Managing Student Workers at OHIO

The student employee’s first priority is their academic success. However, their employment as a student can serve to really supplement and improve their overall educational experience at OHIO, and to fill gaps in our workforce at the same time. We want to give students an employment experience that will enable them to risk, to learn, and to observe a healthy and efficient workplace.

General expectations and tips for managing students:

- Expect and prepare for regular turnover. Most students will be here for 2-4 years, which means they might work for you for just one semester, or their entire academic career. Have departing students train your new round of student workers if possible.
- Flexible schedules. A student’s primary focus should be their studies. Try to support flexible schedules so students can work shifts around their classes. Plan for lower workloads/productivity periods around mid-terms, final exams, and breaks, and increased hours and project activities during the summer months when students may work more hours.
- Students are going through more than average life changes, significant identity development; career, personal and academic life decisions; and everything from homesickness to finding an apartment to a family crisis may pose a challenge. You will be most effective if you familiarize yourself with available campus resources, and encourage your student staff to seek those as needed. Contact HR if you need help knowing what office to contact as a resource for a specific situation.
- Provide opportunities for students to do meaningful work. Students want to make a difference. Offer opportunities, support, and constructive feedback, and they will bring their best. One way to allow students to really participate on campus is to allow them to be part of a search committee. This adds a new perspective from a group that isn’t represented often on our search committees and will likely feel like a privilege and a valuable learning experience for them.
- Create a workplace that has room for fun and social interaction. This will make them likely to learn more and be more productive, while also enjoying working for you!

Departmental Student Handbook/Work Rules

One of the most helpful practices for any department to begin doing to manage their student employees more effectively is to create a written document of work rules or a student handbook that will govern, clarify, and define the regular practices of your department, likely similarly to how you expect your professional staff to behave, but with more flexibility. This ‘handbook’ will help to set clear expectations for how you want students to behave and what level of performance and professionalism you intend to hold them to. One of the most important elements in managing employees is setting clear expectations that equip your employees to perform as you need them to.
**Job Descriptions**

Create an accurate job description in a simple format (not required to use Position Description). It should list the responsibilities, hours, duration of the job, and any other important details. This can be used to help you as you post and screen for the job as well.

**Screening Measures**

You’ll want to screen the applicants using some kind of systematic approach based on the qualifications required to be able to accomplish the job, usually with at least one interview. Be aware of unconscious bias, and keep focused on evaluating the students’ ability to perform the job, not how much you like them. Use the job description as the foundation for your screening criteria.

**Compensation**

Compensation for students is determined by hiring managers and individual departments. When compensating any employee, it is important to be fair and consistent, but there are no additional prescribed guidelines at OHIO besides the federal and state minimum wage requirements.

A best practice would be to choose a fair starting wage for each type of position and allowing higher wages for a higher level of responsibility/experience/skill.

**Managing Performance**

Helping Student Employees improve regularly is congruent with the fact that student employees are here to learn. We generally want to offer them opportunities to improve through on the job training as much as we are able. While annual goal setting and performance evaluations are not required for student employees, you may find benefit (and provide valuable experience for your student employee) by setting goals and objectives and evaluating your student employee. You may utilize the Performance Management form used for faculty and staff or you may seek to develop your own student form. You also might benefit from the Performance Management training series for supervisors, even if you only supervise student employees.

**Discipline and Terminations**

Discipline should be issued for violations of work rules, policies, laws, general professional expectations or simply for very poor job performance after repeated efforts to help employees improve. Discipline for students should be given fairly across the department, progressively, in proportion to the offense, and consistent over time.

A best practice would be to create a set of work rules that your department will adhere to with student employees. Contact your HR Liaison if you are concerned about something.

General tips:

- Progress through discipline
- Intended to correct performance or behavior
- Don’t surprise the employee, give feedback regularly
- Document issues
**Onboarding and Orienting**

Set and clarify expectations as needed. You’ll do this once very clearly when a student begins, but may need to remind them of what results you’re looking for, what resources are available, what happens if they don’t perform, and/or how you’ll be helping them improve.

Go over any handbook or work rules and where to find resources. Tell them what the first couple weeks will look like for them. Whatever you would do to welcome a professional staff member, attempt to do for student staff as well (tours, introductions, etc.).

**Contact for Further Assistance**

Please contact your HR Liaison for assistance creating job descriptions, determining fair compensation, managing performance, or determining the best route for discipline.

[https://www.ohio.edu/hr/contact/upload/HR_Liaison_Assignments.pdf](https://www.ohio.edu/hr/contact/upload/HR_Liaison_Assignments.pdf)

Many of these best practices as well as other helpful practices may be found in the Culinary Services Student Employee Handbook, which applies only to Student Employees in Culinary Services [https://www.ohio.edu/food/about/students.cfm](https://www.ohio.edu/food/about/students.cfm).