



The *GPS* Rating Scale

The online *GPS* tool allows employees and supervisors to select performance ratings from a drop-down list of nine descriptors plus two additional choices: Not Rated and Too New to Rate. In addition to the drop-down list, there are links from the [Employee Rating](#) and [Supervisor Rating](#) field labels that open a window showing the nine descriptors and their corresponding definitions.

<i>GPS</i> Rating Scale		
Numerical Value	Descriptor	Definition
1.0	Unsatisfactory	Results significantly miss achievement of the key accountabilities; <i>immediate improvement is required</i>
1.5	Below Most Expectations	Performance generally falls between Unsatisfactory and Needs Improvement
2.0	Needs Improvement	Results demonstrate potential to become successful; <i>some development and/or improvement is needed</i>
2.5	Meets Most Expectations	Performance generally falls between Needs Improvement and Fully Successful
3.0	Fully Successful	Results meet expectations of all key accountabilities; <i>a reliable and competent employee</i>
3.5	Exceeds Some Expectations	Performance generally falls between Fully Successful and High Contributor
4.0	High Contributor	Results are consistent with complete mastery of all key accountabilities; <i>regularly exceeds most expectations</i>
4.5	Exceeds Most Expectations	Performance generally falls between High Contributor and Exceptional
5.0	Exceptional	Results are above and beyond expectations in a manner that is <i>significant, extraordinary, and rare</i>

Although there are nine possible rating descriptors, they represent a five-point scale with “Unsatisfactory” having a minimum value of one and “Exceptional” having a maximum value of five. The other descriptors provide half-point increments between the lowest and highest descriptors.

Why Are There So Many Possible Descriptors?

The *GPS* rating scale was configured for the online *GPS* tool based on the input and feedback of the Performance Management Steering Committee. It is an adaptation of the Committee’s original sliding scale concept used in the 2007 *GPS* Appraisal paper forms but which could not be duplicated in the online tool. The sliding scale allowed reviewers to place an appropriate rating anywhere along a bar anchored with various descriptors: Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement, Fully Successful, High Contributor, and Exceptional.

The original descriptors have been maintained as well as their numerical values. However, for the online *GPS* tool, additional descriptors for the half-point increments had to be created. The new descriptors include: Below Most Expectations, Meets Most Expectations, Exceeds Some Expectations, and Exceeds Most Expectations. The definitions for each of these descriptors indicate that they are each half-way points between the descriptors immediately below and above.

Descriptor versus. Numerical Ratings

In the online *GPS* appraisal form, descriptor ratings are used throughout the various sections. Numerical equivalents are not shown. In assessing performance, it is generally easier to match observed or demonstrated performance with a descriptive phrase than with a number. It is also easier for most supervisors and employees to discuss performance using words rather than numbers.

However, data calculations require numbers and so the descriptors' numerical equivalents are used to calculate an overall performance 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.

To meet both these needs (discussion and comparison), the calculated overall performance rating is shown as both a number and its equivalent descriptor rating.

Overall 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 below.

Overall Rating Range	Equates to...
1.0 to 1.4	Unsatisfactory
1.5 to 1.9	Below Most Expectations
2.0 to 2.4	Needs Improvement
2.5 to 2.9	Meets Most Expectations
3.0 to 3.4	Fully Successful
3.5 to 3.9	Exceeds Some Expectations
4.0 to 4.4	High Contributor
4.5 to 4.9	Exceeds Most Expectations
5.0	Exceptional

Example: Appraisal Summary Section for Nancy Nash, Academic Coordinator

Overall Performance Rating Calculation

Fully Successful
Calculated Rating: 3.22 / 5.0

Section Weight: 95.0%			
2009 Key Accountabilities	Descriptor Rating	Weights	Numerical Rating
Coordinate the graduate admissions process.	Fully Successful	30.0%	3.0
Assist and advise undergraduate/graduate students.	Exceeds Some Expectations	30.0%	3.5
Provides administrative support for the department.	Meets Most Expectations	25.0%	2.5
Coordinates meetings and events.	High Contributor	15.0%	4.0
Section Weight: 5.0%			
2009 Special Projects/Assignments	Descriptor Rating	Weights	Numerical Rating
Serve on the departmental faculty search committee	High Contributor	100.0%	4.0
Plan the departmental holiday party	Not Rated	0%	0.0

1. First, a weighted average is calculated for each section by multiplying the item weight by the numerical rating:

Key Accountabilities:

$$(0.30 \times 3.0) + (0.30 \times 3.5) + (0.25 \times 2.5) + (0.15 \times 4.0) = 3.175 \quad \text{Section Average}$$

Special Projects:

$$(1.0 \times 4.0) = 4.0 \quad \text{Section Average}$$

2. Then an overall weighted average is calculated by multiplying each section average by the section weight:

$$(3.175 \times 0.95) + (4.0 \times 0.05) = \mathbf{3.21625} \quad \text{Overall Performance Rating}$$

3. The overall numerical rating of 3.22 falls within the range of 3.0 to 3.4 so the overall descriptor rating is "Fully Successful."