

Career Development Review (CDR) – Reviewer Guidance

This guide provides essential instructions for Managers, PIs, and Supervisors (reviewers) within the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences (NDS). It outlines how to facilitate an effective Career Development Review (CDR) within the Review Cycle period between April to June and support the professional growth of our research and professional staff.

Which staff should have a Career Development Review (CDR)?

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 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

As a reviewer, you should generally expect to conduct CDRs for research staff within these groups.

Professional and support staff are not normally included within the CDR process and will continue to follow the Personal Development Review (PDR) process.

If you are unsure whether a member of staff should complete a CDR or a PDR, please contact the HR team before arranging the review at recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.

The Shift from PDR to Career-Led Conversations

At NDS, we are evolving the way we support our staff by shifting from the traditional Personal Development Review (PDR) to the Career Development Review (CDR).

- **The PDR Focus:** Historically centred on monitoring delivery of project goals and past performance.
- **The CDR Focus:** A structured, forward-looking dialogue about the researcher's professional identity and long-term trajectory.
- **Your Role:** You are transitioning from a performance manager to a career coach. Your goal is to help the researcher explore viable career options in any sector.

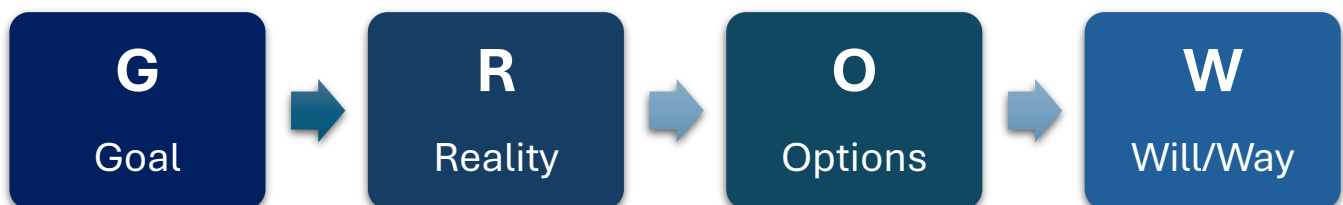
The Quality of the Conversation

An effective CDR is not a "tick-box" exercise. It should be:

- **Encouraging and Supportive:** Create a "safe space" to discuss aspirations and barriers.
- **Listen First:** Spend more time listening than talking to understand the researcher's true goals.
- **Non-Directive:** Invite the researcher to articulate their own ideas rather than providing instructions. This builds confidence and clarity.

Using the GROW Model in Your CDR

To facilitate a high-quality conversation, we recommend the GROW coaching method:



- **Goal:** What do they want to achieve in the long term? (e.g. "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?")
- **Reality:** Where are they now? (e.g. "What skills are you currently using well?")
- **Options:** What could they do to bridge the gap? (e.g. "What training or networking would help?")
- **Will/Way Forward:** What specific actions will they take? (e.g. "What are 3 SMART objectives for this year?")

Your Role as a Reviewer

- **Researcher-Led:** The reviewee is responsible for leading the meeting. Your role is to listen, provide reflective input and guide/signpost.
- **Confidentiality:** Assure the reviewee that the detailed content of the conversation remains confidential between you both.
- **PI Independence:** While you are typically the reviewer, the researchers may request a CDR with another senior colleague. We encourage you to facilitate this if it better suits the researcher's career path.
- **Mid-Career Support:** For mid-career researchers, focus on assessing what is working well and identifying if a "pivot" is needed given fixed-term funding timelines.
- **Regular One-to-ones:** Maintain momentum throughout the year by facilitating frequent catch-ups. These meetings are vital for tracking progress against SMART objectives, supporting growth and wellbeing.

Managing the Review in 'My Development'

Reviewers should use the Manager Dashboard in HR Self-Service (PeopleXD) to record and sign off reviews.

- **Preparation:** Log into HR Self-Service and navigate to the Manager Dashboard. Select the Development tab and View All to see assigned reviews.
- **Pre-Meeting:** Read the comments and documents the reviewee has attached in Section A at least one week before the meeting.
- **The Meeting:** Use open questions to explore options: *"How do you feel about working in research long-term?"* or *"What other sectors attract your interest?"*
- **Action & Sign-off:** After the meeting, record your summary in Section B. Once the reviewee has signed, you must select Sign Off to change the status to "Complete".
- **Submission:** Ensure the final record is emailed to recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.

The '10 Professional Days': Briefing for Reviewers

As a Manager or PI, you play a critical role in enabling the professional growth of your research staff. Under the national Researcher Development Concordat and Oxford's Charter, researchers are entitled to a minimum of 10 days (pro rata for part-time or part-year) per year for professional development.

What You Need to Be Aware Of

- **The Commitment:** The University and major UK funders expect PIs to allow researchers 10 days per year to develop professional competencies that extend beyond the training required for their current role.

