Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Process Guidelines
for Principal Investigators and Senior Research Associates
and Research Associates (Limited Term)

1. Introduction

The Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Guidelines are a companion piece to the Performance Assessment Policy for Senior Research Associates and Research Associates (Limited Term) (hereafter, SRAs/RAs), and may be used as a resource by Principal Investigators and SRAs/RAs in understanding and navigating the Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Process.

2. Purpose of the Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Process

The Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Process is designed to be of mutual benefit to the Principal Investigator and the SRA/RA and provides the opportunity to:

- Recognize accomplishments, areas of special competence or strength of staff
- Provide constructive feedback on areas of performance requiring improvement
- Provide an objective link between performance assessment rating and merit award
- Provide staff the opportunity to give input regarding performance expectations
- Provide the opportunity for collaborative discussion of goals, and professional development

3. Components of the Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Process

Planning

Planning is both the beginning and end of the annual performance assessment process. The planning process typically takes place at the face-to-face performance assessment meeting with the Principal Investigator and the SRA/RA towards the end of the review period, and involves a collaborative effort of setting objectives and creating a professional development plan for the next annual review period.

Best practice indicates that objectives are easily understood and acted upon when they are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time specific.

See the Development section below for more details on creating a professional development plan.

The objectives and professional development plan should be reviewed throughout the year to monitor progress and as well, to revise the objectives and professional development plan as a result of changing/ new circumstances and/or changing needs/interests.
Feedback

Feedback is a critical component of the Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Process for purposes of recognizing the SRAs/RAs accomplishments and as well, to provide constructive feedback on areas of performance requiring improvement.

The annual performance assessment is an opportunity to provide formal feedback to the SRA/RA. A primary basis of feedback is the assessment of Competencies, which provide detailed descriptions of the knowledge, skills and abilities typically required by a staff member while carrying out his/her role. The assessment of Competencies in combination with the completed Activity Report, feedback from others with whom the SRA/RA has worked or had contact with, and an assessment of the overall quality of work, inform the annual performance assessment and overall performance rating.

The Competencies for SRAs/RAs are similar to those of the Professional & Managerial group at the University but with some tailoring to be relevant and meaningful to the SRA/RA group. A summary of the Competencies for SRAs/RAs can be found in Appendix II – Summary of Competencies and Values and Worksheet in the Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Form.

In preparing the annual performance assessment, the Principal Investigator may solicit feedback from others with whom the SRA/RA has worked or had contact, for example, students, colleagues, clients, faculty. There is provision in the Activity Report for the SRA/RA to provide contact information for those people s/he wishes to be contacted to provide additional feedback. The Activity Report for SRAs/RAs can be found in Section A of the Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Form. Principal Investigators should include a summary of the feedback received from others in Section B – Overall Performance Rating in the Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Form.

Feedback should not be restricted to the annual performance review. Informal discussions throughout the year regarding progress on established objectives and the professional development plan for the review period are important and can include:

- Recognition of good performance/accomplishments
- Adjustment of work priorities and objectives
- Problem solving on any obstacles encountered
- Constructive feedback on areas needing strengthening
- Discussion of any professional development taken and/or new opportunities

It is important to provide feedback as events occur and these should be documented for reference in the annual performance assessment and to avoid any surprise information concerning performance.
Development

Development involves expanding knowledge and experience, and developing/strengthening skills, abilities and competencies, that will benefit the SRA/RA in his/her current position and for his/her evolving career.

Development activities may include job assignments such as projects and committees, continuing education courses and/or supportive relationships such as peer coaching, mentoring and professional networks.

The discussion of developmental needs, interests and opportunities should be a part of the annual performance assessment process where the Principal Investigator and the SRA/RA contribute input and suggestions that will enhance job performance, address any areas of performance that need strengthening, and provide an opportunity for career development. A brief description of developmental activities for the next review period should be documented in Section C – Planning For The Next Review Period of the assessment form.

4. The Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Form

The Performance Planning, Feedback and Development Form for Senior Research Associates and Research Associates (Limited Term) is used by SRAs/RAs to complete their Activity Report and as well, by the Principal Investigator to record his/her assessment of individual Competencies and overall performance, and the overall performance rating. The form also should be used by both SRAs/RAs and Principal Investigators to document objectives and a professional development plan for the next review period.

A copy of the final completed Form should be given to the SRA/RA and a copy should be retained in the SRAs/RAs departmental personnel file along with any written comments provided by the SRA/RA about the assessment.