

Guidelines for annual reviews

at the University of Oldenburg



These guidelines are designed to support managers and employees involved in preparing for and taking part in annual reviews. If you have any additional questions, please contact Professional Development (PE/OE).

Objectives

Establishing the best possible working conditions and ensuring the utmost quality in our work requires the commitment of all University employees. Managers with an excellent understanding of leadership skills are also essential in this process. Annual reviews in HR and person-

nel development are an instrument for strengthening a management culture where responsibilities are delegated, employees are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and communication structures are transparent and open.

Regulations and background

Annual reviews are structured and formal interviews between disciplinary managers and employees that take place each year. The most important objective of the annual review is to establish common goals in the following areas: responsibilities, working environment, conditions, cooperation, and areas for future development and training.

During the annual review, agreements are reached on future work and development targets.

Annual reviews are intended to encourage managers to be directly accountable for their employees. Managers must offer their employees the opportunity to take part in an annual review, although employee participation is voluntary.

Annual reviews are clearly distinct from other types of meetings held between managers and employees. An annual review is not a platform for judgement, criticism or managing conflicts. The purpose of the annual review is neither to compare the performance of employees, nor to discuss misunderstandings or resolve conflicts. Annual reviews should encourage employees and managers to analyse tasks undertaken and working conditions. On this basis, new target agreements are reached for the upcoming year.

Employees must have a minimum employment period of six months in their organizational unit before an annual review may be held. This applies to managers and employees.

Agreements reached during the annual review must be documented in written form. The attached protocol sheet may be used for this purpose and must be signed by the manager and the employee. Only the manager and the employee retain the annual review protocol. This document must be treated confidentially and stored in a place secure from unauthorized access. The annual review protocol is not submitted to the personnel file. Specific information such as training requirements may be provided to third parties subject to the permission of the employee. If the manager is no longer responsible for the employee, the protocol must be destroyed and a new annual review must be held.

To evaluate the success of this instrument, the disciplinary manager will inform their direct manager how many annual reviews have taken place each year and this information will be reported to PE/OE.

Preparation

The manager is responsible for organizing the annual review.

This includes:

- inviting the employee personally to the annual review
- arranging an appointment 2–3 weeks in advance
- planning at least one hour for the review (duration usually 1–2 hours)
- coordinating the review in a dialogue-based and objective manner
- ensuring a positive atmosphere and avoiding interruptions during the review
- arranging a neutral space to hold the review (for example in a meeting room)

Questions to be answered by the manager in preparation for the annual review:

- Are tasks, assignments and areas of responsibility clear?
- What strengths and development potential do I see in terms of current or future tasks?
- What mid-term goals are appropriate from my perspective?
- What is the team constellation? How does the employee relate to colleagues and management?
- What qualifications does the employee have and what potential is there for development?
- There should be an opportunity to discuss working conditions such as the employee's level of satisfaction with work-life balance or changes which can be made to the workplace for the benefit of the employee's health.

Questions to be answered by the employee in preparation for the annual review

- What suggestions, difficulties and weaknesses have I encountered in relation to my position?
- What strengths and development potential do I see in terms of current or future tasks?
- Which strengths could I bring to new tasks planned for the future or potential tasks? Which weaknesses could stand in my way?

- What support and training do I need?
- How do I feel about my position in the team and working with colleagues?
- How do I feel about working with my manager? Which aspects of my manager's behaviour support or hinder my work?
- What are my goals and suggestions?
- There should be an opportunity to discuss working conditions such as the employee's level of satisfaction with work-life balance or changes which can be made to the workplace for the benefit of the employee's health.

Directing and concluding the annual review

The manager is responsible for directing the annual review and must:

- take the employee seriously and acknowledge their efforts and achievements; provide feedback on work which did not meet quality requirements rather than criticize the employee
- describe rather than evaluate
- formulate criticism as questions or personal views
- listen
- direct the review by asking questions; acknowledge responsibility for the review
- document the review with the employee

The results, any measures agreed upon, and any other parties which need to be informed (such as PE/OE with training agreements) are recorded in a brief protocol which is signed by both participants.

Guidelines for conducting the review

- Ensure that the employee has enough time to relax and feel comfortable in their surroundings.
- Arrange a pleasant environment with an open seating plan. Do not sit at opposite sides of a desk.
- Avoid interruptions: they have a negative impact on the atmosphere, flow and result of the review.
- Remember that the first three minutes are critical in establishing a rapport and determining the course of the review; make sure to open the review with praise and be positive where possible.
- Encourage a dialogue. Mutual understanding can only be attained if both parties have the opportunity to express themselves.
- Name the topics you wish to address at the start of the review.
- Listen actively. If you only speak, you will not learn anything from your employee.
- Show respect for your employee. Try to understand their point of view. Be objective and avoid irony.
- Be authentic: send the same signals in spoken and body language.
- Ask open questions. If questions are only answered with yes or no, you will not be able to establish a dialogue. Use question words to gather information, such as what, when, who, and why.
- Focus on the future; use the opportunities presented and work with your employee to find solutions to problems.
- Summarize the points discussed at appropriate intervals. This will help you to remember the most important content of the review. It also helps to identify and solve misunderstandings.

Support in conflict management

Both employees and managers may postpone the review at any point if a conflict arises. However, an appointment must be arranged immediately to resume the review. If a conflict arises that cannot be resolved directly, assistance is available from Professional Development (PE/OE) or the Staff Council.



Key words for preparing the Annual review

- Cooperation
- Training and explanation of tasks
- Instructions
- Delegation
- Communication
- Involvement in decision-making
- Supervision and feedback
- Support
- Recognition and criticism
- Strengths and opportunities
- Managerial behaviour
- Occupational health
- Work-life balance
- Tasks and work environment
- Objectives
- Focus
- Deliverables
- Quantity/Quality of work
- Processes
- Workload
- Working hours
- Scope for making own decisions/independent action
- Teamwork
- Managerial tasks
- Support and development
- Wishes and expectations in terms of current position
- Training requirements and wishes
- Career perspectives
- Other suggestions

Other



Annual review protocol

Annual review on:

between

Employee

Manager

Name:

Name:

Position:

Position:

Issues discussed

What?	Who?	By when?	Remarks / statement

Acknowledged by:

Acknowledged by:

Employee

Date

Manager

Date