



Teaching Intensive Research Informed

A GUIDE TO  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REVIEW  
2018/19

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## Introduction

The University's strategic plan 2015 – 2020 sets out our Teaching Intensive Research Informed (TIRI) agenda. The fundamental principle of this approach is to provide high quality intensive teaching and individualised support to our Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) students across the academic disciplines of the University. The intensive teaching will be sustained by rigorous research that informs both the content and delivery of the curriculum. The TIRI strategy places the students at the centre of “everything we do” in the institution, and aims to develop distinctive academic strengths and competitive advantage in the sector. The core purpose of the strategy is to provide excellent teaching and unparalleled learning experience to our students. This involves developing “Platinum Courses” in a focussed set of academic disciplines in which the University will be a leading provider of Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses. These courses will be market relevant attracting critical mass of high quality students from across the UK and internationally, and produce highly employable graduates.

Enabling academic colleagues to achieve high standards of performance is fundamental to deliver the TIRI agenda and enhance overall student learning experience. Therefore, it is crucial to have a system that links performance to agreed objectives within the TIRI agenda supported through appropriate staff development. This will also include introduction of progression routes for academic staff in the form of TIRI Professorships.

The academic performance review process has been updated to reflect this and is designed to provide academic colleagues an opportunity to be clear about their contribution to the TIRI agenda in their School, how effectively they are performing but also consider relevant career plans. In essence, the Academic Performance Review is a crucial component of the University HR strategy – to develop a culture of individual and collective performance - and provides a University wide framework for effective and positive performance management.

It is envisaged that the update process will facilitate the following; enhance organisational performance and the student experience, ensure a consistent approach across the Schools, provide for a framework to supplement regularly meetings between academic colleagues and their academic line manager and focus on objectives / targets aligned to achieving the TIRI agenda.

The updated Performance Review process can only succeed if academic colleagues understand the process and participate annually. This guide is designed to assist both the Reviewer (usually the Head of School / Head of OFCD) and the Reviewee to understand and get the best out of the process.

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## Principles and Key Features

- Process is owned by both the Reviewer and Reviewee and will be based on a two-way constructive and positive discussion.
- It will be fairly and consistently applied to all academic colleagues.
- The process will link to the University's strategic priorities and other academic planning processes such as School annual plans and Workload Allocation Model.
- All academic employees are entitled to a Performance Review meeting.
- The Head of School / OFCD will store an electronic copy of the completed Performance Review form as a record of the meeting.
- The process is based on an annual, structured but informal meeting with a six-month mid-year progress meeting.
- The process covers a review and feedback on last year's performance against key measurables, the setting of 'SMART' objectives/targets and personal and career development plans.
- The Performance Review discussion will be evidence-based and there will be a significant element of self-assessment.
- Performance is assessed on the achievement of objectives.
- A summary of training and development needs will be reviewed by the Head of School / OFCD and HR Business Partner.
- University-wide timetable for Performance Review is November to December (although it is noted that in 2015/16 the timetable was February to April).
- The process will supplement other one-to-one meetings.
- Although Academic Performance Review is not directly linked to processes which determine promotion/progression evidence collected as part of Academic Performance Review may help in preparing other submissions.
- HR to annually report to Executive Board on completion of Performance Review in Schools.
- Link to and provide information to inform the Talent & Succession Planning process

**Note:** In this document reference is made to those responsible for undertaking Academic Performance Review as being Heads of School. Where Heads of School are referred to in this guide it should be interpreted as all those with formal line management responsibility - i.e. Faculty Deans, Heads of School, Heads of Centre, Academic Operational Leads and, if appropriate, TIRI Professors.

## Benefits to Academic Employees and Heads of Schools

Positive engagement in the Academic Performance Review process should bring benefits not just to the Reviewer and the Reviewee but also the School team as a whole – to include students. However, the benefits to academic employees and Heads of School are summarised below;

### *Academic Employee (Reviewee)*

- Understand how your contribution fits in with the School plans and the TIRI agenda
- Understand what is expected of you
- Feedback on your performance and setting clear objectives / targets
- Recognition for success and good performance
- Opportunity to discuss development needs and discuss career plans
- An evidence based, honest two way discussion

