

## Human Resources Launches New Performance Feedback Model

University Relations – Communications  
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Most employees want to have open, honest conversations about their performance, and they appreciate guidance about how to be more successful.

The UA's **Division of Human Resources** <sup>[1]</sup> is encouraging those discussions with a new feedback and planning approach called Career Conversations, a replacement for traditional forms of performance evaluation.

The Career Conversations model focuses on open discussion of employees' strengths, contributions and potential for career advancement. These are meant to be structured conversations between an employee and supervisor that support the growth of the employee through honest and constructive feedback.

Last summer, Human Resources began meeting with University employees and supervisors to seek advice about how to enhance the University's traditional approach to performance reviews. Both employees and supervisors expressed frustration about rigid evaluation forms and said that performance ratings get in the way of constructive feedback and honest conversations about how things are progressing in an employee's career at the UA.

"What we learned is that managers often struggle to provide honest guidance about performance improvement because they don't want to create tension or compromise the ability to offer a performance-based salary increase," said **Allison Vaillancourt**, vice president for human resources and institutional effectiveness. "At the same time, employees crave honest feedback, and many of those who participated in HR's focus groups said they wanted specific suggestions about how to position themselves for bigger opportunities. In developing Career Conversations with the University community, we learned that employees and supervisors alike want an approach that is easy, future oriented and that improves performance and preserves relationships."

Features of the Career Conversations template include an employee self-reflection and planning sections for the next year. The supervisor will make notes once the self-reflection is complete and then there should be a face-to-face conversation in which the employee and supervisor discuss the employee's performance. The hope from Human Resources is that this will become an ongoing conversation throughout the year between the supervisor and employee.

Although University departments are not required to use the Career Conversations approach, Human Resources encourages moving away from ratings and point systems and toward an open conversation between supervisor and employee.

"Ratings can detract from meaningful conversation and each supervisor applies ratings differently, meaning ratings cannot be compared across supervisors," Vaillancourt said. "Both employees and supervisors say that ratings are hard to determine, create unnecessary stress and often damage relationships."

The Human Resources website provides a **guide** <sup>[2]</sup> with examples of how to fill out the feedback form, along with answers to frequently asked questions, including how to make salary increase recommendations without using a rating system.

"This new approach is a step towards creating a culture of conversation, where it is safe to give and receive honest feedback," Vaillancourt said.

To find out more about Career Conversations, visit the **Human Resources** <sup>[3]</sup> website.

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**Source URL:** <https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/human-resources-launches-new-performance-feedback-model>

### Links

[1] <http://hr.arizona.edu/> [2] <http://hr.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/hr/forms/HR-Conversations/UACareerConversationGuide.pdf> [3] <http://hr.arizona.edu/forms#hdr-9>