Companion Guide to the Asylum Officer Performance Plan and Appraisal

Revised

Asylum Division
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General Principles

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Companion Guide is to supplement the field Asylum Officer (AO) and Senior Asylum Officer (Sr. AO) Performance Plan and Appraisal (PPA).[1] It sets forth performance expectations based on the Asylum Division's established lesson plans, policies, procedures, and guidance. Supervisory Asylum Officers (SAOs) should use these guidelines to evaluate the quality and accuracy of work performed by AOs under the Performance Goals and the Core Competencies.

II. PPA Framework

The AO PPA is comprised of Performance Goals and Core Competencies. The Performance Goals account for 60% of the AO's overall rating and the Core Competencies comprise 40% of the total rating. AOs will have three Performance Goals: Quality, National Security and Fraud Detection, and Timeliness. The Core Competencies include Communication, Customer Service, Representing the Agency, Teamwork and Cooperation, and Technical Proficiency. The weights assigned to each of these rating categories are outlined in the table below.

Field Asylum Officer PPA Framework

Performance Goals (60%)	Weight	Core Competencies (40%)	Weight
Quality	35%	Communication	20%
National Security & Fraud Detection	35%	Customer Service	20%
Timeliness	30%	Representing the Agency	20%
		Teamwork & Cooperation	20%
		Technical Proficiency	20%

III. Sources of Authority

All performance standards are based on existing Asylum Division guidance, as articulated in the Lesson Plans, Procedures Manuals (Affirmative Asylum [AAPM], Identity and Security Check [ISCPM], Credible Fear, Reasonable Fear, and ABC/NACARA), and other applicable guidance documents. If there is any discrepancy between the PPA guidance and the above-referenced guidance, the legal and procedural guidance is controlling. Such discrepancies should be identified and communicated to the Asylum Division Management Branch Chief through the chain of command.

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[1] Moving forward, this Companion Guide will collectively refer to Asylum Officers and Senior Asylum Officers as "Asylum Officer" or "AO."

IV. Supervisory Review Expectations

SAOs are required to conduct 100% review of all asylum prescreening cases (including Credible Fear, Reasonable Fear, and Migrant Protection Protocol Screenings), and NACARA (I-881) adjudications. For affirmative asylum cases, the following categories of review will occur:

(1) SAOs will fully review all cases from asylum officers within their first six months of competently conducting affirmative asylum interviews and writing legally sufficient assessments, or within their first 150 competently interviewed and legally sufficient adjudicated cases, whichever comes first. If an AO has not adjudicated an affirmative asylum case in the previous six months or longer, an SAO will fully review the first 15 cases that the AO completes upon returning to affirmative adjudications.

(2) SAOs will fully review all cases involving fraud and/or national security concerns, egregious public safety concerns, terrorist-related inadmissibility grounds ("TRIG"), the taking of a sworn statement, a Notice of Intent to Deny ("NOID"), or other complex issues or populations requiring full supervisory review.

(3) Each month that an AO adjudicates affirmative asylum cases, SAOs will conduct full supervisory review of a random sampling of approximately 25% of the cases submitted by AOs adjudicating affirmative as long as they do not fall within the criteria outlined by category #1 above. This sampling is to assess the accuracy of the officer's case submissions. This generally equates to about four cases per pay period. To ensure transparency and objectivity in the selection of cases for full supervisory review, local offices will use a standard, randomized selection process similar to that outlined on page 9 of this Companion Guide for the monthly scored case reviews. Offices will include cases identified in category #2 above as subject to mandatory supervisory review toward the 25% of cases reviewed. Note that AOs may have more than 25% of their work reviewed if additional cases fall into one of the case types listed in category #2.

For affirmative asylum cases not undergoing full supervisory review, SAOs will still review the NTA where applicable to determine that the allegations/charges and the location of the Immigration Courts are correct. SAOs will also ensure the Asylum and NACARA § 203 Background Identity and Security Checklist ("BISC") is present and completed in accordance with the decision being issued for all asylum grants. For these cases, the SAO will sign and date the NTA if required, and sign and date the BISC for all asylum grants.

Procedures for full supervisory review remain unchanged. For these cases, SAOs will continue to review the I-589 form, the assessment, the interview notes, the decision documents and interview forms, and will ensure that the GLOBAL system is properly updated.[2]

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[2] *See* Part II, Section O of the Affirmative Asylum Procedures Manual (AAPM) for more information on supervisory review.

V. Recordkeeping and Forms

Shared recordkeeping and communication are critically important under the PPA. AOs will be required to report, and SAOs to validate, individual case submissions. When AOs and SAOs cooperate in this manner, performance data is current and more transparent. The tracking of performance will occur on a pay period basis, with overall scores based on aggregate data at the mid-cycle review and final appraisal. The process outlined may be revised in the future, particularly if new reporting capabilities become available with the creation of a new case management system. Such changes will be bargained as appropriate.

A. AO Biweekly Report

Each AO is responsible for completing and submitting an *AO Biweekly Report*, which automatically calculates timeliness for the pay period. The AO Biweekly Report for the preceding pay period should be submitted no later than the first Friday of the following pay period absent exigent circumstances (leave, etc.). This includes both the Biweekly Overview tab and the Timeliness Log tab. The AO Biweekly Report is reviewed by the SAO, and may be verified through a review of systems, system-generated reports, and consultations with the AO. Absent exigent circumstances, the SAO is expected to review the submitted report and to address any concerns regarding the data provided no later than the second Friday of the pay period absent exigent circumstances (leave, etc.). If an error is detected, the AO Biweekly Report must be updated. The failure to submit this report or to exercise due diligence in submitting an accurate report may be an issue appropriate for a performance or conduct action depending on the circumstances.

B. AO PPA Workbook

An SAO must maintain and update an *AO PPA Workbook*, or similar method of record keeping, for each AO he or she supervises on a routine basis. The AO PPA Workbook, explained below, is an Excel spreadsheet that aggregates the data from the AO Biweekly Reports, automatically uses the data to calculate overall ratings, and serves as a log of random case reviews, scored case reviews, and other relevant PPA actions. The first tab, Data Entry, should be updated using the data provided by the AO in the AO Biweekly Report after that report is reviewed and confirmed by the SAO. Under the new SAO case review procedures, the Workbook's Data Entry tab will allow the SAO to enter:

- the total number of interviews and cases completed by the AO (blue columns in the spreadsheet under Case Data Entry)
- the total number of cases submitted for full SAO review counted for accuracy and any returns (green columns under Accuracy Data Entry)
- the total number of cases submitted for timeliness, which would continue to be for all cases submitted (orange columns under Timeliness Data Entry)

As noted above, any discrepancies between the AO Biweekly Reports and the Workbook should be addressed promptly by the SAO. Regularly updating the AO Workbook spreadsheet will help the SAO calculate and monitor performance throughout the year. This data includes:

- Number of cases submitted for the pay period
- Number of returns for accuracy
- Number of timely cases submitted

- Scored Case Reviews using the Interview, Written Decision, and Administrative Tasks Evaluation Forms
- Other relevant rating activities/performance information

The SAO should also update the Scored Case Reviews tab and the Performance-Training-Core Competencies tab throughout the year as appropriate. The Scored Case Reviews tab of the AO PPA Workbook is used to record the AO's scores on random evaluations of the case interview, written decision, and associated administrative tasks. The SAO is encouraged, but not required to update the Performance-Training-Core Competencies tab of the AO PPA Workbook. This tab is provided to assist SAOs to organize performance related information, which may not be otherwise catalogued in the other forms and documents. For example, an SAO could reference events documented elsewhere via e-mail or memo under any of the relevant categories.

If an office opts to use a different document or method to track AO performance, it should be uniform across that office and it must contain all the essential data points covered in the AO PPA Workbook. Additional data elements may be added to the AO PPA Workbook as needed. The SAO and AO are encouraged to meet periodically to review the contents of the AO PPA Workbook upon either party's request.

C. Evaluation Forms

Performance standards are described in the evaluation forms and their accompanying guides. An SAO must use an evaluation form to notify an AO of his or her performance on a given case. There are four types of evaluation forms: *Interview Evaluation Form* (IEF), *Written Decision Evaluation Form* (WEF), *Administrative Tasks Evaluation Form* (AEF), and the National Security Fraud Detection Evaluation Form (NFEF). The SAO must use the *Interview Evaluation Form* (IEF), *Written Decision Evaluation Form* (WEF), and *Administrative Tasks Evaluation Form* (AEF) for scored case reviews. When informing an AO of an inaccurate non-scored case review, the SAO must use the IEF, WEF, AEF, NEFE to identify the deficiencies or errors in the work product. A score is unnecessary for inaccuracy notifications. Regardless of whether the case is a scored review or not, SAOs can also note positive feedback on a case using the comment section of the form. SAOs should retain the original evaluation forms, giving a copy to the AO.

D. Required PPA Documentation

An SAO should maintain the following performance-related documentation relied upon for each AO:

1) *AO Biweekly Reports* (submitted by the AO and verified by the SAO) for each pay period in the rating year.
2) *AO PPA Workbook,* an Excel spreadsheet that covers the rating year.
3) System-generated officer activity reports for each pay period in the rating year.
4) *Interview Evaluation Forms* for each observed, scored, and returned case.
5) *Written Decision Evaluation Forms* and accompanying written decisions for each scored and returned case.
6) *Administrative Task Evaluation Forms* for each scored and returned case.
7) *National Security and Fraud Detection Evaluation Form*

8) Any other documentation related to the AO's performance for the rating year, including the core competencies. It is encouraged, but not required, an SAO organize this information in the Performance-Training-Core Competencies section of the AO PPA Workbook.

