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Policies and Procedures

Title: Performance Planning and Appraisal

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This P&P outlines procedures for establishing performance elements and standards and for rating employee performance. It applies to all employees in the Economics agencies **except** members of the Senior Executive Service and employees holding certain temporary and/or excepted service appointments.

Table Of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Performance Planning	4
	Performance Elements	4
	Performance Standards	5
	Documenting and Communicating Elements and Standards	5
	Annual Appraisal Period	5
3.	Progress Reviews	6
4.	Annual Appraisals	7
	Element Rating Levels	7
	Appraisal Units	7
	Summary Rating Levels	8
	Discussing Apopraisal	8
	Document Distribution and Rentention	9
5.	Special Situations	9
	Advisoty Ratings	9
	Inability to Rate/Extension of Appraisal Period	10
	Performance Deficiencies	10
	Grievances	11
6.	Impact on Other Personnel Actions	11
	Appendix A	12
	Appendix B	13
	Appendix C	14
	Summary of Responsibilities	15
	Glossary	17

1. Introduction

Performance appraisal is a management tool designed to encourage communications in the office, improve the quality of work produced, and promote individual accountability. This is the concept underpinning the legal requirement that all agencies evaluate employee performance.¹ Just how a supervisor is expected to do this is addressed in some detail below. The information applies to **all employees** assigned to the Economics agencies **except** the following:

- members of the **Senior Executive Service**;²
- employees in the excepted service who are not expected to serve more than 120 calendar days in a consecutive 12 month period;
- **temporary employees** with appointments not to exceed 1 year, providing they agree—in writing—to serve without a rating and are aware of the consequences of that agreement (i.e., employees will not be considered for reappointment or for an increase in pay when either determination is based on a rating).

In addition to these three general exceptions which are covered by law,³ the USDA's Office of Personnel has also obtained exemptions for a number of specific positions, among them:

- **students** employed as trainees under a work-study program or under temporary appointments; and
- **non-temporary** intermittent or part-time employees whose appointments carry **salary limitations** (i.e., excepted service Schedule A (g) authority appointments).

For further information on these and other exempted positions, see the USDA's Performance Management Plan.⁴

The fact that certain employees are excepted from the formal aspects of the appraisal process does not mean they are, therefore, exempt from performance related scrutiny, criticism, and

¹Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 43.

²The Senior Executive Service is covered by a separate performance appraisal system which will not be discussed in this P&P.

³Title 5, United States Code, Section 4301 (1) and (2).

⁴Currently outlined in USDA Personnel Letter No. 430-15 dated July 31, 1987. This document is being reviewed and may eventually be superseded. It is likely, however, that these exemptions will be retained in any future guidance issued by the Office of Personnel.

praise. The supervisor should still maintain records of performance for all non-ratable employees and recommend and take administrative action as required.

2. Performance Planning

Performance Elements

The supervisor must identify **no fewer than 3, but not more than 10** performance elements for each position, capturing the major duties and responsibilities. In developing these elements, it is important that the supervisor consult with the employee in the position, although the supervisor, of course, is ultimately responsible for the decisions made. Working together, the supervisor and the employee will determine which elements are critical (i.e., essential to the performance of the job) and which are noncritical (i.e., important to the job, but not essential to overall performance). **At least one** element must be identified as non critical. In the rating process, critical elements are double weighted; that is, they are assigned 2 points (referred to as appraisal units), while non-critical elements are assigned 1 point (see Chapter 4 for further details on appraisal units). To simplify the process, the supervisor should attempt to standardize the elements as much as possible, adopting similar elements for similar positions.

At least one critical element must give the supervisor an opportunity to assess the employee's performance in the area of civil rights. For **supervisory** positions, a separate critical element must be established to specifically and exclusively address civil rights responsibilities. For **non-supervisory** positions, a separate civil rights element will not normally be necessary; in most cases, civil rights goals and responsibilities for a non-supervisor can be addressed within the context of one or more of the established duty-related elements. For example, an element focusing on internal working relationships would provide an occasion to measure an employee's support for diversity and the ability to interact with co-workers from different backgrounds and ethnic groups. Civil rights responsibilities would also be a major factor in any element relating to customer service functions.

