



## Foreign Service Performance Management Documents and Forms Explained For Employee Performance and Development

**Quarterly Conversations Record (QCR) AID Form 461-4** is used by the supervisor and employee to record objectives and notes from quarterly conversations and document the dates those conversations took place. The first quarterly conversation is focused on clarifying expectations, work, and skill development objectives. Suggested topics for the second and third quarterly conversations include priorities, goals, expectations, challenges, and progress with a focus on what may have changed. The fourth quarterly conversation is intended to be a wrap-up and review of performance and skill development, to include discussion of the Skills Assessment, the employee's Annual Accomplishment Record, and goals and insights to carry forward into the next performance appraisal cycle. The only system requirement is to enter and confirm the quarterly conversation dates so that EXOs can confirm that the required conversations are taking place. Employees must initiate this by checking the box confirming the conversation happened and entering the date; after which the supervisor opens the QCR and also checks the box confirming the date of the conversation. If an employee gets a new supervisor any time during the performance appraisal cycle, the new supervisor will have access to the existing QCR and will be responsible for continuing the quarterly conversations with that employee until the end of the cycle. A new QCR will be created for each employee and his or her current supervisor at the start of each new performance cycle. EXOs have access to the administrative dashboard showing who did and did not complete required conversations and they can generate reports for senior leaders. *The information on completion rates stays within the chain of command and QCR notes stay between the supervisor and employee. The QCR is not seen by Promotion Boards and is not stored in official personnel files.*

**Annual Performance Evaluation (APE) AID Form 461-1** is the official rating of record for the performance cycle. There are only two rating categories: "Satisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory." An unsatisfactory rating can only be given if the employee was given notice of poor performance, given an opportunity to improve under a formal, 90-day Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), and then failed to bring his or her performance up to a satisfactory level by the end of the 90-day period. When this is the case, the supervisor will rate the employee's performance "Unsatisfactory" and complete a short narrative referencing the PIP and describing the reason for the unsatisfactory rating. Individuals who receive an unsatisfactory rating at the end of the performance appraisal cycle, or who fail a 90-day PIP at any point during the performance appraisal cycle, are subject to mandatory retirement under Section 608 of the Foreign Service Act if a Performance Standards Board finds no extenuating circumstances that would warrant retention (see new ADS 464 for policies and procedures). *The APE is stored in official personnel files as the employee's official rating of record.*

[Annual Accomplishment Record \(AAR\) AID Form 461-5](#) is used to summarize the employee's achievements and contributions to the work unit. The employee writes the AAR and the supervisor reviews it. The supervisor's signature indicates that the entries accurately reflect the employee's contributions and accomplishments during the time period covered by the AAR. It is the employee's responsibility to complete an AAR at the end of every performance appraisal cycle, as long as the employee has been in the assignment at least 60 days. Employees must also complete a partial-year AAR any time an employee's supervisor leaves or the employee leaves an assignment (as long as the employee has been in that assignment at least 60 days). AARs for time periods less than 60 days are optional.

The purpose of the partial-year AAR is to ensure that the employee has a record of contributions and accomplishments that is verified by a supervisor for all significant time periods (60 days or more) over the course of the performance appraisal cycle. Therefore, employees who change assignments or who have more than one supervisor during an appraisal cycle will typically have two or more partial-year AARs instead of one 12-month AAR. Like the Annual Improvement Form (AIF) under the old system, partial-year AARs completed under one supervisor will be made available to the supervisor responsible for the employee's overall performance evaluation at the end of the performance appraisal period. However, the partial-year AARs are not rolled up into a final year-end AAR – they are stand-alone documents. These records not only inform the end-of-cycle evaluation and annual review conversation, they are also included in the employee's promotion package. *AARs from the current year and up to four prior years (as they become available) will be reviewed by Promotion Boards.*

## Employee Performance and Development Feedback Processes

[360 Feedback](#) is used by the supervisor to better understand how the employee is perceived by others and to gather examples that can be shared with the employee to enhance his or her self-awareness and professional development. Supervisors should solicit qualitative 360 Feedback, including specific examples of effective and/or ineffective behavior, throughout the year, ideally whenever the employee completes a significant project or deliverable, or has had an opportunity to demonstrate an important skill. At a minimum, however, supervisors should solicit 360 Feedback at the end of the year to inform the Skills Assessment and the end-of-cycle evaluation. In the years when an employee is eligible for promotion, input from the 360 Feedback process may also inform the supervisor's ratings on the Multisource Ratings, and the narrative on the employee's Promotion Input Form (PIF). We discourage supervisors from using 360 Feedback quotes on the PIF, however. There is a 360 Feedback function in ePerformance that allows replies to email requests for feedback to be saved in one place for convenient access. 360 Feedback collected by supervisors does *not* go directly into documents reviewed by Promotion Boards and *does not* get stored in official personnel files.

