Radcliffe Department of Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

PDR: Academic & Research: Reviewers

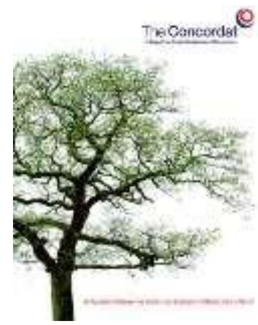
Radcliffe Department of Medicine

A GUIDE FOR RESEARCH REVIEWERS & PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS CONDUCTING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Personal Development Review (PDR) provides a simple but powerful framework for managing the performance and development of your staff.



PDR also helps fulfil the requirements set out in the *Concordat* agreed between the UK's major funders and the employers of researchers regarding the development of research staff. The Concordat sets out the expectations and responsibilities of researchers, their managers (i.e. PIs), employers and funders.

The research councils and other major funders are committed to the Concordat, and actively seek evidence that it is being implemented not only at organisational level, but also at research group level. Applications for funding, and reports to funders, now often have an element dealing directly with researcher development and how this will take place during the life of the funding. At Oxford, we put our commitment to the Concordat into operation through our Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff[1], (available online).

There are, however, some points of divergence between the guidance accompanying the Code of Practice regarding reviews and the typical departmental arrangements for PDR, and these are addressed in this document.

Your staff should receive two types of review during their time with you: **probationary reviews** (during probation) and **PDR**. It therefore makes sense to discuss both types of review and to see them as lying on a continuum, and that is the approach adopted in this booklet.

The booklet sets out a series of steps to follow, rather than a debate of alternatives and variations, providing easy-to-follow checklists and guiding principles rather than underlying theory or skills.

For more support on PDR, speak to your local personnel and look at the departmental or Oxford Learning Institute websites.

http://www.rdm.ox.ac.uk/career-progression-and-training-overview

http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/index.html?page=1

These websites include information on and links to career progression and training, RDM's Career Development Committee and Mentoring Scheme, details of support available for research staff including the Careers Service, training courses available, regrading processes and contract types, and the annual reward and recognition scheme.

[1]This will be referred to as the *Code of Practice* in this booklet. To read the Code of Practice, go to: http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/cops/rsemp-career/rscop/

Career Progression and Training Overview

From this link http://www.rdm.ox.ac.uk/career-progression-and-training-overview on the 'Working at RDM' web pages, you'll find lots of information on how RDM and the University can help support and develop your career:

- Career Development Committee
- Personal Development Review
- Mentoring
- Career Development and Training Courses
- Support for Research Staff
- Careers Service
- Contract Types
- Pay Scales
- Reward and Recognition Scheme
- Regrading Procedure
- Oxford Academic Career Path

THE ROLE OF PDR

PDR is the University's appraisal process for Support, Academic-related and Research staff. Academic staff members have their own appraisal system, though academics who manage staff often participate in PDR.

PDR:

- Reviews achievement of, or progress against, agreed objectives and development goals and summarises the reviewee's achievements since the last review.
- Agrees clear objectives and clarifies expectations so that reviewees know exactly what they should focus on and what you see as important.
- Identifies any development needed to enable reviewees to do their jobs to the agreed standards and to develop capabilities needed by you or by them in the context of becoming a rounded and capable researcher.

Typically, PDR consists of an annual review supported by in-year, one-to-one meetings to discuss progress. As such, it mirrors what many successful PIs probably already do with their research staff. So why do PDR if it simply mimics what PIs who are good with staff do anyway? Two reasons:

1. PDR provides a structure that enables busy PIs to remember to do fundamentally important things such as talking to staff about their performance and development;
2. PDR provides a template that new, less experienced or just less 'good with staff' PIs can use to ensure their staff members are productive and that they develop the skills and abilities needed to be a successful researcher.

PDR is important both for research staff and for you as a PI. If done well, PDR can help you to:

- Identify gaps in your research staff's skills and experience;
- Identify any obstacles to good performance and agree ways to remove or reduce the impact of these, so enabling your team to achieve more;

- Ensure your staff develop to be more capable researchers, which benefits you, your research, the member of staff and the University as a whole;
- Align research staff roles and responsibilities with your group's priorities and work, and ensure everyone has a shared understanding of what you and your team is trying to achieve and what their role is in this;
- Clarify expectations – unclear expectations are often a cause of the kind of dissatisfaction and petty grumblings that can undermine the work of a research team;
- Get to know your staff better, including what motivates them, their goals and their anxieties;
- Provide a track record and exemplars for funders, who are increasingly interested in what PIs do to develop capable researchers and who are keen to have proof of this taking place.

Note that PDR does not cover students, so any graduate students who are part of your research group are not required to have a PDR, however the principles and the process of PDR could be as useful with students as with staff and you may wish to use the process to conduct formal/ informal PDRs with your graduate students.