In certain unusual instances, the elements established for the duties of a non-supervisory position may not lend themselves to a discussion of civil rights issues. This is most likely to occur if the work is extremely technical or scientific in nature, or if it is performed in a very independent or isolated manner. Certain research positions might fall into this category. In such cases, the supervisor and the employee may formulate a separate element addressing the position's civil rights responsibilities.

In the rarest of cases, the supervisor and the employee may determine that the duties of a non-supervisory position simply do not provide a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to civil rights or work force diversity. Should this occur—and it should seldom, if ever, occur in the Economics agencies—the Department requires that the second level supervisor

review the case. If the second level supervisor agrees that civil rights goals cannot be addressed within the context of the position, the second level supervisor will forward a **written** request for an exception to EMS's Personnel Director, who will appoint an ad hoc panel to study the request. The panel will be composed of at least three members: (1) the agency's civil rights director (or designee), (2) EMS's Personnel Director (or designee), and (3) a representative of the mission or program area of the position under review. The panel will forward a recommendation to the agency head, who will either grant or deny an exemption. All exemptions will be reported to the Department's Office of Civil Rights Enforcement within 30 days following approval.

Performance Standards

For each performance element, the supervisor—again soliciting comments from the employee occupying the position—will prepare a statement describing how a reasonably effective employee would perform the work, addressing, as appropriate, the quantity and quality of the work produced, its timeliness, any customer service expectations, and the amount of supervision required. This description will become the performance standard for that particular element at the Fully Successful rating level (see Chapter 4 for more information on rating levels). The supervisor will use this standard as a yardstick for measuring employee performance.

Documenting and Communicating Elements and Standards

The supervisor will record the proposed elements and standards on form AD-435A, Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheet (see Appendix A),⁵ and its Continuation Sheet, form AD-435B (see Appendix B), and will discuss them with the employee occupying the position. The supervisor and the employee will then sign the AD-435A, and the supervisor will forward the documents to the reviewing official for approval and signature. Once the documents have been approved and signed, the supervisor will forward a copy to the employee.

The supervisor and the employee will discuss the proposed elements and standards and sign the forms **within 30 days** following the beginning of each appraisal period, or, for newly assigned employees, within 30 days after the new employee officially arrives on board. (Note: elements and standards are required for details and temporary promotions in excess of 120 days.)

Annual Appraisal Period

A employee must have been in the position with elements and standards in place for at **least 90 days** before an evaluation may be completed. Any period shorter than 90 days simply does not

⁵The reverse side of the first page of this form provides instructions on performance planning and appraisal in conjunction with a step by step discussion of each item on the form. The evaluating official may use this as a quick reference guide for the appraisal process.

afford enough time to make a reasonable assessment. In most cases, the supervisor will evaluate each employee once every 12 months, although the supervisor may extend the appraisal period to 15 months should circumstances so dictate. The appraisal period may begin and end on any date convenient for the agency.

3. Progress Reviews

At some point during the appraisal period, usually at the midpoint of the rating year, the supervisor will meet with each employee to discuss performance and performance-related issues. This meeting, officially labeled a progress review, but frequently referred to as an **interim appraisal** or **mid-year review**, is intended to assess the employee's current level of performance as measured against the standards established for the work and offer advice. As necessary, this review will identify problems and formulate remedies. In a sense, the progress review is preventive medicine; it urges the supervisor and the employee to confront performance deficiencies in their early stages, when treatment is easier and before formal action becomes necessary. For marginal employees, it would, in fact, be wise to conduct these reviews on a quarterly basis.

While trouble-shooting is perhaps its primary purpose, the progress review should not be seen in a negative light. For the successful, effective employee, it should provide an occasion for positive reinforcement, the supervisor encouraging the employee to keep up the good work or to accept increasingly ambitious challenges.