[FS Skills Assessment, AID Form 461-3](#) is used by the supervisor to assess the employee's performance in the four core skill areas and to suggest appropriate actions with respect to each subskill (e.g., Improve/Grow, Stay on Track, or Coach/Mentor Others) in the [FS/SFS Skills Framework](#). This document may be used at any time during the year to structure skill development discussions, but is a requirement at the end of the rating period. We recommend supervisors and employees to refer to the most recent Skills Assessment when they are establishing the mandatory skill development objective in the first quarter of the performance cycle. *It does not get stored in official personnel files.*

## New Foreign Service Promotion Process: Documents Reviewed by Promotion Boards

[Promotion Input Form \(PIF\) AID 463-4](#) is used to describe how the employee has demonstrated the four core skills in the [FS/SFS Skills Framework](#), plus his or her understanding of and ability to advance the Agency's mission. Examples provided in the PIF may be drawn from any experience or assignment since the employee's last promotion. The employee writes the narratives for each core skill and understanding or ability to advance the Agency's mission. The supervisor reviews the employee's write-up and checks a box to indicate whether the employee's write-up is or is not consistent with the supervisor's own observations. The supervisor also writes a narrative to provide supplementary information the Promotion Board might find useful in assessing the candidate against the six promotion decision criteria outlined in ADS 463. When employees are not promoted the first year they are eligible, they can update the PIF when they compete for promotion the next year. *Only the new, most current PIF is provided to the Promotion Board.*

[Annual Accomplishment Record \(AAR\) AID Form 461-5](#) is used to provide an overall summary of the employee's achievements and contributions to the work unit. The employee writes the AAR and the supervisor reviews it. The supervisor's signature indicates that the entries accurately reflect the employee's contributions and accomplishments during the time period covered by the AAR. Employees are responsible for completing an AAR at the end of every performance appraisal cycle, as long as the employee has been in the assignment at least 60 days. Employees must also complete a partial-year AAR any time the employee's supervisor leaves or the employee leaves an assignment (as long as the employee has been in that assignment at least 60 days). AARs for time periods less than 60 days are optional.

The purpose of the partial-year AAR is to ensure that the employee has a record of contributions and accomplishments that is verified by a supervisor for all significant time periods (60 days or more) over the course of the performance appraisal cycle. Therefore, employees who change assignments or who have more than one supervisor during an appraisal cycle will typically have two or more partial-year AARs instead of one 12-month AAR. Like AIFs under the old system, partial-year AARs completed under one supervisor will be made available to the supervisor responsible for the employee's overall performance evaluation at the end of the performance appraisal period. These records not only inform the end-of-cycle evaluation and annual review

conversation, they are also included in the employee's promotion package. *AARs from the current year and up to four prior years (as they become available) will be reviewed by Promotion Boards.*

**Operating Unit Context Statement (OU Context Statement)** is written by the Operating Unit director (or person to whom the task is delegated) to describe the context, challenges, and organizational structure of the Operating Unit. The Context Statement includes such key information as the program budget and staff size, strategic priorities, and any country/organizational factors that had major bearing on staff performance during the appraisal period. *These statements provide context for the AARs and will be provided to Promotion Boards for assignments during the last five years.*

**Annual Performance Evaluation (APE) AID Form 461-1** is the official rating of record for the performance cycle. There are only two rating categories: "Satisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory." An unsatisfactory rating can only be given if the employee was given notice of poor performance, given an opportunity to improve under a formal, 90-day Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), and then failed to bring his or her performance up to a satisfactory level by the end of the 90-day period. When this is the case, the supervisor will rate the employee's performance "Unsatisfactory" and complete a short narrative referencing the PIP and describing the reason for the unsatisfactory rating. Individuals who receive an unsatisfactory rating at the end of the performance appraisal cycle, or who fail a 90-day PIP at any point during the performance appraisal cycle, are subject to mandatory retirement under Section 608 of the Foreign Service Act if a Performance Standards Board finds no extenuating circumstances that would warrant retention (see new ADS 464 for policies and procedures). *The Annual Performance Evaluation is stored in official personnel files as the employee's official rating of record.*

**Individual Multisource Ratings (MSR) Report** summarizes the numeric ratings provided by supervisors, peers, and when applicable, subordinates on the 15 to 21 items in the MSR surveys. The items are examples of core skill-related behaviors and raters use a five-point scale to indicate the extent to which the employee demonstrates those behaviors. Ratings provided by peers and subordinates are strictly confidential and only the averages for each group are reported. Summary core skill scores are calculated by averaging the ratings on the items that reflect that skill. The Individual MSR Report is provided to Promotion Boards to help them assess candidates' core skills, and it is provided to employees and their supervisors to inform professional development conversations. *Only promotion eligible employees receive MSRs and all MSR Reports obtained over the last five years will be provided to the Promotion Boards.*

**MSR Class Summary** includes the average MSR ratings provided by the three rater groups for the promotion candidates reviewed by each Board (i.e., each competitive pool). We will share MSR Class Summaries with the workforce after Boards have completed their deliberations and we will provide both a context for interpreting the data on the Individual MSR Reports, and an indication of the core skill strengths and weaknesses of each group. *Promotion Boards will have access to MSR Class Summaries for the last five years.*

**Prior-Year AEFs:** Each file reviewed by Promotion Boards will continue to include five years' worth of performance information. Therefore, until the new promotion process has been in place for five years, i.e. 2023, prior-year AEFs will continue to be included in the Promotion Package.

**Employee Data:** Records drawn from the EIMS and other agency systems show assignment history, training, awards, and language scores.