently demonstrates meaningful impact through accomplishments and contributions. This level of impact is reflective of a fully qualified, competent and experienced individual in this role. Viewed as someone who gets the job done and effectively prioritizes work and produces strong results. Contributes positively to the overall objectives of the department and / or the larger organization. Achieves valuable accomplishments in several important areas of the job and/or on assigned projects.</p>
<p>Learning/ Building</p>	<p>Needs to gain proficiency and/or productivity in the position to achieve consistent impact. May achieve some, but not all, goals. Stronger or additional knowledge, skills and abilities need to be demonstrated for consistent success in the role.</p> <p>This rating is recommended for use when an employee is still coming up-to-speed with their job responsibilities based on limited tenure in the role.</p>
<p>Needs Improvement</p>	<p>The quality of performance is below expectations for the role. Knowledge, skills, abilities and/or productivity have not been demonstrated at the appropriate levels.</p>



STRUCTURING THE DIALOGUE

In order to keep the conversation simple and direct, create a brief agenda, like the one attached, and send it in advance along with the questions you'll use to guide the conversation. Preserve ample space in the agenda for your employee to ask questions of you. A timeframe of 40 to 50 minutes is advised to keep the conversation energized, focused and constructive without feeling rushed. After the conversation, complete the manager and employee comment sections in the Annual tab in PeopleSoft to document the reflections and insights you discussed. Below are some thoughts for framing the conversation.

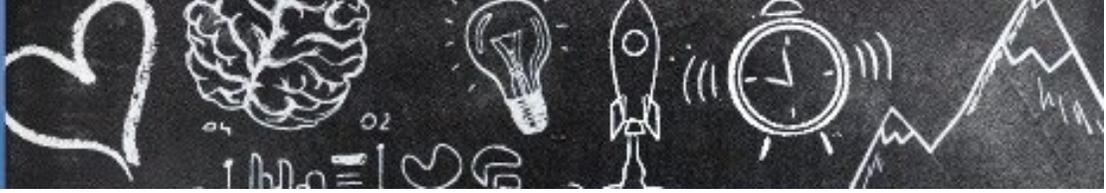
Open with gratitude.

The first order of business in discussing performance with staff this year is to express your gratitude for all they have done to keep delivering under trying conditions.

Review past accomplishments and areas for growth.

Next, take time to look back at what has been accomplished and learned during the year. Using short, open-ended questions, invite your employee to describe what they have achieved, what has been satisfying and what has been frustrating this past year. Highlight specific accomplishments that were particularly difficult to achieve. Focus on the outcomes of their efforts. Reflect on areas for growth. Invite your employee to talk about what they have learned about themselves and about the work.

*If your school or unit **will be using ratings** this year:* In light of the year you just reviewed together, share the rating they'll be receiving. Let them know that in coming to your decision you considered not only their accomplishments and areas for growth, but also the challenges and opportunities this year presented. Share that their rating this year will not have an impact on their merit increase.



If your school or unit **will not be using ratings this year**. Take the time to inform the employee about the absence of ratings from the process this year and explain that their rating in PeopleSoft will be entered as No Rating. Share that selecting No Rating will not have an impact on their merit increase.

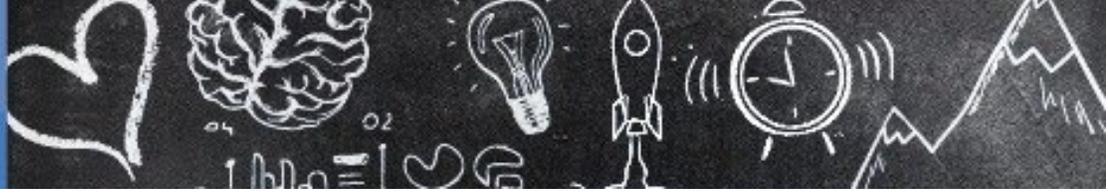
Take time to look forward.

Invite your employee to share their thoughts for the coming year. Again, using short, open-ended questions, ask them what they feel sure about, worried about and hopeful about. Review your team priorities as context for their thinking. Then engage the employee in a process of setting SMART goals for the year ahead. Clear goals help all employees (whether they are fully remote, hybrid, or always in the office). This clarity can be particularly helpful when face-to-face interaction is less frequent. The goals should be:

- **Specific:** Encourage your employee to make the goals as specific and narrow for effective planning and evaluation.
- **Measurable:** Try to make the objectives as quantifiable as possible. Assign a number or a value to the goal so that expectations are clear.
- **Achievable:** Ensure that the goals are realistic. They should be not only doable but reasonable.
- **Relevant:** Individual goals should align with team and organizational objectives.
- **Time-bound:** Set a realistic, ambitious deadline for prioritization and motivation.

