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PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS: ARE THEY A USEFUL TOOL IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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JCSP 45

Exercice Solo Flight

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

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PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS: ARE THEY A USEFUL TOOL IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

INTRODUCTION

Every year, tens of thousands of person-hours are spent producing Performance Evaluation Reports (PERs) in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).¹ In addition, untold hours are spent processing, tracking, and applying the grievance process annually. Given the amount of time and effort expended on the Canadian Forces Personnel Assessment System (CFPAS), the value it represents to the CAF must be substantial. But is it?

The aim is to develop CF personnel through constructive feedback and to accurately assess the level of demonstrated performance and potential for career administration purposes.²

In Canadian Forces General Message (CANFORGEN) 127/08, it was stated that “personnel evaluation report (PER) grievances account for the largest proportion of grievances in the CF”.³ It must be surmised that the current system is flawed, as evidenced in the number of grievances submitted annually by members related to their PERs. If the system were providing the outcomes outlined in the policy, then would there be so many individuals who believed they are being wronged by the system.

There is an acknowledgement that the current CFPAS system is not meeting the intent. A new evaluation system, based on the new Leadership Development Framework (LDF) has been developed and is to be implemented within the next two assessment

¹ This number is not taken from any body of research, but determined from this author’s personal experience with the process and extrapolated out to the entire CAF. It may, in fact, be a much greater number.

² Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal System Help File. Version 2009.0.17.*, 1.

³ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces General Message 0127/08 Initial Authority for PER Grievance.* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008).

years. While a new tool is being implemented, based on a new set of principles, the overall goal of the system remains the same. It is to provide feedback on a member's professional development and to assess their current performance and future potential to succeed at a higher rank. While no data is available to evaluate the effectiveness of the new system, it can be explored to determine whether the greatest issues arising from the current CFPAS have been corrected or improved.

The thesis of this paper is that current assessment systems remain flawed when a numerical value is assigned to a member, based on their performance and potential. It will not satisfy the needs of the CAF or the stated purpose of the assessment system. This is evident in the need for individuals to continually score higher on assessments to reach the next promotion, rather than crossing a threshold of knowledge and potential.

In order to prove the thesis, the paper will be broken out into five sections. Section one will review the current academic and professional literature on why employee performance assessments are done and their overall value. Section two will take a deeper look at how the current CFPAS is applied. The third section will highlight where the shortcomings of the assessment tools used lie. The fourth section will provide an overview of how some of our alliance partners perform personnel evaluations. The final section will look at the new assessment system being implemented in the CAF and whether it will resolve the current highlighted issues.

THE STUDY OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

There is a bevy of literature on the topic of performance appraisals coming from both academics and business professionals. In fact, in 1980, Landry and Farr published a

whole review on the study of performance appraisal research.⁴ In their study, they categorized the bodies of work into the following:

"roles" or characteristics of the rater and rate, the "vehicle" or rating format and form, the context of the rating including its use, and the rating process which dealt with data analysis and rater training.⁵

Granted, the study is now nearly 40 years old, a review of the current areas of study shows that there has not been a great change in the areas of research.

While all the areas noted will be touched on in this paper, the two of most interest are the context of the rating and the rating format. What does the research say as to why performance evaluations are done, and how are they carried out? The answer to the first part of the question is fairly consistent throughout the literature reviewed.

[E]mployee evaluation helps remind workers what their managers expect in the workplace . . . [and] provide information to use when making decisions, such as promotions, pay raises, and layoffs.⁶

The aim of the CFPAS “to develop CF personnel through constructive feedback and to accurately assess the level of demonstrated performance and potential for career administration purposes”⁷ aligns well with this statement.

The why performance appraisals are done therefore appears to have a rather simple answer. Without a means to provide feedback to employees (or subordinates in a military context), how are they to know they are meeting management’s expectations of

⁴ Eric Press. "Employees' Subjective Experience in Participating in a Performance Management System Based on the Principles of Appreciative Inquiry." (Fielding Graduate University, 2010), 15. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/576998452?accountid=9867>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Susan Heathfield. "What's The Purpose of Employee Evaluation?" The Balance Careers. November 04, 2018. Accessed May 06, 2019. <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/employee-evaluation->

⁷ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal System Help File. Version 2009.0.17*, 1.

them. How does one acknowledge good performance, or conversely counsel on poor performance or areas in need of improvement without some form of assessment system?

