



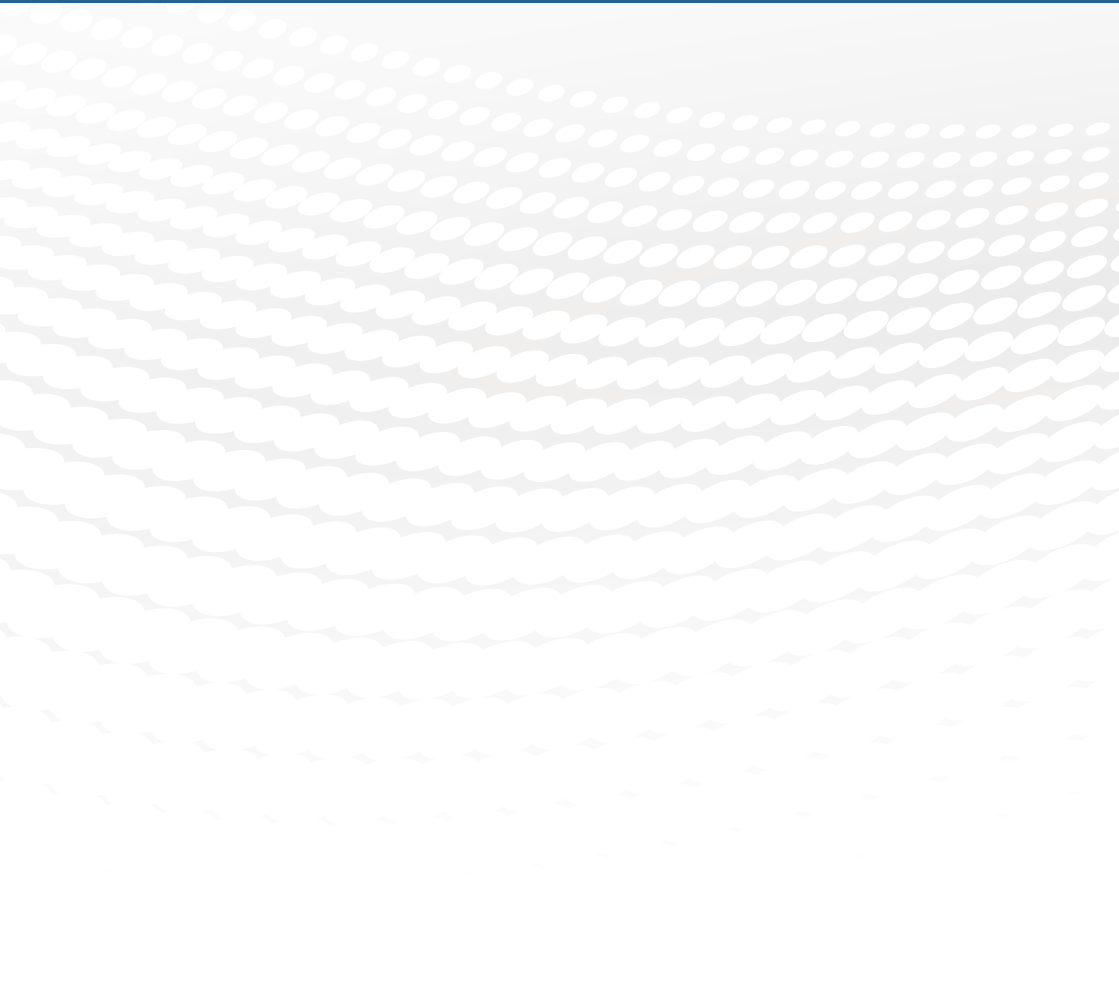
**Personnel Development**

Pooling strength for a strong university



## Performance Reviews at the University of Bremen

### Guidelines



**Members of the project steering group:**

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The members of the steering group will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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**Foreword to these guidelines**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Further development of our University and successfully coping with future challenges can only be achieved by well-qualified and highly motivated staff members. As you know, over past years the University has invested a lot in providing ongoing support to faculty as well as its research, administration, and technical staff.

