

CDR - Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between a Career Development Review (CDR) and a Personal Development Review (PDR)?

A career development review (CDR) is a structured and confidential conversation about a researcher's career development. The focus of a CDR conversation is on supporting career planning and exploring personal career aspirations in any sector or in any role. The conversation should identify career goals, opportunities to improve career prospects, routes to further career development and related skills and professional development or training objectives.

The distinguishing feature of a Personal Development Review (PDR) conversation is an opportunity to reflect on achievements over the last year in an environment in which feedback can be heard and received. While a PDR meeting may cover any career aspirations that the reviewee wishes to share, it will usually focus on achievements, learning and development, plus objective-setting, within the current role and professional domain.

The CDR does not replace the need for conversations on delivery of post goals, which should be provided via 1:1 supervision and/or a PDR.

Who is eligible for a Career Development Review (CDR)?

In NDS, Career Development Reviews (CDRs) are intended for research staff who meet the University of Oxford's Concordat criteria. This typically includes staff who:

- are employed primarily to undertake research;
- are on fixed-term contracts or externally funded open-ended contracts;
- are employed within Research Grades 6–9;
- fall within the Academic and Research staff categories (AP and AR).

Typical examples include: Senior Postdoctoral Researchers, Postdoctoral Researchers, Research Associates/Assistants, Senior Research Associates/Assistants and Research Fellows employed by the University, or other research-focused appointments that meet the above criteria.

Professional and support staff will normally participate in the Personal Development Review (PDR) process rather than a CDR.

If you are unsure which process applies to you or a member of your team, please contact NDS HR at recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk

What if I am a clinical academic and already complete an NHS appraisal?

NDS recognises that many clinical academics complete an annual NHS appraisal that already covers clinical, teaching and research activity.

Where appropriate, this may be used in place of a separate CDR to avoid duplication. Staff should discuss their individual circumstances with NDS HR, and where possible share a copy of their completed NHS appraisal for departmental records.

Please contact recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk if you are unsure how this applies to your role.

Do all department or faculties have a scheme for Career Development Review (CDR)?

In February 2022, People Committee agreed to a stepped approach towards an institution-wide target in which all departments or faculties will have a scheme for CDRs for fixed-term researchers by 2025. Each department or faculty has had freedom to set up their own scheme relevant to internal staff, following the principles found in the above section 'How do I start my CDR and who is responsible for what?'.

The subsequent implementation of 'My Development' module within HR Self Service provides all departments/faculties with a mechanism to manage and record CDRs and professional development time for researchers. Researchers and their academic managers/PIs are advised to ask their local HR administrator how CDRs are being implemented in their department/faculty.

Can researchers have a CDR during their probationary period?

Departments and faculties are strongly encouraged to enable fixed term researchers to participate in CDRs within their first year in post as a parallel, separate process to probation, which has its own robust review process to follow. While staff in their [probationary period](#) are not automatically entitled to an annual review, such conversations can be particularly helpful where the researcher's contract period is less than two years.

How is the CDR reviewer selected?

The reviewer will usually be the reviewee's PI or academic line manager. Departments or faculties are encouraged to enable researchers to have CDRs with another senior colleague in the University where the researcher expresses this preference. Where the reviewee would welcome a second career conversation with a Careers Adviser who specialises in other sectors, preparing for career transitions or making strong applications, they should self-refer to the Careers Service.

How do researchers get career advice from a professional other than their PI/Line manager?

The Careers Service has dedicated Careers Advisers for fixed-term researchers who are employed by the University or a college. These advisers work closely with the Researcher Hub.

- The Careers Service offers [careers appointments for fixed-term researchers](#). These 30 minute 1:1 appointments are online (in-person appointments by request) and can be booked in advance.
- The Careers Advisers for researchers also offer a wider range of workshops and seminars to support researcher career progression, details of which will be publicised via the Careers Service newsletter for researchers (for which researchers can sign-up when they create a [CareerConnect](#) account), [Term Planner](#) and on [OxTalks](#).
- The [Careers Service website](#) contains extensive guidance including [researcher-specific tips and resources](#), available 365 days a year.
- Researchers can register for a [CareerConnect](#) account to access appointment bookings, event registration and sign up for the newsletter (note: account generation is done by a person during office hours).

Is the Career conversation confidential?

The detailed content of the CDR conversation is confidential between the reviewee and reviewer.

Researchers in departments using My Development in HR Self Service are encouraged to record key outcomes and plans made during the CDR conversation for easy reference in subsequent conversations and the next annual CDR.

Where do I find guidance on how researchers can take professional development time?

These [FAQs](#) contain guidance for departments/faculties, researchers and their line managers/Principal Investigators (PIs) to enable researchers to use at least 10 days for professional development (pro rata) per year.

How are professional development plans recorded?

Researchers are strongly encouraged to record their intended use of at least 10 days for professional development over the coming year. This is easily done and can be adjusted at any point (e.g. if plans change), within the My Development module in HR Self Service. Further guidance is provided in the [FAQs](#) including for part-time staff.

Only the researcher, their reviewer and the HR administrator can view entries made in the My Development module in HR Self Service.

Why is the reviewer asked to sign off on the 'Review' in the My Development module in HR Self Service?

The reviewee and then the reviewer need to sign off the 'Review' in acknowledgement that the CDR conversation has taken place and will be kept confidential. The reviewer is not required to approve the content of the researcher's entry in My Development

My question isn't listed here. Who should I ask?

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Questions or support

If you have any questions, require support, or would like to discuss CDR's or My Development in more detail or a step-by-step tutorial, please contact HR team via recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.