PDR IN CONTEXT

Within the context of their work 'lifecycle' all research staff typically undergo two types of review: Probationary Reviews, and PDR. These are similar, but, technically, PDR takes place only when the person is confirmed in post. Until then, their reviews are Probationary Reviews. All reviews, however, look back to the time when the objectives were last agreed and then forward to the next review, and this process is equally applicable to probationary reviews. The first probationary review, which should occur at the mid-point of the probationary period, will look back at the expectations and priorities identified at induction and then forward to the final probationary review (which should be held a month or so before the end of the probationary period).

Similarly, the first PDR looks back to any objectives agreed at the final Probationary Review.

There is, in effect, a continuous line of reviews that starts with the setting out of expectations at induction and ends with the last PDR before the end of the contract.

Because many, probably, all, of your research staff will be on fixed-term contracts, this 'line of reviews' will be relatively short, so it makes sense to set PDR in the context of this sequence of reviews and to provide some guidance on induction and probation as well as on PDRs in their true sense (i.e., after confirmation in post).

Also, although the *Code of Practice* states that research staff should be included in departmental arrangements for PDR, departmental arrangements are based on an annual review, which means that some research staff on short-term contracts might have only one PDR, which would be a wholly inadequate approach to developing them. So you should ensure that you allow for flexibility when looking at works best for you and your research staff.

At each review meeting, the reviewer (usually the PI, but in larger research groups it could be the person designated as the line manager or supervisor) and the reviewee look back over the preceding 12 months and then forward to the 12 months to come.

For a researcher on a fixed-term contract this annual cycle is less useful than it is for permanent staff. To make it work, we need to look at four overlapping sets of requirements and find a sensible pattern of reviews. These requirements are linked to:

1. Induction;
2. Probation;
3. PDR;
4. The Code of Practice guidelines.

Induction

Induction starts the process of reviews by making clear what your expectations are, how things are done in your team, what the new member of staff's priorities should be in the first half of their probationary term, and how they will be evaluated with regard to their probationary period. In effect, induction produces the first set of criteria against which both you and they can carry out an evaluation at a mid-point probationary review (e.g., at six months for a one year probationary period, or at the three-month point for a six month probationary period).

Probation

In the probationary period, the reviews are Probationary Reviews rather than PDR reviews. These, however, are almost indistinguishable from PDR reviews other than they have the added, ultimate purpose of helping you make a summative judgement on whether or not to confirm the person in role.

You should have at least two review points during probation: one at the mid- point of the probationary period; the other at least a month before the end of probation.

These reviews, and your observations and discussions with the new member of staff as part of their on-going work, will help you make your decision on whether or not to confirm them in the role. The probationary reviews also provide the opportunity to look at their development needs and to agree their key objectives until their next review (assuming you confirm them in post).

Once out of the probationary period, their reviews then become PDR reviews, but their development is also shaped by the requirements of the Code of Practice.

PDR

Once the probationary period is past, PDRs become the main framework for staff development and performance, but, as we have already discussed, annual reviews may not work well for contract research staff. For example, someone on a three year contract may only get two PDRs.

A researcher on a two-year contract, however, might end up having only one PDR. Neither feels right. Because of this, some PIs opt to carry out mid-point mini- reviews, so that, effectively, a discussion is held every six months or so. This satisfies the needs of the department and of the Code of Practice, and, most importantly, the needs of contract research staff.

Code of Practice guidance

The *Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff*

http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/cops/rsemp-career/rscop/

states that researchers should be included in departmental arrangements for PDR. However, the Code does not say, 'researchers must have a PDR only once a year'; in essence, the Code of Practice is saying researchers should always have PDRs if the department has them. They can, of course, have them regardless of this as PDRs are one of the most effective way of shaping performance and contribution.

The guidance notes that accompany the Code of Practice state that, at a minimum, researchers should have a review not long after starting (i.e. in the probationary period) and then regular reviews during their contract, one of which should take place around nine months before the due end date of the contract. This final review allows those on fixed-term contracts time to identify and address any areas of weakness that might affect their employability either with you or elsewhere.

HOW TO CARRY OUT REVIEWS

Probationary reviews and PDRs are very alike, so PDR provides a good model for Probationary reviews, on which there is generally less guidance other than on timing and outcomes.

Reviews basically have three stages:

1. Planning
2. The review meeting
3. Follow-up

All reviews follow this pattern, so let's look at what each stage involves.

STEP 1: PLANNING FOR THE REVIEW MEETING

A principle of PDR is that staff should self-evaluate before each review meeting, thinking about:

1. What has gone well/less well against their main tasks and objectives;
2. If any obstacles got in the way and how these might be removed/ overcome.
3. What their objectives might be for the period between this review and the next.
4. What areas they need to develop to be successful in their current research and to be successful in their career.

Your role at the planning stage is to give some thought to the same questions. The Departmental PDR form helps the reviewee to reflect on the period since the last review (or since their start date) and to plan for the period until the next review. This reflection is important and adds to the ability of the researcher to monitor and shape their own performance.