In close collaboration with staff representatives, in 2011 the University initiated a project called **"Good Leadership! Shaping the Future Together"**, a measure designed to foster the participation of all status groups in further developing cooperation among all areas of the University.

The purpose behind the project is to promote dialog between members of staff and the University management on the fundamental values, aims and roles of leadership and individual career development prospects. This dialog is intended to act as a catalyst for individual career development at all levels, providing the opportunity to coordinate common aims and expectations. Annual appraisal interviews can make an important contribution in this respect.

They constitute highly useful leadership instruments for building trust and strengthening cooperation in one-on-one talks.

We believe that mutual esteem, recognition and respect are important to promote trust and that they play a key role in motivating both leadership personnel and members of their staff alike. The overwhelmingly positive feedback received from across the University so far supports our expectation that appraisal interviews are important drivers of enhanced cooperation and fostering identification with our University – always provided, of course, that they are well-prepared. I am personally very pleased with the results so far.

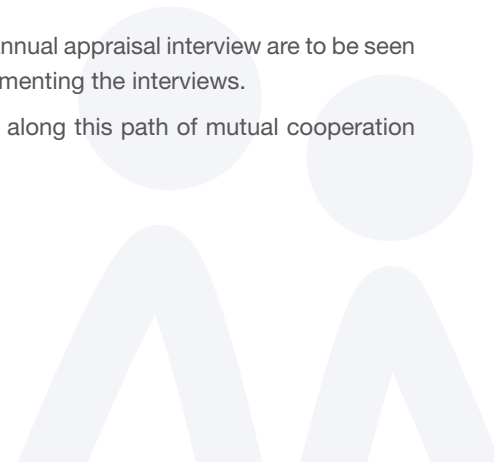
The present guidelines on how to conduct the annual appraisal interview are to be seen as an orientation intended to help you in implementing the interviews.

I look forward to continuing with you together along this path of mutual cooperation and wish you success with your interviews.

Yours truly,

Dr. Martin Mehrrens

*Director of Finance and Administration*



## Annual Appraisal Interviews: A successful leadership instrument

Since beginning of 2012, the annual appraisal is a mandatory leadership instrument in all organizational units of the University's areas of research, teaching, administration and technics.

The regular evaluation confirms: The annual appraisal is a successful leadership instrument which contributes to an appreciative leadership culture. The annual appraisal is a yearly respectful exchange between members of staff with their line managers.

A well-conceived appraisal interview can:

- enhance cooperation,
- result in constructive feedback between line managers and their staff members,
- improve matching work fields and duties,
- support and advance individual career development.

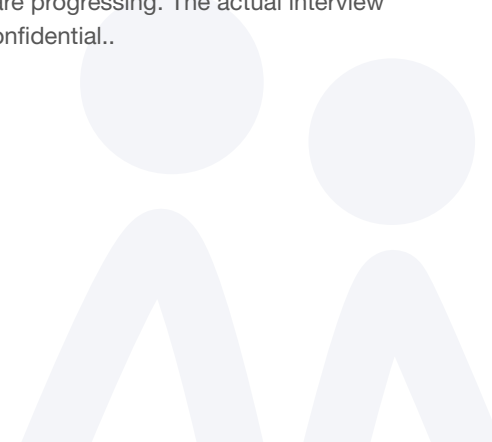
Annual appraisal interviews are meant to:

- put existing organizational and leadership expertise on a common and coherent conceptual basis to allow targeted further development,
- sustainably build and anchor enhanced social competences (in respect of communication, cooperation and capacity for teamwork, accepting responsibility, and pro-active collaboration),
- invigorate and intensify mutual exchange in respect of good practice, information and feedback on personal attitudes and orientations, and on (personal) prospects and possibilities for development in the University,
- boost exchange on formal structures, networks, and "informal rules" in the University
- promote the transparency of necessary lines of cooperation via binding internal networking on a broad scale across all status groups.



