

## F.A.Q. Some Frequently Asked Questions about the Annual Review Cycle

**Question 1.** When the objectives for a review are established, how and when will the evidence relating to them be collected?

**Answer:** At the initial discussion it will be agreed between the reviewer and reviewee what evidence will be gathered to inform the judgement about the objectives having been achieved. This will be in accordance with the Code of Practice. It is expected that the evidence gathering will include at least two periods of classroom observation.

**Question 2.** What does 'in-year monitoring' mean and how will it be conducted?

**Answer:** The teacher should be monitoring their own performance on an ongoing basis. There may also be a sharing of information throughout the year, particularly through the observation requirement of the scheme where the performance will be monitored.

**Question 3.** What does classroom observation involve and when will it happen?

**Answer:** The scheme requires all reviewees to be observed, either in the classroom or through task observation. Classroom observation is linked to the agreed objective(s) set at the beginning of the review cycle. It is likely that the classroom observation(s) will occur twice during the cycle and at an appropriate time interval. It will involve the reviewer and reviewee having an agreed focus for the observation, agreeing the proforma that will be used to record.

Observation allows for information from a different perspective. It may confirm where the practice of the teacher is good and meets the standards and expectations of the school and it may also give an insight into improving aspects of performance.

The evaluation of the observation should form the basis of the review discussion

**Question 4.** Will teachers be given advance notice of classroom observation?

**Answer:** Classroom observation should be planned during the initial review meeting. It is not expected that the reviewer will arrive unannounced to conduct a classroom observation.

**Question 5.** What happens if, as a result of circumstances entirely beyond a teacher's control, one or more of the objectives for review becomes impossible to achieve?

**Answer:** While it is expected that all the objectives agreed at the beginning of the cycle should be achieved. The review statement will focus upon the overall performance of the reviewee and not just the achievement of the objectives.

**Question 6.** When review objectives are being discussed, how will the priorities in the school development plan be balanced with the legitimate personal objectives of individual teachers?

**Answer:** PRSD is quite specific about the links between the school development plan and the setting of individual performance objectives. It departs from SDPR in this respect. PRSD seeks to align individual improvement with departmental and whole school improvement.

Each school in its school development plan will have identified 3-5 key development priorities and it is likely that these are linked to major educational initiatives – ICT, Literacy, Numeracy, Special Education, etc. Schools may also have identified particular priorities linked to their school's particular context.

Each reviewer should be familiar with these areas for development.

**Question 7.** When and how will the review discussion be arranged?

**Answer:** It is likely that this will occur towards the end of the annual cycle. Some schools may decide to link PRSD into the school development planning cycle during the 3rd term. At this point reviewers and reviewees would be aware of the school development priorities for the following year. Other schools may start the cycle at the beginning of the academic year and conclude it in May/June of the following year.

It is up to each school to establish a review calendar which maps out the time windows for review discussions and monitoring (including classroom observation)

**Question 8.** What will happen if a reviewee achieves two of the review objectives, but not the third?

**Answer:** While it is expected that all the objectives agreed at the beginning of the cycle should be achieved. The review statement will focus upon the overall performance of the reviewee and not just the achievement of the objectives.

It is important that PRSD leads to improving quality and raising standards throughout the school. It is recognised that setting challenging objectives leads to the individual thinking about a high performance culture and also to a greater sense of personal achievement at the end of the cycle.

Many teachers are already working at a high performance level and this is to be encouraged.

*Question 9.* What do the references in the scheme to confidentiality mean?

*Answer:* Confidentiality is referred to in the handbook. The school already operates many processes that have confidentiality rubrics included. PRSD should be consistent with the school's approaches to confidentiality.

*Question 10.* Where will the copies of the review statements be kept? Who will have access to them?

*Answer:* The scheme is quite specific regarding the review statements. In the instance of teachers and principals the review statement will always be kept in a secure place and access to all or part of it must be restricted to only those entitled to such access.

In the case of a principal and teachers the review statement may be taken into account by those responsible for taking decisions or making recommendations about pay or performance

Relevant information from a statement may be taken into account by school management as part of its function relating to the effective management of the school.

*Question 11.* Where will time be found for these reviews to be completed?

*Answer:* PRSD is part of the conditions of service of all teachers and must be managed within the agreed arrangements.

*Question 12.* How can the whole process avoid adding the existing burden of paperwork?

*Answer:* The documents to be completed for PRSD were part of the materials issued through the employing authority. It is expected that all schools will use the 'planning record 2005/2006' and the 'review statement 2005/2006'. The lesson observation proforma are included as exemplars and schools may use existing observation sheets or amend and adapt the exemplars to best support the observation arrangements in their school.

*Question 13.* What resources and information be available to reviewers and reviewees?

*Answer:* The exceptional closure day will form part of the resources available. Schools will also acquire their own resources. An on-line e-development resource is also being developed and be available towards the end of April 2005.

*Question 14.* How will reviewers be identified?

*Answer:* Principals are responsible for the designation of reviewers within the school. Wherever possible a reviewer should have management and/or curricular responsibility for the teacher

*Question 15.* What if I don't like my team leader?

*Answer:* Principals are responsible for designating reviewers. As the relationship between reviewer and reviewee is crucial, principals should be sensitive and ensure that reviewer allocation pays attention to this. Principals can consult but they have the final decision. All reviewers should be in a position to help and support teachers in the pursuit of their objectives.

*Question 16.* What happens if a reviewer insists on setting unreasonable or unfair objectives?

*Answer:* The role of the reviewer is to assist and support the setting of a reviewee's objectives. The objectives should be challenging but achievable and be informed by the school development plan.

The reviewee has the right to record any points of disagreement within 10 working days of receipt of the completed review statement.

*Question 17.* How do the outcomes of the review process relate to decisions about pay progression?

*Answer:* For those teachers who have already progressed to UPS3 (whenever arrangements are finalised). PRSD will not have any links to decisions about pay. PRSD will be therefore used in connection to individual improvement and to any matter related to the provision and support of professional development for teachers.

For others PRSD shall be a necessary requirement in respect of pay progression on the main and upper pay scales and school ISRs. The review statements shall be taken into account by those responsible for taking decisions or making recommendations about the pay and performance of teachers

*Question 18.* How will they relate to threshold assessment and progression on the upper pay spine?

*Answer:* TBC

**Question 19.** Can a school determine that there will be one objective that will be the same for every member of staff?

**Answer:** The scheme does not exclude a situation that all staff work towards a particular objective that is clearly a priority within the school development plan. However it should be discussed with the individual since PRSD is essentially about the development of teachers within the context of the school development plan.

PRSD does include the idea of objectives being shared objectives which might include a number of teachers working to the same objective, perhaps as part of a school project.

**Question 20.** Does the introduction of PRSD mean that target setting for principals and vice-principals continues, or is it replaced?

**Answer:** PRSD will replace the existing arrangements for principals and vice-principals on target setting and the outcome of these informing decisions about pay progression. The 2000 circular on Salary Policy does not change and any decisions about pay still need to consider GUIDANCE TO BOARDS OF GOVERNORS ON THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SALARY POLICY FEBRUARY 2000 issued by employing authorities.

### Important Note

The reason for listing the questions is three-fold

- they give school leaders a sense of at least some of the questions that they can expect to be asked and for which they can prepare their responses
- they point to the importance of providing time on the exceptional closure day or making other arrangements to enable teachers to raise these and other issues and be given clear and honest answers
- Some of the questions that teachers may pose will relate to school based issues and can only be addressed by those in the school. It is important that schools recognise this and perhaps begin to consider what internal protocols or systems might be developed to support PRSD in the school.