The PDR paperwork set out the key areas to cover during the planning stage and during the review meeting. To ensure that thought is given to the skills and experiences that underpin success as a researcher, encourage your staff to look at the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) on the Vitae website (www.vitae.ac.uk). Vitae is the national body for the development of researchers (including PIs) and has produced a comprehensive breakdown of the key areas that researchers might seek to develop over the early years of their career.

You might find it useful to look at this framework yourself, but you should certainly encourage your research staff to use it as part of their planning and reflection.

It can be a good idea for the reviewee to send you their planning form before the review meeting so you know what they want to discuss and can add anything to this that you want to discuss. You can then send the amended form back to the reviewee so that you both now know what will be covered in the meeting and there are no surprises in store at the meeting.

This '***principle of no surprises***' is important as it enables the meeting to be a review rather than a debate about new issues. Whether or not you send a planning form back and forth is up to you, but the principle of no surprises is a good one to abide by as new 'issues' can hijack the discussion and take it in entirely the wrong direction. It is definitely the place to summarise any issues that have arisen and to remind each other of what has been agreed with regard to these, but it is not the place to raise them.

STEP 2: THE REVIEW DISCUSSION

The review usually starts with the reviewee giving their thoughts on the period since the last review. The important thing is that this is *their* meeting, about them, so encourage them to talk, to give their views and to reflect.

After the initial thoughts of the reviewee, the review then starts to focus on answering the key questions associated with 'looking back' and 'looking ahead':

Looking back: a summary of the period since the last review (or since induction) – what has gone well/less well; what were the main activities; were there any obstacles and how can these be overcome; were there any changes from the job descriptions or unexpected aspects to the work; did any development needs emerge from this period?

Looking ahead to the next period: what are the important things to focus on; are there any anticipated challenges or changes; what objectives should the reviewee strive to achieve; what help/support might they need; what development needs emerge from the challenges ahead and the aspirations and skill gaps of the individual; how can these be met, and what support might be needed?

You should decide who will take brief notes at the meeting, but these can be very concise, covering the key points discussed and agreed. Typically, the manager completes a record of the review discussion afterwards and the reviewee reads and once it is agreed, signs it. You can decide if this format suits you and your reviewee.

STEP 3: FOLLOW UP

This is the key stage. All of the reflection, planning and discussion will count for little if there is no on-going discussion and support.

During the period between reviews, you should carry out regular, short, one-to- one meetings to check that all is well, and to adjust plans if necessary, to give recognition for achievement and to deal with any performance that is not up to standard. These short meetings are the key to getting the best performance out of your staff and to preventing problems arising or festering. They need take no more than 10-15 minutes at most, and will repay you many times over in the time you will save not having to sort out problems and issues that you were unaware of. If there is such a thing as a 'secret of effective management' it is this; sit down with your individual members of staff regularly and ask them how things are going. Give them feedback, check progress against objectives, adjust plans, give encouragement and pick up on any under-performance as part of these one-to-ones and you will reap the rewards in enhanced morale, better engagement, greater achievement and better research.

Appendix 1 sets out an overview of the typical process for reviews.

GUIDANCE ON REVIEWS

PROBATIONARY REVIEWS

Setting the scene for the Probationary Reviews: Induction

The important thing is that the new starter should know what is expected of them, what their priorities are, and something about 'how things are done around here' as a result of effective induction, which would typically include induction to:

- Oxford (both the locale and the University);
- The department;
- Your team/group;
- The role they will carry out;
- You (and in particular, to your expectations).

To explore expectations, you might find it useful to adapt the *Expectations* exercises that can be found on the Learning Institute website at:

http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/oxfor dlearninginstitute/documents/overview/rsv/ExpectationsinSupervision.pdf

http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwadminoxacuk/localsites/oxfor dlearninginstitute/documents/overview/rsv/Clarifying Expectations.pdf

Very importantly, induction should cover all the legal compliance aspects relevant to a new starter, including health and safety. As with most inductions, a lot of the information will not sink in first time around, so give it time. In particular, ensure they understand how you see their role and that they know your expectations of them, including what they should focus on and what they should seek to accomplish over the probationary period. Your mid-point probationary review of them will then be able to look back at how they've settled in, and forward to what they can seek to achieve during the rest of their probationary period.

The Code of Practice guidance suggests you encourage new researchers to use the checklist on the following page to help them during their induction, and that you use the checklist on the page that follows that to guide your thinking.

The induction checklist for new Research Staff:

- What do I want to get out of this experience as a researcher at Oxford?
- Where do I see myself being in five or ten years' time? What are the implications of that for my career and professional development while I'm here? What opportunities do I need to look for?
- Do I understand the terms of my contract, including the fixed-term nature of it?
- Have I seen a copy of the University's Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff?
- Have I looked at the staff handbook on the website?
- Have I completed my initial induction? Do I know what induction procedures there are in the department/group? What have I been sent or given? What do I need to know about? Who shall I ask? (My supervisor? The departmental administrator? A colleague?)
- Do I know about research and publication protocols and codes of practice in my group and department, and in the University generally? Do I know what training is available from the University on research integrity?
- How clear am I about what is expected of me in this project?
- Do I know what the Careers Service offers specifically for researchers?
- Do I know what the Oxford Learning Institute and my division offer (e.g. induction seminars, seminars on teaching)?
- Do I know what the University and College Union offers for research staff?