There is however a growing body of literature that is pushing to do away with the classic annual performance review. In 1996, Timothy Schellhardt wrote an interesting article in the *Wall Street Journal* that summarized the thoughts of the day, many of which remain relevant now. In his article, he stated that “in almost every major survey, most employees who get job evaluations and most supervisors who give them rate the process as a resounding failure.”⁸ There are several reasons laid out for this conclusion. First, he states that “[e]xperts say appraisal systems often don't work because most were designed . . . by personnel specialists with limited input from managers . . . and even less input from the employees.”⁹ Next, employees don't like to hear bad news, and managers don't like to give it. Also, busy supervisors don't have the time to put adequate effort into the reviews to make them relevant and useful. The amount of money expended in revamping the processes, and implementing them appears to not significantly contribute to the company's bottom line and to many the sole reason the assessments remain in place is at the urging of Legal and Human Resources (HR) officials who insist on having documentation to counter wrongful dismissal lawsuits.¹⁰ Overall, this would explain why “a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, of Alexandria, Va., concluded that more than 90% of appraisal systems are unsuccessful.”¹¹ Liz Ryan, author, business writer and former HR leader, contributed a scathing article for *Forbes*

⁸ Timothy Schellhardt, “It's Time to Evaluate Your Work, and All Involved Are Groaning. (Cover Story).” *Wall Street Journal - Eastern Edition*, November 19, 1996. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=9611197763&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

magazine in 2018 that decried the use of performance reviews.¹² Her reasoning highlighted many of the same areas brought up by Timothy Schellhardt 20 years earlier.

THE CAF METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

As previously stated, the CAF uses the CFPAS as the means of developing and evaluating its members. The current system was implemented in April of 1998, and the first evaluations were completed for the 1998/99 reporting period.¹³ The CFPAS consists of two processes. The Personnel Development Review (PDR) process's role is to outline the expected outcomes for the member, provide periodic feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, and any future goals and professional desires of the member. This document is normally completed by the member's immediate supervisor and reviewed by a more senior member in the chain of command. The documents produced through this process form the backstop to the second process, the Personnel Evaluation Report (PER). This second process produces an annual report that is critical for career management. It is used for such things as determining selection for career progression (promotion, postings and special appointments, career courses etc.), competitive processes (occupational transfers, commissioning programs) and administrative reviews.¹⁴

The PER itself is a document that assesses a member's performance and potential for promotion based on the previous year's assessment period, normally from April until

¹² Liz Ryan. "Performance Reviews Are Pointless And Insulting -- So Why Do They Still Exist?" Forbes. January 16, 2018. Accessed May 07, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lizryan/2018/01/14/performance-reviews-are-pointless-and-insulting-so-why-do-they-still-exist/#398d2b9f72d1>.

¹³ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal System Help File. Version 2009.0.17*, 1.

¹⁴ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal System Help File. Version 2009.0.17*, 1.

March of the following year. It is written by the member's supervisor and reviewed by an officer more senior to the supervisor. The current iteration of the form has 16 performance assessment factors assessed as not observed, unacceptable, needs improvement, developing, skilled, exceeded standard, and mastered. There is an accompanying word picture book that provides criteria to assess each factor for each different rank. There is also a text box where the author of the PER has nine lines to provide examples justifying the scores. The form is also used to assess a member's potential to perform at the next rank level, using six factors assessed as low, normal, above average and outstanding. The word picture book also provides guidance for each of these assessments, and once again the author has nine lines to provide examples to speak on how the member demonstrates that they can perform at the next level. It is imperative that the member's assessment be based on their performance/potential for the assessment period being reviewed, not against their previous performance/potential or the performance potential of their peers. The PER has three other critical pieces of information. The first is a promotion recommendation of no, developing, ready, or immediate, based solely on an automatic calculation of the scoring of the potential factors. The second is a ranking against the member's peers, based on their overall PER score. Lastly is a ranking and recommendation from the formation commander or CO, based on unit or formation assessment boards. Once the form is completed and signed by all the levels of review, the member is debriefed on their annual report. The most recent changes to the CFPAS system implemented the option for members to choose to opt out of the PER process if they so desire, the result being no further rank progression. They

can also choose to opt back in to the process at a later date, restarting their eligibility to progress in rank.

