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Calibration   
Resource Guide

Table of Contents

Content Overview3

Calibration of Performance3

Debunking Calibration Myths3

Benefits of Calibration Process4

Calibration Process Tools4

Administering the Calibration Process: Checklist for a Sample Procedure4

Checklist ‒ Facilitating a Sample Calibration Meeting5

# **Content Overview**

The Calibration Resource Guide is provided as a resource to assist organizational units with calibrating performance appraisals.

Topics in the guide include:

* Overview of the calibration process.
* Benefits of the calibration process.
* Checklist for administering the calibration process.
* Checklist for facilitating the calibration meeting(s).

# **Calibrating Performance**

As part of UCR’s Performance Management process, organizational units should calibrate the performance of its staff employees.

Calibration is a process by which the organizational unit ensures a consistent application of performance standards in the rating of staff employees.

The purpose of calibrating employee performance is to encourage a common understanding of performance standards and expectations across the organization.

Calibrating performance is an interactive process that provides a forum for organizational leadership to:

* discuss the proposed ratings of staff employees,
* determine alignment with the rating scale,
* ensure individual evaluators are applying consistent rating levels for comparable performance,
* ensure that performance is evaluated in a meaningful way to distinguish between different levels of performance, and
* agree on the final performance appraisal ratings for staff employees.

Calibration requires a common understanding by the organization of:

* rating guidelines/descriptions,
* the seven (7) performance factors, and
* the components listed on the performance appraisal form, which are intended to help define each performance factor.

# **Debunking Calibration Myths**

Calibration **is not:**

* rating all employees the same, regardless of their performance/contribution,
* arbitrarily reducing the performance ratings of staff employees, or
* a forced distribution of ratings (e.g. a bell curve).

# **Benefits of the Calibration Process**

When understood and well-executed, calibration can result in:

* a common understanding of performance standards and expectations,
* consistent application and justification of rating levels for comparable performance, no matter who the supervisor is,
* more equitable merit-process outcomes, and
* increased perception of fairness and consistency in the overall performance management process.

# **Calibration Process Tools**

The organizational heads of campus schools, colleges, and departments are responsible for determining the most effective way to administer the calibration process within their units. The following tools are provided to assist organizational units with the process; they are intended to serve as guidelines only.

# **Administering the Calibration Process: Checklist for a Sample Procedure**

* Describe and discuss the calibration process with organizational leadership.
* Establish calibration team(s).
* The calibration team is responsible for ensuring that the organization consistently applies performance standards in the rating of staff employees. The team is generally comprised of representatives of the organization’s leadership at each level.
* Establish a calibration timeline.
* Discuss the calibration process and timeline with the calibration team(s).
* Schedule calibration meeting(s) of a meaningful duration. Considerations include:
* Sufficient time to meet, discuss and evaluate.
* Managing the volume of drafted performance appraisals to be calibrated by scheduling more than one calibration meeting, if needed.
* Discuss the calibration process and timeline with supervisors.
* Communicate the calibration process to employees.
* Collect drafted performance appraisals from supervisors.
* Note: as drafted performance appraisals have not yet been discussed with the employee, the submitted drafts should not contain any signatures.
* Review drafted performance appraisals to ensure the following elements are present and return any incomplete drafts back to the supervisor:
  + Appropriate application of the rating rules.
  + The *reviewer comments* section is completed for each performance factor, providing specific examples of performance that support the rating.
  + An overall rating has been assigned.
* Facilitate calibration meeting(s) (See “[Checklist for Facilitating a Sample Calibration Meeting](#_Checklist_-_Facilitating),” below)
* The facilitator is typically a representative from the organization’s HR or administrative unit. The facilitator is responsible for facilitating timely calibration discussions in alignment with the performance management tools and resources.
* Provide supervisors with sufficient time to finalize their draft appraisals in accordance with the calibration team’s recommendations.
* Provide supervisors with time to discuss performance appraisals with employees, and obtain the required signatures on the Performance Appraisal Form.
* The supervisor is accountable for the final overall rating decision and represents it as their own during the performance appraisal meeting with the employee.
* Collect completed Performance Appraisal Forms from supervisors.

# **Checklist - Facilitating a Sample Calibration Meeting**

* Complete calibration meeting preparation.
* Before the meeting, the facilitator sorts appraisals based on the tentative overall rating proposed by the supervisor (i.e., 5’s in one pile, 4’s in another pile, etc.).
* Calibration team members agree to maintain confidentiality of the calibration discussion and outcomes.
* Begin with the drafted performance appraisals of employees who received a tentative overall rating of 3 – Successfully Meets Performance Expectations.
  + Review and discuss the proposed overall ratings and comments provided by the supervisor, ensuring alignment with the tools and resources provided in the performance management process.
  + Determine if the tentative overall ratings are supported by cited examples in the reviewer’s comments.
  + Formulate a recommendation. For each employee, the calibration team will recommend only **one** of two options:
    1. The overall rating proposed by the supervisor demonstrates consistent application of rating levels for comparable performance. The calibration team agrees with the overall rating proposed by the supervisor.
    2. The overall rating proposed by the supervisor does not demonstrate consistent application of rating levels for comparable performance. The calibration team does not agree with the overall rating proposed by the supervisor and instead, recommends an overall rating of: Enter rating.
* Select another group (those tentatively rated 4) and repeat the process.
* The calibration meeting concludes once the calibration team has reviewed all drafted performance appraisals and provided its recommendation.
* Per the above-referenced section, provide supervisors with sufficient time to finalize their draft appraisals in accordance with the calibration team’s recommendations.