If the AO is reassigned to a different SAO during the rating period, all performance documentation is passed on to the new SAO. Detailed guidance on the above-referenced reports and evaluation forms are provided in an attachment to this document.

Performance Goals

Performance goals will account for 60% of an AO's total rating. AOs will be evaluated on three performance goals including Quality (35%), Fraud Detection and National Security (35%), and Timeliness (30%). The following section will outline the standards for each performance goal and provide guidance on how those standards will be applied.

Quality Goal (35%)

Overview

AOs will be evaluated on their ability to accurately apply rules, regulations, precedent decisions, policies, and procedures to the timely completion of work assignments. Quality decisions ensure that the right benefit is given to the right person at the right time. AOs are expected to produce a high quality work product that is mission-centered and customer-focused. To this end, interviews, written decisions, and administrative tasks will be evaluated against the performance standards outlined on the IEF, the WEF, and the AEF.

For routine work products, an AO's performance will generally be evaluated in the following ways:

1. Cases that are randomly selected for scoring and are fully reviewed by a supervisor will receive a numerical quality rating using the IEF, WEF, and AEF. The ratings by evaluation types will then be averaged to arrive at a final average for all Scored Case Reviews; and
2. The number of cases that were accurate at the time of submission and that were fully reviewed by a supervisor will be averaged for an overall accuracy rating score.

The AO's final rating for the Quality Goal will continue to be based on the average of the individual's average of the scored case reviews and his or her average accuracy rating. However, for AOs who have competently conducted affirmative asylum interviews and written legally sufficient assessments for six months or more, or who have competently conducted interviews and written legally sufficient assessments for 150 cases, whichever comes first, the accuracy rate will be determined by the 25% random review in addition to the other categories of cases required by the updated SAO case review procedures, instead of 100% of all cases submitted. That combined score will then be applied to the rating scale below to determine the AO's rating in the Quality Goal in most circumstances. Note that under the updated SAO case review procedures, less cases will be evaluated for every officer, however, the same sample size will be used for all officers.

Additionally, while most of the goal language in the Quality Goal is directly tied to case adjudications, there is one factor that is not. That factor relates to "Promoting a Community of Practice," (CoP) which is described as "contributing to process improvements and supporting fellow officers" with distinction. High-performing AOs are encouraged to contribute to process improvements and support to fellow officers by collaborating with peers to improve the quality and efficiency of adjudications. This may be facilitated through the asylum office's teams, peer-to-peer networks, or communities of practice. Some examples include: collaborating with an Asylum Training Officer to develop training on complex country conditions information or highly technical immigration issues, laws, regulations or policies or drafting a local standard operating procedure to enhance the quality, consistency or efficiency of a work process in the office. If an AO receives a numerical score at the top 3 percent or higher of the Exceeded Expectations (outlined in the chart below), that individual's rating may be increased to Achieved Excellence if they have promoted a "Community of Practice" with distinction. The basis for this determination must be documented in the SAO's records, as well as in the narrative of the final rating.

Quality Rating Scale: GS-9/11/12/13 Field Asylum Officers

GS-9	
≥70% or <80%	Achieved Expectations
≥80% - <88%	Exceeded Expectations
≥88% - <90% w/o CoP	Exceeded Expectations
≥88% - <90% w/ CoP	Achieved Excellence
≥90% w/ or w/o CoP	Achieved Excellence

GS-11	
≥70% or <80%	Achieved Expectations
≥80% - <88%	Exceeded Expectations
≥88% - <90% w/o CoP	Exceeded Expectations
≥88% - <90% w/ CoP	Achieved Excellence
≥90% w/ or w/o CoP	Achieved Excellence

GS-12	
≥75% or <82%	Achieved Expectations
≥82% - <90%	Exceeded Expectations
≥90% - <92% w/o CoP	Exceeded Expectations
≥90% - <92% w/ CoP	Achieved Excellence
≥92% w/ or w/o CoP	Achieved Excellence

GS-13	
≥80% or <88%	Achieved Expectations
≥88% - <92%	Exceeded Expectations
≥92% - <95% w/o CoP	Exceeded Expectations
≥92% - <95% w/ CoP	Achieved Excellence
≥95% w/ or w/o CoP	Achieved Excellence

Example of Overall Quality Goal Performance Calculation

Scored Case Reviews:			Accuracy:			
Case Scores	Average Score		# of Reviewed Cases[3]	# of Inaccurate Cases	% Inaccurate	% Accurate
Case 1: 95%			PP 1: 16	2	12.5%	87.5%
Case 2: 85%	**Average: 89%**		PP 2: 15	1	6%	94%
Case 3: 89%			PP 3: 18	3	16%	84%
Case 4: 87%			PP 4: 17	2	11.8%	87.2%
			Total: 66	8	12%	**88%**

The AO's final rating for the Quality Goal is the average of scored case reviews and the average accuracy rate (the latter of which is based on either 100% of submitted and fully reviewed cases or 25% of cases if the AO meets the new criteria). In this case, it is the average of 89% and 88%, which is 88.5%. This number is then applied to the above chart to determine the AO's performance level.

Hypo 1: The AO is a GS-9 or GS-11 and he or she has not promoted a Community of Practice with distinction. Based on the chart, the AO will be rated Exceeded Expectations in the Quality Goal.

Hypo 2: The AO is a GS-9 or GS-11 and he or she has promoted a Community of Practice with distinction. In that circumstance, the AO may be rated as Achieved Excellence in the Quality Goal.

Work Products Evaluated

For first-time assignments, an AO will not be rated until they have been assigned to and gained experience of 30 days or more on that particular assignment. For example, the first time an AO is placed on the affirmative asylum caseload, their work product will not be counted toward their rating until they have at least 30 days experience working on the affirmative asylum caseload. The SAO will provide performance feedback during the initial 30-day period that will not be incorporated into the performance evaluation. Formal evaluations will begin after the 30-day grace period. Additionally, the grace period will count toward the new requirement that officers' cases be subject to full supervisory review within their first six months of conducting affirmative asylum interviews or within their first 150 adjudicated cases, whichever comes first.

Interviews

Asylum Officers should conduct interviews in accordance with statute, regulation, policy, training materials, procedures manuals, and any other designated authority regarding all matters under the jurisdiction of the Asylum Division. Quality interviews lay the foundation for quality adjudications. An

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[3] Note that for the Accuracy Rate, the "number of reviewed cases" represents cases that were fully reviewed by an SAO. This number may vary depending on the AO's experience. For example, an AO who has met the new criteria and has adjudicated for 6 months or longer or 150 cases or more, would have less reviewed cases and therefore less cases counted toward the accuracy rate. An AO who has not met the new criteria will submit all cases for full SAO review and all cases will factor in the accuracy rate as depicted in the table.

AO is rated for adherence to the quality standards for the following interview types: Asylum, NACARA, Credible Fear (CF), Reasonable Fear (RF), and Terminations.

Written Decisions/Determinations

AOs should prepare a written decision for each case reflecting an analysis and outcome that is consistent with statute, regulation, policy, training materials, procedures manuals, and any other designated authority regarding all matters under the jurisdiction of the Asylum Division. To that end, taking into account current guidance on what analysis is required in the relevant decision document, written decisions should document the application of the law and any relevant policy to the facts for each of the eligibility requirements, enabling reviewers to gauge adherence to legal requirements, program policy, and, when applicable, providing customers with effective notice and opportunity to respond to potential agency actions. An AO will be rated for adherence to the quality standards for the following written decision types: decision assessments (including CF and RF determination checklists), Notices of Intent to Deny (NOID), NACARA decision worksheets, Notices of Intent to Terminate (NOIT), and Recommendation Memoranda produced under AAPM III(V)(7) for Termination cases only.

Administrative Tasks

An AO completes administrative tasks for each case in accordance with statute, regulation, policy, training materials, procedures manuals, and any other designated authority regarding all matters under the jurisdiction of the Asylum Division. The accuracy of the administrative tasks may impact the integrity and legality of the agency's decision and any associated benefits or actions. Moreover, correct data and documentation ensures that customers receive their decisions promptly. AOs will be rated for adherence to the quality standards for the following administrative tasks and prepared documentation: Asylum, NACARA, CF, RF, and Termination of Asylum.

Rating Method

An AO's rating in the Quality Goal is calculated by averaging the overall scored case reviews and the overall accuracy rating score. For AOs who have adjudicated affirmative asylum cases for six months or longer, or 150 affirmative cases or more, whichever comes first, the Quality Goal will be calculated by averaging the overall scored case reviews and the overall accuracy rating score, which is based on approximately 25% of the officer's submissions for the month for most officers. In the event that the person's rating is in the upper 3 percent of the Exceeded Expectations range, an additional non-scored factor featured in the Achieved Excellence standard language, "Promoting a Community of Practice," may be cited to increase the AO's rating from the Exceeded Expectations to the Achieved Excellence level provided certain conditions are met.

