

# Evaluating Performance During Difficult Times

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Each supervisor at UTHSC is asked to evaluate performance annually. This year's evaluation is different, because of the global pandemic on our operations, ability to work, and the impact on our employees' personal lives.

**Below is some information to consider during this year's performance evaluation cycle.**

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## Idea #1: Reflect on your purpose

For starters, think about why you are conducting these reviews – because, as the COVID-19 pandemic trudges on, you are **not necessarily looking to weed out poor performers or decide who gets a raise.**

Rather, it's to **strengthen our organization's culture and reinforce its values.**

## Idea #2: Be compassionate

Fully acknowledge the vastly different and varying circumstances under which your team members are operating. With some team members working from home or other difficult situations, your approach calls for a "little more flexibility, a little more heart, and a little more leniency."

## Idea #3: Set the right tone

Zoom fatigue is real, but for these kinds of conversations, video is important! It is more personal and humane. Listen carefully and encourage back and forth communication. Spend the time to really make sure things are not lost in translation.

## Idea #4: Gather different kinds of data

One of the most difficult things about conducting performance reviews at a time when some of your team may have gone remote, is that you don't have as much data as you usually do, because you are not seeing your employees in person all day, every day.

Request self-evaluations and canvass peers for their thoughts. Ask others: "How is this employee proactively communicating? How are they connecting with clients and colleagues? Who are they helping? Put those (positive) questions front and center."

## Idea #5: Make feedback the focus

Performance reviews should be a two-way conversation, not a top-down listing of compliments or grievances. "Supervisors need to hear the issues employees are facing with regard to how successfully they can do their work."

The pandemic can be a time for employees and managers to adjust goals and agree on which things need to be accomplished, which things are feasible given the circumstances, and which areas show success is possible.

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## Principals to Remember

### DON'T:

- Be hard-hearted toward your poor performers. Give them a time-bound grace period to get used to working remotely and to turn things around.
- Let your old biases creep in. Seek out alternative data. Ask colleagues and reports for information on how well other employees are communicating, collaborating, and helping.
- Revert to business as usual — instead, think about how to do performance reviews better. In this environment, semi-annual or quarterly check-ins may be optimal.

### DO:

- Approach your evaluations with more flexibility, leniency, empathy, and compassion.
- Recognize and show appreciation for employees who are engaged and working hard. It's critical for their morale – and for your organization's ability to retain them.
- Use video (Zoom or Teams) for this conversation. It is more personal and humane.
- Use the key elements guide to assist with your evaluations.
- Provide additional explanation/documentation if you rate an employee the lowest rating, does not meet expectations or the highest rating consistently exceeds expectations.

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## Useful Performance Evaluation Tools

Performance Evaluations: <https://www.uthsc.edu/hr/compensation/performance-evaluations.php>

Key Elements Guide: <https://www.uthsc.edu/hr/compensation/documents/uthsc-key-elements-guide-2020.pdf>

## Have Questions or Need Support?

Contact Employee Relation in Human Resources: 901.448.5600 or [hr@uthsc.edu](mailto:hr@uthsc.edu)

## References

How Do You Evaluate During a Pandemic: <https://hbr.org/2020/12/how-do-you-evaluate-performance-during-a-pandemic>

How to Do Performance Reviews Remotely: <https://hbr.org/2020/06/how-to-do-performance-reviews-remotely>