

Writing Effective Appraisal Comments

Chairperson and Peer Review Team (PRT) comments at the end of an Annual Faculty Performance Appraisal should serve these purposes:

1. To **highlight accomplishments** indicating sustained performance consistently exceeding expectations and professional growth.
2. To **assess the faculty member's progress** toward the next promotion and/or tenure and to suggest ways to strengthen weak areas.
3. To **discuss general work qualities**, such as collegiality, leadership, initiative, work ethic, reliability, completion of assigned tasks, response to student concerns, etc.
4. To **provide constructive advice** for development of the skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for teaching success as well as the achievement of promotion and tenure.
5. To **evaluate the accuracy** of the faculty member's presentation of his or her contributions and accomplishments.
6. To **provide information** for future promotion and tenure decisions.

The commenters should write with both the faculty member and the future portfolio reviewers in mind.

Because all parties will have read the appraisal, the comments of the chairperson and PRT should contain *minimal* restatement of the faculty member's activities. More importantly, the comments should include evaluation of the value and adequacy of the stated activities in preparing the faculty member for the next promotion and/or tenure. Additionally, comments might include global evaluations of the faculty member's value to the students, the department, and the college as a whole.

The comments should address the following areas:

1. Teaching Activities

- a. Evidence can be found in peer and chairperson observation reports, nominations for teaching awards, documents such as syllabi and other peer reviewed materials, course development, unsolicited student compliments or patterns of student complaints (not individual complaints), etc. The comments of the chairperson and Peer Review Team may differ since people in each role have access to different types of information.
- b. Sample reviews
 - i. Positive: "Jo Faculty has clearly demonstrated excellence in teaching, as evidenced by the consistently positive comments of the peers who have observed her teaching and my own observation of her class. Additionally, she has shared teaching materials with other faculty that have been judged very effective."
 - ii. Negative: "Although Jo Faculty has indicated her desire to improve her teaching effectiveness, student complaints continue to be a concern, as are peer observation reports. We suggest that Jo meet with her mentor to discuss teaching techniques for conveying _____ more effectively. Additionally, the college offers workshops on Active and Collaborative Learning that may give Jo some ideas for involving all students in the learning process."
 - iii. Mixed: "Jo Faculty shared with me that, over the past year, her student surveys have been very positive, with special kudos for her quick response times to

emails and her clear concern for her students. Peer observations have noted some concerns with accuracy during observed lectures, which is something that Jo should discuss with her lead instructors and/or PRT to make sure that she is effectively preparing students for the next course in the series.”

2. Service Activities

- a. Evidence can be found in the faculty member’s appraisal, results of work as seen in the college, discussions with the faculty member, and confirmation by others involved in the activity. In the rare event that there is a question regarding the accuracy of a faculty member’s reporting, chairpersons and/or PRT members may contact relevant parties for more information.
- b. Sample reviews
 - i. Positive: “Joe Faculty has been very active in several major committees during the past year, as well as contributing to his department and the profession. His position as co-chair of the _____ Committee demonstrates his leadership, as does the work he undertook as part of the _____ Committee. In the department, Joe continues to be instrumental in the hiring and training of adjuncts, and his work on the _____ initiative was invaluable.”
 - ii. Negative: “As noted in his appraisal, Joe Faculty has been on several committees this year; however, his attendance and participation were limited, which is a significant concern. As he moves toward his promotion to Associate Professor, it would be advisable for him to take a more active role. While chairing a committee would be helpful, when that is not possible, it is imperative to show involvement (through regular attendance at meetings) and initiative (through volunteering for subcommittee work and following through with assigned duties). Additionally, Joe could involve himself in service to the department by getting involved in the _____ or _____ initiatives.”
 - iii. Mixed: “Joe Faculty has played a major role in this year’s _____ initiative at the college level, a benefit to the entire college community, as noted by the President at the recent In-Service Day. While this activity took a large number of hours each week during spring semester, as it will again next year, Joe would be wise to delve into other service opportunities during the fall and summer to ensure that he has amassed enough service for his next promotion.”

3. Professional Development Activities

- a. Evidence can be found in the faculty member's appraisal, reporting to colleagues on learned information (possibly through Professional Development Report forms), transcripts, written work, and shared experience by peers attending the same activities.
- b. Sample reviews
 - i. Positive: "Jalin Faculty has been quite active in seeking out learning experiences over the past year. Their list of conferences, webinars, and training sessions is long; even more impressive is the way that they used the information to improve the classroom experience for their own students and all of the students in the department. Additionally, Jalin has shared their knowledge with others through presentations at both a national and state conference and through events held here on campus."
 - ii. Negative: "As noted in Jalin Faculty's appraisal, they have attended several local presentations on three days over the past year. While this is a good start, it is important that Jalin exceed expectations and show professional growth in the next academic year by more significant involvement in professional development. Prior to the next budgeting session, Jalin might research a state or national conference to attend and might talk with their PRT about writing or presentation opportunities. Many department members have been active in _____ and would be happy to discuss those experiences with Jalin."
 - iii. Mixed: "Jalin Faculty's involvement in the _____ Conference held here on campus was significant, including organizational duties prior to and during the conference. Additionally, Jalin lists one webinar attended during the year. In the next year, adding more professional development activities would be helpful. Jalin should take advantage of more of the online learning opportunities that the PRT brings to their attention, and they may wish to consider submitting a proposal for a presentation on our _____ initiative at the _____ national conference in _____ next year."

4. General Work Qualities

- a. Evidence can be found in the faculty member's interactions with the chairperson, colleagues, staff, and students. General patterns of behavior, both positive and negative, may be noted, although specific disciplinary actions are considered private issues between the faculty member and the college.
- b. Sample reviews
 - i. Positive: "J.J. Faculty is a valuable member of the _____ Department. He is quick to offer assistance to students, whether his own or someone else's, and his relationships with colleagues are very positive. Joe demonstrates initiative in finding solutions for problems, such as the _____, and he is very reliable and thorough when tasks are assigned to him, as when he took over _____ during the last year."
 - ii. Negative: "Over the next year, J.J. Faculty should work on maintaining collegial relationships with colleagues in discussions over curricular changes so that the

ideas of all can be thoroughly heard and evaluated. Additionally, promptness in submitting required forms would be appreciated.”

- iii. Mixed: “J.J. Faculty’s dedication to his students is evident. He is often observed tutoring students in his office, and he has put many hours into creating online review materials used by all of the instructors. J.J.’s philosophy on grading, however, has put him at odds with the stated policy of the department. This should be addressed over the next year by his adherence to the department standard of _____.”