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**ONWARDS TOGETHER**

# **General Guide To Performance Management**

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## Introduction

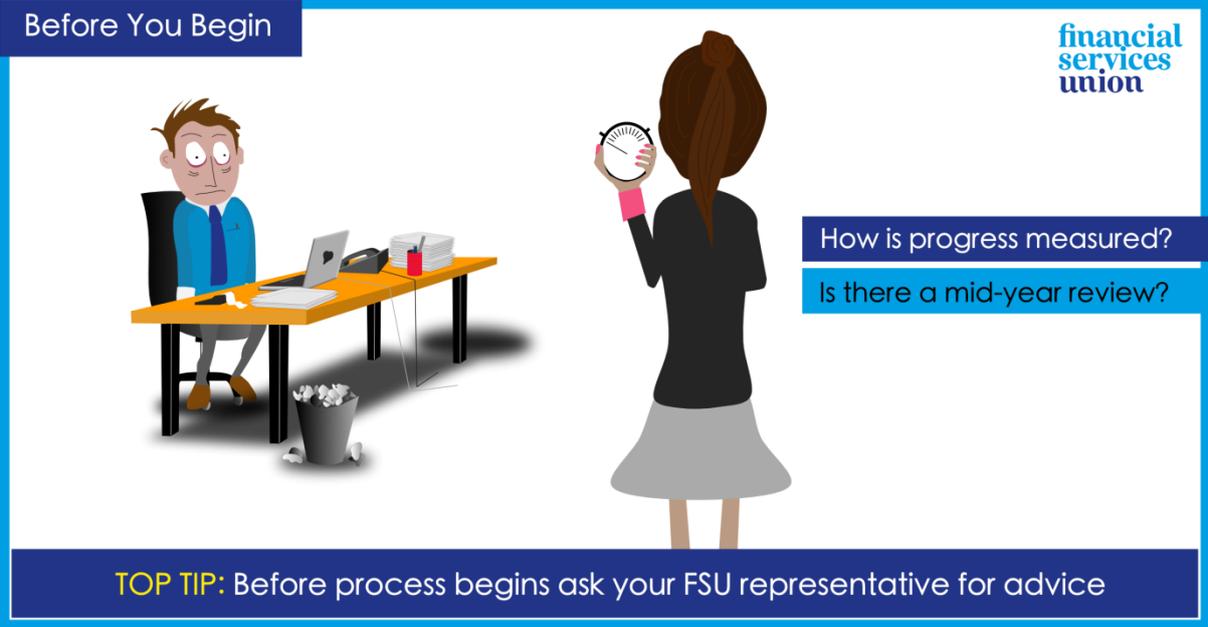
Performance Management processes are now firmly established in most employments.

For many members the process can be challenging. Performance Management outcomes have significant implications for pay, promotional opportunities and a lot more.

Your union wants to help you through the process so that you can get the rating you deserve and better protect yourself in increasingly pressurised and complicated working environments.

This general guide gives you some important pointers.

We have also developed more detailed guides that outline the performance management process used in each of our major employments so be sure to check these out after reading this.



The illustration shows a man in a blue suit sitting at a desk with a laptop, looking stressed. A woman in a black top and grey skirt stands next to him, holding a stopwatch. The scene is framed by a blue border. In the top left corner, a dark blue box contains the text 'Before You Begin'. In the top right corner, the 'financial services union' logo is displayed. Two blue boxes on the right side contain the questions 'How is progress measured?' and 'Is there a mid-year review?'. At the bottom, a dark blue box contains the text 'TOP TIP: Before process begins ask your FSU representative for advice'.

Before You Begin

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How is progress measured?

Is there a mid-year review?

**TOP TIP:** Before process begins ask your FSU representative for advice

## Before you Begin - Know the process!

You are entitled to know the process your employer uses to judge performance. It is important before you begin a performance review that you understand that process.

So for instance ensure that your employer clearly outlines the steps involved.

Make sure you have a clear understanding of the main stages of the process.

Ask yourself

- Do you know how progress will be measured?
- Do you know if there is a mid-year review?
- If there is a mid-year review how is that conducted?
- Is performance 'rated' or 'scored' and if so what is that result used for?
- If new challenges or requirements emerge in work during the year how does the performance management system adapt?

If you don't know the answer to any of these questions contact one of your Sector Committee members in the Union or ring the Union directly.