The progress review also provides an opportunity to review the performance elements and standards and make any necessary adjustments. (Note: changes cannot be made within 90 days of the end of the rating period; if changes are proposed within that window, the length of the rating period must be extended to give the employee a minimum of 90 days to perform under the revised elements and standards.)

In terms of the paperwork involved, the progress review is a relatively undemanding exercise. If desired, the supervisor may prepare narrative comments by attaching a memorandum to the AD-435A. But this is entirely optional. The only written requirement is for the employee and the supervisor to initial and date the block at the bottom of the form verifying that the progress review discussion(s) did take place.⁶

⁶Since the AD-435A also functions as a worksheet used in determining the employee's final rating of record, it will, at this point, be returned to the supervisor's working files. Once the final appraisal has been completed, the form will be filed and retained along with other documentation pertinent to the rating process. See Chapter 4 for further information on document handling and retention.

4. Annual Appraisals

Element Rating Levels

At the end of the rating period, the supervisor will evaluate each performance element and determine which of the following three rating levels is most appropriate. In each case, the supervisor will compare the employee's performance with the Fully Successful performance standard established for that element.

- **Exceeds Fully Successful:** The employee's performance was significantly better—in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness and/or customer service—than one would normally expect from an individual assigned to the position (i.e., the performance **exceeds** the Fully Successful standard for the element being evaluated).
- **Fully Successful:** The employee's performance was as good as, but not necessarily better than, one would normally expect from an individual occupying the position (i.e., the performance **meets** the Fully Successful standard for the element being evaluated). This level generally describes the performance of the "average" effective employee whose work meets normal expectations in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness, and customer service.
- **Does Not Meet Fully Successful:** The employee's performance has failed to fulfill the basic expectations for the work (i.e., the performance **does not meet** the Fully Successful standard for the element being evaluated). The supervisor must prepare a written statement describing the employee's deficiencies for all elements rated at this level (the supervisor may record this statement on either the AD-435A and/or B or on a separate sheet of paper).

After determining the level for each element, the supervisor will record the decision by checking the appropriate block on the AD-435A and B (i.e., block 4, "Element Rating").

Appraisal Units

As noted above, all performance elements were not necessarily created equal; some of them are critical; some are non-critical. To recognize the difference—and give extra credit where extra credit is due—the supervisor will assign points: two points (usually referred to as appraisal units) for critical elements and one point (i.e., one appraisal unit) for non-critical elements.

To calculate the number of appraisal units for each employee and thereby arrive at a total score and a final rating, the supervisor will transfer the individual element ratings (see preceding section) from the AD-435A or B to the final rating document, form AD-435, Performance Appraisal (see Appendix C). The supervisor will record either one or two points in the appropriate blocks (i.e., block 15B, 15C, or 15D) and add up the points (i.e., appraisal units)

awarded at each level. The supervisor will then translate this total score into the summary rating level for the employee.

Summary Rating Levels

The **number of appraisal units** earned **at each element rating level** will determine the **summary rating level** for the employee. As its name implies, the summary rating level is an adjective summarizing the employee's overall performance. There are five such adjectives, or rating levels, which the supervisor may use based on specific criteria:

- **Outstanding:** All appraisal units were earned at the Exceeds level. For each Outstanding rating, the supervisor must prepare a written narrative outlining the employee's accomplishments.
- **Superior:** More appraisal units were earned at the Exceeds level than at the Fully Successful level, **and** no appraisal units were earned at the Does Not Meet level.
- **Fully Successful:** Appraisal units earned at the Fully Successful level equal or surpass the number of appraisal units earned at the Exceeds level, **and** no **critical element** was rated Does Not Meet; if one or more **non-critical** elements were rated at the Does Not Meet level, the appraisal units earned at that level must have been offset by appraisal units at the Exceeds level.
- **Marginal:** More appraisal units were earned at the Does Not Meet level than at the Exceeds level, **and** no **critical element** was rated Does Not Meet.
- **Unacceptable:** One or more **critical elements** were rated at the Does Not Meet level. Should this occur, the supervisor must contact an employee relations specialist in EMS's Personnel Division for guidance on how to proceed.