The process as designed could have been a very effective tool to assess CAF members. It is based on the individual and assesses them based on a predetermined set of goals. It provided a mechanism through the PDR process to highlight a member's weaknesses early so they could correct them during the reporting period. It allowed a supervisor to review a member's strengths so they could challenge them with more difficult tasks, and where possible provide additional opportunities to broaden their technical and leadership skills. The detailed assessment guidance combined with the word picture book descriptions allowed for accurate ratings of the different factors. The need to provide concrete examples in a text format would add context to the assigned score and provide promotion board members with real material in which to assess files. The entire appraisal system was touted as being a revolutionary step forward in the development and assessment of the future leaders of the CAF. It was a move away from a simple dot system that provided a numerical score without context or justification. It would open the kimono on what was seen a secretive process that had no recourse for individuals who felt they were unfairly assessed.

THE SHORTCOMINGS

So what went wrong? How did such a well-designed system become the bane of so many? The answers are many. First, the PDR process was not adhered to appropriately across the entire CAF. There is not adequate training for members to apply the system correctly. The leadership has learned how to game the system to get their subordinates

ahead. The threat of a grievance leads to an informal resolution that sees the evaluated subordinate get a better evaluation. Proper notes are not taken to justify an assessment, which often leads to grievors winning at least part of their grievance. Despite annual directives to not assign scores to members before writing their PERs, nor to compare individuals prior to PERs being written, units still do this. Supervisors only put effort into the Immediate PERs. The timelines for review and boards require PERs to be written well before the end of the reporting period, not taking into account performance and potential displayed in February and March. Changes commencing in 2014 to the production of PERs to streamline the writing process and make it less manpower intensive detracted from the supervisor's ability to provide adequate feedback and justification of scores. While this author has seen all of these examples play out throughout his career, it is not simply personal experience being applied with a broad brush to the CAF as a whole.

Part of the 2015 and 2016 Your Say Survey (s) included sections asking those surveyed to provide responses to questions related to the "Interim Changes to the Military Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) Results".¹⁵ While the overall results of the survey provided positive feedback to the changes made from 2014 onward, it is the negative comments, or areas to improve that provide the best evidence to substantiate this author's claims above. In the Defence Research and Development Canada Letter on the 2015 Survey, the summary of open-ended survey responses saw 1081 comments. The largest numbers of responses were provided on the topic of limiting the narrative to nine lines of text. The most common reasons given for dissatisfaction related to not being able to

¹⁵ Carina Daugherty and William Oakman. *Fall 2016 Your Say Survey: Interim Changes to the Military Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) Results*. (DRDC-RDDC-2018-L008, January 2018), 1.

adequately provide enough information to justify the scores.¹⁶ Table C-7, reproduced below from the letter, provides an overview of the general comments provided of the PER system as a whole. In the DRDC Letter for the 2016 Survey, Tables C-2 and C-3 (also reproduced below) provide similar data. The takeaway from both survey years is that the act of trying to streamline the process to make it less cumbersome for supervisors and leadership to use, has caused the rank and file to have less faith in the process as a whole. Granted, the number of responses to the survey was small compared to the overall size of the CAF, however, it provides a baseline to demonstrate there is a belief that the current system is flawed.

Table C-7. Summary of comments related to “Changing narratives from paragraph to bullet form”.

Comment Category	Number of Comments
i. Generally a poor system	41
ii. Not enough space/information	38
iii. Everyone needs feedback/PER	27
iv. Not just a promotion tool but an important feedback tool	20
v. Promotion is dependent on supervisor’s writing skills	17
vi. More standardization needed across CAF	15
vii. Merit boards need more information not less	15
viii. Does not allow for elaboration on good or bad	15
ix. Allows for favouritism	11
x. Allows for score inflation with no justification	11
xi. Does not provide an accurate picture when comparing people at the boards	8
xii. Generally supports this change	8
xiii. Dots are unacceptable feedback	8
xiv. Suggest removing all narrative to make it objective	4
xv. There are too many changes made as it goes up the chain of command	1

Source: Squires, Hill, and Peach. “Fall 2015 Your Say Survey: Interim Changes to the Military Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) Results”, 23.