Knowledge is power. Knowing the system and how it will operate over the entire year is important. Be sure to have this knowledge before the formal performance management review begins!

## Start of Year Objective setting

While performance management process vary between different employers in general there are three main steps or 'conversations' as modern HR lingo terms them.

- Start of year objective setting
- Mid-year appraisal
- End of year rating and review

Arguably start of year objective setting is the most important part of the process. It will involve a meeting with a manager where objectives for the coming year are discussed and agreed. The outcome of this meeting largely defines how your performance will be assessed over the year.

Your approach to this meeting is very important. Remember it is meant to be a **discussion** that leads to objectives **agreed** between you and your manager.

Before the meeting ensure you have reflected on your role, what you have achieved and what you want to achieve in the coming year.

Be confident about these issues before you go to the meeting. This meeting is not about you quietly accepting the demands of management. You should have a very active role in shaping this discussion.

You should also have a clear idea of how you want your career to develop over the next 12 months. Management should commit to providing the training and support necessary to achieve these goals.

Also remember that you know more about your job than anyone else – even the person opposite you in the meeting - so make sure you deploy that knowledge.

The illustration shows a man in a blue suit sitting at a desk with a laptop. On the wall is a 'YEAR PLANNER' calendar with a red circle around a date. To the right, a trolley holds several books titled 'Banking DUMMIES', 'Coding DUMMIES', 'Sales DUMMIES', 'Finance DUMMIES', 'Insurance DUMMIES', 'Presentation Skills DUMMIES', and 'Accounting DUMMIES'. A trash can is under the desk. The background is white with a blue border.

**Objective Setting**

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Play active role in setting objectives  
Be clear about career development

**TOP TIP:** Seek resources and training support

## SMART Objectives

SMART objectives are one of those buzz words used in performance management that refers to the outcomes agreed at the objective setting phase. Basically it means:

**S**pecific objectives must be clear and focussed

**M**easurable how progress will be measured should be clear

**A**chievable objectives should be within your control to deliver

**R**ealistic objectives can be achieved with resources available

**T**ime bound dates for delivery of results are clear

When discussing and agreeing your objectives make sure they correspond to the SMART analysis. Otherwise you may have agreed to unrealistic goals, with no way of measuring progress and without the resources to deliver them.

Reaching agreed objectives is the goal of these objective setting meetings. Often it may require a second meeting or further communication as you or your manager reflects on concerns raised.

However, it is also entirely appropriate for you not to accept an unrealistic or unclear objective.

In this case if your concerns have not been taken on board and an unrealistic objective is still on the table ensure that this is recorded. Also make sure you speak to your FSU representative for advice and support.



## Make a note throughout the process

If you have agreed objectives for the year then make sure to keep a note of your major achievements as you progress. Also, record instances where the employer may have reneged on a commitment regarding resources or training.

This will empower you at a mid-year review or end-of-year review – you'll have all the facts at your disposal.

Always record everything in writing. This can include following up a discussion with a brief email to your manager outlining what you took from the discussion to keeping your own record of your achievements. Your own records and notes will prove invaluable throughout the process.

Many employments have a system called 'calibration' or 'consistency' reviews where managers from across different units of the business compare proposed staff ratings. This may involve you being measured against other individuals or collective performance which may not be part of your individual process.

This can sometimes be used by management to negatively affect or change your rating. If that is the case it's the fault of management – not you. Having your own records and seeking advice from your FSU rep is important in this instance.

## **Mid-Year Review**

A mid-year or interim appraisal is a common feature of most performance management systems.

This is an important part of the process – both to benchmark your own progress and to check that your employer is delivering on their commitments in areas such as resources, staffing and training.

This shouldn't be a one-way 'box ticking' exercise – as with all elements of performance management it is important that this is a two-way discussion.

Your employer is under an obligation to carry out the mid-year appraisal in a professional manner. This means that it should take place in a private location. You should also be informed of the meeting well in advance to allow you to prepare (this is where having a note of your progress during the year becomes really helpful!).

Also if for some reason your employer is giving you a poor performance assessment at this stage of the year then that should be communicated to you. It is also important that at this stage the employer commits to an agreed plan to give you the opportunity to lift this rating during the rest of the year. You should talk to your union rep if you find yourself in this position.

As with all stages of the performance management process the outcome of a mid-year appraisal needs to be clear and recorded.

