

Performance Planning - Summary Levels
Ref: OPM Performance-Management-FAQS

1. [Are the performance rating, the rating of record, and the summary level the same thing?](#)

No, but they are similar.

- a) A performance rating is the appraisal of the employee's performance compared to the elements and standards established in the performance plan.
- b) The rating of record is a specific performance rating done at the end of the appraisal period that includes the appraisal of the elements and standards and also must include the assignment of a summary level (Levels 1-5).
- c) A summary level is an ordered category of performance from Level 1 through Level 5, with Level 1 as the lowest and Level 5 as the highest. Performance ratings assigned at times other than the end of the appraisal period (such as at the mid-year review, for promotion panels, or similar situations) do not require a summary level to be assigned, although one is permitted.

2. [Can a program include more than one pattern of summary levels for ratings of record?](#)

No. Each program must use a single pattern of summary levels. To use different summary patterns, agencies must define separate programs and employee coverage to which a single pattern applies. However, more than one program can use the same summary pattern.

3. [When designing a method to assign the summary level, do critical elements have to weigh more than non-critical elements?](#)

No. The Governmentwide regulations permit non-critical elements to have a greater weight in determining the final summary level. However, if performance on any critical element is appraised as Unacceptable, a Level 1 summary must be assigned and performance on a non-critical element can not be used to raise that summary above Level 1, no matter the weight it might receive in other circumstances.

NOTE: Non-critical elements will not be used in the MyPerformance appraisal program.

4. [Can employees on approved annual or sick leave be held to a work performance standard in their performance appraisal?](#)

An agency may not hold an employee accountable for work that does not get done because of an absence for which the employee is on any type of approved leave. If there is a specific performance standard for the appraisal year, it may be prorated for the amount of time the employee was at work.

5. [Do Governmentwide regulations require higher-level review for ratings of record above Level 1?](#)

No. Higher-level review of ratings of record above Level 1 is not a Governmentwide requirement. However, agencies may decide that higher-level review is a good practice and provides a measure of fairness.

6. [When must a summary level be assigned?](#)

When the rating of record is completed at the end of the appraisal period, a summary level must be assigned. A summary level can be determined at any time agencies deem appropriate and specify in their appraisal programs (e.g., performance rating, progress review). However, the ways in which summary levels are applied (e.g., granting within-grade increases and additional service credit in a reduction in force) are always in the context of the rating of record.

7. [Must the rating of record be derived and the summary level assigned only on the basis of appraisal of elements and standards in the employee's performance plan?](#)

Yes. Statute requires that employees be evaluated against their performance standards.

8. [Why does OPM require higher-level management review of a Level 1 \(Unacceptable\) rating of record?](#)

An Unacceptable rating of record bars granting step increases, may result in a performance-based adverse action, and removes retention rights in a reduction in force. For these reasons, there must be an extra measure of assurance that a Level 1 rating of record has been properly assigned. The requirement for higher-level review of a rating of record that could have significant consequences for the employee is a prudent measure of protection for employees.

9. [Can veterans on leave seeking treatment for a service-related disability be held to a work performance standard in their performance appraisal?](#)

Performance management regulations specifically address veterans seeking medical treatment. Agencies may not lower the rating of record or performance rating of a disabled veteran seeking medical treatment.