¹⁶ Erin Squires, Robert Hill, and Jennifer Peach. *Fall 2015 Your Say Survey: Interim Changes to the Military Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) Results*. (DRDC-RDDC-2016-L297, 2016-08-23), 23.

Table C-2: Summary of comments related to “Limiting narrative to 9 lines of text”.

Comment Category	Number of comments	Percentage of total comments for each component
i. <i>General formatting</i> – The 9 lines are inadequate to provide sufficient feedback, detail for assessment and/or to justify each of the allotted points.	Reg F = 570	Reg F = 52.4%
	P Res = 316	P Res = 54.1%
	Total = 886	Total = 53.0%
ii. <i>Ethical/Fairness concerns</i> – Relies on a supervisor with good writing skills, does not capture all information and does not justify members' contributions.	Reg F = 251	Reg F = 23.1%
	P Res = 128	P Res = 21.9%
	Total = 379	Total = 22.7%
iii. <i>Overall inadequacies</i> – Too generic and impersonal, making it difficult to differentiate between members. Harmed the overall integrity of the process.	Reg F = 124	Reg F = 11.4%
	P Res = 65	P Res = 11.1%
	Total = 189	Total = 11.3%
iv. <i>Difficult for the evaluator</i> – The 9 line structure is “complicated”, “rigid”, time consuming, and ultimately creates more challenges than the previous narrative.	Reg F = 66	Reg F = 6.1%
	P Res = 23	P Res = 3.9%
	Total = 89	Total = 5.3%
v. <i>Occupational differences</i> – Differences in elements, trades, or in duties undermine the 9 line restriction.	Reg F = 19	Reg F = 1.7%
	P Res = 23	P Res = 3.9%
	Total = 42	Total = 2.5%
vi. <i>No narrative required</i> – Individuals who indicated that the narrative was not required at all.	Reg F = 26	Reg F = 2.4%
	P Res = 15	P Res = 2.6%
	Total = 41	Total = 2.5%
vii. <i>Discouraging/Demoralizing</i> – The lack of detail trivializes the contributions of members and is unrepresentative of their past service resulting in a drop in morale.	Reg F = 18	Reg F = 1.7%
	P Res = 9	P Res = 1.5%
	Total = 27	Total = 1.6%
viii. <i>Recommendations</i> – explicit suggestions from respondents on how the process should be changed.	Reg F = 13	Reg F = 1.2%
	P Res = 5	P Res = 0.9%
	Total = 18	Total = 1.1%

Source: Daugherty and Oakman. “Fall 2016 Your Say Survey: Interim Changes to the Military Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) Results”, 20.

Table C-3: Summary of comments related to "Restricting the potential section narratives".

Comment Category	Number of comments	Percentage of total comments for each component
i. <i>Fairness</i> – All members are deserving of feedback, needed for merit boards, courses, tracking individual progress and justifying scores.	Reg F = 123 P Res = 62 Total = 185	Reg F = 40.6% P Res = 29.7% Total = 36.1%
ii. <i>Negative impact on the PER process</i> – Undermines the evaluation, feedback and promotion process.	Reg F = 88 P Res = 55 Total = 143	Reg F = 29.0% P Res = 26.3% Total = 27.9%
iii. <i>Importance at all career stages</i> – Highlights the importance of regular documented feedback for all members to aid in their progression.	Reg F = 64 P Res = 54 Total = 118	Reg F = 21.1% P Res = 25.8% Total = 23.0%
iv. <i>Negative impact on leadership</i> – Concerns about leadership perceptions and overall integrity.	Reg F = 12 P Res = 26 Total = 38	Reg F = 4.0% P Res = 12.4% Total = 7.4%
v. <i>Occupational differences</i> – Differences in elements, trades, or in duties that make this change problematic.	Reg F = 8 P Res = 6 Total = 14	Reg F = 2.6% P Res = 2.9% Total = 2.7%
vi. <i>Recommendations</i> – Explicit suggestions from respondents on how the process should be changed.	Reg F = 6 P Res = 8 Total = 14	Reg F = 2.0% P Res = 3.8% Total = 2.7%

Source: Daugherty and Oakman. "Fall 2016 Your Say Survey: Interim Changes to the Military Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) Results", 23.