## **End of Year Review**

Preparation is key for the end-of-year review. You should be given a minimum of one week's notice for this meeting. You should also be given an agenda or an overview of the topics that will be discussed.

It is important that you enter this meeting confident and fully prepared, so in advance:

- Assemble documentary evidence of your performance throughout the year
- Have a note of changes in the business environment (new responsibilities, staffing changes etc.) that have impacted on your performance
- Review your employer's performance – did they live up to commitments about resources, training and staffing for instance?

As with all other stages in the performance management process ensure this meeting is a two-way discussion, not an employer dominated exam!

Be clear and confident in putting forward your achievements, how you managed changes not considered when objectives were first established or your view on how the employer could have provided more support.

Make sure that the positive aspects of your performance are noted and acknowledged.

## Ratings

The end of year meeting will also involve your manager proposing a rating.

Ratings are very important – they have a direct impact on your salary and future promotion prospects. Also they are important for your own sense of value at work.

Remember the employer **proposes** a rating. If you think the rating is fair then you should formally accept it and ensure a note is made.

If you don't think the proposed rating is reflection of your contribution then say so at the meeting.

You should not feel intimidated into accepting a rating that you feel is unfair or doesn't take into account all the factors relevant to your performance.

It is your decision whether to accept a rating or not. If you don't think the proposed rating is fair then don't accept it. Instead inform your manager that you intend appealing.

A good rule of thumb is that your rating should never be a surprise to you.

**Your Right to Appeal**

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Don't accept unfair rating  
Use your right to appeal

**TOP TIP:** Talk to your FSU representative before you appeal

## Rating Appeals

Most ratings are fair and agreed between employer and employee. However, each year many employees receive inaccurate or unfair ratings.

That is why your union has worked hard to ensure that every performance management process has an appeal mechanism. Each year your union assists staff in overturning inaccurate ratings.

If you are appealing a rating, talk to your union rep. They will inform you about the process and give you advice and support.

If you are unhappy with your rating request (in writing) a copy of the grievance procedure for ratings within your employment after your end of year meeting.

Quite often the issues outstanding can be resolved informally at this stage.

However, remember you are entitled to pursue the formal grievance process so don't feel you have to sign off on any proposal by management.

Generally speaking your formal appeal should be lodged within 10 to 14 days of the end of year meeting.

Your union rep will give you advice. Ensure you talk to them in advance of submitting your formal appeal.

Make sure that your appeal includes the reasons why you think your rating was unfair or inaccurate, a summary of your achievements and documentary evidence backing up your case. Again this is why keeping a personal note on your performance throughout the year can be very valuable.

The manager reviewing your appeal will be senior to the original decision maker.

You can also bring a representative with you to a formal appeal hearing. Union members often ask an FSU representative to attend. However, the employer will not inform us of an appeal, it is up to you to inform your union rep of your appeal and request their presence at a hearing.

## Summary

Your union has a wealth of experience in assisting members with performance management reviews.

On a policy level we continue to argue for changes. For instance, we believe that not enough weight is placed on team performance, customer satisfaction or training and/or educational achievement by employees.

However, we also are here to help individual members get the best result from the system that operates at present. In summary here are our top ten tips for performance management reviews:

- Prepare for each stage of the process
- Remember it is a two-way discussion not a one-way exam
- Don't sign up to unrealistic or ill-defined goals
- Keep a note of your achievements through the year
- In particular keep a note of changes that were not expected when you agreed to your objectives
- Monitor if your employer has lived up to commitments regarding training or resources
- Have documentary evidence that backs up your achievements
- Don't feel under pressure to accept a rating you think is inaccurate or unfair
- Use the appeal mechanism or rating review if you are dissatisfied with a rating
- Talk to your union rep at any stage

## Detailed Employment Guides

The Financial Services Union has developed tailored performance management guides for the main banking employments.

These guides are restricted to union members and you must login on our website to access these guides.

Click on the link below for the relevant guide

AIB - [here](#)

Bank of Ireland - [here](#)

Danske Bank - [here](#)

Ulster Bank ROI - [here](#)

Ulster Bank NI - [here](#)

For FSU members in the fintech sector including companies such as Wipro, Infosys, Banctec, IBM, ICE and HPE, please contact your FSU official for specific advice regarding the performance management system utilised by individual fintech companies.