## Framework conditions for the talks

- Wherever possible, the appraisal interviews should be carried out on an annual basis. Participation is mandatory for all employees of the University, including leadership personnel.
- Appointments should be fixed well in advance to allow sufficient possibilities for preparation. The line managers are responsible for setting the agenda for talks.
- Talks should be conducted in an undisturbed environment.
- The content of talks and details of target agreements are strictly confidential and any records kept are of an informal nature.
- Each year, the Director of Finance and Administration (DFA) will notify leadership personnel when they should start organizing the interviews. Of course, it is always possible to request another date, should the proposed timing be inconvenient.
- At the end of the summer semester, the Personnel Development Office will request brief notification of how the talks are progressing. The actual interview contents are naturally to be kept strictly confidential..





## Who talks with whom?

This question can be answered quite easily in areas of the University's central administration because of the clearly defined organizational structures. With regard to areas of research and education, however, it is not so easy, so the University leadership has settled on several different situational frameworks.

The annual talks with leaders of the Faculty's administration, the members of their own research group (research assistants), and mid-level faculty (Lektor\*innen) will be conducted by the Deans.

The professors likewise conduct the talks with the members of their research groups and, if requested to do so by the Faculty, also with the technicians and assistants working in their defined area of responsibility.

Line managers should, of course, also hold talks with staff members on fixed-term contracts. As the appraisal talks take place on an annual basis, however, approximately one year of employment should still be left before their contract expires so that there is sufficient time for the perspectives developed in the talks to be realized. In the case of research assistants whose contracts will expire in the shorter term, professors should use the talks to focus on these persons' future career paths, discuss their prospects, and offer support wherever possible.

## Preparing for the talks

The Personnel Development Office has developed three formats for measures designed to prepare participants' annual talks.

### 1. Kick-off meetings for leadership personnel and their staff members

At these meetings, the DFA, the Personnel Development and staff representatives explain the central aims pursued by the project. All leadership personnel and their members of staff should attend to hear the objectives clearly and honestly explained by the University leadership – an absolute prerequisite for building a leadership culture based on mutual appreciation. Everyone is able to join in the discussion and put questions, removing any uncertainty or fears they may have. It is precisely at the beginning of such projects that participants' questions can lead to valuable inputs for integration into the overall concept.

### 2. Workshops for leadership personnel

All persons in leadership positions take part in a full-day workshop. To ensure neutrality, these workshops are moderated by a facilitator who is not a member of the University. The groups will consist of 12–15 participants drawn from different organizational areas.

The workshop is intended to strengthen the participants in their roles as leaders and support the development of attitudes shaped by mutual esteem and recognition. In addition to this, the workshops present an ideal opportunity to bring in personal experience of past appraisal interviews and exchange views in a collegial fashion across disciplines and status groups. A catalog of questions will be put forward as a basis for discussion.

### 3. Meetings for members of staff

Members of staff are able to prepare for their appraisal interviews at a specially convened assembly. Here, the focus will be on the catalog of questions that serves as orientation for the talks. These talks are a highly personal matter and call for a great measure of openness and trust. These information events provide the opportunity to put questions, also of a critical nature, and clarify anything that may be necessary.

## Key data on the introduction and implementation of annual appraisal interviews in the University:

- Project started in 2011, project closed 1/2015.
- Annual appraisal interviews then became a part of regular operations at the beginning of 2015. Since then, workshops have been held several times for newly appointed professors and new additions to leadership personnel.
- By the end of 2018, 40 leadership workshops had been held with a total of 320 participants, of whom about 70% were professors.
- In addition, there were 36 kick-off meetings with 1,450 participants and 40 meetings of staff with a total of 1,300 participants.

## Suggestions for preparing the appraisal interviews

The following catalog outlines questions from the perspective of members of staff. At the same time, these questions provide a valuable orientation for leaders.

Not every question may be relevant for everyone. They should therefore not be confused with a form of checklist. They merely constitute **suggestions** and aimed at supporting **members of staff** in preparing themselves for appraisal talks.

