

Annual Review Conversations (ARC) Policy

1. Scope and purpose of the Annual Review Conversation (ARC) process

1.1 The Annual Review Conversation is the process by which all staff at Imperial have at least a yearly conversation with their manager which is dedicated to discussing the factors that will enable the member of staff to work at their best and achieve their potential. The purpose of this process and conversation is to ensure staff are supported to work at their best by a) reflecting on the previous year, b) setting clear expectations and objectives for the year ahead, and c) discussing motivational factors such as workplace wellbeing, workload and career support. Managers and staff will be guided as part of the briefing sessions to follow the process positively. People will be signposted to additional, other relevant training and support to increase confidence and develop skills for having effective conversations.

1.2. This process replaces the previous Personal Review and Development Plan (PRDP) process. The PRDP process was formally reviewed in response to continuous feedback from the staff survey and various staff committees which indicated significant variations and inconsistencies in the application and experience of PRDPs. The process was increasingly viewed as a missed opportunity to address and support issues of staff experience and culture.

1.3 Imperial College London is committed to ensuring all staff can meaningfully engage with this process so that they have the opportunity to discuss their contribution and impact, to discuss their support needs, and to have a clear understanding of what is expected in the year ahead, how they can achieve this, as well as support for areas for development.

2. Frequency and Timing of the review

2.1 All staff must have an Annual Review Conversation at least once a year. Where practical, an annual review conversation should happen in an environment that meets the preferences of the employee. This is in order to create an environment where the employee feels supported and safe to discuss topics of a personal nature.

2.2 It is recommended that Line Managers and their staff meet specifically to discuss progress against the actions from their Annual Review Conversation at least once (e.g. six months after) in between the formal ARC meetings. Some staff may wish to have check-ins (e.g. 1-2-1s) more frequently and this should be discussed, and expectations set within the ARC meeting.

2.3 Annual Review Conversations should occur in one of the two ARC periods: February-April or July-September to ensure consistency in messaging, implementation and support for the ARC process. All staff within a department should have their Annual Review Conversation within the same ARC period. It is the responsibility of the department leadership to ensure their staff know which ARC period they have selected.

3. The Process

3.1 The process is focussed on a conversation between the individual and their line manager about; the contribution of the individual, the application of learning and addressing the needs that will help them thrive in their role in the coming year.

3.2 The Line Manager schedules the ARC meeting. The employee will complete the Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey online. A summary of the responses will be automatically sent to the Line Manager who will subsequently inform the employee via email of any additions to the agenda. The Line Manager should take account of the employee 'mode of meeting' preferences outlined in the survey. Following the ARC meeting, the employee will write up any key points, actions and draft the agreed objectives in the provided word document template and send to the Line Manager for input. Once agreed between the Line Manager and employee, the Line Manager will send the agreed objectives section to their Line Manager (Line Manager's Manager) for review.

3.3 Both parties should leave the conversation with clarity on what needs to be done, how, by whom, and when action is required. Any assigned actions should be agreed and noted in the ARC form.

4. Expected Level of participation

4.1 Staff

4.1.1 For the employee expected participation involves; completing the Agenda setting and reflections survey and informing their Line Manager of the sub-topics they would like to talk about at least 2 weeks before their ARC meeting. Following the meeting, the employee to ensure that all the key points and actions from the ARC meeting are recorded in within 2 weeks of the ARC.

4.1.2 Line Managers should contact their direct reports to remind them to complete the Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey prior to the scheduled ARC meeting. If the individual has not completed their Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey after two reminders, the manager should set aside time to discuss and explore the reasons why the survey has not been completed with the employee. If after two reminders the Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey is still not completed, Line Managers can choose to book in the ARC meeting without having received the Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey responses. If the employee has not been able to complete the Agenda Setting and Reflections survey, they should inform their manager of what they would like to discuss and share their high-level reflections in another way e.g. via email before the Annual Review Conversation meeting.

4.1.3 If staff do not engage, Line Managers should explain that all staff are expected to have an Annual Review Conversation and explore what the issue is and how they can get around it. If the staff member refuses to engage, managers should seek advice from their [Strategic Partner](#) who will work with the Line Manager to help identify a way forward.