Random Case Reviews

As previously noted, the updated case review procedures now require that SAOs conduct full review of approximately 25% of cases submitted by AOs who fulfill specific criteria (i.e., the AO must have adjudicated affirmative asylum cases for six months or more, or adjudicated 150 or more affirmative asylum cases). These cases will serve to assess the accuracy of the officer's case submissions and will generally equate to approximately four cases per pay period. Local offices should use a standard, randomized selection process similar to that outlined below for these random case reviews.

Scored Case Reviews

Scored case reviews are evaluated through a specified number of evaluations forms using only the criteria specified on the form. An average of all of the cases randomly reviewed and scored will comprise a portion of the overall "Scored Case Review" score.

A randomly selected case is chosen for a scored review by a locally determined method that ensures indiscriminate selection of a case, such that the AO does not know it will be selected and the SAO cannot choose to evaluate and score a case based on a preview of the work product. The method can be made known to asylum officer staff to the extent that it does not disclose which cases will be selected. For example, an asylum office may determine that the last three digits of an A-number will always be used in the selection of random scored case reviews. For the month of April, all A-numbers that have the last three digits beginning with a "3" are reviewed and scored. An AO could not know that this month's number is "3" or that the method is always based on the first of the last three digits because the randomness of selection would be compromised. However, AOs can be made aware that random selection for scored cases is based on the composition of the A-number.

This same randomization method may be used to identify "Random Case Reviews"; that is, cases that are subject to full SAO review, will count toward the accuracy rating, but are not scored using the evaluation forms. For example, an office may use their current monthly randomization method to identify four cases for full SAO review that will count toward the accuracy rating. The office may apply additional objective criteria in the randomization method that also allow an SAO to complete a scored case review of one of the four cases.

In addition, scored case reviews will be pro-rated to the time the individual is actually assigned to that assignment type.

Example – Pro Rating Scored Case Reviews

AO goes on a 90-day refugee detail. This 3-month absence from the interview calendar is represented by 3/12, or 25% of the year. Since the required number of interview observations and ratings is 12 for the year, it will be reduced by 25%, for a total of 9 interviews observed and rated.

Note: Pro-rata amounts are calculated to the 1/10th percentile and then rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. If the result is exactly in the middle (.5), the number of interview observations required is rounded up if the AO is performing below Achieved Excellence, in order to provide the AO more opportunities to increase his or her performance. Therefore, if the pro-rated requirement is for 10.5 ratings and the AO is at the Achieved Excellence level so far, the number of interview observations required for the year is 10. If the AO is below the Achieved Excellence level, the number of interview observations required is 11.

Number of Interview Observations

The general rule is that an AO will be observed and rated on one interview per month, pro-rated to the time on the interview calendar. However, if an AO performs at the Achieved Excellence level in scored case reviews for three consecutive months (i.e. scoring within the Achieved Excellence range in the chart outlined above based on the AO's grade level), interview observations may be reduced to every other month for the rating period, unless:

- The AO performs below the Achieved Excellence level in a subsequent interview; or
- The SAO detects errors in subsequent interviews upon review of the notes or other available AO work products

In either case, the schedule of observation-based ratings would return to the regular one interview per month. For purposes of scored case review reduction, the Achieved Excellence range utilized should be the non-CoP range. For example, a GS-9 AO would have to receive a minimum of 90% on three consecutive interviews to be eligible.

Interview performance standards are grouped into four categories on the IEF with weights totaling 100%:
- Procedural Requirements – 10%
- Issue Recognition and Coverage – 70%
- Note-taking – 10%
- Effective Communication – 10%

Written Decisions

An AO's performance will be rated based on one written decision per month, pro-rated to the time assigned to the duty. There is no reduction in the number of scored case reviews in this category for performance throughout the year.

Written decision performance standards are grouped into three categories on the WEF with weights totaling 100%:
- Basic Requirements and Completeness – 5%
- Legal Analysis – 85%
- Writing Style and General Quality Criteria – 10%

Administrative Tasks

An AO will receive one scored case review per month, pro-rated to the time he or she is assigned to that duty. Criteria apply to principals and dependents, where applicable. There is no reduction in the number of scored case reviews in this category for performance throughout the year.

The Administrative Tasks performance standards are grouped into two categories on the AEF with weights totaling 100%:
- Forms, Decision Documents, and System Updates – 45%
- Security Checks Documentation – 55%

Scoring Standards and Criteria in Evaluation Forms

The performance standards in the IEF, WEF, and AEF are intended to summarize existing laws, regulations, procedures, and policy guidance. If the AO does not agree with the score assigned by the SAO, the AO and SAO must review and discuss the applicable underlying authority together. If the discussion does not produce a consensus, regular dispute resolution procedures apply when the AO and rating official do not agree.

Performance standards are grouped into categories on the evaluation forms (IEF, WEF, AEF), with weights assigned to each category. Within each category area, there are a series of criteria. The criteria are spelled out in more detail on the "Guide" page of the evaluation form.

The rating official indicates whether the AO met each numbered criterion by noting "Y" for Yes or "N" for No. When all criteria are met, they are weighted equally within the category. If the AO does not meet a criterion marked as "Critical", the result will be a zero for the entire category.

If a criterion does not apply to the case, the rating official will indicate "NA" and the other criteria will automatically count proportionately more.

There is no partial credit. Where there are multiple aspects to a criterion or standard, the AO must satisfy all aspects to receive a "Y."

Example - Evaluation Form Scoring Method:

For Interviews, in the category of "Procedural Requirements," there are six individual criteria: Introduction, Explanation of Purpose, Explanation of Procedure, Administration of Oath, Basic Biographical Information and I-589 Questions, and Representation. Administration of Oath is critical. Possible scores follow:

> Scenario 1: The applicant is not represented and the AO met all criteria except she failed to notify the applicant of how the decision would be delivered. The scoring would be as follows:
>> Introduction: Y
>> Explanation of Purpose: Y
>> Explanation of Procedure: N
>> Administration of Oath: Y
>> Basic Biographical and I-589 Questions: Y
>> Representation: NA
>
> The AO's score for this category would be based on meeting 4 of 5 applicable criteria, or 80%.
>
> Scenario 2: The same performance occurs as described in Scenario 1, except the applicant was represented and the AO met the performance criteria described in the IEF by verifying the presence of the representative or securing a written waiver. The scoring would then be:
>> Introduction: Y
>> Explanation of Purpose: Y
>> Explanation of Procedure: N
>> Administration of Oath: Y
>> Basic Biographical and I-589 Questions: Y
>> Representation: Y
>
> The AO's score for this category would be based on meeting 5 of 6 applicable criteria, or 83%.
>
> Scenario 3: The same performance occurs as described in Scenario 1, except the AO failed to place the applicant under oath. Because the AO failed to meet a critical criterion, his score for the "Procedural Requirements" category would be 0.

The scores for each category are added according to the weight they are assigned for an overall percentage rating for the case. The forms automatically calculate the scores to one decimal point.

After the case is complete and scored, the AO will receive a copy of the form containing his or her scores for each section, the total score expressed as a percentage.

In addition to the scoring, the SAO is expected to utilize the comment section of the relevant evaluation form to highlight positive and critical feedback to the AO.

Accuracy Rate

The quality of interviews, written decisions, and administrative tasks will also be assessed through routine supervisory reviews. An AO will be evaluated by measuring the portion of the total number of cases submitted that are accurate at the time of submission as measured by the criteria on the IEF, WEF, AEF. In situations where an AO is not subject to full supervisory review of cases because he or she has adjudicated for six months or longer, or adjudicated 150 cases or more, all reviewed cases will be used to calculate the accuracy rate, which should be approximately 25% for most officers.

Defining Accuracy

Interviews, written decisions/forms, and administrative tasks are inaccurate when an AO failed to adhere to the performance standards outlined on the evaluation forms.

Accuracy Rate Calculation

An AO's accuracy rate is determined by dividing the number of inaccurate cases by the total number of case submissions. However, for AOs who have conducted affirmative asylum interviews for six months or more, or who have adjudicated 150 cases or more, the accuracy rate will be determined by the 25% random case review in addition to the other categories of cases required by the updated SAO case review procedures, instead of 100% of all cases submitted. In the first scenario (i.e., the AO is subject to full SAO review of all cases), when a non-scored case is returned for correction or otherwise found to be inaccurate, an evaluation form must be used to notify the officer of the errors in the case, but the form is not scored. In the second scenario (i.e., the AO has fulfilled specific criteria that allow the SAO to review approximately 25% of the AO's submitted cases), when a randomly selected case for SAO review that is not selected for scoring purposes, is returned for correction or otherwise found to be inaccurate, an evaluation form must be used to notify the officer of the errors in the case. Because the case was randomly selected exclusively for SAO review purposes and not as part of the PPA evaluation process, the form is not scored.

If an SAO returns a scored case to an AO for correction and the AO makes the correction, but the SAO still finds that the AO's correction is deficient, the SAO will return the case and it will be counted as an additional inaccurate case. Each time a case is returned for correction, an SAO should complete a new evaluation form, in order to keep track of the returns and to identify the source of the inaccuracy.

If the SAO finds a different, pre-existing mistake after the AO already corrected a different inaccuracy, the SAO will return the case to AO for correction using a new evaluation form, but will not count it as an additional return as that error should have been caught during the initial review and counted as part of the original return.

An SAO must evaluate decisions for performance purposes using the standards outlined in the evaluation forms. An SAO may believe that a case is incorrect for a reason that is not outlined in the performance standards. If it is a minor, clear error, the AO should make the change and the SAO will not count the error for Quality Goal rating purposes. If there is a more serious issue not covered by the evaluation form, the SAO should proceed as directed by local office policy. The AO must correct the case as management directs, but the correction will not be taken into account for Quality Goal rating purposes.

