

FAR Groups

Reporting Appraisal FAR Groups in the SAS Database

Guidance on using SAS to report FAR Groups for your appraisal

In recent months, the Quality Team has frequently identified instances in which an appraisal's FAR Groups have been reported in SAS in an incomplete manner. Our conversations with the appraisal leads have often shown these occurrences to be the result of a misunderstanding of FAR Groups and how they apply to an appraisal.

Activity 2.2.2 of the SCAMPI Method Definition Document (MDD) defines a FAR Group: "Functional area representatives (FAR) are typically interviewed in a group across the basic units and within the organizational scope of the appraisal. The focus of the discussion in these interviews will therefore be scoped to a particular set of practices or model components used across the instantiations within the organizational scope."

By contrast, some Lead Appraisers (LAs) have come to define FAR Groups as being support functions. That interpretation is inaccurate, unfortunately. A support function is an organizational group that provides products and/or services for a bounded set of activities needed by other portions of the organization. A FAR Group is a collection of people from across the sampled basic units and support functions who provide affirmations on a specific, selected segment of the organizational unit's processes. Whereas a support function is a component of an organizational unit, a FAR Group is a data collection tool used by an LA to gather evidence during the appraisal.

It is possible for one or more members of a support function to be interviewed as functional area representatives for that support function's body of work (employees from an EPG, for example, participating in an interview that focuses on OPD and OPF), which then would make them a FAR Group from the support function. But a FAR Group can also include a much broader scope of work. Staff from multiple support functions and/or basic units may form a single FAR Group. Senior management, which may not perform a complete process area on their own, and therefore would not be considered a support function, are likely to be included as a FAR Group to provide affirmations related to their oversight of the OU's processes. Testers, developers, project managers, designers, and other project team members may all represent FAR Groups within an OU.

When reporting an appraisal's FAR Groups in a SAS record, the groups' names (as determined by the LA), a brief description of the practices or process areas about which they will be interviewed, and the numbers of interviewees should be provided. If a series of interviews are performed to cover a similar topic, these interviews and interviewees can be considered one unified FAR Group. For example, if there are three basic units

in the organizational scope, and each project's manager is to be interviewed separately, a single "Project Manager" FAR Group with three members could be identified. If separate interviews are held for the development team from each project, a "Developers" FAR Group could include all of these staff members. The focus is on reporting how affirmations were grouped so as to achieve coverage of the full model scope.

Questions regarding this Quality Tip can be sent to quality@cmmiinstitute.com.