The PI / Research Leader checklist for inducting staff:

- What departmental induction processes are in place for me to draw on?
- Have I clarified the job description and my expectations of the researcher's 'output'?

- Have I provided a copy of the research proposal, including the deliverables against which our progress will be assessed?
- Have I explained that the contract is a fixed-term one and clarified the implications of this with the researcher?
- What degree of freedom does the researcher have in pursuing the research objectives? Has this been discussed?
- Is the researcher aware of the relevant standards and policies on research integrity, and have they agreed to observe these?
- How clear is the researcher about laboratory procedure and practice (where appropriate)?
- Have I explained the protocols for publication (authorships, favoured publication methods)?
- Does the researcher know what resources are available – and, if not, do they know how to find out – in terms of library, computing, laboratory facilities and materials, and technical assistance?
- Is the researcher from overseas? Do they need information or support regarding accommodation, bank accounts, signing on with a doctor, getting a national insurance number, etc.? Do they need support with English language development, and if so have I given them information about the University's Language Centre?
- What other information does the researcher need (e.g. about university induction events, or the University's Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff)? Have they received this information?
- What teaching opportunities and/or obligations are there for the researcher and have I communicated these?
- What opportunities have I offered for the researcher to explain their own needs and aspirations, and to bring out any skills they may have that could contribute to the project or more widely to the group or department?

The mid-point Probationary Review

The probationary period for research staff can vary greatly, from 3 to 12 months, so the mid-point will vary accordingly. The aim of the mid-point review is to see how well the individual has settled in and to provide feedback that will help them successfully complete their probationary period.

The mid-point probationary review looks back at what has gone well/less well since induction; what expectations have/have not been met; any obstacles to achievement and how these can be overcome; what their objectives could and should be; any support or development they need to help them succeed.

By this stage, you will probably have some idea of their potential strengths and weaknesses, and you may have some idea of their goals and aspirations. This provides a start point for discussing possible development opportunities during the time you employ them.

Much of their focus at this stage will be on their specific role and on passing the probation period successfully, which is as it should be, but you should encourage them to familiarise themselves with the opportunities for development at Oxford and beyond, so that they can take some responsibility for their own development. You might want to make them aware of:

- Any departmental training and development opportunities;
- Any relevant provision shown on the Divisional website;
- Courses at Research Services, IT Services, OLI and the Language Centre;
- The Vitae website and, in particular, the Researcher Development Framework, which might help them identify specific needs.
- The support you can give (e.g. coaching).
- Other opportunities, such as conferences, contributing to publications and so on;

There is also a regular Welcome Event for research staff, organised by the Oxford Learning Institute, which will help them get a feel for the career and development support available.

The final Probationary Review

This should happen at least one month before the end of the probationary period as one of the questions you will seek to answer is: *Am I satisfied that this is the right person for this role?* If you are unsure, or if your conclusion is *No*, then you should consult immediately with the Department Administrator or Personnel support person. There are two possible actions you can take as the result of this review:

1. Not confirm the person in post (which could consist of either extending their probationary period or ending their contract).

2. Confirm the person in post, which is usually done via your Administrator or Personnel person.

If the individual is retained, this final review will look back at the probationary period and ahead to the period until the next review point. As such, this review follows the pattern already described though it is technically not a PDR.

Some PIs choose to carry out a short probationary review that simply deals with the issue of retention or non-retention and then hold a PDR review once the person has been confirmed in post in order to set objectives and priorities for the period until the next review.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS
PDR during the main part of the contract

Once the probationary period has been successfully completed, reviews become Personal Development Reviews and follow the format already described. You can follow the timing of the departmental arrangements but, as pointed out earlier, the timing can be adjusted to provide a better framework for contract researchers. As long as you can provide the appropriate paperwork (the PDR form) for personnel when they are running the annual PDR exercise, the actual date of the PDR can be flexible.

You should use the PDR form, but you may wish to adapt the questions to suit the situation and the individual (e.g., do you want to break down any discussion of key activities into areas such as Teaching, Conferences, Publications, or do you want to base any detailed discussion on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework ?)

The Code of Practice suggests that during the body of the contract period, research staff should regularly ask themselves the questions in the next section, and that you, as the PI, ask yourself the questions in the section after that.

These questions, though useful and highly relevant, are overarching questions and each review will still need to work through the 'looking back' and 'looking forward' questions of the review process in order to be precise about what has gone well/less well, and about any development needed.

Questions research staff should ask of themselves during the main part of the contract:

- How is my work progressing? Have I asked for feedback from my supervisor or from colleagues? What am I doing well? What could I improve? How am I working on these?
- How well am I attending to my career? What opportunities have I taken (e.g. conferences, publications, grant applications, teaching, training events and networking)?
- How well am I attending to my personal development? Have I had a personal development review meeting?
- What are my achievements? What are my goals? How do I see my future beyond the end of this contract? What action am I taking towards this?
- Have I registered with the Careers Service for Researchers?