To further the argument that the current evaluation system is flawed, a review was done to determine the number of grievances that had been submitted to the final grievance authority. This acted as another source of data to determine where the issues with CFPAS have arisen. Going back to 2008, the earliest that stats were available, it was determined that there were at least 34 grievances that went all the way to the final authority for determination.¹⁷ While not a significant number, as a percentage of all grievances that go to the final authority, they are telling in the reasons for why they have gone that far, as opposed to being resolved at a lower level. All of the grievances were

¹⁷ Information was compiled from the annual reports found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/military-grievances-external-review/corporate/annual-reports.html>, and the case summaries available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/military-grievances-external-review/services/case-summaries/case-summaries.html>

submitted because members disputed something written on a PDR or because they believe there were deserving of a higher evaluation of their performance or potential. With relation to the PDRs, the cases reviewed indicated that adverse PDRs were given almost always in conjunction with some form of Administrative Action the grievor also disagreed with. The PDR was most often used as a tool to record poor performance and potential rather than as a way to give critical feedback and develop a plan to overcome problems the member was having in achieving the supervisor's expectations of the member's performance.

The grievances submitted by members related to PERs covered the majority of the issues highlighted at the beginning of this section. Units using score controls to determine evaluations and rankings factored heavily in several grievances, so much so that it was highlighted as a systemic issue in 2016 by the Military Grievance External Review Committee.¹⁸ Evaluators unable to justify lower scores with adequate corroborating evidence, thus leading to upward changes in PER scores were another common outcome from the committee. There were also several grievors who misunderstood that not receiving PDRs was not grounds to grieve a PER, thus demonstrating a lack of training and understanding of the system.

It must be understood that there is more wrong with the way that the CAF advances personnel from one rank to another and does succession planning than just the CFPAS. There are whole other processes that work in conjunction with the CFPAS and tangential to it. However, the appraisal system is the most visible and has the most

¹⁸ Military Grievances External Review Committee. "Case Summaries Index." Canada.ca. September 20, 2018. Accessed March 16, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/military-grievances-external-review/services/case-summaries/case-summaries.html>.

impactful input to a member's career. It is why the current flawed system needs to be replaced with something better.

ALLIED APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

It may prove advantageous to look at some of the CAF's allies to see how they have implemented assessment or rating tools in their armed forces. In an effort to compare apples to apples, the systems used specifically for the British Royal Air Force (RAF), the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and the United States Air Force (USAF) were reviewed. The first item of note is that the three Air Forces all use an evaluation system specific to their branch of service, rather than a one tool fits all as is used in Canada.

The USAF uses a separate system of evaluation for its officers and enlisted members. However, the overall guidance for the system can be found in one document, AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 36-2406. The evaluation system's purpose is

to establish performance standards and expectations for ratees, meaningful feedback on how well the ratee is meeting those expectations, and direction on how to better meet those established standards and expectations . . . provide a reliable, long-term, cumulative record of performance and promotion potential based on that performance . . . provide officer Central Selection Boards (CSBs), SNCO evaluation boards, the Weighted Airman Promotion System (WAPS), and other personnel managers' with sound information to assist in identifying the best qualified officers and enlisted personnel for promotion, as well as other personnel management decisions.¹⁹

It further reiterates that the focus of the evaluation system is on performance. Similar to the Canadian system, individuals (officers and enlisted) receive an Airman

¹⁹ Department of the Air Force. *Air Force Instruction 36-2406*. (8 November 2016), 10. Accessed on 2 May 2019. https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afi36-2406/afi36-2406.pdf

Comprehensive Assessment, which is similar in content to a PDR. Where there is a difference is that not only are there required timelines for a rater to provide an ACA to a ratee, but a ratee can request that an ACA be provided.²⁰ The two systems are similar in many ways, except that the USAF system appears to be more personalized to the individual. The officer evaluations are very narrative-focused for evaluation and do not use a rating scale such as is used in CFPAS. That said, harkening back to before the CFPAS changes in 2014, certain words in the narrative link to certain levels of achievement, and are looked for by Selection Board Members. While at one time the annual performance reports for both officers and enlisted personnel were written based on a date of enrolment or call up, a common due date, or “close out date” have been standardized by rank and are spread out throughout the year to correspond to differing promotion board dates.²¹ The Enlisted rating system went through an overhaul that was implemented in 2015, and the Officer rating system will be reviewed with an overhaul of that system expected to be completed by 2020. Changes to both systems take into account the digitization of process and the need to implement new strategies on developing and promoting talent within the organization.²² When searching for information on the main criticisms of the appraisal system, a familiar theme was evident: the inflation of Performance on the annual reports, especially in the enlisted report, which does use a point based evaluation system to score performance. There was also an analysis done by the RAND corporation determining that the current enlisted performance reviews were

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 62-64.