The supervisor will identify the summary rating level for each employee by checking the appropriate block on the AD-435.

Discussing Apopraisal

Once the summary rating level has been identified, the supervisor will sign and date the AD-435 and forward it to the reviewing official for signature. It is important that this review take place **before** the employee sees the rating or is engaged in any discussions concerning the rating. After the reviewing official has signed and returned the form, the supervisor will discuss the rating with the employee. The employee will then sign the form, after first responding to the ethics and conduct-related items in block 17. Should the employee refuse to sign for whatever reason, the

supervisor will annotate the form with the following statement: "Employee received rating, but refused to sign."

Document Distribution and Retention

The supervisor will distribute copies of the completed appraisal as follows:

- Original and Copy 1: Classification and Employment Branch, PD, EMS for data input and filing.
- Copy 2: Employee.
- Copy 3: Supervisor.
- Copy 4: Extra copy (discard, retain, or distribute in accordance with individual preferences).

The supervisor must retain all documents relating to performance appraisal for **4 years**. These documents would include the appraisal worksheets and a copy of the final appraisal form itself, along with any work samples or supervisory notes used to substantiate or justify the appraisal. The supervisor will also retain the original of the justification statement required for any Outstanding ratings.

5. Special Situations

Advisory Ratings

In certain rather unusual circumstances, an employee may receive one or more advisory appraisals during a given rating year. The supervisor must consider these advisory ratings when preparing the employee's final rating of record. Just what "consider" means in this context is not spelled out in current regulations. The supervisor may, therefore, exercise individual discretion in reviewing these advisory documents, providing the supervisor is able, in the end, to explain how the final rating was achieved and how the advisory rating was factored in—should the question ever be asked. Advisory appraisals are called for in the following situations:

- **Details and Temporary Promotions in excess of 120 days.** The supervisor of an employee who is detailed or temporarily promoted for 120 days or more must establish performance elements and standards for that position, as outlined in Chapter 2 above. At the conclusion of the detail or temporary promotion, the supervisor will prepare an advisory AD-435 documenting the employee's accomplishments and forward it to the employee's permanent supervisor. (Note: details or temporary promotions of fewer than 120 days duration do not require elements and standards; the supervisor should, however, prepare some written documentation of the employee's performance and forward it to the permanent supervisor.) This guidance applies to any employee detailed within USDA

When an employee is detailed outside the Department, the permanent supervisor should make a reasonable effort to obtain information regarding the employee's performance prior to completing the annual appraisal.

- **Change of Supervisor.** Each individual who supervised the employee for 90 days or more during the rating year must prepare an advisory rating and forward it to the current supervisor.
- **Change of Position and Supervisor.** When an employee who has occupied a position for at least 90 days leaves that position, the supervisor should prepare an advisory rating and forward it to the new supervisor, along with the ratings of record for the past 4 years.
- **Change of Position Without Change in Supervisor.** When an employee changes position but retains the same supervisor (e.g., the employee was promoted or reassigned within the same organization), the supervisor is not required to prepare an advisory rating, since there is really no third party to "advise" in such a case. Some written documentation of the employee's performance might, however, be recommended, since the supervisor must consider the entire rating year—including the work in the previous position—in the employee's final rating of record. A memorandum to the record or an advisory rating kept in the supervisor's own files might provide a helpful reference at the end of the rating year.

Inability to Rate/Extension of Appraisal Period

When the rating year ends before an employee has been in the position for the minimum 90 days, the supervisor will normally extend the appraisal period for the length of time needed to meet the 90 day requirement. When the new target date is reached, the supervisor will prepare a rating of record for the employee.

Performance Deficiencies

When serious performance deficiencies develop, the supervisor should not be bound by the normal appraisal schedule. Rather than wait for the regularly scheduled progress review or final appraisal, the supervisor should immediately contact an employee relations specialist in EMS's Personnel Division and take appropriate action whenever an employee's performance in one or more critical elements slips below the Fully Successful level.

