

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 dedicated to discussing the factors that will enable the staff member 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 staff experience and culture issues.

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, discuss their support needs, and 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 can expect to have an Annual Review Conversation at least once a year. Where practical, an annual review conversation should happen in an environment that meets the employee's preferences. This is 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. More regular check-ins or 1-2-1s are encouraged between Line Managers and employees for roles and work that would benefit from Line Manager input and support. The regularity of the 1-2-1's should be discussed, and expectations set for the year ahead within the ARC meeting. The Line Manager should raise any concerns or feedback on the employee's contribution or impact as they arise outside ARC throughout the year.

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 employee and their Line Manager about the employee's contribution, the application of learning and addressing the needs that will help them thrive in their role in the coming year.

3.2 The employee will complete the Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey online. A summary of the responses will be sent automatically to the Line Manager, who will subsequently inform the employee of any additions to the agenda. The Line Manager should schedule and plan the ARC meeting, taking into account the employee preferences outlined in the Survey. Following the ARC meeting, the employee will write up key actions, draft the agreed objectives in the provided word document template, and send them to the Line Manager for input. Once agreed between the Line Manager and the employee, the Line Manager will send the agreed objectives (Plan) 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. The employee should agree and note any assigned actions 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 two weeks before their ARC meeting. Following the meeting, the employee records any key actions and agreed objectives from the ARC meeting in the ARC form within two weeks of the scheduled ARC meeting.

4.1.2 Line Managers should contact their direct reports to remind them to complete the Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey before the ARC meeting. If the employee has not completed their Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey after two reminders, the manager should set aside time to meet the employee to discuss and explore the reasons why the Survey has not been completed. If, after two reminders, the Agenda Setting and Reflections Survey is still not completed by the employee, Line Managers can choose to book 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 the issue and how they can get around it. If the staff member refuses to engage, managers should seek advice from their Strategic HR Partner, who will work with the Line Manager to help identify a way forward. [Strategic Support and Reward | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)

4.1.4 Staff returning from extended leave (such as maternity, adoption or sickness) can expect to discuss with their manager the most appropriate time to hold an ARC meeting.

4.1.5 If an employee has a disability and has made their Line Manager aware of this, they will carefully consider any reasonable workplace adjustments to help the employee's working or sickness

situation. For more information on disability support, please access the disability support web pages. [Disability support | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)

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 where the number of line reports exceeds ten, 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 people management roles at Imperial.

4.2.2 Employees returning from extended leave (maternity, adoption, sickness etc.) can expect their Line Manager to discuss with them the best time to undertake their ARC or whether it is more appropriate and/or relevant to wait until the next ARC season for their area. ARC is not a replacement for the support someone should receive when returning to work after a period of extended leave. [Returning to work | Staff | Imperial College London](#)

4.2.3 If the employee has a disability and has made the Line manager aware of this, they will need to carefully consider any reasonable workplace adjustments to help the employee's working or sickness situation. [Disability support | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)

4.2.4 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 employee'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.

4.2.4 If Line Managers are not engaging with the process, employees should first ask them directly to book a meeting for the Annual Review Conversation. If Line Managers continue to not engage with the process (as detailed above), employees should seek advice from their Strategic HR Partner, who will work with them to help identify a way forward. [Strategic Support and Reward | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)

5. Exceptions to Line Manager as Reviewer

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

- 5.1.1 The Line Manager has more than ten direct reports; therefore, properly conducting all the Annual Review Conversations within the three-month window would be unfeasible.

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 agenda setting and reflections Survey and 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. [Strategic Support and Reward | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)

6. Tracking and Monitoring

6.1 Line Managers must log the date of the Annual Review Conversation on ICIS when the meeting is completed. Heads of Departments/Divisions are responsible for ensuring that Annual Review Conversations have been carried out and logged. POD will monitor the completion rates and contact the department where gaps are identified, and 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 Department Leadership is expected to communicate about the ARC process, the importance of participating in these conversations and specifically which ARC period their Staff should conduct their Annual Review Conversations.

7.2 Departments are expected to communicate priorities or strategic/departmental objectives for their teams to align to.

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 employee should complete the Annual Review Conversation Form within ten working days of the Annual Review Conversation meeting(s) and send it to their Line Manager for comment and sign-off. The form should summarise the key actions from the discussion and record the objectives that have been agreed. Any action that needs to be undertaken by the employee, 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 to meet 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 (whoever the employee notes on the form). The backend of the Survey will be managed by a maximum of 4 specialist roles in POD so that any issues with the system can be fixed. Data on themes of sub-factors identified across College 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 to maintain oversight of the work 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, as detailed on the HR web pages.

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 [HR Policies and Procedures](#) should be followed for any significant performance and/or conduct issues. Staff (managers and other employees) can seek advice from their [HR Partner](#).

9.3 Underperformance is explicitly covered under the procedures detailed in the [College'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 web pages to support employees and Line Managers in having constructive conversations. Should additional support be required to prepare for potentially difficult conversations, this can be accessed by contacting your HR Partner or booking a micro-development session with one of the POD team. [Micro-development sessions for Managers | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)

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