### *Heads of School / OFCD (Reviewer)*

- Comprehensive, robust process for examining all areas of academic contribution linked to the TIRI agenda
- Two way discussion
- Helps to build relationships with academic colleagues
- Clear process for determining objectives / targets and ensuring commitment and accountability for meeting agreed objectives / targets
- An opportunity to recognise high performers and identification of talent (as part of an on-going process) and those who require further support
- An opportunity to determine overall departmental gaps and development needs.
- A framework for evaluating workloads and how this might fit with the separate Workload Allocation Model
- Provide data / information to inform a new Talent & Succession Planning process

## Roles and Responsibilities

### *Academic Employee (Reviewee)*

- To cooperate fully and engage with the Academic Performance Review process
- Prepare for the Performance Review and ensure relevant evidence obtained
- Reflect on successes last period and those areas where things could have been better
- Give thought to future objectives / targets
- Actively engage with the Head of School / OFCD during the process – in their discussion regarding to performance, objectives / targets, career plans and development needs
- Accept constructive feedback on performance where it is justified and objective
- Take ownership for ensuring form completed in a timely manner

### *Head of School / OFCD (Reviewer)*

- Arrange and communicate date, time and location of review and any mid-year follow-up review – allow for sufficient time and appropriate venue to be used
- Communicate clearly what they expect academic employees to achieve and how assessed
- Provide clear and regular feedback and make Academic Performance Review an on-going process
- Support colleagues in their development
- Prepare for the review
- Provide honest and objective feedback to academic employees based on evidence
- Support employees in achievement of their objectives
- Ask for feedback on their own performance
- Refocus objectives / targets in line with School plans and Workload Allocation Model
- Ensure reviews are completed and form stored electronically

## Process – Conducting the Academic Performance Review

### *Preparation*

#### Reviewer

To make the most of the Performance Review process the Head of School / OFCD should agree a suitable date, time (between 1 and 1.5 hours) and location well in advance (suggest at least two weeks).

Heads of School / OFCD should also consider how well the Reviewee has performed and any achievements since the last Performance Review (reflecting on any factors that may have affected performance both within and outside the Reviewee's control), potential objectives for the current year and potential aspirations.

It should be noted that the form itself provides a structure for the meeting and also once completed provides a formal record of the Performance Review conversation. Heads of School / OFCD may wish to use the form in flexible manner.

#### Reviewee

The Reviewee should ensure that they have downloaded the Performance Review form.

#### Part One

The Reviewee should obtain all relevant evidence / data/information for each of the criteria listed in the Performance Review form (Teaching & Learning, Student Attendance, Retention and Achievement, Employability and Industry engagement, Research (drawn from the ORCID profile), CPD and Enterprise and School goals and targets) and attach / embed this to the evidence section for each criterion.

It is important that due consideration is given to research by following the REF definition; "research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared" (REF 2018/01). You should explain clearly your plan for producing outputs that would be suitable for REF submission with a realistic timeline for when those outputs will be available. Clearly, all research should be linked in some way to teaching (in line with the TIRI agenda) and it is expected that you would outline how your research is informing the teaching you undertake.

Reviewees should conduct a self-evaluation exercise and provide comments on progress made in the previous reporting period in the progress box for each criterion.

#### Part Two

Reviewees should also consider, in light of the above, any University / School level plans what the objectives / areas of focus should be for the current reporting period and any key development needs to achieve these objectives / areas of focus.

It should be noted that both Part One and Part Two of the form are designed to capture evidence of performance but also of enhancement / development (i.e. to reflect continuous improvement).

## Part Three

Reviewees should also consider what, if any, future careers plans they may have over the next one to three years. This might cover academic qualifications, membership of and involvement in appropriate professional bodies and other appropriate external engagements.

The Reviewee should send a copy of the part completed Performance Review form to their Head of School no later than one week prior to the schedules meeting.

### ***The Meeting***

This is the heart of the Performance Review process and should be a positive and constructive experience. Therefore it is important that the meeting is held in an environment that is private and free from interruptions.

The Reviewee should do most of the talking and there should be scope for reflection and analysis by the Reviewer. Performance for the full period under review should be discussed – not just recent or specific events.

Note: Although the form allows for the all five elements from the previous year to be discussed before those for the forthcoming period Heads of School / OFCD may wish to alternatively structure the meeting so that each element is taken in turn – discussing progress in the previous year and then priorities for the forthcoming period in that element before moving to the next element. The structure to be used should be confirmed with the Reviewee.

It is recognised that not all elements in the five areas are relevant for all roles and in some cases (e.g. those appointed to the TIRI roles), some elements may be more critical than others. If this is the case this should be clearly recorded on the form.