Grievances

An employee may not grieve the substance of the performance elements and standards established for the position. Since management assigns work, management may determine the manner in which it should be performed. The employee may, however, grieve the **application** of

those standards (i.e., the performance appraisal itself).

Should a grievance or potential grievance situation arise, the employee and the supervisor should immediately contact an employee relations specialist in EMS's Personnel Division for assistance. All grievances will be handled in accordance with administrative grievance procedures.

6. Impact on Other Personnel Actions

An employee must receive a rating of record of Fully Successful or better to be eligible for a within-grade increase, a performance award, or promotion. Performance ratings may also affect the employee's selection for training opportunities and will help determine service credit in the event of a reduction in force. (For more information on these related personnel issues, please consult the applicable P&P on each separate topic.)

Appendix A

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PERFORMANCE PLAN, PROGRESS REVIEW AND APPRAISAL WORKSHEET
 (Instructions on reverse)

1. Name (Last, First, M.I.) Balladur, Edward M.	Pay Plan, Series, Grade GS-1530-13	Agency/Division NASS, SSD	APPRAISAL PERIOD	
Position Title Statistician (Ag)			From 10/1/94	To 9/30/95
2. PERFORMANCE ELEMENT No. 7 (Describe below the duty or responsibility for which the employee is accountable and responsible. Indicate if the element is critical or noncritical.)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRITICAL <input type="checkbox"/> NONCRITICAL	

Civil Rights

3. STANDARD (Describe the level expected for "Fully Successful" performance. Include appropriate indicators of quality, quantity, cost efficiency, or timeliness, where applicable.)

Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect toward co-workers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business.

Demonstrates an awareness of civil rights policies and responsibilities.

Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap condition.

4. ELEMENT RATING (At the end of the rating period, compare the employee's performance with standard and assign an element rating. For instructions about documentation, see reverse.)

EXCEEDS FULLY SUCCESSFUL
 DOES NOT MEET

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

5. CERTIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND RECEIPT OF PLAN

Signatures certify discussion with the employee and receipt of plan which reflects current position description.

Employee's Signature /s/	Date
Supervisor's Signature /s/	Date
Reviewer's Signature /s/	Date

6. PROGRESS REVIEWS - at least one must be completed:

Employee's Initials and Date	Supervisor's Initials and Date
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Appendix B

CONTINUATION SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PERFORMANCE PLAN, PROGRESS REVIEW AND APPRAISAL WORKSHEET

1. Name (Last, First, M.I.) Balladur, Edward M. Position Title Statistician (Ag)	Pay Plan, Series, Grade GS-1530-13	Agency/Division NASS, SSD	APPRAISAL PERIOD From 10/1/94 To 9/30/95	
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2. **PERFORMANCE ELEMENT**
 No. (Describe below the duty or responsibility for which the employee is accountable and responsible. Indicate if the element is critical or noncritical.) CRITICAL NONCRITICAL

Public Relations

3. **STANDARD** (Describe the level expected for "Fully Successful" performance. Include appropriate indicators of quality, quantity, cost efficiency, or timeliness, where applicable.)

Prepares and issues releases and bulletins in accordance with predetermined schedule; obtains interesting, clear and concise information for inclusion in the text.

Answers routine requests in a timely manner; identifies other appropriate data sources for the user; handles telephone requests in a positive, friendly manner.

Maintains positive, friendly contacts with industry people and develops an awareness of industry needs and desires.

