

BY ORDER OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

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Personnel

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND APPRAISAL PROGRAM
ADMINISTRATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This publication implements Department of the Air Force Policy Directive (DAFPD) 36-1, *Appropriated Funds Civilian Management and Administration*, and supplements guidance in Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1400.25, Volume 431, *DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Performance Management and Appraisal Program*. The DoD instruction is printed word-for-word in regular font without editorial review. The Department of the Air Force supplementary material is printed in bold font and indicated by “(Added)(DAF).” This supplement provides Department of the Air Force guidance on the performance management and appraisal program, new employee and supervisory probation, employee and supervisory training, and performance-based awards. In collaboration with the Chief of Air Force Reserve (AF/RE), the Director of the Air National Guard (NGB/CF), and the Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Human Capital (SF/S1), the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services (AF/A1) develops personnel policy for the performance management and appraisal program. This publication applies to all civilian employees (Title 5 and Title 10 of the United States Code) of the United States Space Force, Regular Air Force, the Air Force Reserve, and the Air National Guard. This Department of the Air Force instruction (DAFI) does not apply to Air National Guard technicians, nor does it apply to Title 5 civilians assigned to duty with the National Guard Bureau, or their Field Operating Locations, when there is controlling National Guard Bureau guidance in place. This instruction does not apply to any employees listed as exclusions from coverage in Appendix 3A of this publication. This Instruction requires the collection and or maintenance of information protected by the Privacy Act of 1974 authorized by Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 5400.11, DoD Privacy and Civil Liberties Programs. The applicable System of Record Notice (SORN) OPM/GOVT-2, Employee Performance File System Records is available at: <https://dpcl.d.defense.gov/Privacy/SORNs/>. Ensure all records generated as a result of processes prescribed in this publication adhere to Air Force Instruction 33-322, *Records*

Management and Information Governance Program, and are disposed in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule, which is located in the Air Force Records Information Management System. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the office of primary responsibility using the DAF Form 847, ***Recommendation for Change of Publication***; route DAF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. This Department of the Air Force publication may be supplemented at any level; Major Command/Field Command level supplements must be approved by the Human Resource Management Strategic Board prior to certification and approval. All supplements that directly implement this publication must be routed to the office of primary responsibility for coordination. The authorities to waive wing/Space Force equivalent/unit level requirements in the Department of the Air Force supplemental portion of this publication are identified with a tier (“T-0, T-1, T-2, T-3”) number following the compliance statement. See DAFMAN 90-161, ***Publishing Processes and Procedures***, for a description of the authorities associated with the tier numbers. Submit requests for waivers through the chain of command to the appropriate tier waiver approval authority, or alternately, to the requestor’s commander for non-tiered compliance items.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This publication is substantially revised and must be completely reviewed. Major changes include: (1) defining circumstances affecting an employee’s eligibility to receive a rating-based award; (2) adding Cyber Excepted Service (CES) Quality Step Increase (QSI) guidance, allowing for step increases beyond step 10 in connection with an award recognition; (3) adding clarifying guidance on rating official (RO) responsibility and specially situated employees; (4) adding QSI eligibility; (5) adding United States Space Force (SF/SC1) roles and responsibilities; (6) adding Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) role; and, (7) updating AFI and DAFI references.



DoD INSTRUCTION 1400.25, VOLUME 431

DoD CIVILIAN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND APPRAISAL PROGRAM

Originating Component: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

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(Added)(DAF)Approved by: **Gwendolyn R. DeFilippi**
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Purpose: This instruction is composed of several volumes, each containing its own purpose. In accordance with the authority in DoD Directive 5124.02:

- This instruction establishes and implements policy, establishes procedures, provides guidelines and model programs, delegates authority, and assigns responsibilities regarding civilian personnel management within the DoD.
- This volume, in accordance with DoD Directive 1400.25:
 - Pursuant to Volumes 410, 430, and 451 of this instruction, implements policy, assigns responsibilities, and establishes procedures for the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program.

- Implements the requirements of Section 9902 of Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).
- Establishes a DoD performance appraisal program in accordance with Section 430.205 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

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SECTION 1: GENERAL ISSUANCE INFORMATION

1.1. APPLICABILITY. This volume applies to OSD, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD (collectively referred to in this volume as the “DoD Components”).

1.2. POLICY. The DoD will:

- a. Provide a fair, credible, and transparent performance appraisal program for linking bonuses and other performance-based actions to employee performance in accordance with Section 9902 of Title 5, U.S.C.
- b. Develop and maintain a results-oriented performance culture that links individual performance to organizational goals.

1.3. SUMMARY OF CHANGE 3. The changes to this volume are administrative and:

- a. Make procedural language in Paragraph 3.9.b.(2)(c) of this volume compliant with Section 3(c) of Executive Order 14003.
- b. Update references for accuracy.

SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS (ASD(M&RA)). Under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), the ASD(M&RA) has overall responsibility for the development of DoD civilian personnel policy covered by this volume.

2.2. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR CIVILIAN PERSONNEL POLICY (DASD(CPP)). Under the authority, direction, and control of the ASD(M&RA), the DASD(CPP) supports the development of civilian personnel policy covered by this volume and monitors its execution by DoD Components, ensuring consistent implementation and application throughout DoD.

2.3. DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HUMAN RESOURCE ACTIVITY. Under the authority, direction, and control of the USD(P&R), the Director, Department of Defense Human Resources Activity, provides support to the DASD(CPP), as appropriate, in execution of duties and responsibilities assigned in this volume.

2.4. DOD COMPONENT HEADS. The DoD Component heads:

- a. Oversee the implementation, application, and evaluation of performance management programs within their respective Components.
- b. Ensure that the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program procedures and requirements are applied properly within their respective Components.
- c. Ensure that new supervisors and employees, as well as those transferred or promoted, receive information and are properly oriented to the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program.
- d. Ensure performance management training for supervisors and employees is provided.
- e. Actively promote a high-performance culture within their respective Components.

2.5. (ADDED)(DAF) DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE.

a. (Added)(DAF) Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (SAF/MR). Serves as an agent of the Secretary of the Air Force and provides guidance, direction, and oversight for all matters pertaining to the formulation, review, and execution of plans, policies, programs, and budgets addressing Air Force and Space Force performance management.

b. (Added)(DAF) The Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Manpower, Personnel and Services (AF/A1). Develops, coordinates, and executes personnel policy and essential

procedural guidance for Air Force management of performance management.

c. (Added)(DAF) Director, Civilian Force Management (AF/A1C). Directs development of Air Force performance management policy to ensure compliance with this publication and consistency across the Air Force.

d. (Added)(DAF) Director, Civilian Policy and Management (SF/S1C). Develops, coordinates, and executes personnel policy and essential procedural guidance for Space Force civilian personnel matters.

e. (Added)(DAF) AF/A1 Digital Transformation Activity. Acts as the Department of the Air Force Primary Office of Responsibility with Department of Defense (DoD) for the MyPerformance Appraisal Tool. Maintains a library of Business Intelligence reports to assist civilian personnel sections with planning and tracking annual appraisals and awards.

f. (Added)(DAF) Air Force Personnel Center. Establishes operating procedures to ensure the performance management program is consistent with this publication. Provides operational oversight, instructions, and guidance to Major Commands, Field Commands, Combatant Commanders, and civilian personnel sections.

g. (Added)(DAF) Major Command, Field Command, Direct Reporting Unit, and Field Operating Agency Directors of Manpower, Personnel, and Services. Where necessary, establish standards, administrative requirements, processing procedures, and program quality control consistent with this publication. Supplement this publication as needed.

h. (Added)(DAF) Installation Commander/Director, Tenant Commander/Director, and Head of Activity.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Where necessary, establish standards, administrative requirements, and processing procedures consistent with this publication. Supplement this publication as needed.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Establish a quality control process to ensure accurate and timely completion of the performance management and appraisal program process and associated award recommendations and approvals. Ensure performance-based award programs make meaningful distinctions based on the levels of performance. This responsibility may be further delegated in writing.

i. (Added)(DAF) Civilian Personnel Section.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Provide management advice to installation commanders/directors, tenant commanders/directors, and heads of activities with regard to the administration of the performance management program. Ensure actions taken are consistent with this publication.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Advise and assist supervisors in addressing performance

concerns that occur during the performance management appraisal cycle or during the probationary/trial period.

(3) (Added)(DAF) Communicate general information and guidance to supervisors and employees on the performance management program, recognition and rewards, and maintaining the position hierarchy.

(4) (Added)(DAF) Ensure timely processing and update of annual appraisals and related awards.

j. (Added)(DAF) Supervisor/Rating Official.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Foster a collaborative work environment to sustain organizational effectiveness.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Develop performance plans based on duties and responsibilities, which are linked to organizational mission and goals, and solicit employee input into their performance plan. Ensure employee is placed under an approved performance plan in the MyPerformance Appraisal Tool within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal cycle, or the employee's assignment to a new position or set of duties.

