

Wellesley College Performance Improvement Plan

This resource is designed to be used as a tool for managers to help navigate through a Performance Improvement Plan. As managers, we expect that staff members will perform their job responsibilities well and follow College policies successfully. A Performance Improvement Plan can assist staff members who are finding some of these goals difficult to achieve.

As a manager it is important to monitor and assess job performance. A key component to preventing the need for a PIP is to document and address issues as soon as possible. You should be alert to early warning signs of performance problems. Often the warning signs may seem small at the time, but working with the staff member as soon as possible can help the individual overcome performance deficiencies or behavioral issues. Be sure you are clear to identify the problem area and your expectations. Be sure to document all of your conversations and meetings regarding the identified issues.

This resource is designed to provide you with an understanding of Performance Improvement and to provide you with templates.

1. Identify – In Partnership with HR, assess the situation and determine if a structured plan is the necessary next step. In many cases performance issues can be resolved relatively quickly through a performance discussion. In other cases, a longer term solution may be necessary.
2. Develop – Create a draft plan outlining the timeframe to accomplish specific, measurable goals to improve performance. Make sure your plan is attainable and fair, not just a means to terminate a staff member.
3. Implement – Discuss the plan in detail, leaving room for modifications based on employee feedback before signing the final plan.
4. Monitor – Commit to a schedule to review employee progress and provide motivation and guidance along the way.
5. Analyze – Analyze the results. Did the employee meet the goals set in the PIP or did they fall short?

STEP ONE - Verbal Warning

A verbal warning is given if the staff member's performance continues to fall below the set standards.

- In preparation for this meeting, develop an outline that includes what happened that caused the verbal warning, what does the staff member need to do to correct the behavior, and when (date) it is to be accomplished - the end of the verbal warning period. Use the Verbal Warning Discipline Template as a guide in planning your meeting.
- The meeting should proceed as follows:
 1. Remind the staff member of any feedback sessions or discussions the two of you have already had regarding the performance issue.
 2. Explain the reason for the meeting - a verbal warning.
 3. Focus on the performance issue, and cite specific incidents/examples.
 4. Describe the impact on the group and/or co-workers as a result of the current performance issue.
 5. Explain to the staff member the specific change in performance you expect; describe what you need to see him/her demonstrate and/or deliver.

Ask the staff member for his/her perspective; why are these performance issues happening?

- i. Failure to understand expectations?
- ii. Lack of resources?
- iii. Lack of skills?
- iv. Other?
- v. Do not "see" the performance issue you describe; do not believe there are any issues

Develop a Plan to follow the Verbal Warning

This plan should identify concrete steps that the staff member needs to take to improve performance, including a timeframe for each accomplishment to be completed and a deliverable to be provided (for example, "within thirty days you will gain the expertise you need to create Excel spreadsheets without assistance). The plan should include a date by which all specified accomplishments should have occurred and deliverables

submitted (the Verbal Warning Period). For this step use the Verbal Warning Template.

Points to cover in the Verbal Warning Conversation

- Gain the staff member's commitment to solve the performance issue by fulfilling the requirements of the Verbal Warning.
- Make sure the staff member understands that their performance is not adequate. As a result it is not "business as usual". At this point you have entered progressive discipline that can lead to termination of employment at the end of this discipline process.
- At the end of the meeting, summarize the discussion and the commitments made and gain mutual agreement.
- Give the staff member encouragement and let them know that you support their efforts to improve their performance to an acceptable level.

Follow up to Verbal Conversation

- Follow up the meeting by sending an e-mail that contains a written summary of the discussion, using the Verbal Warning Discipline Template.
- Place a copy of the written Verbal Warning into the staff member's personnel file.

Monitor the staff member's performance and document his/her progress

- Establish a consistent approach for reviewing and assessing the staff member's performance
- Meet weekly with the staff member to review the plan and to assess progress
- Document your meetings and discussions with the staff member via e-mail to minimize the chances for miscommunication or disagreement.
- As a general guideline, this stage of the process should last two to four weeks; this time frame depends on the nature or the performance issue and how easily it can or cannot be fixed.

