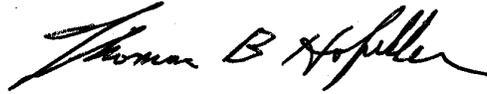


For: FSA Employees

**Guidance on the New Performance Management System -
Assessing the Standards to Rating the Elements**

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management



1 Overview

A Background

During the implementation of FSA’s new Performance Management System, many questions have been raised:

- on how to differentiate between the various levels of performance within a performance element
- as to whether failure of a specific performance standard within an element containing many standards requires that the entire element be determined to be “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”.

B Purpose

This notice:

- provides key points when dealing with assessing performance
- offers guidance on moving through the process of assessing the standards in an element to arriving at the overall rating for the element

Note: Although the guidance in this notice is best used early in the appraisal cycle, and is ideal for FY 2009, the principle that communication is always good means that much of the information can also be used for FY 2008 performance appraisals.

- provides a link to the performance management web page, where more guidance on moving from assessing standards to assigning the element rating will be posted.

Note: This is the first in a series of PM notices that will provide guidance on various aspects of the Performance Management System.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2009	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

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2 Approaches

A Key Points

When thinking about performance appraisals, remember the following:

- to be successful, Rating Officials must **communicate** to their employees how each employee's performance will be assessed, including how the Rating Official will move from assessing the employee's standards to assigning the element rating
- this philosophy does **not** need to be incorporated into the performance plan, or even put in writing, but it **must** be clearly communicated by the Rating Official early in the appraisal cycle
- the Rating Official should inform individuals that the employee has substantial responsibilities in the overall rating process. These responsibilities include documenting and communicating performance in each of the elements within the employee's overall rating.

Notes: This documentation is in addition to any documentation maintained by the Rating Official. The quantity and content of this documentation should be discussed between the employee and Rating Official throughout the year.

Communication is key to the success of this system.

B Additional Guidance

Since a minimum of 3 standards are required per element, Rating Officials must be able to translate their assessment of these standards into an overall rating for each specific element. There are a number of strategies that the Rating Official can use to accomplish this task.

Example: This specific element has 5 standards. At the end of the appraisal cycle, the Rating Official determines that the employee has:

- exceeded expectations in 1 of the standards
- met expectations in 3 of the standards
- **not** met expectations in the last standard.

Possible outcomes include the following.

- The Rating Official could weigh each of these standards equally, with each standard contributing one-fifth to the overall element rating. If this is the case, majority rules and the element would be rated "Meets Fully Successful".

2 Approaches (Continued)

B Additional Guidance (Continued)

- Failure in 1 standard means that the element as a whole must fail. In this case, the element would be rated “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”. Care should be taken when using this approach. The specific standard must be so job critical that failure in the standard means failure of the element.
- Rating Officials may give different weighted importance to different standards in the same element. This means that 1 of the standards carries more weight than the others; that is, more important than the others. In this situation, the overall element could be rated as “Meets Fully Successful” or “Does Not Meet Fully Successful”, based on the Rating Official’s determination of the weight of each standard.

Note: If the Rating Official is using this approach, the element should **not** be rated as “Exceeds Fully Successful” here because, even though the standards are weighted, it is assumed that all meet at least a certain level of importance. Failure in 1 standard, although it does **not** automatically mean “Does Not Meet Fully Successful” in the element overall, should mean that the employee cannot “Exceed” as a whole.

Rating Officials have the flexibility to determine which of the following approaches to take.

- Rating Officials can treat all the standards within an element as equal. It is unlikely that there would be an element where each of the standards was exactly equally important, but this is an option.
- Rating Officials can weigh the standards within an element. This means the Rating Official can determine that, for example, 2 of the 5 standards in an element are the key standards and their results will largely determine the overall element rating. This does **not** mean that the other 3 standards are unimportant and will not be measured and assessed, just that the standards will **not** carry as much weight.
- Rating Officials can determine that failure in 1 standard means failure in the element as a whole. However, if the Rating Official wants to take a performance action against an employee, the Rating Official must have sufficient documentation to support it, including demonstrating that the standards on which the action is based are reasonable.

Note: Whatever approach the Rating Officials choose, their decision must be determined and clearly communicated to the employee at the beginning of the appraisal cycle.

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2 Approaches (Continued)

B Additional Guidance (Continued)

As additional guidance becomes available, it will be posted on the Employee Recognition and Performance Management web site at

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/hrdapp?area=home&subject=erpm&topic=prm>.

CLICK “Assessing Standards and Rating Elements” under “FSA Performance Management Program”.

C Additional Information

If there are any questions about this guidance, contact the appropriate Servicing Personnel Office according to the following.

IF located in...	THEN contact...
National Office	HRD, Employee Programs Branch at 1 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 202-401-0679• 202-401-0694• 202-205-9057 (TTY).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kansas City or St. Louis offices• APFO	Kansas City Human Resources Office, Human Capital Management Section at either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 816-823-4669• 800-735-2966 (TTY).
State or County Office	State Office, Administrative Division.