(3) (Added)(DAF) Clearly communicate performance expectations and outcomes to employees.

(4) (Added)(DAF) Monitor employee performance and modify the performance plan as mission, organizational goals and priorities, or employee responsibilities change.

(5) (Added)(DAF) Provide ongoing performance feedback. Assist employees in improving performance throughout the rating period as needed or requested. Consider training or developmental opportunities to further employees' performance. Engage with employees to improve workplace effectiveness.

(6) (Added)(DAF) Timely prepare and document progress reviews; meet with employees to discuss the feedback.

(7) (Added)(DAF) Prepare the rating of record with narrative justification where required; meet with employees to discuss the rating.

(8) (Added)(DAF) Provide timely recognition of high-quality performance.

(9) (Added)(DAF) Take immediate action if performance declines or falls below the "Fully Successful" level in any performance element.

(10) (Added)(DAF) Take immediate action to address a probationary/trial period employee's unacceptable performance or conduct.

(11) (Added)(DAF) Ensure employees complete mandatory training requirements within required timeframes.

(12) (Added)(DAF) Participate in DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program training, as required.

(13) (Added)(DAF) Maintain position hierarchy; review MyBiz+ for Managers and Supervisors Suspenses/Pending Actions folder and take timely action on personnel notices and actions.

k. (Added)(DAF) Higher-Level Reviewer.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Review and approve performance plans, all ratings of record, and performance decisions. The higher-level reviewer has the authority to direct changes to the performance plan, rating of record, and rating-based award.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Ensure subordinate rating officials execute the performance management process within established guidelines and timelines.

(3) (Added)(DAF) Participate in DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program training, as required.

l. (Added)(DAF) Employee.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Participate in and provide input to the development of the performance plan and any revisions to the performance plan.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Gain an understanding of supervisor's expectations and request clarification, if necessary.

(3) (Added)(DAF) Manage individual performance to attain performance elements and standards identified in the performance plan; bring to supervisor's attention circumstances that may affect accomplishment of performance expectations and request feedback if needed.

(4) (Added)(DAF) Prepare for and participate in performance discussions.

(5) (Added)(DAF) Initiate discussion and engage with supervisor to improve workplace effectiveness or personal performance.

(6) (Added)(DAF) Participate in DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program training, as required.

(7) (Added)(DAF) Review MyBiz+ for currency and accuracy.

SECTION 3: PROCEDURES

3.1. GENERAL PROVISIONS.

a. Purpose. The DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program:

- (1) Provides a framework for supervisors and managers to communicate expectations and job performance.
- (2) Links individual employee performance and organizational goals.
- (3) Facilitates a fair and meaningful assessment of employee performance.
- (4) Establishes a systematic process for planning, monitoring, evaluating, and recognizing and rewarding employee performance that contributes to mission success.
- (5) Nurtures a high-performance culture that promotes meaningful and ongoing dialogue between employees and supervisors and holds both accountable for performance.
- (6) Supports and is consistent with merit system principles in Section 2301 of Title 5, U.S.C.

b. Coverage.

(1) **DoD Component Coverage.** The DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program applies to all DoD employees, except those employees in positions identified in Appendix 3A.

(2) **Savings Provision.** No employee may be concurrently covered by more than one performance appraisal program in accordance with the savings provision established in Volume 430 of this instruction. Accordingly, the requirements of this volume will not apply to employees subject to performance improvement plans (PIPs), or subsequent actions resulting from having failed a PIP, taken in accordance with Chapter 43 of Title 5, U.S.C., that was initiated prior to the effective date of implementation of the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program with respect to the employee.

3.2. BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROGRAM.

a. Appraisal Pattern. The DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program uses a three-level rating pattern, Summary Level Pattern B, as identified in Section 430.208(d)(1) of Title 5, CFR, and the performance rating levels (also known as “summary levels”) listed in Table 1 must be used.

Table 1. Performance Rating Levels

Level 5 – Outstanding
Level 3 – Fully Successful
Level 1 – Unacceptable

b. Appraisal Cycle. The appraisal cycle for employees covered by the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program is April 1 through March 31 of each calendar year. Components operating academic institutions may elect to apply an appraisal cycle based on their academic year to some or all of the employees of these academic institutions.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Academic Institutions. The appraisal cycle for academic faculty employees in the Administratively Determined pay plan is listed below.

(2) (Added)(DAF) United States Air Force Academy: June 1 through May 31 of each calendar year.

(3) (Added)(DAF) Air University and Air Force Institute of Technology: July 1 through June 30 of each calendar year.

c. Effective Date of the Appraisal. A rating of record is final when it is signed by the employee's supervisor, in his or her capacity as rating official and, where required by Component policy, by a higher level reviewer (HLR). A rating of record finalized before June 1 will be effective June 1.

(1) (Added)(DAF) In accordance with Section 430.208 of Title 5, CFR, a rating of record is final when it is issued to the employee with all appropriate reviews and signatures.

(2) (Added)(DAF) All ratings of record will be reviewed and approved by a higher-level reviewer. (T-1)

(3) (Added)(DAF) Academic Institutions. The effective date of the appraisal for academic faculty is determined by the academic institution commander but will be no later than 30 September. (T-3)

d. Minimum Period of Performance. The minimum period of performance is 90 calendar days. Employees who perform under an approved performance plan for a minimum of 90 calendar days will be rated based on the period of demonstrated performance.

(1) (Added)(DAF) There is no requirement for the minimum period of performance of 90 calendar days to be consecutive. However, modification of the elements and standards will affect the minimum period of performance.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Modifications to the performance plan will be accomplished in

accordance with paragraph 3.3.e. (T-0) Supervisors may contact the servicing civilian personnel section for assistance with determining specific employee eligibility for rating based on the period of demonstrated performance.

e. Performance Discussions. To foster a culture of high performance, supervisors and employees should engage in two-way performance feedback throughout the appraisal cycle. Supervisors are required to hold a minimum of three formal documented performance discussions during the appraisal cycle. These required discussions will include the initial performance plan meeting to discuss performance expectations, one progress review, and the final performance appraisal discussion to communicate the rating of record. Additional progress reviews are highly encouraged throughout the appraisal cycle.

f. DoD Core Values. In order to develop common awareness of and reinforce a high-performance culture, DoD core values will be discussed with employees at the beginning of the appraisal cycle and will be annotated on all performance plans. The DoD core values, which form the foundation of the DoD performance culture are: leadership, professionalism, and technical knowledge through dedication to duty, integrity, ethics, honor, courage, and loyalty. In addition to the DoD core values that will be annotated on performance plans and discussed with employees, DoD Components may include organizational values and may include organizational mission statements or goals which apply to the employee's performance elements. This aids in developing a common awareness and to reinforcing the individual contribution to the overall success of both the DoD and organization's mission. Employees will only be assessed on the DoD core values or organizational values to the extent applicable to the assessment of a performance element.

(1) (Added)(DAF) United States Air Force or United States Space Force Core Values. The United States Air Force or United States Space Force core values may be included on performance plans and incorporated into the DoD core values discussion if applied to the employee's performance elements.

(2) (Added)(DAF) The United States Air Force core values, which are intended to inspire employees to do their very best at all times, are: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.

(3) (Added)(DAF) The United States Space Force core values are: character, commitment, connection, and courage.

g. MyPerformance Appraisal Tool. The MyPerformance appraisal tool provides an automated system to create, review, and approve performance plans; document modifications to performance plans; document progress reviews; document employee input on his or her individual performance; and document performance appraisals.

(1) The MyPerformance appraisal tool is the only automated appraisal tool that has been authorized for use in administering and documenting activities under the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program, and MyPerformance generates a completed DD Form 2906, "Department of Defense Civilian Performance Plan, Progress Review, and Appraisal."

(2) When supervisors or employees do not have access to the electronic MyPerformance appraisal tool, they must use the paper copy of DD Form 2906 to document the performance plan, progress review(s), and rating of record. The DoD Components will develop any needed processes for completing appraisals using a blank DD Form 2906.

