



CHECK-IN GUIDE

LEADERS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help leaders prepare and conduct Align check-ins that occur twice per year per your school or unit's schedule. It provides information about steps leaders need to take prior to the check-in conversations, things to consider when assessing performance, and what is important to communicate throughout the process.

Check-in conversations are an opportunity to quickly reflect on your employee's progress, which provides direction on what to focus on going forward. During check-in conversations, both employees and leaders assess what was accomplished, the outcomes realized, and the behaviors displayed relative to what was agreed to and expected. Both can share where there were successes, where there were challenges or missed opportunities, and how to take the employee's performance to the next level.

PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND

Performance excellence doesn't just happen; intentionality and time is required. The most effective check-ins occur when conducted in combination with regularly occurring one-on-one conversations. Refer to the [Align One-on-One Guide](#) or [Setting Key Deliverables Guide](#) for additional information.

- Check-ins primarily benefit employees. It is an opportunity to reflect on their accomplishments, discuss areas of improvement, and support their growth and aspirations.
- No surprises! One-on-one discussions serve as the foundation for check-ins. Neither party should be surprised by the status of the key deliverables during check-ins as progress should have been discussed during one-on-ones.
- Provide feedback and support that leads to better outcomes rather than focusing on problems.
- Focus on the degree to which key deliverables were accomplished and the frequency of displayed behaviors.
- Plan for a productive session by ensuring sufficient time is allotted for open dialog about each person's perspective.
- Staff should have a clear understanding about their accountability for their own performance.

PREPARING FOR CHECK-INS

Plan to conduct and have check-in meetings with each direct report at least twice a year per your school or unit's schedule. Check-ins are based on the results of regularly scheduled one-on-one conversations occurring throughout the check-in period. They summarize results and progress on key performance areas and close out the period by assessing and rating the accumulated results and progress made on expectations.

Check-in sequence and flow: Productive conversations are more likely when managers and staff properly prepare and complete their respective pre-check-in tasks. Establishing clear expectations prior to the check-in increases the likelihood for a productive meeting.

- **Prior to Check-in:** Use a scheduled one-on-one conversation to review the purpose, sequence, timing, flow of the check-in process, and any progress updates. Scheduling this meeting at a minimum of least two to three weeks prior to the check-in allows manager and staff to complete their respective tasks.
- **Check-in:** The sequence of form completion and conversation flow will likely be:
 1. Staff fills out the check-in form first and includes their ratings and assessment for the key deliverables and behaviors. They submit form to their manager for review.
 2. Manager reviews staff rating and comments, then drafts their appraisal comments and ratings
 3. Staff and manager have check-in discussion
 4. Manager finalizes rating and appraisal (or is done before #3)
 5. Staff reviews and acknowledges the final ratings and assessment. The check-in is complete.

Understand the ratings: Understanding the ratings and their definitions is key to assessing and discussing performance results.

- The rating scale for key deliverables considers how much of the deliverable was completed within the specified criteria. Determine how much of the key deliverable was accomplished, and then identify which criteria were met or missed.
- The scale for key behaviors indicates how frequently the behavior was displayed throughout the check-in period. Key behaviors apply to all work-related situations and not limited to time spent working on key deliverables.

See page 3 for rating scales and next steps.

| RATING SCALE FOR KEY DELIVERABLES | RATING SCALE FOR BEHAVIORS |
|--|---|
| <p>4: SURPASSED – Successfully completed more than the specified key deliverable and exceeded all established criteria (time, quality, results, etc.).</p> <p>3: ACCOMPLISHED – Successfully completed the specified key deliverable and met all established criteria.</p> <p>2: PARTIALLY ACCOMPLISHED – Completed part of the specified key deliverable, missed on some established criteria.</p> <p>1: NOT ACCOMPLISHED – Did not complete any of the specified key deliverable within the established criteria</p> | <p>4: ALWAYS – Consistently models the behavioral anchors.</p> <p>3: MOST OF THE TIME – Displays the behavioral anchors often.</p> <p>2: SOMETIMES – Displays the behavioral anchors inconsistently.</p> <p>1: RARELY – Seldom displays the behavioral anchors.</p> |
| OVERALL RATING CALCULATION | |
| <p>Overall rating is automatically calculated. It is equal to the sum of the averages of the key deliverables rating and behaviors rating. The overall rating calculation will be a score up to a maximum of 8.0</p> | |

Identify an appropriate environment: The environment should provide a safe space appropriate to the conversation, such as a conference room or office for privileged or sensitive topics. Take into consideration the employee’s preference as it is their performance review.