Questions PIs should ask of themselves during the main part of the contract:

- How is the researcher's work progressing? What are they doing well? What could they improve? How am I communicating my views on these? Am I making my expectations clear?
- How is the researcher attending to their own professional development? What opportunities and encouragement am I offering for them to do so (e.g. conferences, publications, grant applications, college attachments, teaching, committee membership, training events)?

- How does the researcher see their future beyond the end of this contract? What action are they taking?
- Is the researcher aware of the support available from the University Careers Service, the Oxford Learning Institute and divisional research training teams; are they aware of the 'job opportunities' page of the University's website?

The final PDR before the end of the contract

The final PDR should take place some 6-9 months before the end of the contract period even if the intention and likelihood is renewal of the individual's contract, as this enables them to address any development needs that might help them either to retain their current role or to seek a new role.

At this stage, in addition to the questions that form the basis of the PDR, the Code of Practice suggests that the individual should ask the questions shown on the next section, and the PI reflect on the questions on the section after that.

Questions research staff should ask themselves in the last third of their contract period:

- Have I familiarised myself with university procedures relating to the expiry of fixed term contracts?
- What are the prospects for my continuing employment on this (or a different) project? (Do I want to stay?)
- What discussions have I had with my supervisor about this? What communication have I had with my departmental administrator? What action am I taking to secure the job that I want when this one finishes?
- Where else can I get advice and support? In particular, have I checked what advice for researchers is available to me from the Careers Service or from divisional resources?

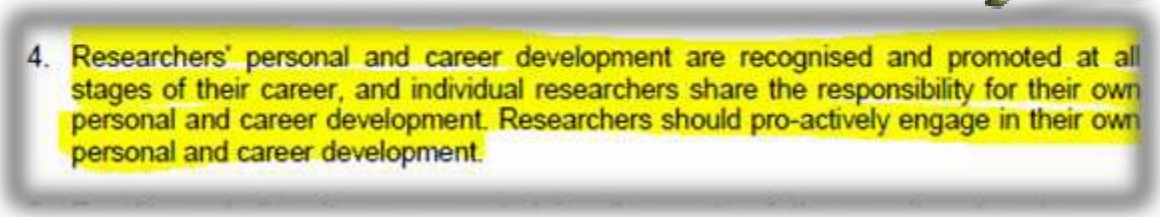
Questions PIs should ask themselves during the last part of the contract period:

- What are my expectations regarding output at this stage?
- What are the prospects for the researcher's continuing employment on this (or a different) project? What discussions have I had with the researcher about this? What communication have I had with my departmental administrator?
- Have I made the researcher aware of university procedures relating to the expiry of fixed term contracts?
- Have I reminded the researcher of the Careers Advice available from the Careers Service (if appropriate) as their current contract enters the final phase, and indicated options for additional support available through the divisions?

WHAT IS 'DEVELOPMENT'?

By 'development' we mean any growth in skills, knowledge or understanding that leads to the researcher becoming more capable within their current setting or within the field of research as a whole.

The Code of Practice says we will promote both 'personal and career development'.



4. Researchers' personal and career development are recognised and promoted at all stages of their career, and individual researchers share the responsibility for their own personal and career development. Researchers should pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development.

In effect, our promise to funders is that we will be aware of what individual researchers see as their goals and that we will support them in achieving these, as far as is practicable. This calls for some common sense. What are the goals? What options are there to support the development needed to achieve these goals?

What are the resources available? There are always boundaries, but the existence of limits should not encourage a default position of 'that is too much trouble'. You need to explore, with each individual, what can be done and, where resources do not allow some needs to be met, explain why.