(a) (Added)(DAF) Supervisors and employees are strongly encouraged to use the MyPerformance appraisal tool to generate and document the performance plan, progress review(s), and rating of record. Where access to the electronic MyPerformance appraisal tool is either restricted, limited, or impractical, supervisors and employees may use a blank, paper copy of DD Form 2906 to document the performance plan, progress review(s), and rating of record. When a paper copy of DD Form 2906 is used, the supervisor will provide the employee a copy of each completed action. (T-1)

(b) (Added)(DAF) When an organization uses a paper copy of DD Form 2906, the performance plan, progress review, and rating of record data from the paper DD Form 2906 will be entered into the MyPerformance appraisal tool by a trusted agent assigned by the rating official or higher-level reviewer. (T-2)

(1) (Added)(DAF) Individuals assigned as MyPerformance trusted agents act on behalf of the rating official or higher-level reviewer for the purpose of documenting performance management events and decisions.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Assignment of a trusted agent does not absolve the rating official or higher-level reviewer of performance management responsibilities.

h. Retention Schedule for Employee Performance Files. Performance ratings of record, including the performance plans on which they are based, will be retained for 4 years or as otherwise required by Section 293.404 of Title 5, CFR. Since the MyPerformance tool maintains performance records for 4 years, supervisors and employees are advised to print performance records they wish to maintain beyond the 4-year period. Where any performance-related document is needed in connection with an ongoing administrative, negotiated, quasi-judicial, or judicial proceeding, the rating of record must be retained for as long as necessary.

(1) (Added)(DAF) If a supervisor prints the employee's performance records, the printed version will be maintained in the employee performance file section of the supervisor's employee work folder. (T-1) Printed records will be maintained in accordance with the Air Force Records Information Management System Records Disposition Schedule. (T-1)

(2) (Added)(DAF) Performance-related documents retained beyond the 4-year period in connection with an ongoing proceeding will be maintained in a file separate from the supervisor's employee work folder in accordance with the Air Force Records Information Management System Records Disposition Schedule. (T-1) Potential proceedings include, but are not limited to, administrative, negotiated, quasi-judicial, or judicial proceedings.

i. Transfer of Employee Performance Files. When an employee transfers to another DoD Component or is assigned to another organization within the Component, the organization, in accordance with Sections 430.209 and 293 of Title 5, CFR, will transfer with the employee:

(1) The most recent ratings of record as required by Paragraph 3.2.h. of this volume.

(2) Any subsequent performance ratings.

(3) (Added)(DAF) All performance ratings of record that are 4 years old or less, including the performance plan on which the most recent rating was based. (T-0) The supervisor in the losing organization or agency should contact the servicing civilian personnel section for assistance with procedures for completing the transfer to the gaining organization or agency.

3.3. PLANNING PERFORMANCE. Employee and supervisor engagement that provides opportunity for employee input is the first step in establishing ongoing communication and understanding of performance expectations and organizational goals throughout the appraisal cycle. This results in effective performance planning. Specific performance measures will be used to determine whether expectations and goals are being met. Each employee must have a written performance plan established and approved normally within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal cycle or the employee's assignment to a new position or set of duties. The supervisor will communicate the performance plan to the employee after it has been approved in accordance with DoD Component procedures.

a. Employee Performance Plan. The performance plan will clearly document for each employee how the expected outcomes and results are linked to the organization's goals and objectives and how his or her performance will be measured throughout the appraisal cycle. The performance plan includes the employee's performance elements and performance standards for the appraisal cycle. Changes to mission, organizational goals, work unit priorities, or assigned duties that occur during the appraisal cycle may necessitate revisions to the performance plan.

(1) (Added)(DAF) All performance plans will be reviewed and approved by a higher-level reviewer. (T-2)

(2) (Added)(DAF) The higher-level reviewer has the authority to direct changes to the performance plan. The higher-level reviewer and rating official should work together to resolve any disagreement over the performance plan. Contact the servicing civilian personnel section for assistance with recommendations for resolving disagreements. The servicing civilian personnel section is best positioned to provide advisory services regarding any next steps for addressing the disagreement based on specific circumstances.

b. Performance Elements. Performance elements describe the expectations related to the work being performed. All performance elements must be critical elements and clearly align with organizational goals. For ratings of record, each ratable element will be assigned a performance element rating. For assistance with alignment of performance elements to organizational goals, supervisors should review organizational plans and may consult with their performance improvement officer, or equivalent, as necessary. The USD(P&R) must approve

DoD-wide performance elements for groups of employees, as needed. The two types of performance elements are:

(1) **Critical Element.** Performance plans must have a minimum of one critical performance element, and each element must have associated performance standards that define expectations. A critical element is a work assignment or responsibility of such importance that unacceptable performance on the element would result in a determination that an employee's overall performance is rated as "Unacceptable." Critical elements are only used to measure individual performance; supervisors must not establish critical elements for team performance.

(2) **Supervisory Element.** All performance elements related to supervisory duties are critical elements. The number of supervisory performance elements on performance plans for supervisors will equal or exceed the number of non-supervisory (technical) performance elements. The requirement for the number of supervisory performance elements to exceed the number of non-supervisory elements does not apply to employees coded as Supervisor Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) code '4' in the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System.

(a) (Added)(DAF) All supervisory performance plans will include the Air Force standardized supervisory performance elements and standards. (T-1) Supervisors/rating officials should contact their servicing civilian personnel section to obtain a current copy of the Air Force standardized supervisory performance elements and standards.

c. Performance Standards. Performance standards describe how the requirements and expectations provided in the performance elements are to be evaluated. Performance standards must be provided for each performance element in the performance plan and must be written at the "Fully Successful" level. The standards should include specific, measureable, achievable, relevant, and timely (SMART) criteria, which provide the framework for developing effective results and expectations. SMART standards objectively express how well an employee must perform his or her job to achieve performance at the "Fully Successful" level by providing standards that are:

(1) **Specific.** Goals are sufficiently detailed in describing what needs to be accomplished.

(2) **Measurable.** The accomplishment of the performance element is clear and can be quantified or substantiated using objective criteria.

(3) **Achievable.** Goals are realistic, yet challenging and can be accomplished with the resources, personnel, and time available.

(4) **Relevant.** The critical element aligns with or links to organizational mission and success.

(5) **Timely.** Goals will be completed within a realistic timeframe.

d. Developing and Communicating Performance Expectations. Written performance plans must be developed and approved by supervisors, clearly communicated to employees, and acknowledged by employees.

(1) Normally within 30 days of the beginning of each appraisal cycle, supervisors and employees should discuss performance goals for the upcoming cycle. Supervisors must allow employees the opportunity to provide input into their performance elements and standards. While employees have the opportunity to provide input into their performance plans, supervisors must develop and approve the performance elements and standards.

(2) Supervisors must communicate each approved performance plan and how the performance expectations link to any organizational goals with their employees. This also provides an opportunity for the supervisor and employee to achieve a common understanding of the performance required for mission success.

(3) The date of the meeting or communication will be documented in the MyPerformance appraisal tool or on the DD Form 2906 and acknowledged by the employee.

(4) (Added)(DAF) Newly assigned supervisors will review the performance plans and initiate performance discussions with the employees. (T-1) Supervisors may modify performance plans and update approval in accordance with paragraph 3.3.e., as necessary, to capture any changes to organizational goals/priorities or employee responsibilities.

e. Modifying the Plan During the Appraisal Cycle. A performance plan is a flexible, living document and should be reviewed and discussed throughout each appraisal cycle. Plans may be modified as organizational goals and priorities or employee responsibilities change. All approved modifications to performance elements or standards must be discussed with and communicated to the employee, and the employee should acknowledge the revisions in the MyPerformance appraisal tool or on the DD Form 2906. If considering a change to an element or standard within 90 calendar days of the end of the appraisal cycle when work requirements change or new duties are assigned, the supervisor may:

(1) Revise the element or standard at the beginning of the next appraisal cycle;

(2) Update the plan. If the employee does not have an opportunity to perform the new element(s) for the minimum 90-calendar-day period, do not rate the revised element(s); or

(3) Extend the appraisal cycle by the amount of time necessary to allow 90 calendar days of observed performance under the revised element or standard. Extending the appraisal cycle will affect the start date of the employee's subsequent appraisal cycle; however, the subsequent appraisal cycle should still end March 31 of the following calendar year.

3.4. MONITORING PERFORMANCE. Monitoring performance consists of ongoing assessment of performance compared to the stated expectations and ongoing feedback to employees on their progress toward reaching their goals.

a. Continuous Monitoring of Performance. By monitoring performance throughout the appraisal cycle, supervisors can provide timely feedback on meeting expectations and identify unacceptable performance during the appraisal cycle in order to provide assistance to improve performance, rather than waiting until the end of the cycle when a rating of record is assigned. Additionally, while monitoring performance, supervisors may identify an employee's need for

training or developmental opportunities in order to enhance the knowledge, skills, or abilities related to the employee's job performance in his or her current position.

b. Performance Discussions. The supervisor and employee will discuss the employee's work performance and its link to organizational effectiveness. The discussions may consist of verbal feedback sessions, regular one-on-one meetings, or impromptu recognition or acknowledgement of performance. Supervisors or employees may initiate performance discussions at any time during the appraisal cycle to foster ongoing engagement and understanding. Performance discussions help ensure that the performance plans accurately reflect the work being evaluated. Effective communications include ongoing, constructive feedback to contribute to overall employee and organizational success.

c. Progress Reviews. Progress reviews may only be initiated by supervisors. They are performance discussions that must be documented in the MyPerformance appraisal tool. While employees must have at least one documented progress review, providing additional progress reviews throughout the appraisal cycle is encouraged. Employees are not given a performance narrative or performance element ratings on progress reviews. The supervisor and employee should engage in meaningful communications throughout the appraisal cycle to review and convey:

- (1) Organizational goals and priorities.
- (2) Performance elements and standards, including ensuring the performance plan accurately reflects the work being evaluated.
- (3) Supervisor's expectations.
- (4) Employee's accomplishments and contributions.
- (5) Employee's level of performance, including any areas that need improvement.
- (6) Barriers to success.
- (7) Employee's developmental needs and career goals.

d. (Added)(DAF) Progress Reviews. Employees are not given a performance narrative in conjunction with a progress review as defined in paragraph 3.5a(2). However, the supervisor may document the content of the progress review discussion in bullet or narrative form, regarding the above listed areas, in the MyPerformance appraisal tool. While encouraged, there is no requirement to document the content of the progress review discussion.