4. **ELEMENT RATING** (At the end of the rating period, compare the employee's performance with standard and assign an element rating. For instructions about documentation, see 435A.) EXCEEDS FULLY SUCCESSFUL
 DOES NOT MEET

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

AD-435B 12/86 Original - Official Personnel Folder/Employee Performance File Page ____ of ____

Appendix C

United States Department of Agriculture Performance Appraisal				1 Social Security No. 000-00-0000	2 Position Number 99999	3 Pay Plan GS	4 Occup. Series 1530
5 Name (Last, First, Middle Initial) Balladur, Edward M.				6 Grade/Step of Pay Level 13/5		7 Appraisal Period From 10/1/94 To 9/30/95	
8 Official Position Title Statistician (Agricultural)				9 Organization Structure Code 00 00 00 0000 00 00 00			
10 Duty Station 00 0000 000		11 Funding Unit		12 Agency Use		13 NFC Use	
<p>Instructions</p> <p>Blocks 1 through 10, completed by NFC, should be reviewed and, if necessary, corrected.</p> <p>Block 11: Enter funding unit number.</p> <p>Block 14: Enter brief description of performance elements.</p> <p>Block 15A: Check performance elements identified as critical.</p> <p>Blocks 15B, 15C, 15D: Rate actual performance by entering 2 for critical elements and 1 for non-critical elements in appropriate column.</p> <p>Blocks 15E, 15F, 15G: Enter total of each column.</p> <p>Block 15H: Enter total from 15E, 15F and 15G.</p> <p>Block 16A: Check off the correct summary rating described in decision table (16B).</p> <p>Blocks 17 through 22: Self-explanatory.</p>							
14 Performance Elements				15A Critical Element (*)	15B Exceeds Fully Successful	15C Meets Fully Successful	15D Does Not Meet Fully Successful
1) Data Analysis and Estimate Recommendations				x	2		
2) Survey Planning and Coordination				x	2		
3) Public Relations					1		
4) Technical Guidance and Coordination						1	
5) Professional Skills and Abilities					1		
6) Response to Management Requests				x	2		
7) Civil Rights				x		2	
8)							
9)							
10)							
<p>16B Decision Table (check off Summary Rating in Block 16A)</p> <p>Rating of Outstanding if 15E equals 15H.</p> <p>Rating of Unacceptable if any critical element is rated in 15D.</p> <p>Rating of Superior if no element is rated in 15D; 15F is greater than zero; and 15E is greater than 15F.</p> <p>Rating of Marginal if 15G is greater than 15E, and no critical element is rated in 15D.</p> <p>Rating of Fully Successful if none of the above apply.</p> <p>U/ Un satisfactory for SES</p> <p>M/ Minimally Satisfactory for SES</p>				15E Exceeds 8	15F Meets 3	15G Does Not Meet	
				15H Enter total 15E + 15F + 15G = 15H		15H 11	
				16A Summary Rating (See Decision Table in 16B)			
<p>17 Employee (Check off appropriate box)</p> <p>I have a copy of USDA and Agency regulations on employee responsibilities and conduct; I have discussed them with my superior and questions have been answered to my satisfaction.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">X Yes No</p>				<p><input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Superior</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Marginal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable</p> <p>U/ Un satisfactory for SES</p> <p>M/ Minimally Satisfactory for SES</p>			
18 Employee's Signature /s/		Date		If employee did not sign, state reason			
19 Supervisor's Signature /s/		Date		20 Reviewer's Signature /s/		Date	
21 Approving Official's or Funding Unit Manager's Signature (optional)		Date		22 FOR SES ONLY			
				PLA to SES _____		Bonus Amount _____	

Summary of Responsibilities

Agency Heads

- Ensure consistency in the application of appraisal procedures throughout the agency.

Reviewing Officials

- Review and approve proposed elements and standards for specified positions and review and approve the final ratings of employee performance.

Supervisors

- Develop performance elements and standards for all positions supervised.
- Notify employees whenever their performance on a critical element slips below the Fully Successful level and take whatever measures may be needed to effect improvements. Assistance offered might include, but is not limited to, formal or on the job training, counseling, and closer supervision.
- Conduct at least one progress review per year for all employees.
- Conduct an annual performance appraisal for all employees.
- Discuss completed appraisals with the employees and offer suggestions as to how performance might be improved.
- Complete the necessary appraisal forms and retain all documentation for 4 years.