²¹ Debbie Gildea. "AF Implements Static Enlisted Performance Report Closeout Dates, Eliminates Change of Reporting Official Reports." Air Force Personnel Center. August 11, 2014. Accessed May 06, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150923042213/http://www.afpc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123420836>.

²² Stephen Losey. "Air Force Officer Performance Eval Overhaul Could Be Done by 2020." Air Force Times. May 07, 2018. Accessed May 06, 2019. <https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2018/05/07/air-force-officer-performance-eval-overhaul-could-be-done-by-2020/>.

not best designed to identify leadership potential. This was determined to be a key requirement with the pushing down of leadership responsibility to the enlisted ranks, especially at the rank of Master Sergeant.²³

The Armed Forces of the United Kingdom uses a tri-service joint appraisal report process for officers and other ranks. The “process utilizes attributes, performance and potential to assess Service personnel within their current roles, determine individual aspirations and viability as future leaders.”²⁴ The newest version of the appraisal report process was rolled out in the RAF with the introduction of the new Joint Personnel Administrative system in 2006, which saw the centralization of the processes with the MOD.²⁵ Similar to the Canadian and USAF systems, the goals of the appraisal report are to “inform the individual . . . how well they have done and identifies their potential . . . [and] how to improve performance and enhance potential.”²⁶ Similar to the USAF system and in theory the PDR process, there is a mandatory Mid Period Appraisal Report. The body of annual reports form the basis for which future employment and progression are determined. The actual appraisal report uses a letter grading system, much like an academic institution, which was implemented with the earlier changes. A description of the grading system and promotion recommendations are available in the Tables below. Once again, there is a narrative section that relies on a description that matches the

²³ Kirsten Keller M., Sean Robson, Kevin O'Neill, Paul Emslie, Lane F. Burgette, Lisa M. Harrington, and Dennis Curran. *Promoting Airmen with the Potential to Lead: A Study of the Air Force Master Sergeant Promotion System*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014). Last Accessed at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR581.html.

²⁴ "OJAR & SJAR: Officers' & Servicepersons' Joint Appraisal Reports." Boot Camp & Military Fitness Institute. October 27, 2015. Accessed May 06, 2019. <https://bootcampmilitaryfitnessinstitute.com/military-training/armed-forces-of-the-united-kingdom/ojar-sjar-officers-servicepersons-joint-appraisal-reports/>

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

assessment. The tone and words used are extremely important to this system, as much as the letter grade. The reports also go through two additional reviews that require the reviewing officer to agree with the original assessment, or adjust as they deem appropriate, but the original assessments still form part of the form.²⁷ This is a step not seen in the Canadian context. The faults and critiques of the UK system remain similar to the USAF and Canadian systems. Inflation of scores is an issue. Members whose supervisors are better writers tend to do better at selection boards. Mid-term assessments are not completed as mandated.²⁸

Table 1: Grading system (new and old)

JPA Appraisal Grade	New Description	Old Grade	Old Description
N/A	Not applicable.	-	-
IK	Insufficient Knowledge.	E	Unsatisfactory
D	Performing below standard expected in some/all respects.	D	Up To The Minimum
C	Performing to standard expected in some respects.	C	Well Up To
B-	Performing to standard expected in most respects.	-	-
B	Performing to standard expected in all respects.	B	Above
B+	Performing above standard expected in most respects.	-	-
A-	Performing above standard expected in all respects.	-	-
A	Performing to highest standard in all respects.	A	Well Above
-	-	O	Outstanding

Source: "OJAR & SJAR: Officers' & Servicepersons' Joint Appraisal Reports." Boot Camp & Military Fitness Institute. October 27, 2015.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Table 2: Promotion recommendations (new and old)

JPA Appraisal Grade	Old Grade	Old Description
N/A (Not Applicable)	-	-
IK (Insufficient Knowledge)	5	Is Unsatisfactory In His Present Rank
No	4	Should NOT Be Promoted
Developing	3	Has Potential For Promotion But Not Yet
Yes	2	Is Recommended For Promotion Now
High	1	Should Be Considered For Early Promotion
Exceptional	-	-

Source: "OJAR & SJAR: Officers' & Servicepersons' Joint Appraisal Reports." Boot Camp & Military Fitness Institute. October 27, 2015.