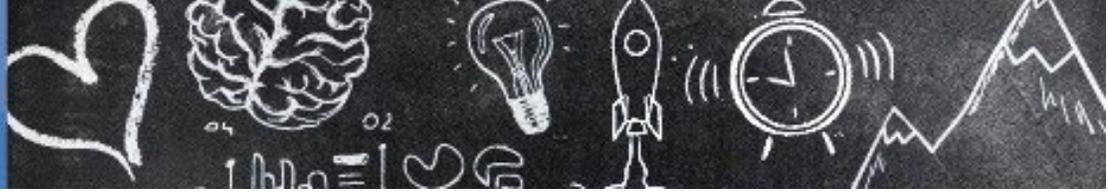
Discuss your working relationship.

Finally, take the opportunity to reflect on your work dynamic. It is important to ensure that the lines of communication are open and that your employee feels confident coming to you with challenges and opportunities. A direct conversation can deepen the relationship between you and your employee in a way that furthers individual, team, and



organizational objectives.

In short, you should recognize that you, too, have been through an extraordinary and unprecedented stressful period. While conducting your individual assessment, let the steps in this tip sheet help you to conduct the conversation in a way that both you and your employee find engaging and motivating for the year to come.

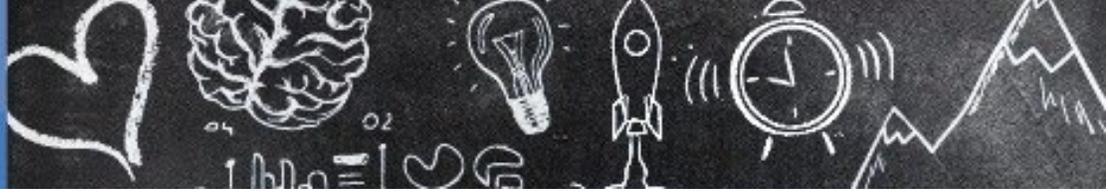


FY22 Year-end Conversation with [Employee Name]:
DATE/TIME

Objectives:

- Establish a moment of closure and continuity at the turn of the fiscal year, despite the disruptions that continued in FY22
- Review accomplishments and learnings from FY22
- Discuss ratings for FY22, if applicable
- Discuss expectations, hopes and concerns related to Q1 FY23 goals and priorities

Time	Topic
5 Minutes	Quick check-in regarding how the employee is today. Start by expressing appreciation and gratitude for the work that the employee completed over the past year.
15 Minutes	Looking back: [Manager chooses questions that will be most appropriate to this employee] What goals and priorities did you make the most progress on? What are you most proud of? What are you most frustrated about? Why? How will you change your approach in the future? What have you learned about yourself? What have you learned about your work and the work of our team?
5 Minutes	In light of these accomplishments and areas for growth above, share the rating they'll be receiving this year, if applicable. If your school or unit has not requested ratings be completed, take the opportunity to inform the employee that you will be entering their rating in PeopleSoft as No Rating.
10 Minutes	Looking Forward: [Manager chooses questions that will be most appropriate to this employee] What are your most important goals for the next quarter? What type of career growth is most important to you? What are your ideal working conditions to be the most productive? What new opportunities or new approaches are you excited about pursuing? What new skills have you gained for pursuing them? What do you see as the greatest challenges that lie ahead for you?



10 – 20 Minutes

Our working relationship: [Manager chooses questions that will be most appropriate to this employee]

Take an opportunity to talk to your direct report about your work dynamic. Think together about ways you can improve it.

How can I be of the most help to you?

What (if any) concerns do you have when it comes to giving me feedback? How can I alleviate those concerns?

How do you prefer to receive feedback and/or recognition for your work?

What are two to three things I could do differently to better manage you?

What do I do that is most/least helpful for you when it comes to completing your work?

What can we do to improve our relationship?

What 2-3 things will you focus on in the next quarter to help you grow and develop?

What can I do to help you better meet your goals?

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