Gather supporting information: To have meaningful and objective check-ins, gather a wide range of information and perspectives before you determine a preliminary rating.

- Note tangible outcomes or results realized by the completion of the key deliverables or exhibition of the key behaviors.
- Review prior one-on-one conversations about the status of tasks and deliverables, how behaviors were demonstrated, and recent accomplishments.
- Speak with client and peers your direct report collaborated with during the check-in period. Collect information and observations from their interactions with your direct report.

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Use this section of the worksheet to perform a preliminary assessment and prepare comments to share with staff. Refer to the ratings charts found earlier in this guide as needed.

| KEY DELIVERABLES | | |
|---|---------------|-----------------|
| Insert key deliverable, rating, and comments, examples and evidence to support the rating. | | |
| Key Deliverable | Rating | Comments |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

| BEHAVIORS | | |
|--|--------|----------|
| Insert behaviors, frequency ratings, and include comments, examples and evidence to support each frequency rating. | | |
| Behavior (School/Unit) | Rating | Comments |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| ARIISE VALUES (FOR UCI HEALTH ONLY) | | |
| Accountability | | |
| Respect | | |
| Integrity | | |
| Innovation | | |
| Service | | |
| Excellence | | |
| LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS | | |
| Establish Alignment & Direction | | |
| Engage Employees | | |
| Deliver Results | | |

CONDUCTING CHECK-IN CONVERSATIONS

Remember to incorporate the following points into the check-in conversation. Take notes and encourage your direct report do to the same.

CONTEXT

- **Convey positive intent:** Check-ins and performance reviews are not punitive. However, open and honest dialogue is necessary to identify and jointly find solutions for challenges and roadblocks.
- **Aim for progress, not perfection:** This is a point-in-time snapshot of one's performance trajectory, which can go up, down, or stay as is. The goal is to help employees progress, grow, and perform at their highest potential.
- **Future focused:** Quickly reflect on the progress made to see what to focus on next. Take note of lessons learned but both parties need to avoid staying stuck in the past.

FLOW

1. Start with the direct report sharing their assessment of each key deliverable citing outcomes achieved and other information to support the rating they selected.
2. Continue with the direct report sharing their assessment of the key behaviors.
3. Follow up with feedback about the outcomes. Share the preliminary rating. Speak to what was accomplished and what was short of expectations, if applicable.
 - When providing feedback, either positive or constructive, keep the feedback descriptive, objective, and timely. Avoid vague and generic feedback.
 - As well as providing clear feedback, be open to soliciting feedback.
4. Anticipate that there may be some differences of perspective about ratings and be prepared with objective supporting evidence and examples.
 - Use questions that encourage staff to share objective evidence and examples to support their ratings.
 - Keep an open mind and listen to understand.
 - Together discuss similarities and differences of both points of view. Attempt to come to a common understanding.
 - Refer back to the key deliverable as needed or behavioral anchors of the key behaviors as needed.

NOTE: If considering adjustments to the preliminary at this point, indicate that the conversation will be taken into consideration before the assessment is finalized.

5. Have the direct report share their focus on the future. Take note of these areas.
6. Respond with additional areas or opportunities they did not bring up. Additionally, ask how they can be supported throughout the next check-in period.

7. Discuss and jointly agree on the areas of focus. Identify any immediate action items for either party. Note the areas and any action items.
8. Summarize the conversation.
9. Allow the direct report to provide final comments.
10. Share next steps, which is to finalize the ratings, add any additional comments, communicate any change in ratings (if applicable), and send the form to the direct report for acknowledgement and final comments.