Determine the outcome of the Verbal Warning

- On the last day of the Verbal Warning Period (which is in the verbal warning email) meet with the staff member to review the Verbal Warning.

- If the staff member has been successful, let him/her know that the performance issue has been resolved.
- Make clear that the employee must maintain this level of performance to avoid further discipline and to be successful.
 - Acknowledge the successful resolution in writing and place in the staff member's personnel file
 - Recognize what worked well
 - Discuss how to **maintain** good performance

If the staff member was not successful, move on to Step Two - the Written Warning.

STEP TWO – Written Warning

The Written Warning is the next step in Progressive Discipline. This step recognizes that things are moving to a more serious level. We are finished with the verbal warning and are moving on to the next step in the process. For this step use the Written Warning Template in consultation with Human Resources.

Develop a Written Warning Letter, in consultation with your HR Consultant. What should be included in a Written Warning Letter?

- Clearly stated performance concern and/or issue.
- Explanation that the staff member's contribution is important to the overall goals of the department.
- Expectations for performance and/or improvement.
- Goals and Timetable for meeting performance expectations and/or performance improvement.
- Follow up – weekly meetings are recommended to address ongoing issues and to positively reward good performance.
- Consequences - if performance expectations and/or performance improvements don't lead to positive changes - failure to improve may lead to termination.
- Summarize in the letter the continuing nature of the performance issue and include documentation of what occurred during the meetings which followed the Verbal Warning.
- Include in the letter a reasonable timeline for moving the staff member's

performance to an acceptable level (the Written Warning Period).

Important Things to Remember

- Stick to facts, and avoid speculation or innuendo
- Be organized, objective, and clear
- Use specific examples to support your position
- Link to the staff member's current goals, if possible

Avoid:

- Emotion – state objective facts
- Humor
- New goals or vague goals
- Predictions and assumptions

Continue to review and assess the staff member's performance

- Follow the same steps here as you followed for the Verbal Warning. Explain *to* the staff member that the situation has become more serious. Assess the staff member's performance against the expectations described in the written warning and document his/her progress and/or lack of progress.
- Continue to meet weekly with the employee and document the meetings as described earlier.

Determine the outcome of the Written Warning

- On the last day of the Written Warning Period, meet with the staff member to review how he/she has performed based on the Written Warning's expectations.
- If the staff member has been successful in meeting the expectations outlined in the Written Warning, let him/her know that the problem has been resolved.
- Make clear that the employee must maintain this level of performance to avoid further discipline and to be successful.
 - Acknowledge the successful resolution in writing and place in the staff member's personnel file
 - Recognize what worked well
 - Discuss how to maintain good performance
- If the staff member was not successful, move on to Step Three, the Final Written Warning.

STEP THREE – Final Written Warning

The Final Written Warning is the last step in Progressive Discipline prior to termination. The Final Written Warning provides one final opportunity for the staff member to bring his/her level of performance up to the expectations outlined by the manager within the context of Progressive Discipline. For this step, use the Final Written Warning Discipline template.

- Explain to the staff member that this is the last step in Progressive Discipline.
- Deliver this Final Written Warning in hard copy; draft it along the same lines as the Verbal and Written Warnings.
- Include documentation which summarizes what occurred during the meetings following the delivery of the previous warnings.
- Continue to assess the staff member's performance as described earlier.

STEP FOUR - Termination

At this step in the process, there should be no surprises because the process has been handled progressively and transparently with clear expectation on what was needed on the part of the staff member to improve performance. You will deliver the termination letter to the staff member (see Termination Template).

- Involve your HR Consultant as early as possible, and at every step of the Progressive Discipline Process. Your HR Consultant can help you navigate this process, especially when and if it becomes very challenging. Your HR Consultant will help the staff member understand this process and help you work toward a successful resolution.
- Develop a written record/file before making any decisions.
- Your files should be kept confidential and disclosed only to those who have a business need to know.
- Be consistent, even-handed and fair. Throughout this admittedly difficult process, treat your staff member as you yourself would want to be treated under similar circumstances.