3.5. EVALUATING PERFORMANCE. The supervisor will evaluate employee performance by assessing performance against the elements and standards in the employee's approved performance plan and assigning a rating of record based on work performed during the appraisal cycle. A written rating of record must be provided at the end of the appraisal cycle for each employee who has been under an approved performance plan for 90 calendar days during the cycle.

a. Preparation and Submission of Performance Appraisals. Performance appraisals will be prepared consistent with this volume and documented in the MyPerformance appraisal tool.

(1) **Employee Input.** Employees can provide written input about their performance accomplishments for supervisors to consider in evaluating each of the performance elements and overall performance accomplishments.

(a) Employee input, while not mandatory, is highly encouraged and valuable for progress reviews during and at the end of the appraisal cycle where the employee input becomes a part of the employee performance file.

(b) The absence of employee input does not relieve the supervisor of the responsibility for writing a narrative statement assessing the employee's performance standards and contributions.

(2) **Performance Narrative.** Supervisors will write a performance narrative that succinctly addresses the employee's performance measured against the performance standards for the appraisal cycle.

(a) The performance narrative justifies how an employee's ratings are determined and provides support for recognition and rewards (or any administrative or adverse action, if necessary).

(b) Performance narratives are required for each element rated "Outstanding" and "Unacceptable." Additionally, performance narratives are highly encouraged for each element rated "Fully Successful" as a means of recognizing all levels of accomplishments and contributions to mission success.

(c) **(Added)(DAF) Performance narratives are required for each element rated "Fully Successful." (T-1)**

(d) **(Added)(DAF) The performance narrative will serve as the justification for any rating-based award and must clearly articulate employee accomplishments that serve as the justification for such award. (T-1) Statements in the performance narrative such as "the employee met this element" or "the employee exceeded this element" alone are not sufficient to justify a rating-based award.**

(e) **(Added)(DAF) DoDI1400.25V451_DAFI36-1004, *Civilian Recognition Program*, Enclosure 3, Paragraph 3.n. prohibits the receipt of multiple monetary and/or time-off awards for the same act, achievement, or period of service. However, there is no prohibition against including accomplishments previously used to support a monetary and/or time-off incentive award in the supervisor's performance narrative in support of the specific performance element ratings for the respective appraisal cycle. The performance appraisal is a separate act from the performance award and these accomplishments may be significant, meaning the difference between a "Level 3 - Fully Successful" and a "Level 5 – Outstanding" rating of record. Since performance awards are based on the rating of record, special care must be taken to ensure employees do not also receive a performance**

award for the same accomplishment(s) previously used to support a monetary and/or time-off incentive award. Refer to paragraph 3.6.e. for processing rating-based awards when the supervisor's performance narrative includes accomplishments for which a monetary and/or time-off award has already been granted.

b. Descriptions of Performance Rating Levels. The performance rating assigned should reflect the level of the employee's performance as compared to the standards established. Some samples that may be useful in developing standards for an employee are provided in the following subparagraphs. These samples are intended to be illustrative only, do not apply to all work situations, and must be tailored to each particular situation.

(1) Level 5 – Outstanding

- (a) Produces exceptional results or exceeds expectations well beyond specified outcomes.
- (b) Sets targeted metrics high and far exceeds them (e.g., quality, budget, quantity).
- (c) Handles roadblocks or issues exceptionally well and makes a long-term difference in doing so.
- (d) Is widely seen as an expert, valued role model, or mentor for this work.
- (e) Exhibits the highest standards of professionalism.

(2) Level 3 – Fully Successful

- (a) Effectively produces the specified outcomes, and sometimes exceeds them.
- (b) Consistently achieves targeted metrics.
- (c) Proactively informs supervisor of potential issues or roadblocks and offers suggestions to address or prevent them.
- (d) Achieves goals with appropriate level of supervision.

(3) Level 1 – Unacceptable

- (a) Does not meet expectations for quality of work; fails to meet many of the required results for the goal.
- (b) Is unreliable; makes poor decisions; misses targeted metrics (e.g., commitments, deadlines, quality).
- (c) Lacks or fails to use skills required for the job.
- (d) Requires much more supervision than expected for an employee at this level.

c. Rating Employee Performance

(1) The supervisor will assign an individual performance element rating of either 5, 3, or 1 to each critical element. All performance element ratings are averaged to calculate the rating of record, which reflects the employee's overall job performance during the appraisal cycle based on the rating criteria outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Rating Criteria

Rating Level	Rating Criteria
Level 5 – Outstanding	The average score of all critical element performance ratings is 4.3 or greater, with no critical element being rated a '1'(Unacceptable), resulting in a rating of record that is a '5'
Level 3 – Fully Successful	The average score of all critical element performance ratings is less than 4.3, with no critical element being rated a '1'(Unacceptable), resulting in a rating of record that is a '3'
Level 1 – Unacceptable	Any critical element rated as '1'

(2) In accordance with Section 430.208(c) of Title 5, CFR, the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program does not establish a forced distribution of performance rating levels.

(3) A rating of record of "Unacceptable" (Level 1) must be reviewed and approved by a HLR.

(4) If an employee does not have an opportunity to perform work associated with a performance element for 90 calendar days during the appraisal cycle, no performance element rating will be assigned for that performance element. An unratable performance element cannot be used as a factor in deriving a rating of record.

(5) The rating of record or individual performance element rating assigned to a critical element for a disabled veteran will not be lowered because the veteran has been absent from work to seek medical treatment, as provided in Section 430.208(f) of Title 5, CFR.

(6) (Added)(DAF) See paragraph 3.2.c(2).

(7) (Added)(DAF) The higher-level reviewer has the authority to direct changes to the rating of record. The higher-level reviewer and rating official should work together to resolve any disagreement over the rating of record. Contact the servicing civilian personnel section for assistance with recommendations for resolving disagreements. The servicing civilian personnel section is best positioned to provide advisory services regarding any next steps for addressing the disagreement based on specific circumstances.

d. Reconsideration of a Performance Appraisal. Employees may seek reconsideration of issues related to the performance appraisal process (e.g., individual performance element ratings, ratings of record) through the administrative grievance system or, where applicable, negotiated grievance procedures. Employees may **not** challenge contents (e.g., performance elements or

standards) of an employee performance plan and decisions to grant or not grant a performance award or quality step increase (QSI) through the administrative grievance system or, where applicable, negotiated grievance procedures.

3.6. RECOGNIZING AND REWARDING PERFORMANCE. Supervisors recognize and reward performance by providing incentives to and recognition of employees for individual and team achievement and for their contributions to the organization's mission. DoD Components will develop recognition and rewards programs that embody strong business principles through the development of policies and rules. Supervisors can strengthen the performance culture and influence employee engagement by using recognition throughout the appraisal cycle. It is important to recognize performance and achievements as they occur, preferably as close as possible to the act(s) being recognized. Policy and procedures for awarding performance are covered in Volume 451 of this instruction as well as in Component-specific policy and guidance.

a. When a supervisor publicly recognizes employee or team efforts, he or she communicates the types of activities and accomplishments the organization values in a meaningful way. Recognition and reward programs are valuable tools to increase employee performance, morale, and commitment to support the organization's mission.

b. Recognition and rewards are not entitlements. Achievements or contributions should be related to organizational mission and goals and to exceeding expectations.

c. Rewards should be an integral part of performance management.

d. (Added)(DAF) The annual award budget is a percentage of civilian pay based on the aggregate salaries of all employees as of the end of the previous fiscal year. Annual civilian pay execution guidance is generally not available at the beginning of the fiscal year. Commander's/Director's financial management and resources advisors provide guidance and information regarding spending on awards in order to ensure appropriate execution throughout the year.

e. (Added)(DAF) Organizations will maintain a record of all award recommendations and approvals, by the method of their choosing (e.g., mass award-processing spreadsheet). (T-1)

(1) (Added)(DAF) In accordance with DoDI1400.25v451_DAFI 36-1004, multiple federal award eligibility for employees is generally restricted and only one award may be granted for a single act, achievement, or period of service. (T-1) Accomplishments previously recognized with a monetary award (e.g., Special Act or Service Award or Notable Achievement Award) or time-off award may not also be used to support an annual performance award. (T-1)

(2) (Added)(DAF) If the supervisor's performance narrative used in support of any element rating includes accomplishments previously used to support a monetary and/or time-off incentive award, then a separate award justification must be provided to support the recommended award type and amount by completing the AF Information Management Tool (IMT) 1001. (T-1) Supervisors should take care when completing the

AF IMT 1001 to include only those accomplishments for which the annual performance award is recommended, and will ensure any accomplishments previously used to support a monetary and/or time-off incentive award are excluded from the AF IMT 1001. (T-1)

(3) (Added)(DAF) The record of award recommendations and approvals will be signed by the award-approving official and must include the certification statement in Figure 3.1. (T-1)

(4) (Added)(DAF) The AF IMT 1001 will be maintained in accordance with the Air Force Records Information Management System Records Disposition Schedule. (T-1)

(Added)(DAF) Figure 3.1. Award Approving Official Certification Statement.