Employee Relations Specialists, Personnel Division, EMS

- Provide advice and assistance to supervisors and employees on employee performance problems.

Personnel Management Specialists, Personnel Division, EMS

- Advise and assist supervisors and employees on various procedural issues related to performance appraisal (e.g., the development of elements and standards; filing and submission of completed forms, etc.).

Employees

- Assist supervisors in developing elements and standards for their positions (e.g., discuss

proposed elements and standards with management and offer comments).

- Cooperate as fully as possible in the overall rating process.

Glossary

AD-435, Performance Appraisal. The form used to determine the summary rating for an employee and to document either an advisory rating or, more commonly, the final rating of record.

AD-435A, Performance Plan, Progress Review and Appraisal Worksheet. A form used to identify a performance element, describe the performance standard for that element, and record the element rating. This form is also used to document progress reviews. **AD-435B** is the **Continuation Sheet** for this form.

Advisory Rating. A rating which addresses work performed for 90 days or more, but not the entire rating period. Most commonly, advisory ratings apply to employees on detail or those who have changed jobs or supervisors during the rating year. The supervisor must consider these ratings in preparing the final rating of record. An employee may have more than one advisory rating in a given appraisal period.

Appraisal. An assessment of an employee's performance for a period of 90 days or more; used synonymously with **rating**.

Appraisal Period. Normally, a 12 month time frame during which an employee's performance is evaluated; frequently referred to as the **rating year**. In special circumstances, the appraisal period may be reduced to 90 days or extended to 15 months.

Appraisal Unit. A point value assigned to each performance element to give more weight to the more important aspects of the job; critical elements are worth 2 appraisal units; non-critical elements are worth 1 appraisal unit.

Critical Element. A duty or responsibility that is so essential to the job itself that failure to perform must be viewed as a grave deficiency; a critical element rated at the Does Not Meet Fully Successful level will result in an Unacceptable rating for the performance as a whole.

Element Rating. The rating level assigned to each performance element, determined by comparing the employee's accomplishments with the established performance standard. There are three **element rating levels**: Exceeds Fully Successful, Fully Successful, and Does Not Meet Fully Successful.

Non-Critical Element. A duty or responsibility of sufficient importance to merit an annual assessment, but of comparatively less importance in terms of the job as a whole; an employee could conceivably perform quite poorly in a non-critical element (i.e., the employee receives a Does Not Meet Fully Successful rating for that element), yet still be regarded as a reasonably effective employee overall.

Non-ratable Employee. An employee who cannot be rated at the end of the rating year. Most frequently, non-ratable employees have not been in their positions the requisite 90 days, or they are temporary and/or excepted service employees who are exempt from the rating process (see Chapter 1).

Performance Standard. A statement describing how well an employee is expected to perform a particular aspect of the job (i.e., a critical or non-critical element) at a given element rating level. Generally, performance standards are written only at the Fully Successful level. (See **element rating**.)

Progress Review. A discussion of employee performance generally held at the mid-point of the rating year; **interim appraisal** and **midyear review** are frequently used as informal synonyms.

Rating. Synonym for **appraisal**.

Rating of Record. The final official rating of employee performance for a given rating year. The rating of record is the **only** appraisal document filed in the employee's official performance folder and is used as the basis for various other personnel actions (e.g., performance awards, the calculation of service credit during reduction in force, training opportunities, etc.).

Rating Year. The standard 12 month **appraisal period**.

Reviewing Official. An individual senior to the rating official (i.e., senior to the employee's supervisor) in the organizational chain of command who reviews and approves both the proposed elements and standards and the employee's final rating; in most cases, the reviewing official is the employee's second level supervisor.

Summary Rating. The final adjective used to describe an employee's overall performance, achieved by pulling together the individual element ratings and calculating the appraisal units. There are five **summary rating levels**: Outstanding, Superior, Fully Successful, Marginal, and Unacceptable. Unless the summary rating happens to be an advisory rating, the summary rating will generally become the rating of record for the employee.