- **Definition of a ‘Day’:** A ‘day’ is considered 7.5 hours. This 10-day guideline must be prorated for part-time staff or for contracts starting/ending mid-year.
- **Salary & Funding:** Most major UK funders have signed the Concordat and will fund the researcher’s salary during this time. However, you should check specific terms and conditions for each grant.
- **Carry-over Rules:** Unused professional development time generally does not carry over to the next year to ensure development becomes a routine part of the contract. You may use your discretion in exceptional circumstances, such as following family or sick leave.

What You Need to Do

- **Facilitate the Discussion:** Use the annual Career Development Review (CDR) or regular 1:1s to proactively discuss how the researcher intends to use these 10 days.
- **Balance with Research:** Work with your staff to find a flexible approach that aligns their development with project timelines. If a funder cannot cover external costs, help identify opportunities within their current work to build those same skills.
- **Signpost Resources:** Direct staff to free internal providers like People and Organisational Development (POD) or the Careers Service if project budgets are limited.
- **Support the Log:** Encourage staff to record their plans and activities in the 'My Development' module in HR Self-Service. Your role is to acknowledge that the conversation has taken place and support the plan.
- **Address Disagreements:** If a resolution cannot be reached regarding appropriate activities, refer the researcher to the departmental HR lead for further advice.

Note: For comprehensive details on funding, operational rules, and specific examples of professional development, please refer to the *FAQs for the 10 Days of Professional Development Time for Researchers*.

Support and Development Resources for Staff

You are not expected to be an expert in every career path. Your role is to signpost researchers to these University resources:

Resource	Resources to Signpost
NDS Staff Training Fund	Remind staff that they can utilise the NDS Staff Training fund, for up to £1,000 for external training to gain professional skills. Apply here .
RECOGNISE Mentoring	Encourage staff to join our inter-departmental scheme with Oncology, to find a mentor outside their immediate group to discuss transitions and long-term goals. Learn more .

Careers Service	Signpost for 1:1 appointments and workshops (e.g., via CareerConnect); support lasts for one year after their contract ends. Researcher Careers .
The Researcher Hub	Direct staff to the Research Hub, which features "The Researcher's Trailmap" and Concordat updates. Visit Hub .
Technical Staff Support	Specific events and "Technician Champions" for those under the Technician Commitment. Support for Technicians .
People & Org. Development	Suggest courses on leadership, project management, and personal effectiveness courses. POD Courses .
Medical Sciences Skills	Direct researchers to transferable skills training specifically for medical fields. Resources and Support for Researchers .
IT & Digital Skills	Remind staff that they have access to Inrehearsal , COSY , and the IT Learning Centre .

The Importance of Regular One-to-Ones

The Career Development Review is not a standalone annual event, but the beginning of an ongoing professional dialogue. It is essential for both the researcher and the reviewer to schedule regular one-to-one meetings throughout the year to review progress against the agreed SMART objectives.

Consistent conversations allow you to provide timely feedback, offer "just-in-time" coaching, and ensure that the researcher remains supported in balancing their 10 days of professional development with their core project milestones.

Keeping these conversations alive ensures that career development remains a proactive, routine part of the researcher's experience at NDS, rather than a "tick-box" exercise completed once a year.

Effective Documentation: Notes and Email Follow-Up

High quality career conversations must be supported by clear documentation to ensure that agreed actions are not lost.

- **Keep Detailed Notes:** During the CDR, capture specific details regarding the researcher's aspirations and the support they require. These notes are vital for completing Section B of the 'My Development' module accurately.
- **The Follow-Up Email:** After the meeting, it is best practice to send a brief summary email to the reviewee. This provides an immediate record of the conversation, reiterates your

support, and confirms the specific "Way Forward" actions established during the GROW process.

- **Accountability:** Following up via email reinforces the importance of the agreed SMART objectives and ensures both parties have a shared understanding of the next steps before the formal system sign-off.
- **Reviewing Progress:** Use these email summaries as an agenda for your regular one-to-one meetings, making it easier to track progress and provide ongoing guidance throughout the year.

Note: For more information on how to structure these ongoing meetings or to address challenges in achieving objectives, please refer to the *CDR - Frequently Asked Questions, the Guide for Reviewers - to Effective One-to-One*, and the *Guide for Reviewers - Managing Challenging Conversations*, or contact the HR team at recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.

Enhancing Your Reviewing Skills

To refine your coaching approach, the University offers tailored development for managers:

- **Leading and Managing People in Research:** Part of *The Confident Manager Series* by POD.
- **Coaching Skills Course:** Deepen your competence in non-directive support.

Further Resources

System Guide: Refer to the *My Development - Completing your CDR – Reviewer* for technical steps on how to finalise the Career Development Review in My Development, PeopleXD (HR Self-Service)

FAQs: See the *CDR - Frequently Asked Questions* document for common queries on eligibility and confidentiality.

Contact: For support, please contact the HR team at recruitment@nds.ox.ac.uk.