Similar to random scored case reviews, the SAO is expected to give positive feedback to AOs when warranted on non-scored cases, particularly if the work is of a high caliber. This could be documented using the comment section of the evaluation form or via-email. The SAO is encouraged to keep records of such performance throughout the course of the year.

National Security and Fraud Detection (35%)

Overview

An AO is responsible for maintaining the integrity and security of the immigration system through detection and deterrence of immigration-related fraud. Accurately applies national security and public safety laws, regulations and policies through interviews, security checks, document reviews, and other actions in accordance with established guidelines. SAOs should keep records of high-quality AO performance, such as noting effective collaboration with FDNS officers or complex and accurate analyses of fraud and national security related issues.

Performance Standards

GS-9/11/12/13
Achieved Expectations

Standards	Examples
Consistently identifies and addresses benefit fraud and national security concerns by referring identified or suspected fraud to FDNS.	Work products and communications establish consistent and correct performance of security checks, follow-up on positive hits, proper identification of national security concerns arising from security checks, and appropriate identification and referral of suspected benefit fraud (including fraud, public safety, and national security matters) as required by established policies and procedures.
Accurately applies national security and public safety laws, regulations, policies, and procedures and ensures these are effectively applied throughout the adjudication process, including during interviews, security checks, document reviews, and other actions	Review of interviews and work product indicates that credibility issues, mandatory bars, factors associated with the terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds (TRIG) and National Security indicators are being properly identified and explored, and national security and public safety laws, regulations, and policies are being properly applied. Accurately follows procedures and completes paperwork to document security checks, TRIG exemptions, national security concerns, and suspected fraud.
Ensures cases are adjudicated or units of work are completed in a timely manner and that decisions are made in accordance with established guidelines; correctly refers cases using appropriate processes.	Work assignments involving fraud or national security issues are generally completed within established time frames barring any unforseen challenges beyond an employee's control. Ensures cases are adjudicated in a timely manner to prevent the exploitation of the asylum process and employment authorization clock by ineligible persons.
Collaborates with Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) and other entities, as appropriate, resulting in the resolution of national security concerns.	In conjunction with the SAO, collaborates with FDNS Officers, Quality Assurance/Trainers, and/or other appropriate entities to document previously identified fraud trends and national security concerns through to resolution and completion.

Achieved Expectations - *In addition to achieving expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:*

Standards	Examples
Promotes the security and integrity of the immigration system through sharing fraud or national security issues and trends with peers and supervisors, as appropriate.	Proactively researches new issues, identifying or learning about fraud trends and national security issues, sharing the information with team members, peers and supervisors, as appropriate. Develops a presentation on the findings and communicates it to the team or office, as appropriate. All trends or new issues should be referred to FDNS.
Provides detailed supporting information and key indicators such that findings of fraud are further strengthened.	Elicits detailed testimony and provides supporting information and key indicators that strengthen findings of fraud or significantly contribute to an FDNS investigation.
Independently conducts research to provide necessary and critical technical advice and guidance in the screening and vetting of sensitive, complex, and problematic applications/petitions.	In addition to carrying out assigned duties, conducts research or provides guidance that assists peers or other members of the asylum office in the screening and vetting of complex or sensitive applications. Drafts or assists in the drafting of a local standard operating procedure to enhance the quality and consistency of a work process in the office.This may be facilitated through the asylum office's teamwork/peer-to-peer networks.
Recommends viable process improvements to better detect and deter fraud and/or enhance national security.	Identifies opportunities for improvement in detecting national security, public safety, and fraud concerns and suggests viable solutions to implement at the local or national level. This may be facilitated through the asylum office's employee suggestion program and/or local FDNS.

Rating Method

In the context of case adjudications, performance in this category should be documented using a National Security and Fraud Detection Form (NFEF) when errors on individual cases are detected. These forms should not be scored but a copy should be provided to the AO as performance feedback. These feedback forms will document the AO's performance in many of the performance standards outlined in the chart above, but others, particularly at the Achieved Excellence level, reflect achievements and tasks, which are not purely adjudicative. For example, one of the standards in Achieved Excellence indicates the AO "recommends viable process improvements to better detect fraud and/or enhance national security." These types of activities and achievements can be documented using e-mail, memo to the officer's personnel file, the office's rewards and recognition program, or by some other documented means. The totality of the AO's documented performance against the standards listed above will inform the AO's rating.

Timeliness (30%)

The updated SAO case review procedures do not affect the Timeliness Goal. All guidance set forth below remains the same. SAOs are required to track the timeliness of case submissions even if all cases do not undergo full supervisory review.

Overview

An AO is expected to complete cases in a timely manner in order to further Asylum Division compliance with deadlines imposed by statute, regulation, policy, and procedure for all matters under its jurisdiction. An AO will be rated for adherence to timeliness standards with respect to Asylum, NACARA, CF, and RF.

Affirmative Asylum
- Local Cases

    - Pick-up Cases: Unless otherwise instructed by this guidance, the SAO, or local/national policy, all locally assigned cases fall into this category. Cases are considered timely when it is first completed and submitted within five working days after the interview. Any such case returned for correction is to be resubmitted the next working day for it to be considered timely.

    - Non-Pick up Cases: Unless otherwise instructed by this guidance, the SAO, or local/national policy, the case is considered timely when it is first completed and submitted within seven working days after the interview. Any such case returned for correction must be resubmitted within two working days for it to be considered timely.

    - Completion Only: When a case is assigned to an AO for completion only, it is considered timely when it is first completed and submitted within two working days unless otherwise instructed by this guidance, the SAO, or local/national policy. In accordance with local procedures, the AO may be responsible for monitoring the release or expiration of hold. If that is the case, the triggering date for timeliness purposes is that event. Some examples of completion only cases include a final denial after the expiration of a NOID rebuttal period and a final decision after HQ, awaiting documents, or other hold type.

- Circuit Ride (not including completion-only or release from holds): Timeliness standards are determined locally as there is considerable variation in the caseloads assigned on circuit ride and the logistics involved. Affirmative circuit ride timeliness standards will be established locally to consider those variations. Standards will be communicated to all officers and timeliness on those assignments will be tracked and rated consistent with the local standards.

Credible Fear and Reasonable Fear
- CF and RF timeliness standards are determined locally as there is considerable variation in the schedules, caseloads, and logistics involved at the nearly 100 detention facilities ASY deals with across the country. As such, CF and RF timeliness standards will be established locally to consider those variations. Standards will be communicated to all Asylum Officers and timeliness on those assignments will be tracked and rated consistent with the local standards. Ultimately, these standards are tied to the enable the fulfillment of national timeliness standards.

Rating Method and Scale

An AO's timeliness rating is based on the following scale regardless of grade level:

Timeliness

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≥75% or <85%	Achieved Expectations
≥85% - <92%	Exceeded Expectations
≥92%	Achieved Excellence

An AO must report the timeliness of case submissions using the AO Biweekly Report. The AO is responsible for accurately counting and reporting the timeliness of cases, both for initial submissions and returns for correction. The AO is expected to exercise diligence in accurately reporting timeliness. The rating is based on the percentage of total submissions that were timely. The SAO keeps track of the biweekly submissions, using the AO PPA Workbook. The total number of timely cases is divided by the total number of submissions to determine timeliness. The SAO will provide a copy of the AO PPA Workbook upon request.

Cases are completed and submitted when the AO turns in a finished work product for SAO review, which includes entering the decision in Global and following local office procedures for file submission for case review and processing. When a case is returned for correction, timeliness standards apply to the re-submission. Overdue cases that have not yet been submitted are counted as untimely by adding them to the number of untimely cases at the time the rating is calculated, no less frequently than at the mid-cycle and final appraisal. However, SAOs should take care to ensure they only factor an overdue (but not yet submitted) case into the timeliness calculation one time only.

Time is calculated beginning the working day following the triggering event (i.e. interview, return for correction, or assignment of a case for completion). Working days that count for timeliness are the days an AO is present on duty for any part of the day.

Timeliness Examples

Example 1: The AO interviewed an out-of-status asylum applicant on a Monday, and was in the office the following day (Tuesday), but was assigned other duties by management for 2 hours. The timeliness clock for this case would begin on Tuesday, because even though the AO was on pre-approved duties for 2 hours, this is still the next working day. The case will be timely if it is submitted to the SAO on or before the 5th working day, Monday of the following week, provided she worked each day.

Example 2: The AO interviewed an out-of-status asylum applicant on a Monday, and was on sick leave for all of the following day (Tuesday), and has an AWS day off on the Friday following the interview. The timeliness clock for this case would begin on Wednesday, which is the AO's next working day. The AWS day off does not count. The case will be timely if it is submitted to the SAO on or before the 5th working day, Wednesday of the following week, provided she worked each day.

Exceptions to the Timeliness Standard

Asylum Office management may shorten timeliness deadlines in individual cases due to operational reasons such as expedited processing, the clock, in-status cases that will fall out of status prior to issuance of a final decision, or other exigent reasons. The AO will be provided notice before the application of a shorter timeliness standard. Under such circumstances, the AO may be given extra time to complete a case that they were unable to work on due to the expedited processing or, if no additional time is given for other work assignments, they may be recognized under the applicable core competency such as Teamwork and Cooperation, Customer Service, or Technical Proficiency.

