

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

### The PAR Process

#### 1. Who participates in the PAR program?

The Performance Assessment Review (PAR) program applies to all employees in the state service, as well as those employees in unclassified titles. While not mandated, departments and agencies are encouraged to include all unclassified titles in the PAR Program.

#### 2. When should an employee receive PAR Job Expectations?

A new PAR should be developed within 4 weeks after the start of the new rating period, a new appointment, a change in supervisor, or a promotion. An employee and their supervisor should meet face-to-face to review and discuss the elements of the employee's PAR (i.e. the Job Expectations, Performance Factors and Evaluation Criteria).

#### 3. Can employees be assigned job duties not recorded in their PAR?

Job Expectations are intended to include only the major job responsibilities of an employee. Every miscellaneous task or duty may not be included. However, if a job duty becomes a significant part of an employee's workload, it should be documented in their Job Expectations. If the Job Expectations have already been completed and signed, additions can be made through a Significant Event.

#### 4. What will happen if an employee disagrees with their Job Expectations?

The ePAR system allows employees the option to disagree with their Job Expectations and provide supporting comments. However, employees should first discuss their concerns with their supervisor to see if a resolution can be reached. The Reviewer may be consulted if attempts at a resolution with the supervisor and employee are not reached. If a resolution cannot be reached between the three parties, Human Resources may be contacted. Please note, an employee is still responsible to complete the work assigned as written while the dispute is being reviewed and settled by Human Resources Office.

#### 5. How does PAR relate to the Working Test Period?

The Job Expectations portion should be completed at the beginning of the Working Test Period since it signifies the employee has a new title. The PAR can be helpful with the completion of the Working Test Period Evaluation for documentation. The Interim and Final PAR Ratings are completed twice a year according to the organization's rating scale, regardless of the start date of an employee's Working Test Period.

**6. What are Rating Cycles and how often is an employee rated?**

PAR rating cycles cover a 12-month period that is established by each organization. Employees are rated twice a year; six months after the rating cycle begins (Interim rating), and then again at year end (Final rating).

**7. Can an organization have more than one PAR model?**

Yes. Each agency establishes the number of PAR models to be used within their organization based on need and employee work assignments.

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

The Reviewer is the Rater's supervisor or manager. It is the Reviewer's responsibility to discuss the unit goals with the Rater, and ensure to that the process is handled equitably for Ratees. If there are concerns between the Rater and Ratee, the Reviewer should attempt to resolve them, and if unsuccessful should consult with Human Resources.

**9. What happens when an employee is on a Leave of Absence?**

Rating periods are standardized and determined by each organization. The rating cycle does not change if an employee goes on a Leave of Absence. Supervisors should only rate an employee for the time he/she actually worked during the rating period. Supervisors should wait for the employee to return from leave to sign the necessary stages of the PAR process.

**10. What is a "significant event?"**

A significant event is any noteworthy event (positive or negative), or any amendments/changes that need to be made to a signed ePAR.

**11. What happens when an employee either changes supervisors or transfers to a new unit, but keeps the same title and duties?**

A "closeout" PAR Evaluation should be completed 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 a final rating.

**12. What happens when an employee gets promoted, and/or has a title change?**

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

### **13. What will happen if an employee disagrees with the Interim and Final Review?**

The ePAR system does allow employees the option to disagree with their Interim and Final Review and provide supporting comments. However, employees should first discuss their concerns with their supervisor to see if a resolution can be reached. The Reviewer should be consulted if attempts at a resolution is not reached between the supervisor and employee. If a resolution cannot be reached between the three parties, Human Resources Office should be contacted. However, the Review stands until the dispute is settled by Human Resources with a different disposition.

### **14. How does the final PAR rating factor into promotional exams?**

When using a three level PAR rating system, credit is awarded as follows:

- Three points for Exceptional Performance
- One point for Successful Performance

When using a five level PAR rating system, credit is awarded as follows:

- Three points for a rating of Five – Exceptional Performance
- Two points for a rating of Four – Commendable Performance
- One point for a rating of Three – Successful Performance

### **15. 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. In this case, PAR Ratings are not used for any applicants in that unit scope.

### **16. What happens if an employee does NOT receive a Final Rating?**

Employees should first speak with their supervisor, then the Reviewer, and request that a Final Rating be completed. If unsuccessful, the next step would be to contact your organization's Human Resource Office to inform them of the situation. If a Final Evaluation Rating is not completed, there will not be an official rating entered in either the ePAR system or PMIS. However, for promotional purposes, a blank score will be treated as if an employee received a rating of "Commendable" for that rating period and awarded 1 promotional point.

### **17. 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.

**18. 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 Supervisors provide employees with performance feedback on an ongoing basis throughout the rating period. The Rater should confront any poor performance as soon as it becomes evident. The important thing to remember is that no one likes to feel surprised during the PAR evaluations.

**19. 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. Ratees should contact their organization's Human Resources Office for further direction in these matters.

**20. What happens if an employee receives an Unsatisfactory Rating?**

It is a Supervisor's responsibility when rating an employee Unsatisfactory to communicate a clear Final Development Plan to the employee which includes the necessary steps to improve performance to the "Commendable" level. A performance conference shall be conducted every three months to evaluate progress (or a shorter period of time as determined by the supervisor).

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

Employees may use the non-contractual grievance procedures (see NJAC 4A: 6-5.3 (b)).