The Royal Australian Air Force uses the Australian Defence Force tri-service performance appraisal system.²⁹ Similar to the PER, the annual performance appraisal is meant to "provide feedback to individuals, identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide constructive guidance for further development."³⁰ Information from the report is also used to "develop career plans, identify potential for promotion, postings and courses, as well as manage underperformance."³¹ One of the differing factors is that each Service has its own set of evaluation criteria. The RAAF evaluates 12 separate criteria, in a similar manner that the Performance and Potential sections do of a Canadian PER. While

²⁹ Australian Defence College, ADF Transition and Civil Recognition Project, "Air Force Annual Performance Appraisal Reporting Criteria." Accessed May 6, 2019. http://www.defence.gov.au/adc/adfctr/Docs/Annual_Performance_Appraisal_Reporting_Criteria_AirForce.pdf.<http://www.defence.gov.au/adc/adfctr/PAR.asp>

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

the Personnel Management Policy Manual for the ADF was available, it only contained specific details of the tri-service policy. Each individual service is responsible to administer their own reporting forms and processes, remaining within the single policy guidelines. The available information online for the particulars of how the RAAF performs performance appraisals and the benefits and criticisms of their current system was very slim, compared to the other two systems reviewed.

After reviewing three of the CAF's Allies personnel appraisal systems, it appears that while they differ in some areas, they are at their core very similar in purpose and process. All three militaries have overhauled in some form their appraisal system within the same timeframe that the CFPAS has, yet all three systems have similar faults and criticisms. The USAF, CAF, RAAF, and RAF organizations are closed systems. The only way to put leadership in place is to produce leaders internal to the organization through development and internal promotion. Therefore, some manner of assessment tool must be used to identify future leaders and prepare them for the burden of being leaders of the organization. If the current tools are flawed, is there an alternative?

THE NEW CAF MODEL

The CAF will be introducing a new competency-based assessment tool to replace the CFPAS. The new name of the system as found in the research documentation was scheduled to be the Personnel Appraisal and Talent Management System (PATMS).³² However, events have overtaken the research documentation, and according to the Chief Military Personnel website, the new name will now be the Performance and Competency

³² Karen Rankin and Kevin Rounding. *Canadian Armed Forces Competency Dictionary (CAF CD): The Way Forward*. (DRDC-RDDC-2018-L005, February 2018), 2.

Evaluation (PaCE) system.³³ The new system will not be a tweak of the old process, but part of an organizational shift to competency-based HR systems. The basis for all this resides in the new CAF Competency Dictionary (CAF CD). “The CAF CD is comprised of 19 conceptually delineated competencies representing global, broad, and comprehensive knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes.”³⁴ The 19 competencies fall into the LDF meta-competencies of Social Capacities, Professional Ideology, Expertise, Change Capacities and Cognitive Capabilities and are ordered by overall importance in the below chart taken from the DRDC scientific letter.

Table 2: CAF Competencies Ordered with LDF Meta-Competencies.

Social Capacities	Professional Ideology	Expertise	Change Capacities	Cognitive Capabilities
1 Communication	3 Credibility and Influence	5 Personnel and Resource Management	11 Stress Management and Resilience	12 Analytical Thinking
2 Teamwork	4 Commitment to CAF Military Ethos	6 Planning and Organizing	13 Developing Others	17 Innovation
10 Interpersonal Relations	8 Action Orientation and Initiative	7 Technical/Professional Proficiency	14 Developing Self	
19 Partnering	9 Ethical Reasoning	16 Organizational Awareness	15 Adaptability	
		18 Envisioning		

Source: Rounding. “The integration of the General Specifications and the CAF Competency Dictionary”, 1.