AOs are responsible for managing their workloads and apprising their SAO of any circumstances that may interfere with the timely completion of cases. Where there are justifiable reasons, management may grant a timeliness exemption or extension or productivity reduction if requested in advance. The request must be made as soon as possible and within the number of days under the applicable timeliness standard.

Core Competencies

Overview

The Core Competencies were established by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and are required of all DHS employees. The Core Competencies comprise 40% of an AO's overall rating. There are five competencies and each is weighted at 20%. SAOs should document evidence of the Core Competencies throughout the year in support of the employee's rating.

Competency 1: Communication

Definition: Actively listens and attends to nonverbal cues when responding to the questions, ideas, and concerns of others. Communicates in an influential or persuasive manner, as appropriate. Writes in a clear and concise manner. Orally communicates in a clear and concise manner. Tailors communication (for example, language, tone, level of specificity) to the audience based on its level of understanding and to the communication medium.

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Achieved Expectations

Listens and appropriately responds to questions and concerns from others.	Asks relevant questions, listens to responses without interruption and takes notes when appropriate.
Shows respect for others' ideas, comments and questions.	Listens respectfully to a colleague's statement. Body language is positive.
With guidance, prepares and delivers basic communications that may require some revisions.	Composes written materials (for example, customer responses) that typically require some minor editorial revisions by supervisor before distribution.

Achieved Excellence

In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Accurately reads and assesses situations and responds effectively.	Identifies sensitive issue and escalates it to the appropriate level, following up to ensure organizational understanding.
Effectively tailors the amount and format of information included in straightforward communications to meet the audience's needs.	Following office protocols, ensures that all written responses contain the appropriate information and are sent to intended audience.
Effectively explains viewpoint when necessary.	Presents proposed procedural changes during a meeting, answering questions and defending changes in a clear manner. Explains policy changes to customers, providing rational responses and answering questions.
Independently prepares and delivers routine communications that are clear, concise, and timely.	Composes written materials (for example, customer emails) that summarize issues clearly within established deadlines, rarely requiring revisions.

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Achieved Expectations

Standards	Examples
Applies effective listening skills and appropriately responds when communicating with others.	Asks relevant questions, listens to the responses without interruption and asks appropriate follow-up questions.
Solicits, shows respect for, and carefully considers others' ideas, comments, and questions within scope of work.	Listens respectfully to a colleague's statements, and provides thoughtful constructive responses.
Effectively explains or defends viewpoint when necessary.	Presents proposed policy changes during a meeting, answering stakeholder questions and defending changes in a clear manner.
Independently prepares and delivers communications that are clear, concise, and timely.	Composes formal email or memo that summarizes issue clearly within established deadline.
Writes communications that generally require few substantive or editorial revisions.	Casework, policies, procedures and other written materials are accurate and well-written.

Achieved Excellence

In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Standards	Examples
Accurately reads and assesses more ambiguous situations and responds effectively.	During an interview, observes the applicant's demeanor and takes a few minutes to establish a rapport before asking official questions.
Effectively explains or defends viewpoint to audiences who hold opposing views.	Presents proposed policy changes during a meeting, addressing concerns and maintaining poise when faced with strong opposition to proposed changes.

Independently and effectively tailors communication style (for example, language, tone, level of specificity) and customizes communications to the audience.	When composing written material intended for wide distribution, recognizes the sensitive nature of the complex issue and adjusts the tone to provide the appropriate level of detail.

Competency 2: Customer Service

Definition: Communicates with customers to understand their needs. Works with customers to set expectations and keeps them informed of issues or problems. Provides timely, flexible, and responsive services to customers.

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Achieved Expectations

Effectively and appropriately interacts with customers, as directed, to understand their needs and provide them with routine or less complex information, products, or services in a timely manner.	When interacting with customers, demonstrates empathy and a courteous demeanor, using correct grammar and providing the appropriate information and guidance.
With guidance, seeks input to clarify customer needs.	Seeks input from colleagues and supervisors prior to responding to customer requests to confirm information accuracy.
Keeps supervisor informed of customer-related issues, as appropriate.	Recognizes issues with potential policy implications or that could generate widespread public interest and brings them to supervisor's attention.

Achieved Excellence
In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Takes initiative to learn about and engage with customers; provides high-quality service.	After receiving an applicant's request (for example, Service Request Management Tool request), takes initiative to contact customer via phone and resolves the issue, saving the applicant an additional trip to the office.
Effectively tailors the amount and format of information included in straightforward communications to meet the audience's needs.	Following office protocols, ensures that email responses contain the appropriate information and are sent to intended audience.
Recognizes and addresses potential issues or inconsistencies in customer needs.	Identifies a customer need and recommends a viable change to office procedure (for example, FAQ website) which improves the overall customer service of the office.
Displays flexibility in responding to changing customer needs.	When faced with competing priorities, remains flexible, going beyond what is expected to ensure customer's needs are met.

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Achieved Expectations

Standards	Examples
Reaches out to customers to gather information about their requirements and needs.	Communicates with an applicant about his or her request, providing the appropriate information and guidance.

Develops and delivers products or provides services to meet those needs in a timely manner.	Recognizing that an internal customer requires assistance on an urgent procurement matter and quickly develops an accurate fact sheet to address the issue.
Discusses expectations with customers, keeps customers informed of problems that could delay progress, and suggests workable solutions.	Provides a customer with information on each step of the application process and standard time frames for completion to reduce customer anxiety and confusion.
Responds to questions or requests from customers within reasonable time frames.	While working at the customer information center, verifies case status and takes reasonable steps to provide service beyond basic status check.

Achieved Excellence
In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Standards	Examples
Independently develops creative and useful ideas that add significant value to products and services.	Makes viable suggestions to management for ways to improve operational processes, improve ways of disseminating information, and/or increase customer comprehension.
Anticipates customer needs and resolves or avoids potential problems, maximizing customer satisfaction.	The officer proactively seeks to resolve a pending case (for example, taking meaningful steps to determine status), and provides follow-up instruction.

Competency 3: Representing the Agency

Definition: Represents the agency and its interests in interactions with external parties. Ensures that interactions with and information provided to outside parties reflect positively on the agency. Enhances trust and credibility in the agency and its mission through effective professional interactions with others outside the organization. Deals professionally and tactfully with external parties, even in difficult, tense, or emergency situations.

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Achieved Expectations

Presents a professional image when interacting with others.	Employee is respectful, reflecting a positive image for him or herself and the agency as a whole.
In predictable situations where roles are well defined, handles interactions with others in a tactful and calm manner.	Employee is courteous and cooperative when interacting with colleagues, customers and stakeholders in everyday situations.

Achieved Excellence
In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Demonstrates a high degree of professionalism and tact when dealing with others in less predictable situations.	Remains calm and respectful when confronted by a difficult, demanding and/or angry customer, consistently upholding the agency's interests and core values.
Takes effective steps to defuse or resolve confrontational situations in a manner that reflects positively on the agency.	Proactively and appropriately addresses a conflict in a manner that assists in the resolution of the issue.

GS-11/12/13
Achieved Expectations

Standards	Examples
Presents a professional image when interacting with others, establishing trust and credibility.	Employee is respectful, reflecting a positive image for him or herself and the agency as a whole.
In unpredictable situations, stays calm and handles somewhat difficult, tense or emergency situations with good judgment and professionalism.	Remains calm and respectful when confronted by a difficult, demanding, and/or angry customer, consistently upholding the agency's interests and core values.
Takes effective steps to defuse or resolve confrontational situations in a manner that reflects positively on the agency.	Proactively and appropriately addresses a conflict in a manner that assists in the resolution of the issue.

Achieved Excellence
In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Standards	Examples
Engages with others in a manner that earns their respect and helps to advance the agency's goals and objectives.	Builds effective relationships with external organizations, taking the initiative to establish him or herself as an authoritative point of contact, when appropriate.
Takes action to effectively manage difficult, tense, or emergency situations.	Initiates a working group to proactively address a controversial issue, defusing tension by suggesting a course of action that is agreeable to all involved parties. When confronted by a demanding, angry group, remains calm and respectfully listens to the group's demands. Assures them that their message will be conveyed to the relevant office for proper consideration and explains why the other office, rather than his or her own, is the one that must consider the matter.

Competency 4: Teamwork and Cooperation

Definition: Makes positive contributions to achieving team goals. Develops and maintains collaborative working relationships with others. Builds effective partnerships that facilitate working across boundaries, groups, or organizations. Respects and values individual differences and diversity by treating everyone fairly and professionally. Works constructively with others to reach mutually acceptable agreements to resolve conflicts.

Achieved Expectations

Contributes to accomplishing goals by working collaboratively with others.	Assumes personal responsibility for assigned duties, is cooperative and demonstrates competence as a team member. Within area of expertise, willingly briefs teammates on issues relevant to the completion of office goals. When working as part of a team, individual contributions meet team expectations. Ensures the smooth transitions of assignments and tasks.
Consults senior team members or supervisors on more difficult situations.	Recognizing that a particular issue has agency-wide implications, brings the matter to the attention of a supervisor to ensure proper coordination and resolution.
Deals with everyone fairly, equitably and professionally, respecting and valuing individual differences and diversity.	Demonstrates respect for others opinions and views by listening to and considering input from colleagues on a particular issue.
Handles minor disagreements or conflicts in a professional manner.	Responds constructively to a complaint from a colleague and helps resolve the issue by maintaining a positive attitude.