The questions are divided into three thematic areas:

- Thematic area 1: Work and responsibilities
- Thematic area 2: Quality of cooperation
- Thematic area 3: Career advancement

### Questions surrounding work and responsibilities:

- In your view, what are the specific characteristics and requirements of the work you do?
- How well are you able to cope with your work (quantitatively, qualitatively)?
- What parts of your work do you like best?
- Where do you perceive your strengths?
- What do you like doing most?
- What bothers and disturbs you most? What causes you problems?
- Are you happy with the results of your work?
- Where do you think your capabilities could be better put to use?

### Questions surrounding quality and cooperation:

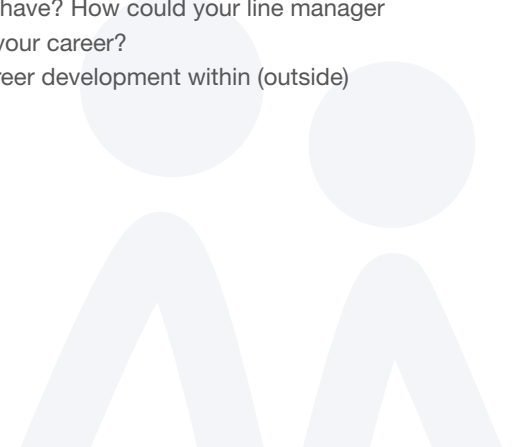
- How do you assess the current climate of cooperation?
- What in particular do you like about current cooperation?
- How open are your relations with the people you work with?
- What do you think you can contribute towards creating a constructive atmosphere during the talks?
- How can you provide your line manager with appreciative feedback?
- Do you feel you receive sufficient support?
- How are the decisions you make dealt with?
- How independently are you allowed to work?
- How do you assess your scope for shaping events?
- To what extent are you integrated in decision making in your area of work?
- How do you assess the information flows in your area?

### Questions concerning career development

- How do you realistically assess your further career development?
- What are your future career prospects?
- How could your line manager support you better? (formulate expectations)

### Questions surrounding the work of research assistants:

- Do you think the organizational and other parameters support your academic career ambitions?
- What could possibly be changed for the better?
- Does your involvement in academic teaching foster your career development?
- What could be improved?
- How satisfied are you with your career development to date?
- What additional support would you like to have? How could your line manager help you establish contacts important for your career?
- How do you assess your prospects for career development within (outside) the University?





## Excursus: Leadership marked by mutual esteem

### Basic attitudes are the foundations

Creating mutual esteem is not a top-down process. Rather, the prime prerequisite for talks in the context of annual performance reviews is that everyone concerned, no matter what their role of function, is prepared to reflect their actions and strive for appreciative cooperation with one another. Stating one's own personal interests and expectations in a clear and concise manner and in so doing showing understanding for the role and expectations of your interview partner does not mean agreeing to everything. Rather, it takes an appreciative and frank communication atmosphere to open up the possibility to constructively discuss differences and thereby mutually arrive at ways to resolve them.

The manner in which we communicate with one another has an important impact on our motivation and efficiency.

In order to do our best, all of us, leaders as well as their staff, need to feel a certain amount of recognition and appreciation.

An appreciative form of communication is a useful tool for personnel development and develops one's communication skills. It opens up numerous courses of action. Appreciation can be expressed in different ways, for example by visibly showing interest in someone's work, their tasks, achievements, and assessments. An attentive and inquiring attitude fosters conversation and openness.

Actively listening and putting questions as well as coming back to central aspects that

are brought up goes a long way towards a successful exchange of views as well as resolving or avoiding misunderstandings

Picking up on your interview partner's strengths fosters motivation and supports successful talks (resource orientation).

The transparent communication of important information (like participation in the further development of one's work area) promotes trust and leads to enhanced cooperation.

## Structuring an annual appraisal interview:

### Review:

- Successes, problem issues, tasks, team...

### Job responsibilities

- Clearly defined tasks and responsibilities
- When graduation is desired: planning the steps, progress along the way to graduate, time windows
- Teaching, research, miscellaneous

### Quality of cooperation:

- Scope for action, information flows
- mutual feedback

### Career development:

- Fixed-term contracts, support possibilities for career advancement within and outside the University, measures of further education, events and meetings...





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