

FORMAL BOARD CHARGE

SENIOR MASTER SERGEANT PROMOTION BOARD, CYCLE 2024

This board convenes under the provisions of Department of the Air Force Instruction 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs*. While performing this service, you work for the Chief of Staff of the Air Force under the direct guidance of the Board President and have a dramatic and enduring effect on advancing us toward the Air Force we need. Your duty is to evaluate the performance of Master Sergeants eligible for promotion to Senior Master Sergeant.

Air Force policy limits the number of Master Sergeants that can be selected for the next higher grade; Senior Master Sergeants comprise of 2 percent of the enlisted force. This percentage, along with changes in force structure, allows for a limited number of vacancies to Senior Master Sergeant; therefore, the importance of only promoting the best-qualified Master Sergeants cannot be over emphasized.

When reviewing performance evaluations, be mindful that the Air Force modernized the evaluation system in 2023 with a marked difference in *how* we evaluate Airmen. The changes impacted how we measure performance using the Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs) to provide clearer assessments of an Airman's performance and potential. The revisions featured a shift to plain language and the introduction of the Higher Level Reviewer (HLR), ensuring Airmen receive more meaningful feedback from leaders who closely observe their work across their peer group in order to enhance standardized and relevant peer comparisons, and improve performance assessment for future talent management decisions.

As a result of the HLR implementation, some evaluators will now have different reference points compared to previous evaluators in the same role/unit. When reviewing and scoring eligible Airmen, focus on evaluating the performance of individuals based on their own merits rather than comparing them to past individuals or past evaluators of that same position. Board members should calibrate themselves to the change to be cognizant when assessing an Airman's record, looking back in the years preceding the change.

Your charge is to review and score the records of eligible Airmen within a given career field. This basis for their promotion selection depends on your evaluation of their proven leadership and potential to serve in the next higher grade.

As Colonels and Chief Master Sergeants, your experience led to your selection as board members. You accept an oath to serve without prejudice or partiality. To ensure absolute credence in the board process, the expectation is for you to act in the best interest of the Air Force as a whole and not in the interest of any one command, specialty, group, individual, or any other interest that interferes with the fair evaluation of each eligible Airman. You must look at the records of the Airmen you score and, if called upon, justify your evaluation. Equal opportunity and unbiased evaluation are essential elements of our promotion system. Therefore, your evaluation of all Airmen must afford them fair and equitable consideration. Preferential treatment of any Airman, group or career field is strictly prohibited.

Application of the promotion selection rate allows Air Force leadership to manage the enlisted

force structure effectively. The actual promotion rate varies from year to year based on the needs of the Air Force; not all career fields, special duty identifiers, and/or force generating specialties receive a promotion quota. Board evaluations determine, the final quotas applied to the top of the order of merit listing by using each eligible Airman's board score.

The Chief of Staff emphasized the need for deliberate evaluation of Airmen eligible for promotion to the top enlisted ranks. Our Airmen experience greater demands due to continuous combat, increased expeditionary operations, budget constraints, and an ever-changing force structure. Therefore, Airmen must have good leadership and managerial experience to prepare them for the challenges they and the Air Force will face. The Air Force must continue to foster a culture that encourages and rewards creativity, innovation, calculated risk-taking, and critical thinking. The effectiveness and efficiency of the Air Force will continue to demand excellent management and leadership skills.

In determining who is best qualified for promotion, you will consider ALQs, carefully assessing the four Major Performance Areas (Executing the Mission, Leading People, Managing Resources, and Improving the Unit). You should consider the Four Major Performance Areas equally when evaluating an Airman's potential to serve in the next higher grade. In your review, avoid equalizing the performance value between Airmen and defaulting to or elevating other factors as pass-fail discriminators. To find a discriminator between records, use caution to avoid placing undue emphasis on any one factor or statement; however, job proficiency remains the primary factor. Stratification statements can be a valuable tool when used in the proper context.

It is Air Force policy that an Airman with a projected date of separation or retirement, by itself, is not sufficient justification for non-selection. If selected for promotion, the Airman may request the separation or retirement date be withdrawn and accept the promotion.

Considering the Airman's marital status or a spouse's employment, educational, or volunteer service activities is prohibited. Therefore, if you see such information in the records you review, disregard it.

You are to base your recommendations only on the material in each eligible Airman's military record. You may not discuss or disclose the opinion of any person not a member of the board concerning an eligible Airman unless the material provided to the board contains that opinion.