Achieved Excellence
In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Collaborates beyond what is expected resulting in high-impact contributions.	Supports supervisor by modeling specific procedures or activities (such as mission support) for teammates so that they observe firsthand how to address issues that may arise.
Contributes to a climate of trust and develops relationships with others that result in more effective team performance.	Consistently follows through on commitments when collaborating with groups outside of the office and/or agency. Acts as a peer mentor, taking initiative to guide and/or assist coworkers within area of expertise.
Effectively defuses or avoids conflicts.	Actively develops positive relationships with others to reduce the potential for conflict. If a disagreements or conflict arises, responds in a constructive way and implements corrective measures to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

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Achieved Expectations

Standards	Examples
Contributes to achieving goals by working collaboratively with others and building effective partnerships across organizational boundaries.	After completing assigned casework and/or duties, volunteers for extra assignments, thereby contributing to the productivity and timeliness goals for the division/team/office.
Independently offers assistance and provides support to advance goals.	Assists a newly-hired employee with navigating a complex database.
Effectively handles disagreements or conflicts, resolving them in a constructive manner.	Remains calm when resolving disagreements during a heated stakeholder meeting.

Consults with senior team members or supervisors when appropriate and makes viable recommendations for resolving differences.	Recognizing that a particular issue has agency-wide implications, brings the matter to the attention of a supervisor and outlines the benefits and challenges of different options to resolve the issue.

Achieved Excellence

In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Standards	Examples
Collaborates beyond what is expected resulting in high-impact contributions.	Recognizes a need and with management approval, takes the lead on collaborating with others to address the issue (for example, develops and provides training for local law enforcement agencies to prepare certifications for victim petitions).
Contributes to a climate of trust and skillfully develops productive relationships and networks that advance goals.	When collaborating with groups outside of the agency, demonstrates a clear understanding of USCIS's role, encourages free exchange of information, and consistently follows through on commitments.
Anticipates situations with potential for conflict and takes effective steps to minimize escalation.	When planning for a stakeholder meeting, anticipates potential issues that may arise and prepares appropriate responses in advance.
Considers all sides of issues and develops effective compromises or resolutions.	Facilitates consensus on a resolution to a complex and/or ongoing issue in a manner that is acceptable to all parties.

Competency 5: Technical Proficiency

Definition: Demonstrates and applies relevant knowledge and skills to perform work in accordance with applicable guidelines. Uses appropriate and available technology or tools to perform work activities. Acquires, develops, and maintains relevant and appropriate job skills through training or other opportunities for learning and development. Stays up-to-date on developments related to own work. Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's mission, functions, and systems. Collects relevant information needed to identify and address problems or issues. Analyzes and integrates information to identify issues and draw sound conclusions. Identifies and evaluates alternative solutions to problems. Makes sound, well-informed, and timely decisions or recommendations. Identifies and uses innovative or creative methods and solutions to accomplish work, as appropriate. Maintains an awareness of available resources and the process for acquiring resources. Identifies and advocates for resources required to accomplish work activities or projects. Makes effective and efficient use of available resources. Safeguards available resources to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.

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Achieved Expectations

Successfully applies basic knowledge and skills (including the use of technology and tools) to perform more routine assignments within own occupational specialty, seeking guidance as appropriate.	Ensures that system access and/or security procedures remain up-to-date or are reinstated at the earliest possible time to minimize negative impact on productivity. Completes mandatory training within established deadlines.

Demonstrates a basic understanding of the applicable organization's mission, functions, values and relevant policies or procedures; carries out basic tasks in accordance with these.	Consults current procedures and guidance to ensure written communication on a basic policy matter is accurate.
Is generally familiar with the basic resources needed to perform own work, and uses resources as directed to complete own work in an efficient manner.	Uses available resources to accurately complete tasks and assignments within established deadlines.
With guidance, effectively gathers relevant information from routine sources and analyzes information to identify reasonable solutions for issues or problems at this level.	With guidance from supervisor, researches routine issue and develops list of viable options.
Makes well-reasoned decisions in situations involving own specialized work.	Independently and accurately addresses routine issues within their work area with minimal supervision.

Achieved Excellence

In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Successfully performs advanced tasks with minimal supervision.	Demonstrates advanced knowledge by accurately completing a complex case with little guidance or intervention by the supervisor.
Continually broadens and enhances job skills, resulting in performing more complex work activities.	Seeks out and volunteers for opportunities that will enhance expertise and develop interdisciplinary capabilities.
Takes initiative to discover and make useful suggestions about ways to use resources more efficiently in performing own work.	Recognizes that customer inquiries on a particular issue are becoming more frequent, and develops a standard template for response to save time and ensure consistency.
Effectively conducts routine analyses and presents recommendations on issues with minimal supervision; seeks opportunities and takes initiative to assist in addressing more complex problems.	Independently conducts market research during procurement process, providing summary of viable options and recommendations to supervisor.

GS-11/12/13
Achieved Expectations

Standards	Examples
Successfully applies basic knowledge and skills (including use of technology and tools) to independently perform a full range of assignments, seeking guidance as appropriate.	Demonstrates advanced knowledge by accurately completing several complex cases on a range of issues with minimal consultation with a supervisor.
Uses formal or informal feedback on own performance to develop job skills that facilitate achieving results.	Actively contributes to performance evaluation process, remaining open to manager's feedback and taking steps to develop additional job skills based on that feedback.
Demonstrates an understanding of the applicable organization's mission, functions and values, the interrelationships between various units and organizations, and relevant policies or procedures; uses this knowledge to carry out a full range of work assignments.	Uses available resources to accurately complete tasks and assignments within established deadlines.

Demonstrates working knowledge of the resources available to perform work.	Uses appropriate DHS databases to conduct security checks, taking initiative to learn about the databases and procedures and continually references relevant materials as new issues arise.
Identifies and acquires needed resources, and ensures that use of resources is efficient and consistent with the planned project or activity.	Noticing an unusual increase in incoming customer inquiries, coordinates with supervisor to identify the resources needed to address the demand.
Effectively gathers complete and relevant information from appropriate sources to address issues or problems.	While conducting adjudications, encounters a number of cases with the same eligibility issue and refers cases to relevant resources available in the office.
Effectively analyzes information to identify issues, weigh alternatives, and draw logical conclusions.	Drafts a thorough adjudicative decision based on the information provided and/or collected from available resources.
Anticipates and resolves a full range of problems or issues.	In tackling a new project, identifies process deficiencies that could compromise quality and develops a new standard operating procedure to address the issue.
Makes well-reasoned, timely decisions and recommendations affecting own work.	Independently and accurately addresses routine issues within their work area with minimal guidance.

Achieved Excellence

In addition to achieving the expectations above, the employee also performs with distinction in one or more of the following areas:

Standards	Examples
Successfully uses knowledge to independently perform highly complex or varied assignments at this level.	Accurately completes complex cases on a range of issues with no consultation with a supervisor.
Continually broadens and enhances expertise, resulting in performing more complex work activities.	Continually evaluates own performance, identifying gaps in skills or knowledge and taking steps to further improve ability to perform complex work and develop interdisciplinary capabilities.
Accomplishes tasks in a highly efficient and effective manner and makes high-impact contributions.	Is sought out by management to provide guidance in areas of expertise, consistently providing advice that has a positive impact.
Takes initiative to expand knowledge about resources available and makes useful suggestions that increase efficiency.	Suggests innovative and plausible ways that databases can be used to increase employee efficiency while conducting security checks.
Identifies and uses effective methods to gather information in a highly efficient manner.	While using DHS databases to conduct security checks, implements changes in the way someone looks up information, resulting in significant efficiencies in routine security check processing.
Regularly and correctly identifies key issues.	When conducting research, realizes that the relevant sources available in the office do not completely address a unique or unusual issue and conducts additional search using online USCIS materials and an online research database, identifying the key issues and drafting a decision to resolve the issue.
Anticipates and identifies alternative solutions for problems that have a variety of viable solutions.	Prepares an options paper, outlining the benefits and challenges of implementing certain options to address a policy issue and makes recommendations.
Seeks opportunities to participate in addressing more complex problems.	Volunteers to adjudicate a case with unique and unusual issues.

Attachments:
A. Interview Evaluation Form
B. Written Decision Evaluation Form
C. Administrative Task Evaluation Form
D. National Security and Fraud Detection Evaluation Form
E. APSO Interview Evaluation Form
F. APSO Written Decision Evaluation Form
G. APSO Administrative Task Evaluation Form
H. AO Biweekly Report and Timeliness Log
I. AO PPA Workbook Report

SELECTING CASES FOR FULL SAO REVIEW

1. **Will the "small number" of cases subject to random full supervisory review be determined by HQASM, local Asylum Office Management, or the individual SAO?**

   The updated case review procedures now require that SAOs conduct full review of a certain percentage cases submitted by AOs who fulfill specific criteria (i.e., the AO must have competently adjudicated affirmative asylum cases for six months or more, or competently adjudicated 150 or more affirmative asylum cases). Headquarters is requiring that approximately 25% of cases submitted by AOs each month be fully reviewed by SAOs. This is approximately four cases per pay period. For these specific cases, local offices will implement a standard, randomized selection process similar to the process for scored case reviews highlighted in the Companion Guide to the PPA, pages 9-10.