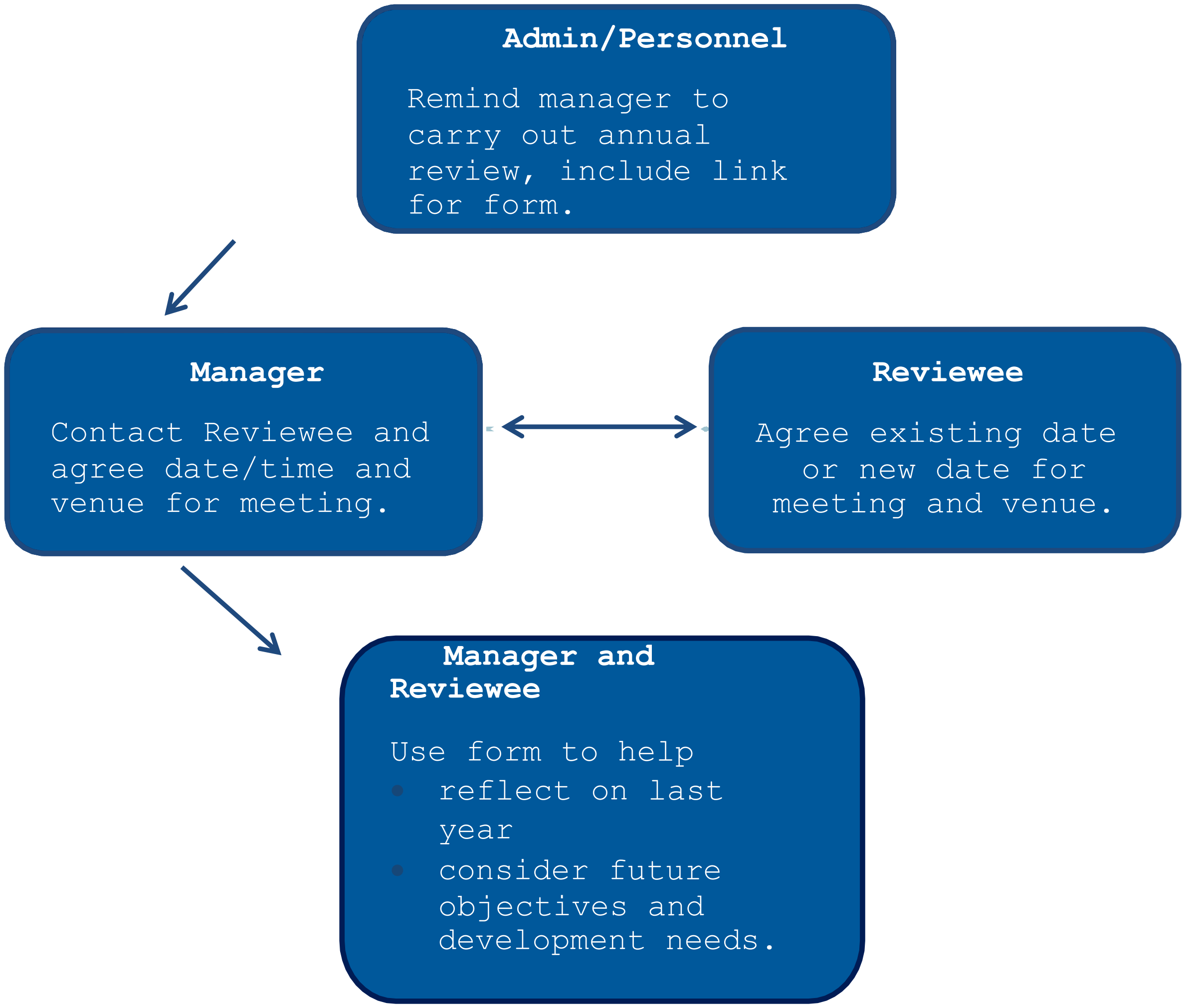
Bear in mind that 'development' takes many forms. Only a small percentage of development occurs through formal training courses; most development happens in the workplace by doing, by being coached, or by observing others. In an academic research context, development will also include things such as networking at conferences, critiquing papers, receiving guidance on contributing to papers, giving presentations to other researchers, attending meetings of various bodies, explaining research to non-specialists or schools, or even getting involved in discussions with colleagues. It could also include mentoring from you or from others, shadowing someone to see how they work or searching the internet for information.

Always encourage your researchers to find out what the options are so that if they come to you seeking development, they have some ideas on how that development might be best achieved.

Encourage them to use the Researcher Development Framework (see www.vitae.com) to help them identify underlying skills and abilities that underpin being a professional and capable researcher.

APPENDIX 1: PROCESS FLOW CHARTS

STAGE 1: PREPARATION



STAGE 2: THE ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING

Manager

Facilitate meeting.

Remind reviewee of purpose and use form to structure meeting.

Agree objectives and development needs and how these will be met.

If being done at this stage, both should complete form and sign.

Reviewee

Take part fully in meeting, using form to provide structure.

Agree objectives and any development needs and consider how these will be met.

Agree notes to add to form and sign it (or sign later when completed).

STAGE 3: FOLLOW UP

Manager

Send form to Administrator/ Personnel along with the summary of any training needs.

Administrator/ Personnel

Keep secure copy of form and check any development / training needs, look for commonalities.

Reviewee

Plan development and follow up plan, keeping manager informed.

Hold regular one-to-ones to discuss progress and agree amendments to plan if necessary.

Manager

Hold regular one-to-one discussions on progress and help amend plan if necessary.

APPENDIX 2: HINTS AND TIPS

These hints and tips are drawn from people who have carried out PDR for several years.

PREPARATION

"Some reviewees may have difficulty completing the form. This may be because the wording does not always suit everyone (which might be because they have English as a second language or because of other literacy issues). Be prepared to help. The most important thing is not how much they write, but that they reflect on the year gone and have thoughts on what they think they want to achieve in the year ahead. The form is there to help them think through what they want to say. They may not need to (or be able to) answer every question. Encourage them to do what they can and support those that need help."

"If there are differences of perception or of focus in the planning, leave these until the meeting rather than engage in an email exchange or semi-meeting in advance of the agreed date, unless the difference is a real showstopper, which has never happened to me. You can then explore the differences at the meeting."

