Work Study Supervision Tips

A work study supervisor can be a key figure in a student’s college experience. Regardless of job responsibilities, work study students can learn a great deal about careers and the world of work in general. Supervising, training, and mentoring a work study employee is an important investment in a young person’s future.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Making job offers and selecting students.
2. Agreeing on a work schedule with each student employee.
3. Completing all pre-employment requirements.
4. Explaining the job to student employees.
5. Explaining the standards of behavior expected of employees.
6. Providing training in skills and procedures necessary to perform tasks.
7. Ensuring adequate supervision of student work.
8. Keeping lines of communication open, clear, and constructive.
9. Ensuring that students are not scheduled to work during established class times, labs, tests, etc.
10. Ensuring the accuracy of student time sheets.
11. Ensuring that students do not exceed their award amount.
12. Evaluating students’ performance at the end of each semester.
13. Informing Loyola immediately in the event of workplace accidents, job abandonment, or serious misconduct.

SUPERVISOR RIGHTS

1. Expecting quality work from your student employees.
2. Expecting your student employees to follow the work schedule you have agreed upon.
3. Expecting confidentiality from your student employees.
4. Informing student employees of any unsatisfactory work performance.
5. Terminating student employees with proper documentation and after discussing the reasons with those students.

CREATING A POSITIVE WORK EXPERIENCE

Some of the things you can do to make a critical difference in the work climate are:

1. Get to know your students. Talk to them about classes, outside interests, family, etc. Let them know that you are interested in them as individuals.

2. Be clear about the assignment. Before you ever talk to your student employees, think the job through. What exactly are the results you want? What options do the students have as they tackle the assignment? Try to give the assignment in such a way that students have some options.
3. **Monitor** to be sure that the job is underway and performed correctly. Do not wait until the end of the semester to check with your students to see how things are going. Be friendly and helpful as you monitor.

4. **Do not ignore** non-performance. As soon as you realize someone is not doing the job, check to see what is happening. Again clarify instructions and expectations.

5. Provide **feedback** to students. If it’s helpful, schedule brief **check-in** conversations every 3-5 weeks. Even when the performance is good, be sure to tell students what they have done well. Don't miss any opportunity to give praise, recognition or correction and suggestions for improvement.

6. When the job is over, **thank** your students for doing the job. Be generous with praise and be sure that they receive credit for the work they have done.

7. Remember that the most important intangible part of the work climate is a healthy sense of **self-esteem**. When students feel good about themselves, about the university and the work they do, it will be much easier to get results.

**Additional tips based on feedback from students and supervisors:**

1. State your expectations clearly.
2. Give a positive work experience - make it fun, and teach responsibility.
3. Outline procedures clearly - assume nothing.
4. Treat student employees as you want to be treated.
5. Be firm yet flexible.
6. Make student employees feel important.
7. Address problems (or potential problems) as they arise - don’t let them build up.
8. When a student employee’s main function is clerical or repetitive, give them more interesting, meaningful, or engaging tasks when they arise.
9. Remember: a student employee’s first job is to be a student. Within agreed-upon limitations, understand that academics comes first.

**FEEDBACK VS. PRAISE**

Feedback is simply a matter of telling people when their performance is on or off track. Feedback should be constructive and done often so that the students work can be reinforced or corrected. Praise is the added ingredient that says, "You did a really good job." "I appreciate your work." "You're a pleasant person to work with." Praise needs to be honest, not elaborate. It should come from someone who understands the job the student is doing. Praise is one of the most powerful motivators for millennial students.
PROBLEM SOLVING

There will be times, in spite of your best efforts, that performance problems will arise. At this point, you are going to have to take some time to stop and examine what happened, discuss the problem with the student, and try to come up with some kind of a solution. Here is a basic approach.

1. Define the problem.
2. Before you even talk to the student, consider some possible, acceptable solutions.
3. Meet with the student.
4. Present the problem to the student in as clear a way as possible.
5. Get the student's input.
6. Pick a mutually agreeable solution.
7. Get a commitment from the student.

Your goal throughout this process is to establish a spirit of cooperation. It is important that there be a feeling of trust between the student and the supervisor. The student employee will be most likely to respect a supervisor who has been fair, consistent, open, and honest. Fault-finding burns up energy that could be used to solve the problem, so try to avoid it. Soliciting possible solutions from the student is very important. You literally want the words to come out of the student's mouth. If the student tells you his/her plan for resolving the problem and the solution is an acceptable one, he/she will be more likely to remember the solution, commit to it, and follow through with it.

CORRECTION/DISCIPLINE

This is a constructive means of dealing with unacceptable behavior or performance deficiencies on the part of an employee. The supervisor should meet with the student employee about any aspects of work performance that fail to meet standards and provide an opportunity for improvement. Disciplinary action is intended to assist and encourage employees to correct their conduct and to achieve satisfactory work performance and should include a series of progressive actions. Prior to the termination of a student employee and depending upon the seriousness of the offenses, one or more of the following steps should be taken:

1. **Verbal warning**: discuss the problem with the student and tell them why it’s unacceptable.
2. **Written warning**: discuss the problem with the student explicitly. Notify the student of the possibility of termination if corrective action is not taken. Write down the date of the meeting, the problem discussed, and the corrective actions recommended.
3. **[Optional]: Final probationary period**: Give the student a defined period of time (1-2 shifts) in which to demonstrate improvement. Give the student a deadline by which a decision about termination or retention will be made.
4. **Termination**: Inform the student of his or her termination. Two weeks notice of termination is recommended except in cases of gross misconduct, where immediate termination is appropriate. Gross misconduct may include, but is not limited to: actions threatening the safety of others, malicious use or theft of agency property, or falsification and/or forgery of time sheets or other documents. Supervisors should report such cases to Loyola.