2. **Will the "other complex issues or populations" requiring full supervisory review by determined by HQASM, local Asylum Office Management, or the individual SAO, or some combination thereof?**

   HQ Asylum will determine which case types fall under the category of "other complex issues or populations requiring full supervisory review." If local offices identify specific case types or populations they would like to mandate for full SAO case review, they should be submitted in writing to the Quality Assurance Branch Chief and the Management Branch Chief for consideration. Cases under this category may include, but are not limited to, cases that are part of an ongoing investigation, cases of significant public or media interest, cases affected by or part of litigation, cases presenting fraud patterns, etc.)

3. **If HQ Asylum will determine which case types fall under the category of "other complex issues or populations" has the division identified any such issues, populations, or case types for the field? Will HQ Asylum provide a list of these cases?**

   See response in preceding FAQ for some examples of cases that may fall into the category of "other complex issues or populations." At this time, HQ Asylum does not have a list specifying which cases may be subject to full review under this category, and will rely on input by the field, QA, and FDNS to identify such cases. If an office has a case type it believes should be subject to this requirement, the request should be submitted in writing to the Quality Assurance Branch Chief and the Management Branch Chief for consideration.

4. **If the office has particular security/fraud concerns, is it permissible to select random reviews based on that concern, rather than a totally random process?**

   Local office leadership may identify specific case types presenting security and/or fraud concerns that merit full supervisory review, but must first consult with and obtain approval from the Quality Assurance Branch Chief and the Management Branch Chief with a detailed justification explaining the reasons why the case(s) should be fully reviewed by an SAO.

5. **When submitting approval to request 100% supervisory review of local fraud patterns, may we request a blanket exception to the random review process, or should we submit a request for each identified pattern separately?**

   Please refer to preceding FAQ on procedures for requesting approval from HQ Asylum for full SAO review. At this time, the offices must seek approval for each specific case type or group that presents local fraud patterns, rather than a blanket exception.

6. **Are SAOs permitted to review final denials, or only NOIDs?**

   Yes, consistent with the requirement that SAOs fully review all NOIDs, final denials are also subject to full SAO review.

7. **How will a supervisor know if there is a TRIG, NS, etc. issue if they do not review the record?**

   Local office procedures can dictate the manner in which an AO notifies the SAO that a submitted case presents Fraud, National Security, TRIG, or other complex issues or populations. For example, some offices require AOs to include a brief note on the front of the file signaling to the SAO the type of case submitted and any other special concerns. AOs may also contact their SAO via email to document their submission of a case that falls under any of these categories.

8. **We understand that the SAO is not to review all cases, but there is concern that un-reviewed grants may present TRIG and/or persecutor bar issues that the AO never identified and would only have been identified during testimony at the interview. We suggest that all grants be reviewed.**

   The recently issued guidance by RAIO mandating implementation of the new SAO case review procedures calls for random supervisory review of a small number of assessments

and decision notices for all cases adjudicated by asylum officers who meet the new criteria. Review of all grants is not consistent with the new guidance. Asylum offices must follow the updated procedure, which as stated by RAIO leadership's message "is consistent with other immigration benefit adjudications by USCIS."

9. **How will a supervisor know if there is TRIG, NS, EPS, or any other issue mandating SAO review if the AO failed to identify this issue during interview and adjudication? Will the fact that an AO has previously failed to identify these issues, but still rates as "achieving expectations," permit us to review all of their cases for these issues?**

   If the AO has met the new criteria for partial SAO review (e.g., has competently interviewed and written legally sufficient affirmative assessments for six months or competently interviewed and written legally sufficient affirmative assessments for 150 cases, whichever comes first), then the officer's cases will be subject to random review. An officer's competency level is determined by his/her rated performance during the relevant time period set by the new criteria. If an officer is neglecting to identify or sufficiently address TRIG and other national security issues, then the SAO must carefully document these deficiencies in the officer's scored evaluations to determine whether the officer is actually meeting the requirements for Achieving Expectations.

10. **If an AO requests supervisory review of a case not in a mandatory review category, does this request need approval by a supervisor, section chief, director, headquarters, or any other party, prior to case submission, or is the AO empowered to determine independently that a case should receive review?**

    AOs are encouraged to independently make a request to their SAO for full review of a case that presents complex issues or other concerns. The SAO will make a final decision as to whether a case requires review in consultation with their management and Asylum HQ as described in this document.

11. **Do MERP cases require 100% supervisory review? Alternatively, would individual offices determine whether it falls under "other complex issues or populations?"**

    MERP cases, without other factors present such as national security or TRIG, are not automatically subject to full SAO review. If local offices identify MERP cases they would like to mandate for full SAO case review, they must first contact the Quality Assurance Branch Chief and the Management Branch Chief to obtain approval as outlined above.

12. **If MERP cases do not always require full review, may a non-MERP certified SAO review the NTA or security checks for grants?**

    As the most recent <u>MERP memo</u> states, cases by applicants and/or dependents from Iraq or Syria require a MERP certified officer <u>and</u> supervisory officer. This requirement applies for all MERP cases, whether the case requires full review or partial SAO review.

DETERMINING WHEN AO MEETS NEW SAO CASE REVIEW CRITERIA

13. **Does random review for "AOs competently conducting interviews and writing legally sufficient assessments" equate to an Achieved Expectations rating or higher in the PPA quality categories?**

    Yes, to determine that an AO is competently conducting interviews and writing legally sufficient assessments, the officer must have scored in the Achieved Expectations range for the Quality and Timeliness Goals on cases reviewed and scored during the relevant six-month period or during the period he/she adjudicated 150 cases or more.

14. **While we understand there has to be an objective way to determine an AO is competently conducting interviews and writing legally sufficient assessments, we are concerned that tying the SAO review too closely to the PPA will be problematic because TOs review new officers' work for a period of time, and people are ramped up slowly or moved to APSO during their initial six months. While we make an effort not to move people to APSO before they have been interviewing for six months, we occasionally have an operational need to do so. In such cases, the officer will reach six months long before 150 cases. We might still have concerns with them moving to random review that would already be reflected in the PPA rating.**

    Regarding situations in which AOs are placed on a ramp up schedule, please note the Companion Guide states that: "[f]or first-time assignments, an AO will not be rated until they have been assigned to and gained experience of <u>30 days or more</u> on that particular assignment. For example, the first time an AO is placed on the affirmative asylum caseload, their work product will not be counted toward their rating until they have at least 30 days experience working on the affirmative asylum caseload. The SAO will provide feedback during the initial 30-day period that will not be incorporated into the performance evaluation. Formal evaluations by SAOs will begin after the 30-day grace period." See

Companion Guide page 8. Based on this guidance, offices have some discretion in extending the AO's ramp up period to ensure the officer is ready to transition to a full schedule.

If situations arise where the officer has reached six months or longer but has not adjudicated affirmative cases or the minimum of 150 affirmative cases (i.e., because they were moved to APSO), then they have not met the criteria for partial SAO review because they have not adjudicated sufficient affirmative asylum cases.

If concerns remain about the AO's performance after the officer has fulfilled the new criteria for partial SAO review, it is critical that SAOs carefully document their scored evaluations to reflect the issues and issue a progress review as appropriate.

15. **If an officer's performance for a previous rating period was "achieved expectations," but during this rating period the supervisor observes a decline in quality performance, what must happen before the supervisor can return that officer to 100% supervisory review? The guidance as it stands assumes that once an officer achieves proficiency, he or she maintains proficiency indefinitely, which may not always be the case.**

The SAO is responsible for monitoring the quality of an officer's work based on the cases being reviewed and other PPA requirements as outlined in the Companion Guide. The SAO should issue a progress review if the AO is no longer achieving expectations and requires 100% supervisory review.

16. **If a case does not fit into any of the categories requiring supervisory review and is subject to partial SAO review, but the SAO notices errors, what recourse does a supervisor have to request corrections for a return?**

In situations where a case submitted to an SAO is only subject to partial review, and the SAO notices error(s) on the documents that the SAO is required to review, the supervisor will notify the AO of the error(s) and request changes on those specific documents. The SAO should not fully review the case. If the SAO believes the error is egregious (i.e., the officer is issuing a grant to an applicant who is ineligible), the SAO should follow his/her chain of command and escalate the issue.

17. **Will the union have a role in deciding when/if someone is ready to transit from 100% review to random review? We are working on criteria that seem vital to us, but what role will the union play?**

No, the union does not have a role in evaluating employee performance.

18. **Will AOs need to be notified whether or not their cases require 100% supervisory review and what impact it will have on PPAs?**

Yes, SAOs must communicate to the AO when the officer is achieving expectations and no longer required to have 100% cases reviewed. This can be accomplished via a short progress review and discussion notifying the AO he/she will transition to random case reviews.

19. **Is the six months experience or 150 cases cumulative? At our office, we have AOs that are on AFF for a month at a time and then switch back to APSO. They may accumulate 6 months of interviewing experience or 150 cases over a period of years. E.g., five one-month AFF rotations over the last three years with the last month long rotation within the past 3 months.**

SAOs will fully review all cases from asylum officers within their first six months of conducting affirmative asylum interviews or within their first 150 adjudicated cases, whichever comes first. Cumulative experience on affirmative may fulfill these requirements. However, local offices are strongly encouraged to assign officers to the affirmative caseload as long as operationally feasible to enable the officer to gain the necessary experience.

