

Career Development Review (CDR) – Reviewee Guide

This handbook provides essential guidance for NDS Research Staff (reviewees) on the Career Development Review (CDR) processes, aligned with current University of Oxford HR standards and the national Researcher Concordat.

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

In NDS, Career Development Reviews (CDRs) apply to 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 roles may include:

- Senior Postdoctoral Researcher
- Postdoctoral Researcher
- Research Associate/Assistant
- Senior Research Associate/Assistant
- Research Fellow (where employed by the University)
- Other research-focused appointments that meet the above criteria

CDRs are designed to support researchers in exploring career aspirations, identifying development opportunities and planning future career progression.

If you are unsure whether a CDR applies to your role, please contact the HR team at recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.

Professional and support staff will continue to participate in the Personal Development Review (PDR) process.

Why Your Development Matters

The Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences (NDS) is committed to creating a supportive, inclusive, and impartial research environment. Whether you are a researcher, technician, or part of our professional support staff, your career growth is a priority.

The CDR is a structured, confidential conversation focused on your career development options in any sector or role. It is a proactive space to identify career goals and the professional development needed to achieve them.

Moving from PDR to CDR

At NDS, we are shifting focus from the traditional Personal Development Review (PDR) to the Career Development Review (CDR).

- **The PDR Focus:** Historically focused on past achievements and objectives-setting within your current role.
- **The CDR Focus:** A forward-looking, confidential conversation dedicated to your future career aspirations in any sector or role.
- **The Change:** We recognise that research careers are often built on fixed-term projects; the CDR ensures you have a dedicated space to plan your next steps proactively, rather than just reviewing current contract tasks.

A Career Development Review (CDR) or Personal Development Review (PDR) is a dedicated, confidential conversation between you and your manager to:

- **Reflect** on your achievements and performance over the past year.
- **Identify** clear objectives and training needs for the year ahead.
- **Discuss** your long-term career aspirations, whether within or beyond academia.

What a CDR can do for you

- **Goal Identification:** Helps you identify long-term career goals and the specific routes to achieve them.
- **Skill Gap Analysis:** Identifies the exact skills or experience you need to progress.
- **Access to Support:** Enlists the help of your supervisor or the University to open doors, such as through the NDS Staff Training Fund or specialist Careers Service advice.
- **Important Note:** These reviews are separate from salary, promotion, or disciplinary procedures. They are designed to support your growth, not to monitor your contract status.

Eligibility: Who is eligible for CDRs?

As per Oxford's Concordat Action Plan, CDRs are available at a minimum to staff who:

- Are employed primarily to conduct research or are contractually expected to do so.
- Are on fixed-term or open-ended externally-funded contracts.
- Are employed on Grade 6–9 posts and are typically in the early stages of their research careers.

When to have your CDR

- **Annually:** Reviews take place at least once a year, typically between **April and June** in NDS.
- **Early Career:** It is recommended within your first year of contract, even during probation, as a separate process from performance monitoring.
- **Contract Milestones:** This is especially critical for researchers with contracts of two years or less.

The '10 Professional Days'

As part of the University's commitment to the national Researcher Development Concordat, you are entitled to at least 10 days (pro rata for part-time or part-year) of professional development time per year.

- **Your Entitlement:** This time is for activities that extend beyond your current project and support your long-term career.
- **What Counts?:** This can include conferences, writing funding applications, mentoring (being a mentee), technical training, or public engagement.
- **Recording Your Time:** Use the My Development module to log these days throughout the year.
- **Lead the Discussion:** Use your CDR to discuss how you will use these 10 days with your manager.

Note: Please refer to the *FAQs for the 10 Days of Professional Development* for further information on funding, carry-over rules, and eligible activities and *My Development – Completing Your Review* – Reviewee on how to process on My Development.

The Review Cycle & System

The quality of a CDR conversation will depend on your preparation. Please be aware that it is a "safe space" to discuss wellbeing, work-life balance, and long-term dreams without fear of it affecting your contract status.

Pre-Meeting Preparation

- **Arrange a date:** Schedule your CDR with your line manager between the **CDR Cycle period April – June**.
- **Review Previous Review (if applicable):** Locate and read through your PDR/CDR document from last year to check your progress against agreed objectives.
- **Draft Section A:** Complete the self-assessment portion of the CDR form in my Development as fully as possible to gain the most benefit from the process.
- **Reflect on Achievements:** Make a list of your key successes, skills gained, and challenges faced over the past 12 months.

- **Identify 10-Day Development Log:** Ensure you have logged your professional development activities in the My Development.
- **Draft Future Objectives:** Think of 2–4 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-based) goals you would like to achieve in the coming year, considering both your current role and long-term career goals.
- **Consider Training Needs:** Identify specific support or training (e.g., NDS Training Fund, POD courses) required to meet your new goals.
- **Submit Documentation:** Send your off completed review form on My Development to your reviewer at least one week prior to the meeting.

