



Tips for FY20 Year End Performance and Development Conversations

This **tip sheet** will help managers at Harvard sustain a conversation-based approach to FY20 year-end performance and development conversations in light of the unprecedented disruption from COVID-19.

What is different this year?

- Due to the university year-end salary freeze for exempt positions, the use of ratings is suspended for FY20. A new, single option of “Not Applicable – No Rating” replaces the previous four ratings.
- Year-end conversations will be conducted via Zoom or Microsoft Teams rather than in person.
- The timing of the pandemic may have interfered with the completion or documentation of mid-year conversations that typically provide a point of reference for year-end conversations.

What hasn't changed?

- The need for meaningful manager-employee check-ins as key drivers of employee engagement.
- The need to provide a sense of continuity and forward progress in support of organizational and team morale.
- The usefulness of the recently simplified PeopleSoft platform as a tool for documenting the reflections and intentions discussed in these conversations.

Here are some tips to support managers in leading these conversations with confidence and care:

Frame the purpose of the conversation as learning and, as possible or appropriate, initial planning rather than evaluation.

First, as with any year-end conversation, take time to *look back* at what has been accomplished and learned during the year. Don't forget to acknowledge and appreciate the goals and priorities that were met before the pandemic hit. Using short, open-ended questions, invite your employee to describe what has been satisfying and what has been frustrating about the past year. While some of their goals and priorities may have gotten derailed or delayed during the past several weeks, there have also been new challenges that required them to respond with creativity, resilience and resourcefulness. Invite them to talk about what they have learned about themselves and about the work.

Second, as appropriate to each employee and as possible with the information available on what the next academic year may hold, take some time to *look forward*. Despite disparate impacts across the team and likely continued uncertainty, it is important to engage people in a positive vision of the future and their role in it. Invite your employee to share their thoughts about how their goals and priorities may persist or shift in the coming months. Again, using short, open-ended questions, ask them what they feel sure about, worried about and hopeful about. Review your team priorities (if only for the next couple of months) as context for their thinking. To the extent possible, offer your own perspective on the work ahead. Acknowledge and legitimize



their anxiety, but model a positive mindset based on confidence in the institution and in each other. Assure them that you will keep them updated as soon as you have any new information that you are permitted to share. Position yourself as a partner to them in adapting their perspective and activities going forward.

Keep it simple. Create a brief agenda, like the one attached, and send it in advance along with the questions you’ll use to guide the conversation. Preserve ample space in the agenda for your employee to ask questions of you. A timeframe of 40 to 50 minutes is advised to keep the conversation energized, focused and constructive without feeling rushed. After the conversation, complete the manager and employee comment sections in the Annual tab in PeopleSoft to document the reflections and insights you discussed. Select the new “Not Applicable – No Rating” option to complete the form.

If an employee’s performance needs improvement, consider scheduling a separate meeting, and documenting that conversation by uploading an attachment in the Annual tab in PeopleSoft before completing the form as noted above.

Follow best practices for using a video platform to conduct a one-on-one meeting. To create a welcoming, comfortable space for your employee, spend some time in advance reviewing and practicing how to use the technical features of the platform and following best practices for being fully present. While speaking to the employee, be sure to look directly at the camera, not the screen; this gives the appearance of direct eye contact. Try to position yourself at eye level with the camera (if you are looking down at your laptop, it can give the other person the sense of being looked down upon). Make sure your face is lit (i.e. not in shadow). Be sure to check your audio is at the right level.

Questions for looking back on FY20	Questions for looking forward to Q1 FY21
What goals and priorities did you make the most progress on? What are you most proud of? What are you most frustrated about? How has the crisis impacted your goals and priorities? What have you learned about yourself? What have you learned about your work and the work of our team?	What goals and priorities do you expect to keep working on in the coming months? How do you think your goals and priorities may shift? What new opportunities or new approaches are you excited about pursuing? What new skills will you gain for pursuing them? What do you see as the greatest challenges that lie ahead for you? How have your career expectations/aspirations been affected by this crisis? How can I be of most help to you?

Additional Resources:

[Link to CWD’s guide for “Exploring Zoom and Remote Collaboration Tools”](#)

[Link to Coaching Conversation prep sheet for tips on getting into a helpful mindset and additional examples of open ended questions](#)

[Agenda Template \[Attached\]](#)



DRAFT TEMPLATE

FY20 Year-end Conversation with [*Employee Name*]: Zoom or Microsoft Teams

DATE/TIME

Objectives:

- Establish a moment of closure and continuity at the turn of the fiscal year, despite major disruption
- Review accomplishments and learnings from FY20
- Discuss expectations, hopes and concerns related to Q1 FY21 goals and priorities, in light of uncertainties

Time:	Topic
5 Minutes	Quick check-in regarding where you are today; how are you making time for self-care?
15 Minutes	Looking back: [<i>Manager chooses questions that are most appropriate to the employee</i>] What goals and priorities did you make the most progress on? What are you most proud of? What are you most frustrated about? How has the crisis impacted your goals and priorities? What have you learned about yourself? What have you learned about your work and the work of our team?
10 Minutes	Looking forward: [<i>Manager chooses questions that are most appropriate to the employee</i>] What goals and priorities do you expect to keep working on in the coming months? How do you think your goals and priorities may shift? What new opportunities or new approaches are you excited about pursuing? What new skills will you gain for pursuing them? What do you see as the greatest challenges that lie ahead for you? How have your career expectations/aspirations been affected by this crisis? How can I be of most help to you?
10 – 20 Minutes	Questions and discussion [<i>If appropriate, what do you want to start/stop/continue in FY21?</i>] Agreement on how best to document this conversation in Peoplesoft To close out the document, select the “Not Applicable” rating, click on the “Complete Annual” button and ask the employee to acknowledge receipt.