### ***Documentation and administration***

Both the Reviewer and Reviewee should take ownership that the form is completed as a record of the meeting.

The Reviewee should ensure that he / she has provided comments in the Reviewee comments section

For each objective the Reviewer should complete each Reviewer comments section on the form and taking account of progress made, the level of the post-holder and select the most appropriate final outcome from the drop-down menu for each objective as outlined in the table below;

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b><i>Excellent</i></b>	Exceeds expectations in the majority of key areas
<b><i>Good</i></b>	Meets and / or exceeds expectations in key areas
<b><i>Acceptable</i></b>	Meets expectations in some but requires improvement in others to achieve an outcome of good

<b><i>Unsatisfactory</i></b>	Requires significant and urgent improvement
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Both the Reviewer and Reviewee should retain copies of the final Performance Review form.

### ***Mid-Point Review***

The Performance Review should not just be an annual meeting. It should be part of ongoing discussions between the Reviewer and Reviewee - recognising that situations may arise that affect priorities in the School and for the Reviewee.

The Mid Point Review provides for a more informal opportunity to take stock, review progress being made, identify any issues that might be affecting progress and any adjustments / contingency plans put in place that are required.

Appendix 1 of the Performance Review form provides for space for the parties to note progress and any other relevant comments during any Mid Point Review undertaken.

## Research Trajectory and Plans

It is important that all of our teaching is underpinned by credible research and that this research is effectively shared with our students and external stakeholders; this is the very essence of the TIRI agenda. The University is committed to REF2021 and sees research as being an important feature of the academic role that complements the teaching aspects of the role.

In REF 2018/01, research is broadly defined as “a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared” which of course means sharing the outputs of research with the external academic community in the usual manner. However, in addition to the internal research agenda of the University there is a need to consider REF2021 and how your research contributes to that.

There is a further amplification in REF2018/01 of what are considered to be acceptable for outputs that would contribute to REF;

“...work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship (NB: not scholarly activity); the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.”

In the Academic Performance Review form you are being asked to indicate what type of research you are undertaking and the likely outputs that will follow from this research. You should be realistic in setting your objectives bearing in mind the lead times to produce an output and to have it accepted for publication or other dissemination; you must be clear on dates by which you will achieve various milestones. The discussion you subsequently have with your reviewer may determine an allowance of hours for these agreed activities within the ‘research active’ sections of the workload allocation model.

## Setting Objectives

As part of the Academic Performance Review process objectives / targets are set for the academic year. These relate to the individual effort needed to create tangible results and should be readily measurable, relate to the School plans and be relevant for the individual being reviewed. Objectives should be defined to focus on the activities that represent the most important aspects of long-term, on-going performance.

The SMART acronym is a useful and effective way of getting objectives right:

*Specific* - objectives should state a desired outcome. What does the employee need to achieve? Is the objective / target clearly defined?

*Measurable* - how will the Head of School and academic employee know when an objective has been achieved? It is clear what success is?

*Achievable* - is the objective something the academic employee is capable of achieving but also challenging?

*Relevant* - do objectives relate to those of the programme, School / University? Are they important and add value?

*Timebound* - when does the objective need to be achieved?

## Career Planning

A vital component of the Academic Performance Review is the opportunity to have an annual consideration of your career plans. Academic employees are expected to be pro-active in managing their own careers and the career planning element of the process is an opportunity to have a tailored discussion according to the individual's career stage. Some may have a long-term career plan others may be satisfied with their current position

There are three career pathways at the University for academic employees:

- i) Academic (progression through Associate Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader to Professor)
- ii) Academic Management (progression through Associate Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Academic Co-ordinator, Academic Operational Lead, Head of Centre, Head of School to Faculty Dean)
- iii) TIRI (progression to Assistant Teaching Professor, Associate Teaching Professor and Teaching Professor).

The above potential career pathways are interchangeable and academic colleagues may move (lateral and/or upward) from one to another.

The University recognises the contributions of a diverse workforce. It believes that academic colleagues should, wherever possible, be permitted to continue working for as long as they wish to do so provided that they are making a full contribution to the University. The University does not have an organisational retirement age for academic employees however it recognises that colleagues will wish to consider full / partial retirement plans for a number of reasons and in good time and it is reasonable for the Head of School / OFCD to seek to understand the working intentions of employees towards the later stages of their careers in order to facilitate workforce planning and in respect of budgeting and other administrative considerations.