Airmen not selected for promotion occasionally challenge the board's evaluation. If approached in this regard, advise the individual that your responsibility as a board member ceased upon adjournment of the board and instruct the Airman to contact AFPC Enlisted Promotions.

Remember, your primary job while here is to ensure each Airman receives fair and equitable consideration. Therefore, any board member who believes they cannot, in good conscience, perform their duties as a board member without prejudice or partiality must request relief from the Chief of Staff from such duty. Also, any board member who believes the integrity of the board's proceedings has been adversely affected by improper influence of superior military or civilian authority, misconduct of the Board President, or a board member, or any other reason, must request, from the Chief of Staff, relief from their obligation not to disclose board proceedings and, upon receiving it, report the basis for their belief.

During your board deliberations, you may review records containing adverse information. Carefully weigh the adverse information against the SNCO's performance record and potential to serve in the next higher grade. Give the information appropriate weight, neither ignoring significant information nor giving undue weight to matters of little significance. In examining adverse information, consider its severity, repetition, timing within the SNCO's career, the amount of time passed since the incident, the SNCO's performance since, and the rating chain's assessment of the SNCO.

Upon completion of board deliberations, you shall, as a minimum, certify in your report that:

- (1) the board complied with the Chief of Staff's Formal Board Charge
- (2) you were not subject to or aware of any improper attempts to coerce or influence any action in the formulation of the board's recommendation
- (3) you were not a party to or aware of any attempt at unauthorized communications
- (4) the board carefully considered the record of each Airman
- (5) the board conducted voting by use of a secret ballot
- (6) in the opinion of the voting board members, the Master Sergeants recommended for promotion are the best qualified to meet the needs of the Air Force.

The Chief of Staff's direction prohibits the disclosure of board proceedings, findings, and results. Do not keep the names of Airmen considered or any statistical data about board results, and do not disclose your knowledge of the same to anyone, including your superior officers and commanders. Discussing board processes before the public release of promotion selections is prohibited. Sharing your personal observations of the board's proceedings or deliberations after the promotion results are public is also prohibited. However, you may use the briefing slides provided by the board secretariat staff to brief the board process and structure, which includes overall numbers evaluated, the organization of the board, the general procedures followed, and the number and grade of its membership.

Additional Chief of Staff Instructions

Specific Guidance. In fulfilling your responsibilities as board members, the following specific guidance applies:

Primary Responsibilities. The expectation is for Master Sergeants begin transitioning from front-line supervisors and trainers to leaders of teams with operational competence and overall effectiveness. Master Sergeants are expected to effectively cultivate a climate of inclusion and excellence. Furthermore, Master Sergeants are required to study leaders' decisions to understand their rationale and goals and then translate and communicate tasks and responsibilities up and down the chain of command in order to facilitate mission accomplishment. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to foster unit cohesion, connectedness, and belonging as a team, and leverage their personal experience/knowledge to effectively accomplish and advance the mission. Additionally, the expectation is for Master Sergeants to contribute to a professional climate and culture by ensuring their teams understand leadership orders by clarifying expectations as well as identifying, highlighting, and correcting behaviors that might detract from a professional climate and culture. Lastly, Master Sergeants are expected to be highly proficient at the ALQs and have a comprehensive knowledge of the foundational competencies operating at the advanced and expert levels.

Major Performance Areas (MPAs)

Executing the Mission. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to develop a greater understanding of leadership, operational, and managerial concepts, and advance communication skills to reach and connect with diverse audiences to accomplish the mission. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to establish and expand relationships to advance priorities and connect teams to solve problems. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to foster a climate of dignity, respect, and inclusion, and set the example for a culture that does not tolerate sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, or discrimination of any kind. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to demonstrate knowledge and professional skill in their assigned duties, while achieving positive results and impact in support of the mission. Additionally, the expectation is for Master Sergeants to contribute to a professional climate and culture by supporting leaders' decisions, seeking clarification when needed, and defining expectations to their subordinates, as well as identifying, highlighting, and correcting behaviors that might detract from their teams. Furthermore, Master Sergeants assess and take independent or directed action to complete a task or mission that impacts the mission or organization.

