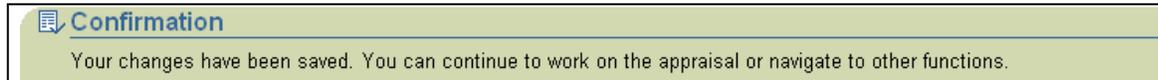


FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
NSPS PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL APPLICATION (PAA)
30 October 2006

NAVIGATION

1. What should I do when the system tells me my session has expired?

The system automatically saves your data to database tables at critical points such as when your session times out. Log back in by entering your password, clicking the “login” button, and the clicking the “retry” button. You will be returned to the same area you were in at the time your session expired and receive the following confirmation that your changes were saved.



2. What causes foreign characters to sometimes *appear* when I cut and paste from an existing MS Word Document or the DD Form 2906 to the PAA? How can I fix this?

This behavior is not unique to the PAA and may occur any time you try to cut and paste from a MS Word Document to a web based application. MS Word has a feature called “Auto Format as you Type” that replaces certain characters with special characters that are not recognized by many web based applications.

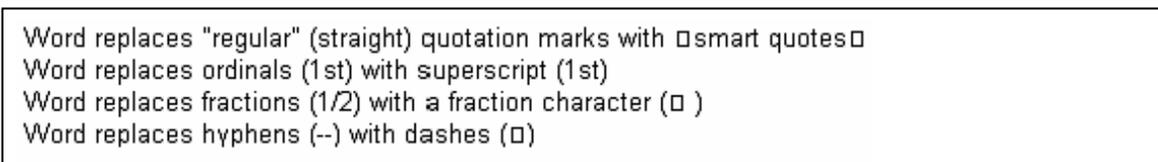
For example:

1. MS Word replaces “regular” (straight) quotation marks with “smart quotes” (curly quotes)
2. MS Word replaces ordinals (1st) with superscript (1st)
3. MS Word replaces fractions (1/2) with a fraction character (½)
4. MS Word replaces hyphens (--) with dashes (–)

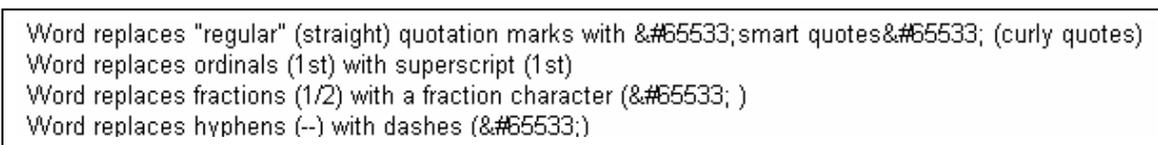
When you cut and paste from a MS Word document (or the DD Form 2906 where the text was cut and pasted from a MS Word document) and save your input, the system does not recognize these special characters and replaces them with either a box or a combination of characters.

Please see below for an illustration of the behavior:

First Save:



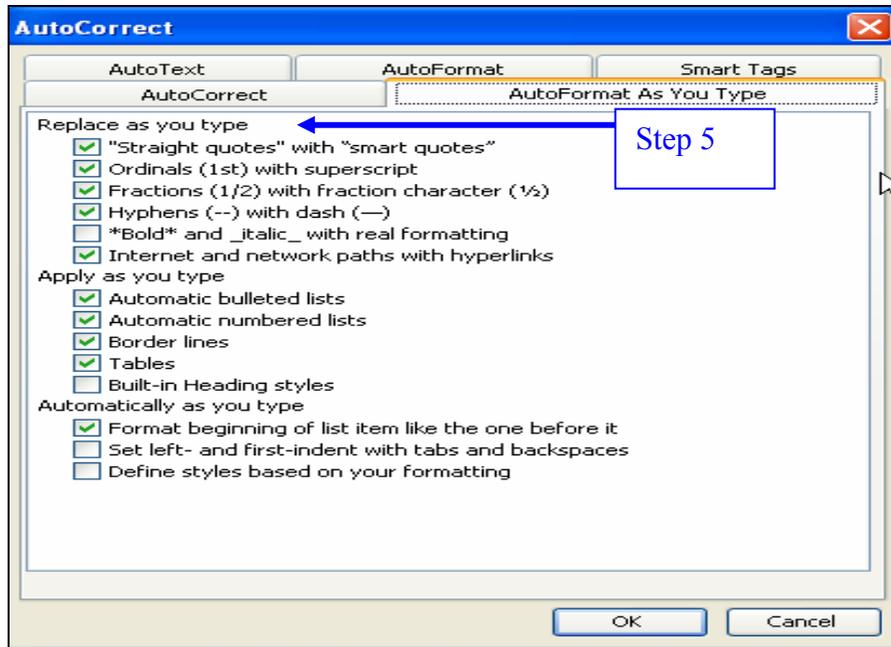
Second Save:



How do I prevent this from happening in the future?