4.2 Managers

4.2.1 All Line Managers and those with staff reporting directly to them must engage with the Annual Review Conversation Process and conduct Annual Review Conversations with each of their direct reports. There may be some exceptions to this where the number of line reports exceeds 10 in which case an alternative person may be identified to undertake the ARC meeting. This must be agreed upon by both the employee and the Line Manager. Undertaking the Annual Review Conversation is a core part of all management roles at Imperial.

4.2.2 On receiving the results of their staff's Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey, Line Managers should schedule the Annual Review Conversation meeting honouring as many of the individual's requests around the setting of the meeting as possible. Should the Line Manager wish to add anything to the agenda, they should inform their employee at least one week before the meeting.

4.2.3 If Line Managers are not engaging with the process, individuals should first ask them directly to book in a meeting for the Annual Review Conversation. If Line Managers continue to not engage with the process (as detailed above), PPO.

5. Exceptions to Line Manager as Reviewer

5.1 There may be instances where someone other than an individual's Line Manager will carry out their Annual Review Conversation with them.

- 5.1.1 The Line Manager has more than 10 direct reports and therefore it would be unfeasible to conduct all the Annual Review Conversations properly within the three-month window.

5.2 In this situation, the Line Manager and their report may agree on another, appropriate person to conduct their ARC. The reviewer must be at least at the employee's seniority level or higher and must have some understanding of the employee's work. The Line Manager should be sent a copy of the employee's ARC form so that they can gain an overview of the points discussed.

5.3 Where the relationship has broken down between the Line Manager and employee. The employee or Line Manager should speak to their Strategic HR Partner to explore a way forward.

6. Tracking and Monitoring

6.1 Line Managers must log the date of the Annual Review Conversation on ICIS when the meeting is completed. It is the responsibility of Heads of Departments/Divisions to ensure that Annual Review Conversations have been carried out and logged. POD will monitor the completion rates and will contact department where support may be needed.

6.2 Data on ARC completion rates by Department and Job Family will be reported via the HR Dashboards to Departments and Faculties, and reviewed by the People and Culture Committee (Chaired by the President) on a termly basis.

7. Role of the Department

7.1 Departments are expected to communicate about the ARC process, and specifically which ARC period their staff should conduct their Annual Review Conversations.

7.2 After their ARC period, Departmental leadership should ensure mechanisms are in place to discuss and gather key themes and any actions for the department arising from the ARC's in their areas. Department management can work with their Strategic HR Partners and Senior Organisational Development Consultants to support this process.

8. Documentation

8.1 The Annual Review Conversation Form should be completed by the employee within 10 working days of the Annual Review Conversation meeting(s) and sent to their Line Manager for comment and sign-off. The form should summarise the key points of the discussion and record the objectives that have been agreed. Any action that needs to be undertaken by the individual, the Line Manager, or others in the department should be noted.

8.2 Once the form is completed and reviewed by the employee and Line Manager, the Line Manager should send the objectives section of the form to their Line Manager (Line Manager's Manager)

8.3 Clinical Academics should also seek a signature from their Clinical Reviewer. They should then follow their NHS Trust's guidance on where the form should be uploaded so that it meets the requirements of the Trust's joint appraisal processes.

9. Confidentiality

8.4 The content of the agenda setting and reflections survey will only be seen by the employee and their Line Manager (or whoever the employee notes on the form). The backend of the survey will be managed by maximum of 4 specialist roles in Learning and Talent so that any issues with the system can be fixed. Data on themes of sub-factors identified across the university from the Qualtrics system will be captured over time to help inform people & culture priorities. Only the PLAN (objectives) part of the post conversation form will be shared with Department Management so they can maintain an oversight of the work happening in their areas.

10. Links to other Policies and Procedures

9.1 The Annual Review Conversation is not linked to processes or procedures that determine [pay](#), or [promotion](#). Imperial has separate processes for this as detailed on the HR webpages.

9.2 Any issues related to performance or conduct should be discussed as they arise and not left for discussion at ARC. The relevant and separate [Policies and Procedures](#) should be followed for this and staff (managers and other employees) can seek advice from their [People Partner](#).

9.3 Underperformance specifically is covered under the procedures detailed in the [university's Ordinances](#) for Academic Staff and in the Performance Improvement Policy for all other job families.

9.4 There is a wide range of support and resources available via the HR and POD webpages to support employees and Line Managers to have constructive conversations. Should additional support be required to prepare for potentially difficult conversations, this can be accessed by contacting your HR Partner or by booking a micro-development session with one of the POD team.