

## **Performance Assessment Review (PAR) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Who is required to receive a PAR?**

In State service, the Performance Assessment Review (PAR) program shall apply to all non-aligned and/or managerial employees in the career service, as well as those in non-aligned unclassified titles as designated by particular departments or agencies. While not mandated, departments and agencies are encouraged to include all non-aligned unclassified titles in the PAR Program.

### **When should I receive my PAR Job Expectations (Section I)?**

Within a reasonable time after the start of the new rating period, a new appointment, a change in supervisor, or a promotion. A face-to-face meeting with your supervisor should take place to review the elements of your PAR (i.e. the Job Expectations, Performance Factors and Evaluation Criteria). Recommended: 1-2 weeks

### **What should happen if I disagree with the Job Expectations?**

Assuming that you have noted your disagreement with supporting comments, you and your supervisor should discuss the situation to see if it can be resolved. If not, the Reviewer should then be consulted to see if a resolution can be reached. Depending on the issue, the employee has the option of filing a classification appeal or a non-contractual grievance. However, until the issue is resolved, the Job Expectations remain in effect.

### **May I be assigned duties not on my PAR?**

Yes. Your PAR Job Expectations contain only your major job responsibilities. However, if a duty becomes a significant part of your workload, it then should become part of your Job Expectations, with both you and your supervisor initialing and dating the change or addition.

### **How many promotional points am I awarded for a Commendable final rating? For an Exceptional final rating?**

Employees receiving a Commendable final rating will be awarded 1 promotional point,. Employees receiving an Exceptional final rating will be awarded 3 promotional points. Those employees rated Unsatisfactory will receive 0 points.

### **What happens if I do NOT receive a Final Rating?**

First, you should ask your supervisor, then the Reviewer, for a Final Evaluation Rating. If you are unsuccessful, you should then contact your Personnel Office to inform them of the situation. If a Final Evaluation Rating is not submitted, there will not be an Official Rating entered in PMIS and the Performance Assessment Database System. However, for promotional purposes, you will be treated as if you received a rating of "Commendable" or "2" for that rating period and awarded 1 promotional point.

**When are PAR Ratings NOT used to add points to promotional examinations?**

Whenever a supervisor completes a performance rating for one of the supervisor's subordinates or acts as a Reviewer for a subordinate's rating and competes in the same promotional examination, then the PAR Ratings are not used for any applicants in that unit scope.

**How does PAR relate to the Working Test Period?**

The PAR Job Expectations should be completed at the beginning of the Working Test Period. These Job Expectations can then assist in the completion of the Working Test Period Evaluation. The Interim and Final PAR Ratings and Plans are completed twice each year, six months apart, regardless of the starting date of the Working Test Period.

**For what period of time am I rated?**

The rating cycle is one year; however, six months after the Initial Certification, the Interim assessment is due and six months later, the Final assessment is due.

**Will my rating period change if I go on Leave of Absence?**

Rating periods have been standardized and are not tied into your anniversary date as in the past. Your rating period will remain the same if you take a leave. You will be rated for the time you actually worked.

**What happens if I change supervisors or transfer to a new unit, but keep my same title and duties?**

A "closeout" PAR Evaluation should be done with the former supervisor. New Job Expectations should be developed with the new supervisor. At the end of the rating period, the ratings of the former supervisor and the new supervisor should be pro-rated by the department's Human Resources Office to arrive at the Final Rating.

**What happens to my PAR if I get promoted, transferred, and/or my title changes?**

In this case, you should receive a Final Rating for the former title. A new PAR should be developed for the new title, new unit and/or new department.

**What happens if I receive a Rating of Unsatisfactory?**

If you receive a rating of "Unsatisfactory", your supervisor must make clear in your Final Development Plan the steps you must take to bring your performance up to the "Commendable" level. A performance conference shall be conducted every three months to evaluate your progress (or a shorter period of time as determined by the supervisor).

**After I reach Step 8 or Step 9 in the compensation scale, do I still have to wait 18 months or 2 years until my Final Evaluation Rating is completed?**

No, you continue to receive a Final Evaluation Rating on the scheduled dates. The increment for Step 9 will be given 18 months after you have received your Step 8 increment. The increment for Step 10 will be given 2 years after you have received your Step 9 increment. Approval or denial of this increment will be based on the most recent Final Rating.

**When will I receive my increment?**

If you are entitled to receive an increment, your increment will be given on the pay period of your Anniversary Date. If you receive a Rating of Unsatisfactory on your most recent PAR, your increment will be denied.

**What is the role of the Reviewer?**

The Reviewer is the Rater's Rater. He/she should ensure that the process is handled equitably. It is the Reviewer's responsibility to discuss the unit goals with the Rater. If there are concerns, the Reviewer should attempt to resolve them.

**Does an agency have to have written PARs for its employees?**

Yes, PARs must be documented on the proscribed forms.

**Can an agency rate "by exception" and assume that most employees are performing at an acceptable level?**

No, every employee should have a PAR and thereby be given the opportunity to grow and develop professionally.

**What is a "significant fact or event?"**

A significant fact or event is any noteworthy accomplishment, or area needing improvement, that occurs throughout the rating cycle.

**Are agencies required to use a "Forced Distribution" Rating approach? Are they permitted to use such a method?**

Ratings should be based on the performance of an individual employee. Ratings should not be based on some predetermined perception that a certain number of employees must fall into a particular category.

**Are there any "safeguards" to prevent intentional or unintentional rating errors?**

It is recommended that each department monitor the various aspects of the PAR Program within its agencies and divisions, take corrective actions when necessary, and reach out for assistance when needed. Civil Service Commission stands ready to lend whatever support is needed. In addition, the Performance Assessment Database System will check for errors in calculating the final rating.

**What, if any, steps are available for employees who feel they have been unfairly or inaccurately rated?**

In this instance, employees have the non-contractual grievance procedures available to them (see NJAC 4 A: 6-5.3 (b)). Employees dissatisfied with the departmental decision can seek Civil Service Commission review. These grievance appeals are processed by Merit System Practices and Labor Relations for determination by the Commissioner of Personnel.

**Does the Rater (Supervisor) have the authority or responsibility to tell an employee that the employee's performance is "Unsatisfactory"?**

It should be the goal as the employee's supervisor (Rater) to keep the employee informed about the assessment of the employee's performance, particularly when that assessment is negative. In addition, there may be a policy or practice in agencies that must be followed when notifying employees that their performance is "Unsatisfactory".

**Does the Rater (Supervisor) have to wait for the Interim or Final Performance Assessment Review to tell an employee that the employee's performance is "Unsatisfactory"?**

No. Good managers provide employees with performance feedback on an ongoing basis, throughout the rating period. The important thing to remember is that no one likes to feel "sandbagged" at PAR time--Interim or Final--so the Rater should confront any poor performance as soon as it becomes evident.

**Should a Ratee get a copy of all the Rater's documents about the employee's performance?**

Employees must be given a signed copy of the PAR document for the Initial Certification, Interim and Final evaluation sessions. It is expected that supervisors may take "supervisory" notes to serve as "memory joggers" regarding the employee's performance. For example, these notes can include the dates or number of times an employee was given an instruction. This type of "supervisory" information does not have to be included in the documents given to the employee.