

# The GPS Rating Scale



With the 2013 introduction of the re-designed GPS online tool and the revised appraisal form, supervisors will select performance ratings from a drop-down list of five descriptors plus a default “not rated” option.

GPS Rating Scale		
Numerical Value	Descriptor	Definition
0.0	Not Rated	Default rating that can be used if the accountability or goal is new or is not relevant for the current review period
1.0	Unsatisfactory	Results significantly miss achievement of the key accountabilities; <i>immediate improvement is required</i>
2.0	Needs Improvement	Results demonstrate potential to become successful; <i>some development and/or improvement is needed</i>
3.0	Fully Successful	Results meet expectations of all key accountabilities; <i>a reliable and competent employee</i>
4.0	High Contributor	Results are consistent with complete mastery of all key accountabilities; <i>regularly exceeds most expectations</i>
5.0	Exceptional	Results are above and beyond expectations in a manner that is <i>significant, extraordinary, and rare</i>

These rating descriptors represent a five-point scale with “Not Rated” having a minimum value of zero and “Exceptional” having a maximum value of five.

## A Little Background

The original GPS rating scale was configured for the old online GPS tool based on the input of the Performance Management Steering Committee. The committee had proposed sliding scale concept that would allow reviewers to place an appropriate rating anywhere along a bar anchored with various descriptors: Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement, Fully Successful, High Contributor, and Exceptional. It wasn't possible to configure a sliding scale into the old online GPS tool so the rating scale was designed with nine possible descriptors to capture the in-between points of the five anchor descriptions. Based on feedback from GPS users, the 2012 “short form” version of the appraisal form maintained the five anchor descriptions and numerical values but discontinued the in-between descriptors and values. The simplified scale was configured into new GPS online tool.

## Descriptor versus Numerical Ratings

In the online GPS appraisal form view, descriptor ratings with a link to definitions are listed along the right side of the form. When it's time for the performance discussion, it is recommended that supervisors and employees discuss performance using words rather than numbers.

Within the form itself, supervisors see the rating descriptors and numerical values when selecting ratings within drop-down fields. In assessing performance, it is generally easier to match observed or demonstrated performance with a descriptive phrase than with a number.

Data calculations require numbers so the numerical values are used to calculate an overall assessment rating. Numerical ratings are also easier to deal with for comparison purposes. At the end of the performance appraisal period, for example, departments and stems prefer to review and track aggregate data using numerical ratings. In the completed form, only the numerical values of the ratings are shown.

## Assessing Performance

When rating performance on the various elements (key accountabilities, performance goals, and/or special projects/assignments), it is important to remember that “3 – Fully Successful” is the benchmark standard. If performance on a particular item is above expectation, then use a higher rating. Conversely, if performance falls below expectation, then use a lower rating. It is assumed that most employees will have an overall assessment rating somewhere in the range of 2.0 to 4.0.

Performance assessment ratings are provided for key accountabilities, performance goals, and special projects/assignments. All of these items appear within a single section on the new GPS appraisal form. Workplace learning/development activities appear in their own section of the form and are not subject to ratings.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Ratings are used in conjunction with weightings to calculate the overall assessment rating. If a decision is made to **not rate** a particular item, be sure that the corresponding weight for that item is also set at zero. Otherwise, the overall assessment rating will be negatively impacted.*

## Overall Assessment Rating Descriptor Ranges

Numerical ranges are built into the online GPS tool in order to match an overall descriptor with the overall numerical rating. The ranges and their equivalent descriptor are shown on the next page.

Overall Rating Range	Equates to...
1.00 to 1.50	Unsatisfactory
1.51 to 2.50	Needs Improvement
2.51 to 3.50	Fully Successful
3.51 to 4.50	High Contributor
4.51 to 5.00	Exceptional

The next page shows an example of how the overall assessment is calculated as a weighted average of all weighted/rated elements in the form.

**Example: Hypothetical Appraisal Summary Section for Academic Coordinator**

2013 Performance Elements	Descriptor Rating	Weights	Numerical Rating
Key Accountability: Coordinate the graduate admissions process	Fully Successful	30.0%	3.0
Key Accountability: Assist and advise undergraduate/graduate students	High Contributor	25.0%	4.0
Key Accountability: Provide administrative support for the department.	High Contributor	15.0%	4.0
Key Accountability: Coordinate meetings and events.	Needs Improvement	5.0%	2.0
Performance Goal: Help implement new system for tracking admissions	Fully Successful	15%	3.0
Performance Goal: Revise process documentation to incorporate new system	Exceptional	5%	5.0
Special Project: Provide admin support to departmental faculty search committee	Fully Successful	5%	3.0
<b>Overall Assessment Rating:</b>			<b>3.45</b>

1. First, the assessment rating is multiplied by the weighting factor to calculate the contribution of each element to the overall assessment rating:

Key Accountabilities:

Coordinate the graduate admissions process	$0.30 \times 3.0 = 0.90$
Assist and advise undergraduate/graduate students	$0.25 \times 4.0 = 1.00$
Provide administrative support for the department	$0.15 \times 4.0 = 0.60$
Coordinate meetings and events	$0.05 \times 2.0 = 0.10$

Performance Goals:

Help implement the new system for tracking admissions	$0.15 \times 3.0 = 0.45$
Revise process documentation to incorporate the new system	$0.05 \times 5.0 = 0.25$

Special Project Goal:

Provide admin support to department faculty search committee	$0.05 \times 3.0 = 0.15$
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2. Then an overall weighted average is calculated by adding together each of the individual results:

$$0.90 + 1.00 + 0.60 + 0.10 + 0.45 + 0.25 + 0.15 = \mathbf{3.45 \text{ Overall Assessment Rating}}$$

3. The overall numerical rating of 3.45 falls within the range of 2.51 to 3.50 so the overall performance descriptor would be "Fully Successful."