Verbal Warning Date:

To: *(Employee Name and position)*
From: *(Manager Names and positions)*

Performance Issues: This Performance Improvement Plan is being created because you have had trouble meeting the standards for your position. Specifically, the following issues have been observed:

- Issue #1: (e.g. “For the months of March and April, you failed to meet your quota for...”)
- Issue #2

On **(date)**, you were appraised of your level of performance. Because we value you as an employee, we are providing you with a verbal warning as a way to clarify expectations and help provide you with concrete solutions for achieving them.

Employee Expectations: Your expectations for the next **(30/60/90)** days are the following:

- Expectation #1 (e.g. “You will complete 30 reports per week.”)
- Expectation #2
- Expectation #3

This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it names the things with which you have been having trouble. You are still required to fulfill the other duties of your job.

Employee Actions: In order to meet or surpass the expectations listed above, you will take the following actions:

- Action #1 (e.g. support, training, counseling)
- Action #2

Manager Actions: To aid you in meeting the expectations listed above, your managers will be expected to do the following:

- Manager Action #1 (e.g. “Weekly meetings to evaluate your work.”)
- Manager Action #2

If you fail to meet the above expectations in the following **(30/60/90)** days, we will take appropriate action, up to and including termination. By signing below, you acknowledge that you understand the expectations detailed above, and the consequences of not meeting them.

Employee Signature _____ **Date** _____

Manager Signature _____ **Date** _____

Performance Improvement Plan Written Warning Date:

To: *(Employee Name and position)*
From: *(Manager Names and positions)*

Performance Issues: This Performance Improvement Plan is being created because you have had trouble meeting the standards for your position. Specifically, the following issues have been observed:

- Issue #1: (e.g. “For the months of March and April, you failed to meet your quota for...”)
- Issue #2

On **(date)**, you were appraised of your level of performance. Because we value you as an employee, we are providing you with a verbal warning as a way to clarify expectations and help provide you with concrete solutions for achieving them.

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- Action #1 (e.g. support, training, counseling)
- Action #2

Manager Actions: To aid you in meeting the expectations listed above, your managers will be expected to do the following:

- Manager Action #1 (e.g. “Weekly meetings to evaluate your work.”)
- Manager Action #2

If you fail to meet the above expectations in the following **(30/60/90)** days, we will take appropriate action, up to and including termination. By signing below, you acknowledge that you understand the expectations detailed above, and the consequences of not meeting them.

Employee Signature _____ **Date** _____

Manager Signature _____

Performance Improvement Plan Final Warning**Date:**To: *(Employee Name and position)*From: *(Manager Names and positions)*

Performance Issues: This Performance Improvement Plan is being created because you have had trouble meeting the standards for your position. Specifically, the following issues have been observed:

- Issue #1: (e.g. “For the months of March and April, you failed to meet your quota for...”)
- Issue #2

On **(date)**, you were appraised of your level of performance. Because we value you as an employee, we are providing you with a verbal warning as a way to clarify expectations and help provide you with concrete solutions for achieving them.

Employee Expectations: Your expectations for the next **(30/60/90)** days are the following:

- Expectation #1 (e.g. “You will complete 30 reports per week.”)
- Expectation #2
- Expectation #3

This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it names the things with which you have been having trouble. You are still required to fulfill the other duties of your job.

Employee Actions: In order to meet or surpass the expectations listed above, you will take the following actions:

- Action #1 (e.g. support, training, counseling)
- Action #2

Manager Actions: To aid you in meeting the expectations listed above, your managers will be expected to do the following:

- Manager Action #1 (e.g. “Weekly meetings to evaluate your work.”)
- Manager Action #2

If you fail to meet the above expectations in the following **(30/60/90)** days, we will take appropriate action, up to and including termination. Wellesley College reserves the right to terminate during the next **(30/60/90)** days if you are not making appropriate progress towards these goals. You must also continue to perform at the level expected after the end of the PIP period. By signing below, you acknowledge that you understand the expectations detailed above, and the consequences of not meeting them.

Employee Signature _____ **Date** _____

Manager Signature _____ **Date** _____