There should be realistic and honest reflection on career next steps – to include potential timescale (i.e. short term – within 12 months, medium term – 1 to 3 years, long term – 3 to 5 years), milestones, extent ready for such a move and any development or other support required. The parties should note, however, that there are no guarantees with respect to potential future opportunities.

## Further Information

*Performance Review Policy*

<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/HumanResources/Performance-Review/Performance-Review-Policy.pdf>

*ACAS - How to Manage Performance*

<http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/m/0/How-to-manage-performance-advisory-booklet.pdf>

*Academic Performance Review Form*

<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/HumanResources/Performance-Review/Home.aspx>

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Is the updated Academic Performance Review process for those employees still within their probation period ?**

*A. Yes. Although academic colleagues still within their probationary period will have separate conversations with their Head of School / OFCD regarding progress, the updated Academic Performance Review process has been developed for all academic employees at the University and will supplement conversations being held relating to probation.*

**Q. Does the employee have to sign the Academic Performance Review form ?**

*A. No. Since the objective is to be helpful and constructive there is no requirement for the parties to sign the form. However, there is a requirement for agreed comments to be recorded on the form. The Head of School / OFCD will finalise the form and email a final copy to the Reviewee. Both parties should retain an electronic copy for the records.*

**Q. How does the Academic Performance Review process relate to the Workload Allocation Model?**

*A. The Head of School / OFCD is responsible for developing and reviewing departmental resource allocation plans. However, although there is an indirect link between the two processes Performance Review is a separate process.*

**Q. Who should conduct the Academic Performance Review meeting?**

*A. Normally it is for the relevant Head of School / OFCD to carry out the Performance Review meeting.*

**Q. Will the outcome be confidential?**

*A. Completed Performance Reviews forms will normally be confidential between the Reviewee and Reviewer. Any development outcomes may need to be more widely disseminated however.*

**Q. How does Academic Performance Review relate to the University's promotion arrangements?**

*A. The Performance Review process is separate from any appointment and promotion procedures the University. However, information obtained on completed forms can be used by the Head of School /OFCD in preparing other submissions.*

**Q. How should Heads of School / OFCD deal with academic employees who may be reluctant to participate?**

*A. All academic colleagues are expected to have a Performance Review. The process is designed to be constructive, positive and a useful two way process that benefits both the Reviewee and the Reviewer. It is usual practice for HEIs to have systems to review performance, potential and identify training and career planning needs. However, the relevant HR Business Partner will provide support to the Head of School / OFCD where colleagues are hesitant - to overcome any perceived obstacles.*

**Q. Where does the updated Academic Performance Review process fit into performance management?**

*A. Performance management is an ongoing process of communication and feedback between the Head of School / OFCD and Reviewee throughout the year. The Performance Review process is designed to link academic colleagues individual objectives, contribution and career development plans to the achievement the local School level annual plan but the University Strategic Plan.*

*However, if the Reviewee's contribution and performance is identified to be unsatisfactory overall and the normal coaching, counseling and training do not bring performance to an acceptable level, further action may be necessary – e.g. a formal Performance Improvement Plan may be put in place.*

**Q. Where do I source the data / information required for the evidence sections of the form?**

*A. If you have any queries you should speak to your Head of School / OFCD in the first instance. A summary of the key data sets will be generated centrally in 2016/17 for attaching to the Performance Review form.*

**Q. Where can I find definitive information on research outputs?**

*A. You should download the 'Guidance on Submissions' (REF2018/01) and the 'Panel criteria and working methods' (REF2018/02) available at [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk) for full details on what types of outputs will count for REF.*

**Q. Is the University only concerned about research that can be submitted to REF?**

*A. The University values all research that is undertaken where it can be clearly demonstrated that it informs teaching; this is the TIRI agenda of course. However, it is in your interests and those of the University to align that research with what would be submittable to REF. In this way, we can maximise the benefit from our research and it may help to leverage research funding.*

**Q. Will I be given time to undertake research?**

*A. There are three fields within the workload allocation model that can be used to allocate time to research depending on whether it is externally funded or not. Normally, research time does not get allocated against the core 550 hours for class contact. Your performance review is where you and your reviewer will evaluate your research objectives and agree on the time to be allocated. It is unlikely that time would be allocated where there are no clear, demonstrable, research outputs (using the REF definitions of outputs).*