As the award approving official for <<Insert Organization Name Here>>, I certify that:

- I have fully considered wage costs and productivity loss when granting time-off awards and that the amount of time-off granted as an award is commensurate with the individual's contribution or accomplishment. (DoDI1400.25V451_DAFI36-1004, Enclosure 3, paragraph 10.a(4)).
- All employees receiving a Quality Step Increase received a "Level 5 – Outstanding" rating as fully supported by the supervisor's written performance narrative in the DD Form 2906. (DoDI1400.25V431_DAFI36-1002, paragraph 3.7.c(2).)
- The awards for employees listed in this spreadsheet are not based on accomplishments for which the employee previously received a monetary and/or time-off award. Where the supervisor's written performance narrative used in support of any element rating includes accomplishments previously recognized with a non-rating-based monetary and/or time-off award, a separate award justification has been provided using the AF IMT 1001 and includes only those accomplishments on which the rating-based performance monetary and/or time-off award is based. (DoDI1400.25V451_DAFI36-1004, Enclosure 3, paragraph 3.n.)
- Quality reviews have been completed to ensure rewards have been applied in a consistent manner and clear and meaningful distinctions were made based on levels of performance. (DoDI1400.25V431_DAFI36-1002, paragraph 2.5.g(2).)
- This spreadsheet does not include awards for individuals who are under investigation or upon whom disciplinary/adverse action based on performance or conduct is pending, or were the subject of disciplinary action during the timeframe covering the award. If the employee is under investigation, the installation commander (or equivalent civilian director) has determined the basis for the award is unrelated to the investigation, pending action, or the discipline and the award would not reflect unfavorably on the Department of the Air Force. (DoDI1400.25V451_DAFI36-1004, Enclosure 3, paragraph 2.a(8))

f. (Added)(DAF) The rating official may recommend an employee for a performance-based cash award, time-off award, or a combination of both. Alternatively, the rating official may recommend an employee for a QSI if all of the requirements are met (see paragraph 3.7.c.). A QSI will not be combined with a performance-based cash award and/or time-off award. (T-1)

(1) (Added)(DAF) Rating-based awards will not be effected prior to the effective date of the appraisal upon which they are based. (T-1) An employee's eligibility to receive a rating-based award will be affected by the following circumstances:

a. (Added) (DAF) Employee Movement Within DAF: An employee who leaves a DAF organization to move to another DAF organization either due to a promotion, reassignment, or reduction in grade after January 1 but prior to June 1, is eligible for a rating-based award provided the move is not due to a rating-based action (see paragraph 3.6.f.(1).d). (T-1) The losing organization has discretion to approve a rating-based cash award, time-off award or a combination of both. As for a QSI, it cannot be transferred because it must be applied to the rate of pay for the position on which the rating of record was based. (T-0) For an approved rating-based monetary award, the losing organization will make arrangements to transfer funds to the gaining organization. (T-1)

b. (Added) (DAF) Employee Movement Outside of DAF: An employee who moves or transfers to a non-DAF component, retires, separates or resigns from DAF after January 1 but prior to June 1 is not eligible for a rating-based award. (T-1) An employee must be on the rolls on June 1, the effective date of the appraisal, to be eligible to receive a rating-based award. (T-1) Supervisors may consider departing employees for a non-rating-based or achievement award such as a Notable Achievement or Special Act or Service Award provided the move is not due to a rating-based action (see paragraph 3.6.f.(1).d). Approved non-rating-based or achievement award must be effective prior to the employee's departure, using guidance addressed in DoDI1400.25Vol451_DAFI 36-1004, *Department of the Air Force Civilian Recognition Program*. (T-1)

c. (Added) (DAF) Academic Institutions. The above stipulations apply using parallel dates in accordance with academic institutions' requirements as referenced in paragraphs 3.2.b.1-3 and 3.2.c.3.

d. (Added) (DAF) Rating-based Actions. No rating-based performance or achievement award will be given to an employee who receives or has received a decision in a performance-based action (e.g., WGI denial or Level 1 - Unacceptable rating, or an adverse performance-based action under Chapter 75 or 43) because of unacceptable performance during that rating cycle. (T-0) For an employee who is either under investigation or pending a proposed adverse action that is being processed in accordance with DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Action of Civilian Employees*, the rating official must coordinate with their servicing civilian personnel section and supporting legal office prior to recommending a rating-based performance or achievement award. (T-1) The Installation Commander (or equivalent civilian director) will determine whether the basis for the award is unrelated to the investigation, pending a proposed adverse action, or the discipline and the award would not reflect unfavorably on the Department of the Air Force. (T-1) Refer to DoDI1400.25Vol451_DAFI36-1004, *Department of the Air Force Civilian Recognition Program*, Enclosure 3, paragraph 2.a.(8)(d).

(2) (Added)(DAF) Supervisors and servicing civilian personnel sections will ensure employees' approved and unused time-off-awards will not be transferred to another DoD component or another Federal agency. (T-0)

(3) (Added)(DAF) The recommendation for a QSI must be accomplished in conjunction with the annual rating of record. (T-1) The QSI will be made effective as soon as practicable after it is approved and as close as possible to the rating of record upon which it is based. (T-1) The effective date may be delayed only to give a greater advantage to the recipient (e.g., to allow a regular step increase to step 4 or step 7 to be processed first). The delay will not exceed four pay periods. (T-1)

g. (Added)(DAF) Additional information regarding rating-based awards for academic faculty employees in the Administratively Determined pay plan may be found in DAFI 36-116, *Civilian Faculty Personnel Management*.

h. (Added)(DAF) Guidance for awards and recognition not in conjunction with the annual appraisal (not based on the rating of record) is contained in DoDI1400.25V451_DAFI 36-1004.

3.7. LINKAGE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT TO OTHER PERSONNEL

ACTIONS. Employee performance may impact other personnel actions, and the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program links the following employee personnel actions to performance appraisals for employees:

a. Promotion. To be eligible for a promotion under a merit promotion plan pursuant to Section 335.103 of Title 5, CFR, an employee must meet minimum qualification standards and other promotion criteria. Due weight will be given to performance appraisals and incentive awards. To be eligible for a career ladder promotion under a merit promotion plan pursuant to Section 335.104 of Title 5, CFR, an employee must be performing at the “Fully Successful” level, or higher. However, the fact that employees are rated “Fully Successful” or higher at the time they are eligible for promotion does not mean promotions are automatic.

b. Within-Grade Increase (WGI). A WGI or periodic step increase is an increase in an employee’s rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade pursuant to Sections 531.404 and 532.417 of Title 5, CFR and 5335 of Title 5, U.S.C. A WGI is not an entitlement; a supervisor may approve, delay, or deny a WGI, based on an employee’s performance.

(1) As part of ongoing communication with employees, the supervisor will discuss an upcoming WGI with the employee and may document the date of this conversation in the section designated for progress reviews in the MyPerformance Appraisal Tool.

(2) The decision to grant or deny a WGI is based on the employee’s most recent rating of record issued within the WGI waiting period. To receive a WGI, the employee must be performing at the “Fully Successful” level or higher with a rating of record of “3” or higher. When a WGI decision is not consistent with the employee’s most recent rating of record a more current rating of record must be prepared. When considering denying a WGI, supervisors should contact their servicing human resources office for further information and assistance in following the requirements in Sections 531.409 and 531.411 of Title 5, CFR.

(a) (Added)(DAF) Reference section 3.10 for information concerning use of an out-of-cycle appraisal when:

(1) (Added)(DAF) The WGI decision is not consistent with the employee's most recent rating of record, or

(2) (Added)(DAF) A WGI was denied based on an unacceptable rating and the employee has since performed at an acceptable level of competence for a minimum of 90 calendar days.