THE ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING

"Make sure the room is suitable. I did one in a big room that had two sofas and that didn't feel quite right. It wouldn't be right to do it across opposite sides of a desk either. I prefer to sit around the corner of a desk in the meeting room. I also like to have coffee and biscuits, as this seems to give the right feel."

"Don't ever ask anyone to do their review in reception. My manager did my last one in our reception area. What does that tell you?"

"Funny enough, I don't like it to be too informal. I know I'm there for work and not just for any old chat. But I also wouldn't like it to be too formal … it's not an

interview. My manager is good at just getting the right feeling … business-like, but also relaxed."

"I quite often don't write a lot down when we're discussing things … I try to leave it to the end of each section and then say what I'm writing and ask if the person agrees. Other times, I've just jotted the key points and we've agreed I'll write it up afterwards and send a copy for signing. If you do that, though, it's best to do it soon afterwards otherwise your notes stop making sense."

"There are times when I realise I'm talking too much, but I now have a rule that if I've gone on for more than a minute I shut up and get them to talk. It's never quite 50/50, but I try and get as close as possible."

"Everyone's different. Some of my staff like me to take more of a lead, whereas some will want to go through whatever they've put on the form and kind of lead it. I try and pick up on what works for them …."

"Leave enough time. Most of mine take about 30-40 minutes, some take less, but I always book about an hour and a half, and there have been times I've been glad of it …."

"Last time, my boss emailed me a completed form and said, "Here's your PDR. Change anything you don't like and then sign it and send it back. What's the point of that?"

FOLLOW UP

"Suggest that they keep their copy of their objectives on their computer desktop and just open it now and then and jot down a few notes about what they've done. It makes a big difference if you have a few notes when it comes to the prep time."

"I like to keep a copy of their objectives handy so I can have a quick look before one-to-ones, otherwise it's impossible to remember what we agreed …"

"I always jot down a few notes at one-to-ones. Over the year, you can quite often see a picture … the story of year if you like. When I didn't do that I used to struggle a bit with PDR …"

"I did have one person who disagreed with something I wrote on the form, and who left a comment saying so. That's fine. We agreed to disagree. It didn't come to anything more because it wasn't a big point. Other than that, it's usually not hard to agree."

APPENDIX 3: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who should do most of the talking at the review meeting?

They should. At worst, it should be 50/50. Remember, it is *their* PDR. Ask open questions and encourage them to arrive at conclusions and ideas for themselves. In that way, they will be more committed to the way forward. PDR is about agreement, not about 'telling'. For example, you could encourage them to suggest better ways of doing things. Value their contribution.

What if I can't meet their expectations with regard to development?

We want to try and help people fulfil their potential and achieve their goals, but there are always limitations. If you cannot meet an expectation, explain why not and say what you can do. There are always considerations of time, budget and work demands, but be careful not to let the demands of work obliterate all else, or else morale will fall and so will the quality of the work done.

Should PDR meetings take place at the same time for everyone in my team?

Your local HR team should contact you when PDR meetings are due, however these timings may vary depending on probationary periods and contract end dates. If in doubt please speak to your local HR team.

Is PDR the place to deal with poor performance?

The PDR annual review meeting should not be used as the primary place to address poor performance. Poor performance should be addressed as and when it arises. The review meeting can discuss what happened, the progress made and any work still to be done, but it is not the place to raise an issue of poor performance for the first time. Make sure you are aware of the Discipline process and best practice in dealing with any poor performance. Consult your Personnel adviser, if you have one, or look at the Personnel website for advice and guidance.

What if the person works for more than one manager, or is officially managed by one person but spends a lot of time working for someone else?

Generally, the line manager is responsible for ensuring that the PDR annual review meeting takes place, but more than one manager can be involved. If there is more than one line manager, then both should participate, depending on how much of the time is spent with each. You might seek feedback from other managers involved in managing the individual, or even hold a joint review meeting with the agreement of the individual.

Who should decide on the objectives for the next year?

They should be agreed jointly. The individual should take responsibility for thinking of possible objectives, and then forward these suggestions to you in advance of the annual review meeting. You should ensure that they know what the team and department objectives are, and any changes on the horizon that are not confidential, so these can be taken into account. The final set of objectives is then discussed and agreed in the annual meeting. Quite often, reviewees look to the manager to take a lead on setting objectives, but, if this is the case, always make sure they participate and help shape the final objectives.

What if things change during the year and the objectives no longer apply or are no longer quite right?

Agree new or updated objectives.

What if the person does not want to participate in PDR?

PDRs are compulsory, within the department however, you cannot force someone to make the most of their opportunities. If a reviewee does refuse, try and find out what the issue is that is preventing them from making the most of PDR and point out the benefits. In many ways, PDR simply mimics what good managers do anyway, but not everyone has had good experience of PDR, so you may need to sell it to some staff and explain the benefits. Some staff may feel their job is too mundane to warrant a review or to write objectives for it, or else they say they just want to 'come to work, do a good job and go home', which is fair enough. But everyone has frustrations at times about their work, or ideas on how things can be improved, and PDR gives everyone the chance to discuss their gripes or ideas and be listened to. At the very least, it gives them the chance to talk about themselves and any factors that affect their work. If they still do not wish to take part, they can send a brief email directly to personnel explaining that they don't wish to have a PDR, they do not need to give a reason.

