

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING ANNUAL REVIEW INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS AN ANNUAL REVIEW INTERVIEW?

The annual review interview

- is well prepared and structured,
- designed in a spirit of partnership,
- it combines hindsight with foresight,
- is held once a year, more if necessary, and,
- is confidential.

It is a dialogue between the direct superior (hereinafter referred to as the manager) and the respective employee.

It should close with mutually endorsed agreements, recorded in a confidential documentation sheet. The contents are intended only for the employee and the manager, that is to say, not for third parties.

Conducting annual review interviews is an important and non-delegable manager's task.

GOALS OF THE ANNUAL REVIEW INTERVIEW

Annual review interviews aim at promoting open communication and put cooperation on a trusting basis. A formal annual interview, in which both sides take time for mutual feedback and coordinate their tasks and responsibilities, supplements day-to-day communication between the employee and their manager.

The annual review interview provides the opportunity to

- gain clarity about tasks, responsibilities and associated requirements, as well as to agree on which working conditions play a beneficial or deleterious role in the workplace,
- openly discuss the mutual relationship between managers and employees and to design it in such a way as to promote a trusting cooperation,
- give reciprocal feedback, be it as recognition or constructive criticism,
- agree on how to process tasks in the future, as well as on personal and professional development.

The annual review interview is part of Leuphana's personnel development policy. The annual review interview is not an assessment interview.

IMPLEMENTATION

The annual review interview is held once a year between the manager and the employee and is strictly confidential. The manager invites his or her employee to the annual review interview at least one week in advance. Both sides use these guidelines and the job description to prepare themselves and define the most important topics and concerns for them in advance.

The manager documents the agreements reached during the interview. Both sides then sign the **documentation sheet** to underline the binding nature of the agreements. Like the contents of the interview, the documentation sheet is confidential and will not be sent to



their hierarchical superior. Both interview partners receive one copy each. The documentation sheet is destroyed after the follow-up interview the following year. In addition, both confirm on the **record sheet** that the interview has taken place. The record sheet is used for the quantitative recording of the yearly interviews. It must be passed on by the manager to the Human Resources Development Coordination Office, which is responsible for the realisation of the annual review interviews. In the event of a change of manager, it must be agreed with the employee whether the interview sheet may be handed over to the new manager.

CONTENTS OF THE INTERVIEW

The following aspects should be discussed in the annual review interview. The questions listed in each case serve as suggestions / propositions, but do not have to be strictly worked through:

a. Reflection and achievements since the previous annual review interview / last year

The minutes of the previous annual review interview are used to take stock. It should be clarified whether or not it has been possible to implement what had been jointly agreed at the previous review meeting.

- What tasks/objectives were agreed upon?
- Which tasks/projects went well during the past year?
- Which agreements were made and implemented?

b. Work results and feedback

Here, the manager can provide feedback on how the employee's work results and work behaviour are perceived. The employee can also give feedback to his or her manager. For confidentiality reasons, this point is not included in the documentation sheet.

- How satisfied are you with the work you achieved?
- How satisfied are you with the tasks you completed?
- What particular tasks are perfect for the employee?
- Which strengths could the employee use even better?
- At which tasks can the manager support the employee to achieve better results?

c. Work situation

This topic deals with all points, which affect the work situation as a whole: job satisfaction, workload, workplace climate, work organisation, equipment, etc.

- What set of conditions are felt as being supportive for that work activity?
- Is there anything that is distracting or troubling?
- What ideas are there to improve that particular situation (organisation, equipment etc)?

**d. Leadership and cooperation**

The question before last turns to the future. It addresses the goals to be reached within the framework of certain projects in the next year and how to attain them. At this point, the opportunity arises to discuss continuous professional development (CPD) needs or wishes.

- How do you rate the cooperation?
- What do you perceive as particularly positive?
- Where are the points where cooperation could improve?
- How is the role of the manager experienced?
- Does the employee receive sufficient information/feedback/back cover from the manager?

e. Further development and perspectives

The question before last turns to the future. It addresses the goals to be reached within the framework of certain projects in the next year and how to attain them. At this point, the opportunity arises to discuss continuous professional development (CPD) needs or wishes.

- Which further and continuing professional development courses are adapted to the employee's situation?
- Which (additional) motivational activity could be assigned to your employee?

f. Agreements

The annual review interview should conclude with concrete pledges. These may include work projects, but also, for example, internal communication, collegial or management behaviour. All pledges are recorded in a confidential documentation sheet, which both parties will sign in reciprocal agreement.

- What concrete commitments can managers and employees make?
- Which agreements would you like to make together?

HOW TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

An important prerequisite for the realisation of an open, fair and trusting exchange lies in properly conducting the interview. The conversation should be conducted on an equal footing. It is the manager's task to lead the annual interview and to address all points, as well as to ask questions. Particular attention should be paid to the following aspects:

- The annual review interview should take place in an undisturbed atmosphere and without time pressure, that is to say, with a sufficiently large time window (around 1 hour) and free of possible sources of interference (telephone, emails, colleagues).
- Both partners should present their situation and their impressions clearly and give feedback. The following feedback rules can be useful:
The 4 As: Appreciation – Awareness – Action – Aspiration



- 1) What I appreciate in you...
- 2) What irritates me occasionally/frequently/... irritates/disrupts/... is, ...
- 3) What that triggers in me is.../ this is how that affects / troubles me ...
- 4) (For the future), I wish these things ...

- Both sides should focus on elaborating solutions to improve the aspects addressed, not on searching for deeper reasons or even pointing the finger of blame.
- A consensual agreement should be reached on the next steps to ensure acceptance and implementation of what both sides have agreed.
- If a conflict arises during the discussion, it often makes sense to reschedule to another day, and if necessary, make use of the Leuphana's advisory and support services (that is to say: staff council).

In exceptional conflict situations, a third – uninvolved – person (for example a Staff Council member or the Equal Opportunities' Officer or, as the case may be, the Disabled Persons' Representative) may be called in. However, both sides must agree to the involvement of the other party and select this person jointly. The third person is bound to secrecy.