To prevent this, turn off the “Auto Format as you Type” feature in MS Word.

1. Click “Format” on top line tool bar
2. Select “Auto Format”
3. Select “Options”
4. Select the “AutoFormat as You Type” Tab



5. De-select the first four options under the “Replace as you type”, i.e. “Straight quotes” with “smart quotes”, etc.

What options do I have if I’ve already created my document with this feature turned on?

If you are cutting and pasting from an existing document where these features were turned on, we suggest that you save the document as a text file (.txt file extension), close the document, and reopen it prior to performing your cut and paste. This will replace the auto formatting with the standard formats.

Another alternative is to correct the data directly within the NSPS appraisal module once you have saved the data.

How do I correct the PAA if my information has been modified due to these special characters?

The answer to this question depends upon the stage you are at in the performance plan/appraisal process.

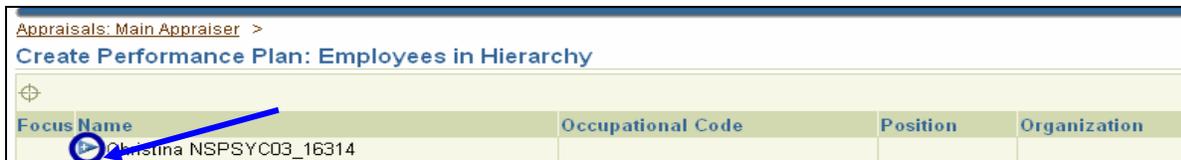
If your information is still pending and is open for revision, simply overwrite the special characters with the correct character.

If the data that needs to be corrected is in the interim review or closeout assessment area, and is approved, the rating official will have to uncheck the “approve” button so that the appropriate changes can be made by either the rating official or employee.

If a DD Form 2906 has already been created within the PAA that contains any special characters, you will receive an error message and not be able to open it. In this situation, your only option is to contact your Human Resources specialist to request that a Change Request Transmittal (CRT) be submitted to Civilian Personnel Management Services (CPMS) for the correction. You will need to provide the correct text so that it can be replaced.

3. Why can't I see the employees in my hierarchy when I navigate to the 'Create Performance Plan: Employees in Hierarchy' screen?

The most common reason is that your hierarchy is “collapsed” which is reflected by the plus (+) sign in the “Focus Name” column. See below for steps on expanding and collapsing your hierarchy.



Focus Name	Occupational Code	Position	Organization
Christina NSPSYC03_16314			

Focus Name



Click on “Focus” symbol to expand list of employees within Hierarchy. The expanded list will show the hierarchy in totality for this individual. For example: the employees whom they supervise as well as their employees.



Click on “Focus” symbol to collapse list of employees within Hierarchy

4. Sometimes while navigating in the PAA, I receive error messages such as “Stale Data”. What causes this?

The most frequent cause is due to using the browser’s “Back” button. The browser’s “Back” button should not be used when logged into My Biz or My Workplace.



DO NOT USE the browser's **Back** button.

The ability to navigate to the previous page is provided on each screen with the NSPS appraisal module.

Navigation Tips to Return to Previous Page

Use the PAA button displayed in the top right portion of your screen

OR

The “[Return to hyperlink ...](#)” in the lower left hand corner of your screen

OR

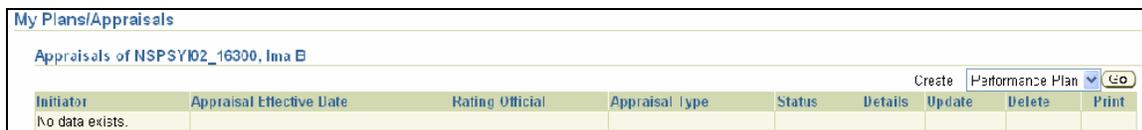
The button displayed at both the top and bottom right portions of your screen

CREATING PERFORMANCE PLANS

1. Can an employee initiate a performance plan?

Yes. The employee would log in to "My Biz" and navigate to "NSPS Appraisals (My Biz)". Click on the "Go" button to Create Performance Plan. Refer to User Guide for the proper steps in creating a performance plan. If the rating official and employee create a performance plan using the same dates in "setup details", a message will be received that there's already a plan in progress with those same dates. (See explanation of error message at end of this document.)

2. When I look at My Plans/Appraisals area, what does "No data exists" under the initiator column mean?



Initiator	Appraisal Effective Date	Rating Official	Appraisal Type	Status	Details	Update	Delete	Print
No data exists.								