During the Meeting

- **Lead the Conversation:** Be prepared to lead with your own assessment of your performance and progress.
- **Discuss Wellbeing:** Use this safe space to discuss workload, work-life balance, or any barriers you are facing.
- **Request Feedback:** Actively ask your manager for feedback on your performance and how they can better support you.
- **Confirm SMART Objectives:** Ensure the objectives agreed upon are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based.
- **Discuss Career Aspirations:** If you wish, talk about your long-term career plans beyond your current role or department.
- **Agree on Monitoring:** Decide how often you will check in throughout the year to review progress on these goals.

Post Meeting Follow-up

- **Review the Write-up:** Check Section B completed by your reviewer to ensure it accurately reflects the discussion and agreed goals.
- **Final Sign-off:** Complete Section C to provide your final comments and sign the document.
- **Submit to HR:** Ensure the final signed document is emailed to recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.
- **Update Personal Plan:** Update your personal learning and development plan to include the new actions and timelines agreed upon.

My Development Question Prompts

Spending a few minutes preparing will ensure a useful conversation that generates clear actions. Please see below the questions and prompts mirrored from the Career Development Review in the 'My Development':

Current Position	What is working well for you in your current role?
	What do you find challenging in your current role?
	How have you performed in relation to your responsibilities?
	What further contributions have you made to the University or your research group?
Career Goals	What areas or roles interest you (within or beyond academia)?
	How could current or future mentor(s) help you progress?
Professional Development	What skills (e.g., research techniques, leadership, public engagement) do you wish to develop?
	Who else would you benefit from speaking to in order to strengthen your networks?
	Identify 2–4 SMART goals for the coming year.

Support and Resources Available to NDS Staff

NDS and the wider University offer extensive resources to help you meet your 10-day development goal.

Resource	Description & Link
NDS Staff Training Fund	Up to £1,000 for external training to gain professional skills. Apply here.
RECOGNISE Mentoring	An inter-departmental scheme pairing you with a mentor outside your immediate group to discuss transitions and long-term goals. Learn more.
Careers Service	1:1 appointments and workshops (e.g., via CareerConnect); support lasts for one year after your contract ends. Researcher Careers.
The Researcher Hub	Features "The Researcher's Trailmap" for navigating Oxford opportunities. Visit Hub.
Technical Staff Support	Specific events and "Technician Champions" for those under the Technician Commitment. Support for Technicians.

People & Org. Development	Tailored courses on leadership, project management, and personal effectiveness courses. POD Courses .
Medical Sciences Skills	MSD offers resources and training courses to develop transferable skills specifically for the medical field. Resources and Support for Researchers .
IT & Digital Skills	Access to Inrehearsal , COSY , and the IT Learning Centre .

Areas of Professional Development to Invest Time In:

- Research practice training (ethics, data, collaboration).
- Teaching experience or student supervision.
- Communication training (public speaking, event organisation).
- Entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Applying for funding.
- Career progression (work shadowing, CV development).

Ownership of Your Ongoing Development

The Career Development Review is not a standalone annual event, but the beginning of an ongoing professional dialogue. As the reviewee, the ownership of booking and maintaining these follow-up meetings rests with you. It is essential to ensure that your career goals remain a priority throughout the year, rather than becoming a "tick-box" exercise completed once annually.

- **Proactive Scheduling:** You are responsible for identifying and agreeing upon a suitable time that works for both you and your reviewer. Use this opportunity to set a regular cadence for your one-to-one meetings, whether this is weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or termly, to review progress against your agreed SMART objectives.
- **The Value of Regular Catch-ups:** Consistent meetings provide you with a dedicated platform to discuss evolving aspirations, flag potential barriers early, and adjust your development plans as new opportunities arise.
- **Reviewing Objectives:** Use these sessions to stay accountable to your personal learning and development plan, ensuring that the actions and timelines agreed upon during your annual review are being met.

By taking the lead in scheduling these conversations, you ensure that your professional growth remains a proactive and routine part of your experience at NDS.

Note: For further guidance on managing your professional development time or tips on having effective 1:1s, please refer to the CDR - *Frequently Asked Questions* or contact the HR team on recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.

Further Resources

- **System Guide:** For technical instructions on how to navigate the My Development module on PeopleXD (HR Self-Service), please refer to our separate *My Development - Completing your CDR - Reviewee*.
- **FAQs:** For common queries regarding eligibility and confidentiality, please see our CDR - *Frequently Asked Questions* document.
- **The Charter:** Oxford's Charter to support the Career Development of Researchers outlines University and researcher responsibilities.
- **Contact the HR team** if you would like more information or further support, email recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.