(b) (Added)(DAF) Department of the Air Force requires an assessed rating to support the WGI. Therefore, all employees should have a rating at the time the WGI is processed. If the employee has not yet received an annual rating of record and it is not time for the annual rating of record, then an out-of-cycle rating will be accomplished. (T-1) WGI should not be processed based on a "presumptive" rating.

c. QSI. The purpose of a QSI is to recognize excellence in performance by granting an accelerated step increase. A QSI is a permanent salary increase for General Schedule employees only, and careful consideration should be given before granting a QSI. QSIs must be limited to those cases where exceptional performance has extended over a significant period of time and is expected to continue into the future. To be eligible for a QSI, an employee must:

- (1) Currently be paid below step 10 of his or her grade.**
- (2) Have a most recent rating of record of Level 5 ("Outstanding").**
- (3) Have demonstrated sustained performance of high quality for a significant period of time.**
- (4) Have not received a QSI (or QSI-equivalent under a personnel system other than the General Schedule) within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks.**
- (5) (Added) (DAF) Occupy a permanent position (appointment does not have a definite time limitation of one year or less). Employees on a temporary appointment are not eligible for a QSI.**

(6) (Added) (DAF) For Cyber Excepted Services (CES) DAF Employees Only. CES DAF employees with a performance evaluation record of "outstanding" in the CES graded structure may be eligible for quality step increases (QSIs). The recommendation for QSI must be accomplished in conjunction with the annual rating of record. (T-1) The CES QSI results in a one-step increase, which may go beyond step 10. Refer to DoDI1400.25Vol3006, DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Cyber Excepted Service (CES) Compensation Administration, 3.10. Advancement Through the Rate Range; and the current year's CES GG Base Pay Tables for the corresponding rate at steps 1-12 of the applicable GG grades located at <https://public.cyber.mil/wid/dod-cyber-excepted-service-ces/pay/>.

d. Reassignment, Reduction in Grade, or Removal Based on Unacceptable Performance. Consistent with the requirements in Section 432.105 of Title 5, CFR, employees who fail to demonstrate performance at the “Fully Successful” level may be reduced in grade or removed from federal service. The employee may also be subject to reassignment at the DoD Component’s discretion.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Reassignment to another position is an option.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Supervisors must consult with the servicing civilian personnel section prior to issuing any notification of proposed action. (T-1)

e. Performance-Based Awards. See Volume 451 of this instruction and DoD Component policy and collective bargaining agreements, if applicable, for more information on performance-based awards.

3.8. SPECIALLY-SITUATED EMPLOYEES. There are a number of special circumstances that may affect an employee’s eligibility for a performance rating.

a. Employees on Detail or Matrixed Employees. When an employee is detailed or matrixed, it remains the responsibility of the supervisor of record to seek input from the detail or matrix supervisor for use in developing the performance plan, conducting progress reviews, and completing the rating of record.

b. Employees Performing Union Representational Responsibilities. When an employee is engaged in union representational responsibilities, the time spent performing union representation does not constitute work of the agency and does not count toward the minimum period of performance of 90 calendar days under an approved performance plan. If an employee performs agency work to meet the 90-calendar day requirement under an approved performance plan, that employee is eligible to receive a rating of record.

c. Employees Absent for Military Service. Employees who are absent for military service (Absent-US) will be rated provided they have performed work under an approved performance plan for a minimum of 90 calendar days. If employees performing military service do not meet the 90 calendar day requirement, then the employee is not eligible to receive a rating of record and the supervisor cannot assign the most recent rating of record for the current appraisal cycle.

d. Employees on Leave Without Pay or Extended Paid Leave. If an employee is absent during the appraisal cycle because he or she was on leave without pay or extended paid leave (including disabled veterans seeking medical treatment), the employee is eligible to receive a rating of record if he or she has performed work under an approved performance plan for a minimum of 90 calendar days. However, if an employee does not meet the 90 calendar day requirement, then he or she is not eligible to receive a rating of record.

e. Employees on Long-Term Full-Time Training. Employees attending a program of long-term full-time training greater than 90 calendar days may have a performance plan developed related to the training. The plan could include elements related to the achievement of

specific training objectives. In this situation, supervisors may wish to contact the respective training activity for assistance and recommended input to the performance plan.

f. Employees Who Transfer or Supervisors Who Leave During the Appraisal Cycle.

The length of time an employee serves under an approved performance plan determines what is required when an employee or supervisor leaves the organization.

(1) If a supervisor leaves the organization, a performance narrative statement is required when an employee has performed under an approved performance plan for 90 calendar days and there are more than 90 calendar days left in the appraisal cycle. This narrative statement will be considered by the incoming supervisor.

(a) (Added)(DAF) Supervisors will follow procedures in paragraph 3.8.f(1) when an employee leaves the organization, has performed under an approved performance plan for a minimum of 90 calendar days, and there are more than 90 calendar days left in the appraisal cycle. (T-0)

(2) A rating of record is required when an employee has performed under an approved performance plan for 90 calendar days and the employee or supervisor leaves the organization with fewer than 90 calendar days remaining in the appraisal cycle. If circumstances preclude the departing supervisor from carrying out this responsibility, the higher level management official may serve as the rating official, subject to Component policy.

(a) (Added) (DAF) The departing supervisor or higher level reviewer must complete the rating of record before the employee or subordinate supervisor departs the organization. (T-1)

(3) (Added)(DAF) Normally, the first line supervisor is the rating official for employees. It may be impracticable for the higher-level management official to serve as the rating official when the position is outside of the installation at the MAJCOM/FLDCOM or Headquarters Air Force level. In such instances, another management official may be designated as the rating official. The designated rating official should be a supervisor or management official with a solid understanding of the organization and direct knowledge of the employee's performance.

(4) (Added) (DAF) There is no requirement to provide an employee a performance narrative statement or a rating of record if the employee has not performed for a minimum of 90 calendar days under an approved plan.

3.9. IDENTIFYING AND IMPROVING UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE.

Supervisors who communicate their expectations and provide constructive, timely, and meaningful feedback to their employees on a regular basis about performance may more readily identify and reduce instances of performance deficiencies and prevent issues from becoming serious performance problems.

a. Addressing Performance Issues Early. At any point during the appraisal cycle, when a supervisor detects a decline in performance, early intervention is imperative. Assistance should

be provided to the employees early on, whenever there is a need for improvement or any time there is a decline in performance. The supervisor should take the following actions, as appropriate:

(1) Clearly communicate to the employee that current performance fails to meet the performance standards described in the performance plan; provide clear guidance as to what is needed in order for the employee to improve; and provide specific examples of what and how work has not met expectations, as well as examples of work that would meet expectations.

(2) Offer appropriate assistance.

(3) Provide ideas of where the employee may go to obtain additional assistance or training, if applicable.

(4) Provide closer supervision and feedback. This might include more frequent reporting, special assignments, or on-the-job training.

(5) If performance issues persist, use a more formal approach to help employees improve and seek assistance from the human resources office.

b. Addressing Unacceptable Performance. If the employee's performance declines to less than "Fully Successful" in one or more performance elements, the supervisor, in consultation with the servicing human resources office, will determine whether action is more appropriate under Section 432.105 or Part 752 of Title 5, CFR, and must provide notice of the performance deficiencies. The supervisor, or other appropriate management official, must follow the procedures contained in Sections 432.104 and 432.105 of Title 5, CFR and this section if action is being taken under Sections 432.105 of Title 5, CFR. The procedures are:

(1) Provide notice to the employee by issuing a rating of record of "Unacceptable." A rating of record of "Unacceptable" will be effective the day it is communicated to the employee. The time spent improving performance to the "Fully Successful" level will not count toward the completion of the necessary waiting period for a WGI (referred to in this volume as the "WGI delay offset period"). The effective date of the rating of record will establish the start date of the WGI delay offset period.

(2) The supervisor must identify in writing (i.e., in a PIP):

(a) Element(s) in which performance is "Unacceptable" and a description of the unacceptable performance.

(b) What standards the employee must attain in order to demonstrate "Fully Successful" performance.

(c) The time allowed for the opportunity to demonstrate "Fully Successful" performance. This amount of time must be reasonable and commensurate with the duties and responsibilities of the position. Generally, this should typically be 30 to 90 calendar days, except

when it is determined that a longer period is necessary to provide sufficient time to evaluate an employee's performance.

(d) Statement of the possible consequences of failure to raise performance to the “Fully Successful” level during the PIP period.

(3) The supervisor must provide assistance designed to help the employee improve his or her performance during the period of the PIP.

(4) If the employee succeeds in demonstrating acceptable performance at the “Fully Successful” level by the end of the PIP, a new rating of record will be recorded. The date the employee is eligible for a WGI will be reset to accommodate the WGI delay offset period. The “Fully Successful” rating of record will establish the end date of the WGI delay offset period.