The "No data exists" message indicates that a performance plan/appraisal has not been started for the employee.

3. What does 'modified' mean in the Plan Phase column under the My Plans/Appraisals in Progress area?

This means that the performance plan was modified after it was approved. For example: an "approved job objective" has been changed, therefore, the plan phase would change from "approved" to "modified".

4. If you have an employee that is on extended leave (e.g., maternity leave), can the employee access the system at home to acknowledge the plan?

No. The appraisal module is only accessible from a .mil or .gov address. However, the rating official can document the employee acknowledgement by clicking on "other" and selecting the appropriate method of communication to complete the acknowledgement.

5. What is the difference between the DD Form 2906 "Working Copy" and the final DD Form 2906 that are available under the Completed Plans/Appraisals area?

The "Working Copy" DD Form 2906 is a "draft" document that can be used by both the rating official and employee to review the performance plan/appraisal data prior to approving specific areas of the PAA. The "final" DD Form 2906 captures specific information at certain points of the appraisal cycle, i.e., approved areas such as the performance plan, interim review, closeout assessment and final rating of record.

6. When does the “Change Rating Official” affect the self-service hierarchy?

While the rating official that is selected will gain ownership of the appraisal via the "Change Rating Official" feature, this change does not affect the self-service hierarchy.

7. While the rating official and the employee are discussing job objectives, should the rating official use the ‘Working Version Job Objective’ box vs. the Job Objective box?

The rating official has the option to use either box. The working version job objective is available to allow the rating official and employee to communicate with each other in regards to developing a job objective. You may want to document the date and name of person providing the comments when entering information in this field to keep track of the dialogue.

Be aware that the job objective box has a maximum limitation of 770 characters while the working version job objective box has a maximum limitation of 2000 characters.

8. Job Objective Start Date – the actual start date of the appraisal cycle for Spiral 1.1 activities was 30-April-06, which was before the system was truly available. Can you overwrite the objective start date?

Yes, these dates can be manually changed.

9. Spiral 1.1 organizations obtained employees acknowledgement of their performance plan on the PDF- fillable copy of the DD Form 2906. It seems inappropriate to again ask the employee to acknowledge their performance plan. Can the rating official create the performance plan in the PAA without updating the Approval and Acknowledgement area for the performance plan?

Yes, for Spiral 1.1 activities, the employee does not have to acknowledge the performance plan. The rating official simply needs to update the Performance Plan Approval Date in the Setup Details area.

The screenshot shows a 'Setup Details' form with the following fields and values:

- Appraisal Type: Annual Appraisal - NSPS
- * Rating Cycle Start Date: 01-May-2006 (example: 28-Oct-2006)
- * Rating Cycle End Date: 29-Sep-2006
- * Appraisal Effective Date: 02-Jan-2007
- Assignment Number: 386685
- * Rating Official: Wink, Deon CPMS J
- Performance Plan Approval Date: (empty) (example: 28-Oct-2006)

The 'Performance Plan Approval Date' field is highlighted with a red box.

JOB OBJECTIVES, CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND OPTIONAL WEIGHTS

1. Can an employee add job objectives to a performance plan created by rating official?

Yes. The job objectives employee creates will remain “pending” until the rating official approves it. The rating official is the only person who can approve job objectives.

2. Can “Contributing Factors” be selected for job objectives created by employee?

Yes, but the rating official may elect to change the contributing factor selected by the employee.

3. Can employees change selected contributing factors identified by the rating official?

No, but you can provide feedback in the “Working Version Job Objective” box for the rating official to take into consideration. If necessary, the rating official can make adjustments to the Contributing Factor area.

4. Can an employee delete a job objective created by them?

Yes, providing the performance plan/appraisal has not been transferred to the rating official as yet. Once the performance plan/appraisal is transferred to the rating official, the rating official is the only one who can delete the job objective created by the employee.

5. Can an employee assign “Optional Weights” to the job objectives created by them?

No, the only person who can assign optional weights to a job objective is the rating official.

FEEDBACK/SELF-ASSESSMENTS AREAS

There are three opportunities within the PAA to capture rating official feedback and employee self-assessment information. They are:

- **Interim Review**
- **Closeout Assessment**
- **Annual Appraisal**

1. Does the user have to go through the acknowledgement area for an interim review?

Yes, the interim review provided by the rating official requires acknowledgement by the employee. If employee is not available to acknowledge within the PAA, the rating official can choose the method of communication. If they choose “other” as the method of communication, they must also provide an explanation in the Other Communication Method block (i.e., certified mail, e-mail, etc.). This block is limited to 20 characters.

2. If the rating official provided an assessment for an interim review, can the employee delete/edit the rating official assessment area?

No, the information is “read only” for the employee.