Does everyone have to talk about their aspirations?

No, only if they want to. There may be little you can do to help them achieve their goals; but there might be. Some people may want to move on, others may be thinking of going part-time or retiring. Others may want to have more responsibility, learn something new or take on a greater challenge. You can only help if you know about these things, but it is up to the individual to decide if they want to tell you about them.

Is feedback one way, or should the manager ask for feedback as well?

It is always a good idea as a manager to ask for feedback. Try asking what else you can do to support or help them. Or you could ask them what they would choose if there was one thing they could ask you to: continue doing; stop doing; start doing.

Why doesn't PDR link directly to reward, such as merit pay?

There are other processes for deciding if and when a change in remuneration is warranted. PDR may well draw on the same evidence and is a good way for staff to think about what this evidence might be. But we want to avoid having more than one process for deciding reward levels. Also, many organisations have found that if they discuss development and reward in the same review, fewer people agree they have development needs, leading eventually to reduced performance (which, in turn, makes it less likely they will get greater rewards). The review can, if the individual wishes, be put forward as part of the case for a change in reward.

What about re-grading; can this be discussed in PDR?

Much the same response applies to this as given for change in reward. The annual PDR meeting is not the time to focus on re-grading, though it may provide evidence that there has been a change in role that needs to be looked at using the re-grading process, and one of the outcomes of the PDR may be to agree to look at the case for a re-grading exercise.

What about those on probation?

For those on probation, a review discussion should be held no later than mid-way through their probation period and then another about a month before the end of the probationary period. Probationers don't have PDRs as such but probation reviews follow much the same format. If your department does not have a prescribed procedure for probationary reviews, you can use the format of a PDR, but check with your Department Administrator/Personnel support person first.

Do the on-going one-to-one meetings that happen throughout the year need to be formal?

Not unless you want them to be, but it is best if they are more formal than a 'chat beside the water cooler'. It helps cement the manager/managed relationship, which does not need to be a distant relationship but does need some element of separation.

My department's PDR process is not the same as my colleague's department. Why?

The University does not have a single, imposed system. Instead, Personnel Committee agreed a set of principles for departments to follow, and these principles allow for some local variations to meet the needs of the department. In practice, the differences tend to be minor and anyone moving from one department to another would see many more similarities than differences.

Is it true that some departments do not have a PDR system?

The majority of departments do have PDR, but some are yet to introduce it, though this is gradually changing for various reasons, including:

- Upward pressure, particularly from those who come from other organisations and are surprised to find there is no appraisal system in place in their new department.
- Downward pressure from those who recognise PDR is a powerful way of ensuring everyone pulls in the same direction.
- External pressures, from government and funders, who want to see how we make use of, and develop, the resources they help to fund.

APPENDIX 4: GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Giving Praise

Your PI should appreciate any thanks you want to give for their support over the past year. Remember to let them know exactly what you found helpful, by giving examples.

For example: "I found it very helpful that you allowed me to do Project X in my own way after we had discussed it, and only come to you when I had queries."

Giving Criticism

If you want to ask your PI to do something differently, or let them know about something you didn't find helpful, the most effective way to raise this is to be factual and constructive about your criticism, and give examples.

For example: Instead of saying "You're not supportive enough," give information which will help your reviewer know what you want them to do differently:

"You asked me to make the changes to the database just before you went on holiday, which meant that I was unable to talk to you about the queries I had. It would have worked better, I think, if you had let me know about this a week or so earlier, so that we could have discussed it more."

Receiving Praise

It's important to accept thanks or praise that is offered. After all, you wouldn't want your manager to stop giving you thanks because they felt you didn't want to hear it! Try to avoid self-deprecating remarks such as, "it was nothing … anyone could have done it." A simple "thank you" is all that is needed.

Receiving Criticism

Your PI may identify aspects of your work where they feel you have not made enough progress. This can sound like criticism, and when we feel we are being criticised, it is natural to for it to raise uncomfortable emotions. However, if you allow yourself to get angry or defensive, it will be more difficult to discuss with your PI how to move on and address any issues.

When you feel yourself reacting badly to criticism, take a deep breath. This will help to take the edge off the feelings and the pause will prevent you from speaking without thinking. You might suggest taking a short break to give you time to digest the feedback.

If you feel you are being criticised unreasonably, try to ask questions to find out more about your reviewer's reasons for making the comments.

Hopefully, any criticism you receive will be constructive – it will help you identify exactly what it was about what you did that was perceived to be wrong or in need of improvement, and it will focus not on the past but on what can be done to put things right.

None of us like being criticised, but if your PI provides information which you can act upon, this will help your development. If you disagree, try to give your reviewer information which explains your viewpoint without becoming defensive.