(5) If the employee fails to demonstrate performance at the “Fully Successful” level despite the PIP, the employee may be reduced in grade or removed from federal service pursuant to Section 432.105 of Title 5, CFR. The employee may also be subject to reassignment at the DoD Component's discretion. In cases of voluntary or management-directed personnel actions, such as change to lower grade, reassignment, resignation, separation, or removal, the effective date of the action will establish the end date of the WGI delay offset period.

(6) (Added)(DAF) Reference section 3.10 for information concerning use of an out-of-cycle appraisal when the employee’s performance either deteriorates to “Unacceptable” and it is not time for the annual appraisal or improves to an acceptable level after receiving an unacceptable rating.

3.10. (Added)(DAF) OUT-OF-CYCLE RATINGS. If the supervisor must provide a rating that occurs other than at the end of the applicable appraisal period, the supervisor should consult with the servicing civilian personnel section for assistance with procedures for completing the out-of-cycle appraisal. Out-of-cycle ratings will be used when:

a. (Added)(DAF) A supervisor has addressed performance problems with the employee, and the employee’s performance has further deteriorated to “Unacceptable,” and it is not time for the annual appraisal. (T-1)

b. (Added)(DAF) An employee’s performance improves for a minimum of 90 calendar days following the employee’s receipt of an “Unacceptable” performance rating and it is not time for the annual appraisal. (T-1)

c. (Added)(DAF) The current rating of record (e.g., “Fully Successful” or higher, or no previous rating) does not support the personnel action under consideration (e.g., WGI denial) and it is not time for the annual appraisal. (T-1)

d. (Added)(DAF) A supervisor has denied a WGI based upon an unacceptable rating, and the employee has since performed at an acceptable level of competence for a minimum of 90 calendar days, and it is not time for the annual appraisal. (T-1)

3.11. (Added)(DAF) PROBATIONARY AND TRIAL PERIODS. Employee performance may affect the successful completion of an employee initial probationary or trial period and the new supervisor's probationary period, which are an extension of the hiring or selection process.

a. (Added)(DAF) Initial Probationary and Trial Period.

(1) (Added)(DAF) Newly appointed employees must complete a probationary period when appointed in the competitive service pursuant to Section 1599e of Title 10, U.S.C., and Part 315, Subpart H, of Title 5, CFR. (T-0) Newly appointed employees must complete a trial period when appointed in the excepted service pursuant to Section 316.304 of Title 5, CFR for term appointments or as required per the applicable appointing authority. (T-0) Supervisors utilize this period to determine the employee's qualifications and/or fitness for continued employment.

(2) (Added)(DAF) During the probationary or trial period, the supervisor should provide close supervision of newly appointed employees. The supervisor evaluates the employee's work performance and conduct and provides performance feedback, guidance, training, and counseling to assist with any necessary adjustment to the organization. The supervisor or employee may initiate feedback discussions at any time during the probationary or trial period.

(3) (Added)(DAF) The supervisor should contact the servicing civilian personnel section for assistance as soon as employee performance deficiencies or conduct issues arise. Unacceptable performance or conduct during the probationary or trial period is serious and can result in termination from federal service prior to the end of the probationary or trial period in accordance with Part 315, Subpart H, of Title 5, CFR.

b. (Added)(DAF) Probationary Period for New Supervisors and Managers. Pursuant to Part 315, Subpart I, of Title 5 CFR, new supervisors and managers must complete a one-year supervisory or managerial probationary period upon their first assignment to a permanent supervisory or managerial position in the competitive service. (T-0) New supervisors and managers in the excepted service do not complete this probationary period.

(1) (Added)(DAF) All new supervisors and managers are required to complete mandatory supervisory training during the one-year period following their initial assignment. See DAFI 36-2670, *Total Force Development*, for further guidance on DAF specific training for supervisors and managers. Individual completion of the supervisory training aids in the transition from working level skills to the required supervisory level skills necessary for successfully completing their probationary period. The rating official holds regular performance discussions throughout the probationary period to monitor progress and provide feedback, guidance, and counseling to the new supervisor or manager.

(2) (Added)(DAF) Employees are notified in writing of the supervisory/managerial

probationary period before assignment to a supervisory or managerial position. (T-1) The notice includes information that if the supervisory or managerial probation is not satisfactorily completed, the employee will be returned to a position of no lower grade and pay than the position from which transferred, assigned, or promoted. (T-0) There are very limited appeal rights over such placement.

3.12. (Added)(DAF) TRAINING. Section 9902(c)(3) of Title 5, U.S.C., requires training and retraining for supervisors, managers, and employees in the implementation and operation of the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program. Training options include completion of either computer-based training or local instructor-led classroom training, or a combination of the two. Contact the servicing civilian personnel section to determine if in-person instructor-led training is available at the Installation.

a. (Added)(DAF) Computer-based Training. The computer-based training course is available via MyLearning at: <https://lms-jets.cce.af.mil/moodle/>.

(1) (Added)(DAF) If computer-based training is the locally-determined delivery method:

(a) (Added)(DAF) The DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program 4-module course must be completed to satisfy the initial training requirement. (T-1)

(b) (Added)(DAF) DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program 4-module will be completed to satisfy the retraining requirement. (T-0)

(2) (Added)(DAF) Computer-based training may not be modified. (T-0) However, local training may be developed to supplement the computer-based training. Any locally developed supplemental training must not contradict guidance in this publication and must be identified as Air Force-specific. (T-0) Should others outside Air Force and Space Force access the training they should be aware that the information is Department of the Air Force specific rather than Department of Defense-wide.

b. (Added)(DAF) Training for Employees. All employees must complete DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program training upon initial assignment to a covered position and at least once every five years thereafter. (T-0)

c. (Added)(DAF) Training for Supervisors and Managers. All supervisors and managers of DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program covered positions must complete DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program training upon initial assignment to the position. (T-0) Pursuant to Section 9902(d)(2) of Title 5, U.S.C., complete training at least once every three years thereafter. (T-0)

APPENDIX 3A: EXCLUSIONS FROM COVERAGE

Table 3. Exclusions from Coverage

Position	Authority
Acquisition Demonstration Projects	Page 1426-1492 of Volume 64, Federal Register (FR)
Academic Faculty members of an accredited college or university with specialized qualifications in positions of a scientific, professional, or analytical nature who are not employed for more than 130 working days per year.	Covered by Volume 430 of this instruction
Administrative Law Judge	Section 4301(2)(D) of Title 5, U.S.C.; Section 942 of Title 10, U.S.C.; Section 7105 of Title 41, U.S.C.
Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System	Section 1601 of Title 10, U.S.C.
Defense Intelligence Senior Executive Service	Section 1606 of Title 10, U.S.C.
Defense Intelligence Senior Level	Section 1607 of Title 10, U.S.C.
Employees outside the United States who are paid in accordance with prevailing rates for local nationals in that area	Section 4301(2)(A) of Title 5, U.S.C.
Experts and Consultants including members of advisory committees	Section 3109(b) of Title 5, U.S.C.; Section 129b of Title 10, U.S.C.
Highly Qualified Experts	Section 9903 of Title 5, U.S.C.
Mariners	The exclusion provided in the February 24, 1981 Office of Personnel Management Memorandum
Nonappropriated fund employees	Section 2105(c) of Title 5, U.S.C.
Persons Without Pay	Section 1588 of Title 10, U.S.C.; Section 3111 of Title 5, U.S.C.
Presidential Appointees	Section 4301(2)(F) of Title 5, U.S.C.
Science and Technology Reinvention Laboratory	
Air Force Research Laboratory	Pages 53076-53126 of Volume 75, FR
Naval Research Laboratory	Pages 33970-34046 of Volume 64, FR
Office of Naval Research	Pages 77380-77447 of Volume 75, FR
NAVSEA, Naval Surface Warfare Center and Undersea Warfare Center	Pages 64050-64071 of Volume 62, FR

Table 3. Exclusions from Coverage Continued

Position	Authority
NAVAIR, Aircraft Division and Weapons Division	Pages 8530-8570 of Volume 76, FR
SPAWAR, Systems Center-Atlantic and SPAWAR, Systems Center-Pacific	Pages 1923-1964 of Volume 76, FR
Army Research Laboratory	Pages 10680-10711, and 13458 of Volume 63, FR
Aviation and Missile Research, Development and Engineering Center	Pages 53142-53143 of Volume 65, FR; Pages 34876-34903 of Volume 62, FR
Engineer Research and Development Center	Pages 14580-14599 of Volume 63, FR
Communications-Electronic Research, Development and Engineering Center	Pages 54872-54899 of Volume 66, FR
Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center	Pages 3744-3787 of Volume 76, FR
Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center	Pages 68936-68966 of Volume 74, FR
Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center	Pages 68448-68475 of Volume 74, FR
Tank and Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center	Pages 12508-12548, and 56406-56407 of Volume 76, FR
Medical Research and Materiel Command	Pages 10439-10462 of Volume 63, FR
Scientific or Professional employees	Section 3104 of Chapter 31 of Title 5, U.S.C.
Senior Executive Service	Section 4301(2)(E) of Chapter 43 of Title 5, U.S.C.
Senior Level employees	Section 430.302 of Title 5, CFR
Temporary Employees (serving under a temporary appointment for less than 1 year who agree to serve without a performance evaluation and who will not be considered for a reappointment or for an increase in pay based in whole or in part on performance)	Section 4301(2)(H) of Title 5, U.S.C.