20. **Does it have to be 15 consecutive cases? We have AOs that may be on AFF for a day or two and then back on APSO.**

The new SAO case review procedures require that if an AO has not adjudicated an affirmative asylum case in the previous six months or longer, an SAO will fully review the first 15 cases that the AO completes upon returning to affirmative adjudications. Cumulative experience on affirmative may fulfill this requirement. However, local offices are strongly encouraged to assign officers to the affirmative caseload as long as operationally feasible to enable the officer to gain the necessary experience.

21. **Do the 15 cases include admin closures and UFT cases or regular Affirmative interviews/adjudications? We have a volunteer team of Officers that conduct UFT interviews and/or other affirmative close outs a few days a month.**

    The new SAO case review criteria may be met by AOs completing other case types like UFTs but not admin closures or affirmative completions where the AO did not conduct the interview. The determinative factors to consider for cases that will fulfill the AO's required experience level to transition from 100% review include (1) whether the case had a full interview and (2) whether the case required an assessment or an equivalent written work-product with legal analysis.

PPA RATINGS AND EVALUATIONS

22. **May we use our own tracking system in place of the HQ-developed AO bi-weekly and accompanying case log and the Workbook?**

    Asylum offices are required to track performance via the AO Biweekly Report and the AO Workbook. An office may use a similar method of record keeping; however, the method must not significantly alter the tools provided and must be applied consistently by the office.

23. **The words "routine" and "regular" are used throughout in the Companion Guide for purposes of recordkeeping and PPA ratings. For example, in the Companion Guide section referring to the PPA Workbook, it indicates that the PPA Workbook needs to be updated "regularly" or "routinely". There should be a standard definition. It could be something defined locally, but a nation-wide definition would allow for more accountability.**

    Because the tracking of performance occurs on a pay period basis, HQ Asylum recommends that offices maintain and update their recordkeeping for purposes of the PPA, at minimum, biweekly.

24. **Section V, Recordkeeping and Forms in the Companion Guide has some ambiguity regarding case submission and timeliness. In some instances, it makes it seem like there is a category of cases that are not required to be submitted timely, but all cases must be submitted timely. Suggestion to clarify that language to avoid confusion.**

Please review the updated language in the Companion Guide, page 4. The language now states:

Under the new SAO case review procedures, the Workbook's Data Entry tab will allow the SAO to enter:
- the total number of interviews and cases completed by the AO (blue columns in the spreadsheet under Case Data Entry)
- the total number of cases submitted for full SAO review counted for accuracy and any returns (green columns under Accuracy Data Entry)
- the total number of cases submitted for timeliness, which would continue to be for all cases submitted (orange columns under Timeliness Data Entry)

Note that the Workbook spreadsheet is also updated to give the SAO the ability to track under the Case Data Entry columns (in blue), for informational purposes how many interviews the AO completed versus how many cases the AO completed. This is in addition to the other data entry tabs for Accuracy and Timeliness.

25. **SAOs will need to log cases for timeliness, but may not be reviewing those cases for quality assurance. Entering cases into the performance logs will have an impact on the accuracy ratings. How should SAOs deal with those cases in the performance logs?**

The updated SAO case review procedures do not affect the Timeliness Goal. All guidance set forth in the Companion Guide to the PPA remains the same. SAOs are required to track the timeliness of case submissions even if all cases do not undergo full supervisory review. For example, an AO must continue reporting the timeliness of case submissions using the AO Biweekly Report. The rating will be based on the percentage of total submissions that were timely. The SAO will also continue keeping track of the biweekly submissions, using the AO PPA Workbook, by entering the required data for all submitted cases in the Data Entry Tab, specifically, in the "Timeliness Data Entry" columns. The total number of timely cases is divided by the total number of submissions to determine timeliness.

The Workbook's Data Entry tab has been updated so that the SAO can enter:

- the total number of interviews and cases completed by the AO (blue columns in the spreadsheet under Case Data Entry)
- the total number of cases submitted for full SAO review counted for accuracy and any returns (green columns under Accuracy Data Entry)

- the total number of cases submitted for timeliness, which would continue to be for all cases submitted (orange columns under Timeliness Data Entry)

For the green columns under "Accuracy Data Entry," SAOs will be responsible for correctly entering only those cases that were subject to full SAO review, and therefore considered for the Accuracy rating. See green Column E in the "Data Entry" tab of the Workbook. If entered correctly, this number will populate Column D "Total Cases Submitted for full SAO review" in the "Quality" tab of the Workbook. In other words, the basic structure of the spreadsheet and the calculations have not changed. The only difference is that SAOs will have to be mindful of correctly entering the number of cases that were subject to full review in Column E "Total Submitted for Accuracy" in the "Data Entry Tab." This number may be the same as Column D "Total Cases Completed" and Column H "Total Submitted for Timeliness" when an AO is still subject to full SAO review of all cases, or the "Total Submitted for Accuracy" in Column E may be different from columns D and H for an AO who is subject to partial SAO review.

26. **To properly address and be able to verify Timeliness by officers, our office recommends including language to be included in Companion Guide defining the effective date of case submission clarifying that decision date entered in Global, physical submission of case to SAO, and RAILS update must be done contemporaneously and on the same day unless otherwise authorized by SAO. Something we are seeing is that some AOs will enter a decision in GLOBAL and/or RAILS the case on the day it is due for timeliness, but then they do not submit the case to the SAO on the same day. This language in the companion guide would give us a point of reference for accountability. If SAOs must validate submission of case, the submission must include: entering decision in GLOBAL, updating RAILS, and file submission to SAO on the same day.**

Please see incorporated feedback in the Companion Guide's Timeliness Goal section: "Cases are completed and submitted when the AO turns in a finished work product for SAO review, which includes entering the decision in Global and following local office procedures for file submission for case review and processing."

27. **For case elevation, in the event and AO and SAO do not agree on a decision, can local policy dictate the review process or must cases go through the Director or Deputy?**

The updated SAO case review guidance does not change the current dispute resolution procedures employed by your office when the AO and rating official do not agree.

28. **Will we be getting guidance regarding how this will affect the calculations for the Quality rating on the PPA, particularly the calculation regarding formal returns as a percentage of total completions?**

    Yes, please refer to the Quality Goal section of the Companion Guide to the PPA for further guidance.

29. **Are there any guidelines for how many "random" reviews should be conducted per AO/per rating year? Will these random reviews be subject to scoring per the PPA guidelines?**

    The number of random scored case reviews per AO/per rating year remains the same as outlined previously in the Companion Guide. They are now referred to as "scored case reviews" to distinguish them from "random case reviews" which now consist of cases that are randomly selected for full SAO review under the new procedures, but are not scored using the evaluation forms. The Companion Guide has guidance on how the new SAO review procedures will affect how cases are randomly selected for review and for scoring. Please refer to the Quality Goal section of the Companion Guide for more detail.

30. **The language regarding "scored case reviews" is confusing and merits clarification. There are cases randomly reviewed by the SAO, but not all of those cases will be the mandatory scored random reviews. There could arise the situation where one scored case could be counted twice because it has already been part of the 25% review.**

    The Companion Guide now distinguishes between "Scored Case Reviews" – cases that are formally scored using the evaluation forms, versus "Random Case Reviews" – cases that are randomly selected for full SAO review. Depending on the randomization method employed by an office, four cases may be randomly selected for full SAO review and one of these cases may be formally scored using the evaluation forms. Once the cases are randomly selected, the SAO should be able to record via the Workbook, which of the four cases will need to be scored using the evaluation forms.

31. **Does movement to random review as opposed to remaining on 100% review based on the criteria set, affect the PPA rating in any way?**

    The updated SAO case review procedures will have no impact on AO performance standards; however, they will alter the way Performance Goal 1 (Quality) is calculated. For a more detailed explanation of this change, please refer to the Quality Goal section of the Companion Guide.

32. **AOs who meet the new SAO case review criteria may be more impacted by having a few cases reviewed rather than all cases, i.e. whether good or bad there will be a larger impact with fewer numbers.**

    While the accuracy rate for purposes of the Quality Goal is calculated using a smaller pool of cases for AOs who meet the new criteria, it is expected that once AOs transition to 25% review of their cases, they are fully equipped and experienced with the level of competency to submit quality work. AOs who reach this point have also received extensive written and verbal feedback from their SAO such that they are deemed ready to transition to less supervision and oversight of their cases. Additionally, all AOs who meet the new criteria are subject to the same experience requirements and percentage of cases subject to full SAO review, as well as a standard randomization method for case reviews.

33. **The FAQ states, "While the accuracy rate for purposes of the Quality Goal is calculated using a smaller pool of cases for AOs who meet the new criteria, it is expected that once AOs transition to 25% review of their cases, they are fully equipped and experienced with the level of competency to submit quality work." Since the quality score for AOs to achieve expectations is 70% for a GS 9, is that an accurate statement that we expect that they are fully equipped and experienced, even though a 70% quality score reflects a substantial number of returns for legal insufficiencies?**

    An officer at the GS-9 level, who is rated between ≥70% or <80% and, thus Achieving Expectations for the Quality Goal, is doing the following:

    • Completes work assignments that are well-reasoned, clear, concise, legally sufficient, procedurally correct, and are made in accordance with rules, regulations, policies, and procedures

    • Reviews and verifies documents for clarity and accuracy prior to customer contact