Members will be evaluated against between 10 and 18 of the competencies depending on rank. Those members who meet or exceed the expected outcomes of each competency and who have not opted out of advancing in rank will be also be evaluated on their potential. The current incarnation will see competencies rated from one to five, similar to the civilian evaluations used for public servants. The PaCE system will be fully electronic, using Monitor Mass as the initial IT backbone and then migrating to Guardian. The expectation is that because all aspects of HR management will be based on the CAF-

³³ Department of National Defence. “Performance and Competency Evaluation FAQ Page”. Last Accessed 4 May 2019. <http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/en/recruitment-careers/performance-and-competency-evaluation/faq.page>

³⁴ Kevin Rounding. “The Integration of the General Specifications and CAF Competency Dictionary: Framework and Way Forward.” (DRDC-RDDC-2016-L373, December 2016), 1.

CD, the appraisal system will naturally fit into the other professional development and career management functions.

The PaCE system will be an improvement in many ways on the CFPAS. There has been over a decade of scientific study and stakeholder input into the development process. There is a common thread of competencies being evaluated starting in the training system and working through the professional development and employment of individuals. Career management and career progression will be tied to how an individual develops the needed competencies for the next rank. The fact that the system will become electronic will in and of itself be a leap forward, being both quicker, more efficient and more environmentally friendly.

However, returning to the thesis of the paper, will PaCE resolve the main concerns of the current system and reduce dissatisfaction and grievances? This will not be determined until the system is actually implemented for a period of time, but already there are some indicators of potential pitfalls. First, the system is still using a number system to assign a score per competency, rather than just meets/does not meet assessment. There are two foreseeable outcomes of this: ratings will be inflated to push certain members ahead of their peers and it does not eliminate the bias of the evaluator. Secondly, members working on the implementation have indicated that the competencies making up the performance factors of an evaluation will still be given more weight than potential factors. This appears to be counter to the academic research that performance at one level is not a solid indicator of success at the next. Thirdly, nothing in the research of PaCE indicated that either the reporting periods will be changed or that how members are counselled on their performance will be amended. The FAQ page on the CMP site does

indicate that “Performance Feedback will be a continuous conversation between members and supervisors, and is documented in the system.”³⁵ While in theory this sounds fine, history has shown that performance feedback is only done when mandated, and even then not always (in the form of PDRs). Lastly, the training for the new system will be a combination of presentations, and mandatory online training through Defence Learning Network (DLN). Once again, experience has shown that without some manner of classroom or one on one training a not insignificant percentage of individuals will have difficulties properly implementing the new intent of the PaCE program.

It was interesting to note that the new PaCE program does not incorporate some sort of self-evaluation. Doing an online search for employee evaluation systems provides many returns that speak to either 360-degree evaluations or an assessment tool that includes the employee’s assessment of themselves as part of an annual report. Used properly, self-evaluations should act as a starting point for the continuous conversation in the above quote from the FAQ.

CONCLUSION

Assessing CAF members through a formal system is a necessary human resource function that must be performed. Due to the fact that the CAF is a closed system that develops its own future leadership internally, it is critical that the system used be right for the task. Research for this paper did not return any results that indicated whether the great leaders who have progressed through the ranks of the CAF in the last 20 years were a result of CFPAS or despite it.

³⁵ Department of National Defence. “Performance and Competency Evaluation FAQ Page”. Last Accessed 4 May 2019. <http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/en/recruitment-careers/performance-and-competency-evaluation/faq.page>.

The academic literature and opinions of the latest human resource specialists are split on the value of annual employee evaluations. Which methods provide the best employee feedback and indicators of exceptional talent are also up for debate. Among Canada's Allies, the specific methods of evaluation are all similar to each other and to Canada, with many of the same goals and reasons for performing assessments. Even though the specific forms may differ, and the way in which the assessments are conducted and when do vary slightly, they still all appear to experience the same downsides. Score inflation, deviation from policies (or outright ignoring them) and a sense of member disappointment when perceived performance does not match their assessment all abound.

Canada's new assessment tool will be evolutionary, but likely not revolutionary. The science and stakeholder input appears to have focussed in on those competencies that future leaders will need to successfully lead not only their troops but the institution as well. That said, this author still questions a system that places a greater emphasis on someone's performance, rather than their potential to succeed at the next rank.

It will be an interesting topic for further research in several years as to whether the implementation of a competency-based human resource structure has drastically improved the training, career management and member assessment. The PaCE system will be adequately mature to determine whether it has become both a fairer assessment tool and a true predictor of leadership potential.

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