3. Do both the employee and rating official’s comments in the interim review section get printed on the DD Form 2906?

Yes, the approved interim review will print on DD Form 2906. The system was designed to print any interim assessments provided by both the rating official and employee.

4. When is an employee self-assessment for Closeout Assessment necessary?

If the rating official or employee depart the organization, a closeout assessment will be necessary. The only exception is during the 90 day period prior to the rating cycle end date when it may be more appropriate to do an early annual appraisal.

5. If the number of characters exceed the allowable amount for self-assessment on annual appraisal, will the exceeded number of characters print on DD Form 2906?

No, the only information that will print on the form will be the number of characters allowed.

MISCELLANEOUS

Can the rating official make a recommendation for share distribution in the PAA?

No, the PAA does not provide an area specifically for documenting shares or payout distribution information.

CHANGE IN RATING OFFICIAL

1. If a rating official departs the organization, and the new rating official has not been selected for replacement, what are the options to allow someone access to the existing plans/appraisals?

At this time, you will need to contact your Human Resources office to request that a change in rating official be accomplished for the appropriate appraisals. You will need to provide them with a list of employees, the name of previous rating official, and the name of the new rating official.

2. If a rating official knows that he/she will be leaving the organization and someone else has been assigned to take his/her place, can the departing rating official transfer the performance plans/appraisals to the new rating official?

Yes, the departing rating official can use the “Change Rating Official” feature to reassign the performance plans/appraisals in progress to the appropriate individual.

For further guidance on Change in Rating Official, refer to the “Performance Appraisal Application User Guide”, Page 158, located on the NSPS website)

NOTIFICATIONS

1. Some of my co-workers are receiving email notifications from the PAA, but I am not. What could be the cause?

There are three possible reasons for this:

- You have not updated your e-mail address in My Biz
- Your e-mail address in My Biz is incorrect
- Your component has chosen not to turn on e-mail notifications

2. How does a user “close” a Notification message within the PAA?

The message has to be open, and then user must click the “Close” button.

3. Does the user get a notification when the appraisal is final and ready to be discussed between rating official and the employee?

No, the rating official will contact the employee to schedule a meeting to discuss the final rating.

4. Will the higher level reviewer receive a notification if the rating official submits the recommended rating for approval?

Not at this time. It is important for the rating official to notify the higher level reviewer once they have submitted their recommendation so that the higher level reviewer can take appropriate action.

TEXT BOX SIZES IN APPRAISAL MODULE

For reference purposes, the following table provides the number of characters allowed for input in various areas within the PAA.

Appraisal Area	DD Form 2906 Section	Text Size
Relevant Organizational Mission/Strategic Goals	B	1400
Performance Indicators	D	1500
Job Objective	E	770
Employee Self-Assessment for Interim Review	F, I	2000
Rating Official Assessment for Interim	G, J	2000
Employee Self-Assessment for Closeout Assessment	L	2400
Rating Official Assessment for Closeout Assessment	M	2400
Employee Self-Assessment for Annual Performance Appraisal	O	6600 will be available on 29 October. Currently, the text size is 4000
Rating Official Assessment for Annual Performance Appraisal	P	2000
Employee Comments (Annual Appraisal)	R	2000
For Component Use Only	Q	4400 will be available on 19 November. Currently, the text size is 2000

ERROR MESSAGES AND WARNINGS

1. The following error message will be received if both the employee and rating official attempts to create a performance plan and one already exists with the same rating cycle start date and appraisal effective date.

 **Error**

A performance plan/appraisal exists with the same Appraisal Effective Date. Please cancel and review Plans/Appraisals in progress.

2. The following error message will appear if the optional weights assigned against job objectives don't equal 100%.

 **Error**

Total of optional weights on all job objectives must total 100%

3. If rating official attempts to approve the performance plan prior to the employee acknowledging, the following warning will be received.

 **Warning**

Cannot approve the performance plan before the employee acknowledges!

4. If rating official attempts to approve the performance plan and job objectives are still in a "Pending" status, the following error message will be received. The job objectives require approval.

 **Error**

At least one approved Job Objective is required prior to approving the performance plan.

5. A warning is received if there are one or more job objectives that have "no" selected contributing factor. This warning provides an opportunity to go back to the job objectives and identify contributing factors, if necessary.

 **Warning**

There is a job Objective(s) that have no contributing factors identified, Did you consider selecting at least one contributing factor for that job objective(s)?

No

Yes

Click yes to continue or no to return to job objectives area.

6. Error message is received if rating official submits recommended rating when the performance plan has not been approved. The performance plan must be approved prior to submitting a recommended rating.

 **Error**

A recommended rating of record is not allowed unless the performance plan has been approved.