Leading People. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to empower Noncommissioned Officers and maintain harmony between caring for people and executing the mission. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to actively integrate subordinates' talents, skills, and abilities and collaborate effectively with other teams to achieve an inclusive climate in pursuit of a common goal or to complete a task or mission. They must mentor their subordinates and peers through continual education, training, and experience to develop ready and disciplined teams. Master Sergeants play a unique and critical role in developing and advising officers to lead teams successfully. Furthermore, Master Sergeants exercise emotional intelligence by exercising self-awareness, managing their own emotions effectively, demonstrating an understanding of others' emotions, and appropriately managing relationships. When communicating, Master Sergeants must articulate information in a clear and timely manner, both verbally and non-verbally, through active listening

and messaging tailored to the appropriate audience. Finally, they should support professional development by sharing knowledge and experience and enforcing standards to best meet the organization's mission requirements. They also build and maintain professional relationships and strive to create effective leadership teams.

Managing Resources. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to demonstrate responsible management of assigned resources, which may include time, equipment, people, funds, and/or facilities, and work to improve resource management in organizations, teach and encourage others to do the same. Additionally, the expectation is for Master Sergeants to be accountable and take responsibility for the actions and behaviors of self and/or team, demonstrating reliability and transparency. Furthermore, the Air Force tasks Master Sergeants with understanding and being prepared to advocate for both current and future fiscal budget requirements.

Improving the Unit. The expectation is for Master Sergeants to understand, manage, and explain manning health and capabilities based on unit requirements and manpower documents, and assist commanders with balancing risk to mission and risk to force. Master Sergeants must make well-informed, effective, and timely decisions under their control that weigh constraints, risks, and benefits to enable a culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, the expectation is for Master Sergeants to think critically and creatively about different ways to solve problems, implement improvement, and demonstrate calculated risk-taking to improve themselves and their work center/unit.

General Guidance.

Education. The Air Force withholds selection brief data pertaining to Enlisted Professional Military Education; however, completion is a requirement for promotion eligibility to the rank of Senior Master Sergeant. The Air Force places a high emphasis on all post-secondary education, which includes programs at civilian institutions and military-sponsored colleges/universities including but not limited to the Community College of the Air Force. Completion of post-secondary education and career field related certifications, like other whole person factors, must be assessed in terms of how it enhances performance and potential; and contributes to the mission and effectiveness of the Air Force. Senior Enlisted Leaders must be able to think strategically, write effectively, and be articulate. Post-secondary education helps improve these skill sets.

Experience. Professional development is very important, and you must consider an Airman's breadth of experience because the expectation is for Master Sergeants to lead effectively at the operational and strategic levels. Performing duties in joint and/or coalition positions directly supporting combat and nation-building are valuable skills that the Air Force seeks to retain and utilize for future application. Experiences that contribute to broader cultural awareness and enable better communication in a global operating environment are crucial underpinnings to support strategic national interests. Additionally, Airmen serving in Force Generating positions such as an instructor or recruiter, build and transform our next generation of Total Force leaders and significantly contribute to developing a high-quality enterprise expectant to warfighting success. Leadership experience gained through breadth of experience from within specialties, through retraining, special duties, and higher headquarters, and joint duty assignments are very important factors when determining who is best qualified to be a Senior Master Sergeant. Assignments outside of an Airman's specialty provide a perspective that can be very beneficial to

Senior Enlisted Leaders. Deployment experience can be valuable in developing leadership skills; however, not all Airmen are afforded the opportunity to deploy, therefore, it is not a pass-fail item.

Non-Rated Periods of Supervision. Policy authorizes particular circumstances for non-rated periods to include lengthy initial skills and advanced training courses; and unique medical circumstances to include post-traumatic stress and Airmen requiring a recovery period as a result of surgery, invasive treatment (such as radiation and chemotherapy), counseling, and/or other rehabilitative treatments and services as well as commander's determination of catastrophic events out of an Airman's control. Board members will give attention to the job performance [if any] performed during these periods. Consider the quality of performance, given each Airman's unique non-rated circumstances versus the quantity of performance compared to their peers. Having non-rated periods of supervision will not negatively affect an Airman and must not be factored into your assessment of the record of performance. Being TDY or deployed is NOT an example of a period that is non-rated.

Level of Stratification/Endorsement. Senior Rater HLR stratification/endorsement is not mandatory nor guaranteed, unless due to forced endorsement. In 2023, Master Sergeant stratification allocations increased; Senior rater HLRs may stratify up to 25% of MSgts. The top 10% of MSgts will receive a numerator and denominator stratification (#X of X) and an additional 15% of MSgts will receive a stratification statement of "Top 25%". NOTE: The current EPB does not have a section to document "Joint" or "DAF" stratifications; therefore, the HLR is only authorized to document the "Joint" or "DAF" stratification in the HLR assessment comment section.