

New Performance Requirements for 2910 Staff

Library Colleagues,

You may recently have become aware that the Library is currently drafting written statements of performance requirements for staff in the Guild's bargaining unit. The following message gives some basic information about this process so that staff can understand what's happening, how they may participate in the process of drafting written performance requirements, and how it will, and will not effect our annual performance evaluation process.

First however, it might help to begin by clearing up a couple of points of confusion that have arisen during the last few months. And so please note the following.

Staff in the Guild's bargaining unit are not getting a new performance evaluation system and we are not getting a new performance evaluation form. You will receive your next performance evaluation at the end of the current rating period. Many service units have established a "common appraisal period." For instance, in Library Services the common appraisal period is March 1, 2012-Feb. 28, 2013. Employees in Library Services will receive their next performance appraisal in March 2013, and it will be on the same written form and in the same format as this year's evaluation.

Staff in the Guild's bargaining unit are not getting a performance evaluation system with "performance plans" like the one that applies to the technicians. As you may know, the technicians are covered by a performance evaluation system that is different from our own. Each year technicians receive a "performance plan;" an "individual development plan" listing training the technician will take; and then each technician also has a "mid-year review" with his or her supervisor after six months to discuss how well the technician is fulfilling the performance plan. Although staff in the Guild's bargaining unit will not have "individual performance plans," supervisors are being encouraged to consider documenting training needs or the need to attend mandatory training courses during the coming year by giving staff members a memo outlining those needs or requirements at the time of their performance evaluation.

Instead of performance plans, the Library is drafting and implementing formal written performance requirements for staff in the AFSCME 2910 bargaining unit. There

is a provision in our current contract that sets out the procedures governing how the Library may create or change written performance requirements and how those requirements will be applied to staff in our bargaining unit. If you would like to read the contract language, it is available at the link below. Specifically, look at section 2 of the article for the language governing written performance requirements.
http://www.loc.gov/staff/ogc/legal_ref/labor/guild/guild-art15.html

The contract defines a performance requirement as stating "how many times, how well, in what time, or in what manner a duty must be performed to be considered satisfactory." Because the performance requirements are based on your position description (PD), there will be a separate draft written performance requirement document for each grade in each separate PD used by the Library. For example, for librarians in ABA doing acquisitions and cataloging work, there will be four draft performance requirement documents, one for GS-9 librarians, one for GS-11s, and then one for the GS-12 and GS-13.

Supervisors and managers are responsible for preparing and discussing a draft with their staff. When staff members receive a draft of the applicable draft written performance requirements for their position, the document they get will be several pages long and will be organized by a listing of "Job Elements." These elements are a listing of the major duty areas and areas of responsibility each of us handles as a Library staff member. For example, for librarians in ABA, their principal duties of cataloging, acquisitions, and training will each be listed as separate job elements. There will be 3 to 5 job elements in all, and each job element is discussed in a separate section of the document, with each section broken down on the page into three broad aligned columns.

The first large column is entitled "Major Duties" and it gives a simple list of all the major duties contained in our PD. Please remember this is a list of all possible duties that an employee could be assigned under their current position description. Therefore it will probably be a long list, but again no staff member is being asked to perform all of these duties or even a majority of the possible duties listed, at any one time or even within the rating period.

The second column lists "Performance requirements." These are short statements that give examples of how assigned duties should be performed in order to be considered satisfactory, excellent, or outstanding. As with the list of major duties, this is a compiled list of many possible examples. No one will be asked to try to match all these examples in order to earn a given rating, your actual performance evaluation

will be based only on the work that you are actually assigned; these examples are there simply to illustrate the different levels of performance.

And the last column is “Specific Assignments.” This column usually just contains the phrase “Continue to consistently perform major duties according to performance requirements,” This phrase restates our basic obligation to perform the work we are assigned; but does so in a general way that allows these draft performance requirements to cover groups of employees who work under the same PD.

When you receive the draft written performance requirements, we would like to suggest that you do two things. First, look over the list of major duties in the first column to verify that your regular work duties are included there (remember the list will include all the major duties of your PD)—if you don’t see your duties listed, point this out to your supervisor as a possible omission. Secondly, look at the performance requirements listed in the middle column to see if the examples are clear and easily understandable—does each example give you a clear indication of what type of performance is needed to be rated “Satisfactory?” Some documents also include language for “Outstanding,” “Excellent,” and “Unsatisfactory” ratings. If the examples are vague or unclear to you, then also point this out to your supervisor as points that may need further clarification. The dialog itself may be useful to you. This is your opportunity to provide input into the process of shaping your performance requirements. The exchange between supervisor and employee is a very important step in gaining a mutual understanding of the requirements for duties assigned to you.

Library managers are meeting to continue editing and refining the drafts, and will consider staff suggestions and comments as part of the editing process. The Guild must be notified of any meetings between supervisors and staff to discuss the performance requirements so that we may send a representative. Our stewards have attended some, but not all, of these meetings.

Once the drafts are completed, the final drafts will be forwarded to Human Resources and the Office of Workforce Management. Human Resources review the drafts and pass them on to Labor Relations in the Office of Workforce Management. Labor Relations will contact the Guild to begin the process of bargaining over the impact and implementation of these new performance requirements, as required by our current contract.

At the bargaining stage you may be contacted by the Guild to determine if you have any questions or concerns. We will also review this document and let you know if

we have any concerns. If you do not identify any adverse impact, the Guild will proceed with collective bargaining and put forward our standard agreement for your protection, which includes provisions that employees will only be evaluated based on the work assigned and that circumstances beyond the employee's control must be considered when evaluating performance. Once the bargaining is completed, your supervisor will provide you with a copy of the final document and a copy of the signed agreement on implementation.

Please be aware---the new performance requirements cannot be implemented until they are bargained with the Guild. This bargaining will occur after the draft requirements are filed with Human Resources so it will be after July 1, 2012---probably in July and August of 2012. The negotiated agreement between the Guild and the Library will include the date when the new performance requirements go into effect and other provisions governing the actual implementation of these performance requirements.

Even though we will be bargaining over the implementation of these performance requirements, if you do have concerns about the wording or any questions about what the requirements mean, we strongly encourage you to speak up now. It is much easier to address questions about the text now at the discussion stage with your supervisors as it can be problematical for the Guild to propose revisions to the wording of the requirements at the bargaining table. If you feel that the requirements will have an adverse impact on your job, please contact the Guild to discuss how that impact can be addressed through collective bargaining.

Please feel free to reply to get in touch with your Guild steward or the Guild office if you have any questions or particular concerns about this process or the draft performance requirements that you have seen. A current list of Guild stewards and their areas of coverage is available on the Guild's web site at:
<http://www.guild2910.org/stewards.html>

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