GLOSSARY

G.1. ACRONYMS.

(Added)(DAF) AFI	Air Force Instruction
(Added)(DAF) AF/A1	Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services
(Added)(DAF) AF/RE	Chief of Air Force Reserve
ASD(M&RA)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CSRA	Civil Service Reform Act
DASD(CPP)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian and Personnel Policy
(Added)(DAF) DoD	Department of Defense
(Added)(DAF) DAFI	Department of the Air Force Instruction
(Added)(DAF) DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
(Added)(DAF) FLDCOM	Field Command
FR	Federal Register
HLR	higher level reviewer
(Added)(DAF) IMT	Information Management Tool
(Added)(DAF) MAJCOM	Major Command
NAVAIR	Naval Air Systems Command
NAVSEA	Naval Sea Systems Command
(Added)(DAF) NGB/CF	Director of the Air National Guard
PIP	performance improvement plan
QSI	quality step increase
(Added)(DAF) RO	rating official

(Added)(DAF) SF/S1 Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Human Capital

SMART specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely
SPAWAR Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command

U.S.C. United States Code
USD(P&R) Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

WGI within-grade increase

G.2. DEFINITIONS. These terms and their definitions are for the purposes of this volume.

acceptable performance. Performance that meets an employee's performance requirements or standards in the elements being assessed.

(Added)(DAF) aggregate salaries. The base salary plus the locality pay is used to determine the award budget.

appraisal. The process by which performance is reviewed and evaluated.

appraisal cycle. A 1-year period (April 1 – March 31) established by the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program in which an employee's performance will normally be reviewed, and a rating of record will be assigned.

(Added)(DAF) appraisal cycle. The appraisal cycle for academic faculty employees in the Administratively Determined pay plan will be the 1-year period of June 1 – May 31 (United States Air Force Academy) or July 1 – June 30 (Air University and Air Force Institute of Technology).

approved performance plan. A performance plan written, reviewed, and approved in accordance with DoD Component procedures, which communicates expectations and requirements of employee performance for the appraisal cycle.

critical element. A type of performance element in which a work assignment or responsibility is of such importance that unacceptable performance on the element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is unacceptable. Critical elements are only used to measure individual performance.

detail. A temporary assignment to a different position or a set of duties for a specified period. The employee is expected to return to his or her permanent position of record at the end of the assignment.

employee performance file. A record containing copies of employees' performance ratings of record, including the performance plans on which the ratings are based. It also includes all performance-related records, such as forms or other documents, maintained as a system of

records within the meaning Section 552a of Title 5, U.S.C., also known as the “Privacy Act of 1974,” as amended.

HLR. A senior-level management official, normally above the level of a rating official.
(Added)(DAF) The rating official and higher level reviewer may be the same at higher levels of the organization. For example, when utilizing a higher level reviewer at a higher level would require going outside of the installation at the Major Command or Headquarters Air Force level, it may be more appropriate for the rating official to also serve as the higher level reviewer.

matrixed employee. An employee hosted by an organization at a location apart from his or her permanent supervisor or organization of record and who is performing work for his or her organization of record. The employee may receive taskings from the host organization but he or she remains under the authority, direction, and control of his or her organization of record.

minimum period of performance. The minimum appraisal cycle for the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program is 90 calendar days on an approved performance plan.

MyPerformance. The DoD automated appraisal tool authorized for use by both supervisors and employees to document the performance management process of the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program.

opportunity period to demonstrate acceptable performance. A reasonable period for the employee whose performance has been determined to be unacceptable in one or more elements to demonstrate acceptable performance in the element(s) at issue.

performance. Accomplishment of work assignments or responsibilities.

(Added)(DAF) performance-based awards. Awards granted to an employee in recognition of the employee’s performance over the entire rating period and based on a Level 3 (“Fully Successful”) or higher rating of record at the end of most recent appraisal cycle.

performance discussion. Joint communication between the supervisor and employee about the employee’s work performance and its link to organizational effectiveness. The discussions may consist of verbal feedback sessions or formal progress reviews.

performance element rating. The written, or otherwise recorded, appraisal of performance compared to the performance standards for each element on which there has been an opportunity to perform for the minimum period of performance.

performance improvement officer. A senior-level organizational leader with responsibility to supervise agency performance management activities; advise agency leaders about measuring organizational performance; and assist with integrating performance information into an agency’s employee performance appraisal process.

performance management. The integrated process by which an agency involves its employees in improving organizational effectiveness in the accomplishment of agency mission and strategic goals. Performance management consists of: performance planning, monitoring employee

performance, evaluating employee performance, and recognizing and rewarding employee performance.

performance plan. All of the written, or otherwise recorded, performance elements and standards that set expected performance. A plan must include critical elements and their performance standards.

performance rating. An ordered category of performance from Level 1 through Level 5, with Level 1 as the lowest and Level 5 as the highest. Level 1 is “Unacceptable”; Level 3 is “Fully Successful”; and Level 5 is “Outstanding.” Also known as “summary level.”

performance standard. The management-approved expression of the performance threshold, requirement, and expectations that must be met to be appraised at a particular level of performance. A performance standard may include, but is not limited to, quality, quantity, timeliness, and manner of performance.

PIP. A strategy developed for an employee at any point in the appraisal cycle when performance becomes unacceptable in one or more elements. This plan affords an employee the opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance and is developed with specific guidance provided by the servicing human resources office.

progress review. A type of formal performance discussion in which the supervisor communicates with the employee about the employee’s performance compared to his or her performance standards. Supervisors are required to conduct at least one formal progress review during the appraisal cycle.

(Added)(DAF) probationary period. The period of service of an employee upon initial appointment to a competitive position, which is used by the supervisor to determine qualifications and/or fitness for continued employment. An individual appointed to a permanent position within the competitive service in the DoD will serve a probationary period of two years. (T-0)

promotion. A change of an employee, while serving continuously within the same agency, either to a higher grade when both the old and the new positions are under the General Schedule or under the same type graded wage schedule, or to a position with a higher rate of pay when both the old and the new positions are under the same type of ungraded wage schedule, or are in different pay method categories.

QSI. Defined in Section 531.502 of Title 5, CFR. Only an employee who receives a rating of record of “Outstanding” or equivalent is eligible.

rating of record. The performance rating level assigned at the end of an appraisal cycle for performance of agency-assigned duties over the entire cycle.

rating official (Added)(DAF) (RO). The person responsible for informing the employee of the duties of his or her position, establishing performance standards, providing feedback, appraising performance, and assigning the performance rating. Normally, this is the employees’ immediate supervisor.

reassignment. The change of an employee, while serving continuously within the same agency, from one position to another without promotion or demotion.

reduction in grade. The involuntary assignment of an employee to a position at a lower classification or job grading level. A reduction in grade is also referred to as a demotion.

removal. The involuntary separation of an employee from federal service.

SMART. An acronym for criteria that can be used in writing and evaluating performance standards: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.

supervisor (Civil Service Reform Act). Position meets the definition of “supervisor” in Section 7103(a)(10) of Title 5, U.S.C., but does not meet the minimum requirements for application of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide.

(Added)(DAF) trial period. The period of service of an employee upon initial appointment to the excepted service, which is used by the supervisor to determine qualifications and/or fitness for continued employment. A trial period is generally one or two years in length as required per the applicable appointing authority.

(Added)(DAF) trusted agent. An individual assigned and authorized by the rating official or HLR to act on their behalf within the MyPerformance tool for the purpose of documenting their decisions related to performance management matters.

unacceptable performance. Performance that fails to meet the established performance standards in one or more elements of an employee’s position. It is referred to as a Level 1 rating under the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program.

WGI. A periodic increase in an employee’s rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step within that grade. The employee’s rating of record must be at the “Fully Successful” level to be eligible for a WGI.

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**(Added)(DAF) Department of the Air Force Manual (DAFMAN) 90-161, Publishing
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**(Added)(DAF) Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 36-116, Civilian Faculty
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(Added)(DAF) Adopted Forms

**(Added)(DAF) DD Form 2906, Department of Defense Civilian Performance Plan, Progress
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¹ Available on the Internet at <https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/>.