



# With New Report, Senior Raters May Identify Just 24 Percent ‘Most Qualified’

By C. Todd Lopez — Army News Service

**T**he new policy for the noncommissioned officer evaluation report, or NCOER, due out in January, includes a limit on how many “most qualified” ratings can be handed out by a Soldier’s senior rater.

Under the new system, a senior rater may rate only as many as 24 percent as being most qualified. That limit applies when those being rated are in the rank of staff sergeant through sergeant major. The expectation will be to make the rating of “highly qualified” as the “new norm,” said Sgt. Maj. Stephen McDermid, the evaluations branch sergeant major for the Adjutant General Directorate, Human Resources Command.

“It’s important to understand that the ‘highly qualified’ selection will be the norm and that noncommissioned officers [NCOs] will remain competitive for promotion with highly-qualified NCOERs, given they complete their required professional military education,” McDermid said.

The senior rater profile is new on the NCOER, and similar to what is already being done on officer evaluation reports. Army leaders hope that implementation of a senior rater profile will help reduce “rating

inflation” within the enlisted evaluation system, which makes it difficult for promotion boards to select the most qualified for promotion.

“It’s hard to use [the NCOER] as a determiner of success and for potential for promotion when everybody is a 1,” said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey. “That should be the number-one thing we are using to decide promotion potential. And unfortunately, because it is so equivalent for everybody, you can’t. You have to go to other things like school reports, awards and decorations and all those other things.”

McDermid said the limit of 24 percent is designed to reflect the promotion percentages common across various military occupational specialties within the enlisted ranks. The intent is to make it easier for promotion boards to identify those Soldiers who are most qualified to be promoted.

The decision to set the limit to 24 percent was made by the sergeant major of the Army and his senior enlisted council. The recommendation was passed to both the Army’s chief of staff and Army secretary, who both agreed with the recommendation.

“It’ll give promotion boards the ability to see who actually are the best by using the NCOER as a true discriminator of talent — what it’s supposed to do,” Dailey said.

The NCOER includes a block labeled “Senior Rater Overall Potential.” That block includes check boxes where senior raters are asked to compare an NCO’s “overall potential” to that of other NCOs of the same grade that the senior NCO has rated in his or her career. For the NCO being rated, senior raters may select from: “most qualified,” “highly qualified,” “qualified,” or “not qualified.” They may choose only one of those ratings, and may rate up to 24 percent of their Soldiers as “most qualified.”

Another change to the NCOER includes the supplementary review.

Army leaders have asked for a supplementary review on NCOERs when the senior rater is a sergeant first class, first sergeant, master sergeant, warrant officer one, chief warrant officer two, second lieutenant or first lieutenant.

“This supplementary review will be performed by a uniformed Army Soldier, senior to the senior rater within the rated NCO’s organization,” McDermid said. “As designed, the supplementary reviewer will monitor evaluation practices and provide assistance and/or advice to rating officials as needed.”

### Counseling required

With the implementation of the new NCOER, counseling will remain critical in reviewing the Soldier’s demonstrated performance and potential while focusing on leader development throughout the rating period.

Raters must counsel the rated Soldier initially and

quarterly, while the senior rater should counsel the rated NCO twice during the rating period.

“Ideally this will occur within the first 30 days of the rating period and then at the mid-point,” McDermid said. “To account for this, senior raters will have a section on the form to annotate comments from any counseling sessions conducted with the rated NCO.”

The requirement for counseling is also expected to help curb rating inflation, Dailey said, because senior raters, who in the past have neglected to engage in counseling with an NCO for an entire rating period, have been reluctant to rate that Soldier as anything less than the best.

“That’s why they got 1 blocks in the past,” Dailey said. “[Senior raters] didn’t do their job counseling, so they just gave them a 1 block.”

Dailey said that when senior raters hold counseling with the Soldiers they senior rate, they are more comfortable providing an honest rating at the end of the year.

“If I tell you all throughout the year in counseling that you are not doing a good job, I have no problem at the end of the year telling you that you are not doing a good job,” Dailey said. “But if I haven’t done my job in telling you what you have done wrong ... then we tend to shy away from that when it is performance evaluation time.”

The new NCOER was at one point expected to hit the streets at beginning of the new fiscal year, which is Oct. 1. But Dailey asked the Army’s chief of staff and Army secretary to move the date to Jan. 1. The additional time will allow for a fine-tuning of the process and procedures for tracking senior rater profiles to ensure Soldiers have a fair chance at promotions while also preventing rating inflation. ■



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

