Conducting Effective Faculty Annual Reviews: A Workshop for Academic Leaders

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INSTRUCTOR’S GUIDE

Background
Most if not all medical schools require annual performance reviews to be conducted on all or a subset of
the faculty. Despite being a common and recurring job expectation for academic leaders such as
department chairs and division directors, such leaders are often poorly prepared to conduct effective
reviews.¹ Some of the difficulties stem from lack of training, avoidance of confrontation, lack of role
modeling, and the time consuming and high stakes nature of the process itself.² In addition,
administrators report challenges related to insufficient methods for assessing teaching and research,
variability in evaluation processes and criteria, and a disconnect between evaluation and salary.³ Thus,
for some academic administrators, the faculty annual review can be perceived as a burden.⁴

When annual faculty reviews are not done well, this creates several missed opportunities. Ideally, the
annual faculty review should be a key element of the individual career development process. The review
process is an opportunity for leaders to provide mentoring and feedback, clarify expectations, and
increase faculty engagement.⁵ Annual reviews can thus be a vehicle for sustaining faculty vitality⁶
throughout the career lifecycle and across the teaching, research, and service missions.

Goals
This session is designed for academic leaders with responsibility for monitoring and assessing the performance
of faculty, such as department chairs and divisions directors. The overall goals of the session are to a) improve
the preparation of academic leaders in conducting reviews that provide constructive feedback to faculty
members regarding their overall performance; and b) increase academic leaders’ awareness of and capacity in
the use of annual reviews as a means toward increased faculty vitality.

Educational Objectives
As a result of attending this session, participants will be able to:
- Outline the timeline and process for faculty annual reviews
- Plan action-oriented face-to-face appraisals
- Outline the elements of effective review documents
- Devise mechanisms to maintain and enhance performance
Resources included in the submission
- Instructor’s guide (this document)
- Powerpoint slide deck (which includes speaker notes on each slide)
- Worksheet 1: Using Questions to Facilitate the Face-to-Face Meeting
- Worksheet 2: Strategies to Maintain Faculty Engagement
- Cases (two)
- Sample Faculty Annual Review Form
- Sample Faculty Annual Review Guidelines
- Workshop Evaluation Form

Practical Implementation Advice
This workshop is planned for a two and a half hour session. If a facilitator would like to have participants complete a sample review (using the case studies, this session could be extended to three hours, the drafting of the review would take place at the end of the session after the discussion of the case studies – this is noted in the timeline below). Below is a suggested timeline for the 2.5 hour presentation and activities (with a notation made for the optional 30 minute review form writing activity). Substantive speaker notes are embedded in the slide deck itself.

Suggested Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Slides and Activities</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>• Introductions of presenters and attendees</td>
<td>• Slides 1-4</td>
<td>Capture attendee comments on flipchart or whiteboard. Presenters should review this list at the end of the session to see what has and hasn’t been discussed in the session.</td>
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<td>• Ask attendees what they hope to learn from this workshop</td>
<td>• Depending on size of group, everyone can introduce themselves</td>
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<td>• Review workshop goals and objectives</td>
<td>• After introductions, ask those in attendance what they want to learn from session.</td>
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<td>• Once attendees have shared, presenters should discuss the goals and objectives of the workshop.</td>
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<td>15 min</td>
<td>• Discussion of why reviews are daunting and so important</td>
<td>• Slides 5-7</td>
<td>Presenters should ask attendees to consider the most challenging aspect of faculty reviews based on their experiences, and invite them to add to what’s listed on the slides.</td>
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<td>45 min</td>
<td>• Presenters will now move into a discussion of the 5 steps of effective annual reviews.</td>
<td>• Slides 8-15</td>
<td>During slide #10, distribute institutional guidelines and forms, or use the samples provided in the resources. Slide 15 is an introduction to Worksheet 1: Using Questions to Facilitate the Face-to-Face Meeting. Working in pairs, attendees should use the worksheet.</td>
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<td>• In this 35 minute segment, the focus will be on steps 1, 2, 3: Expectations, Evidence, and Meeting</td>
<td>• Slides 8-15 should take approximately 15 minutes</td>
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<td>• The worksheet activity (on slide 16) should take approximately 15 minutes for the attendees to work in pairs, and 5 minutes for the large group debriefing.</td>
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to draft a list of questions for annual review conversations. This should take approximately 15 minutes. In the large group debrief, each pair should share one question that they generated (5 minutes for debrief).

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<tr>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>● Steps 4 &amp; 5 of the effective annual review process (writing the evaluation; signing and submitting).</td>
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<td>● Slides 16-20</td>
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<td>● A discussion of the slide content should take approximately 15 minutes.</td>
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<td>● The worksheet activity and debrief should take approximately 10 minutes.</td>
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<td>At slide 18, the presenters should distribute Worksheet 2: Strategies to Maintain Faculty Engagement. Working independently, attendees use the worksheet to reflect on strategies they have used and might consider using. In a large group debrief, they are asked to share general reactions to the activity and add any strategies not already listed.</td>
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<td>15 min</td>
<td>● Case #1</td>
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<td>● Slide 21</td>
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<td>Presenters will distribute the first case example. Attendees will discuss the case in pairs initially, and will summarize their ideas in the large group debrief. Alternatively, participants could be asked to work in threes with two people role playing the situation and the third observing and de-briefing the role play. This should take approximately 15 mins.</td>
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<td>15 min</td>
<td>● Case #2</td>
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<td>● Stay on slide 21</td>
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<td>The same process will be used for case #2 as above, for case #1</td>
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<td>Optional 30 min</td>
<td>● Prepare draft annual review form</td>
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<td>● Facilitators should add a slide to PPT to account for this activity</td>
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|         | If including the drafting of an annual review (3 hour workshop) at this point ask participants to work in pairs to prepare a review based on the information in the case. Alternatively, ask the participants to select someone they will
review and begin drafting
the review form. Allow 20
minutes for the drafting of
the review and 10 minutes
in pairs de-briefing and
providing feedback on the
written document. The
facilitator should move
from group to group to
provide feedback during
this time.

| 15 min | • Questions and Answers |
|        | Refer back to the flipchart
or whiteboard with the
summary of attendee’s
learning goals for the
session. Discuss any topics
that weren’t covered in the
workshop |

| 5 min  | • Distribute and collect workshop
evaluation
  • Adjourn |
|        | Program evaluation data
Although few attendees submitted formal program evaluations, the workshop was well received when offered
at the authors’ institution. Six evaluations were submitted from the 18 institutional leaders that attended the
workshop. Though few in number, the comments received on the program evaluation indicate a positive
response. Attendees were able to identify something that they planned to act upon. In response to an open-
ended question regarding what the attendee will incorporate in their future work, the presenters received the
following representative comments:
  • Good opportunity to reflect on own work as a reviewer
  • Strategies to maintain engagement
  • Create department expectations document
  • Improve faculty expectation document
  • Will use new timeline

Limitations and ideas for improvement
Given that annual faculty reviews are a recurring activity, the presenters plan to continue to refine and offer this
workshop on a regular basis. Over time, more program evaluation data will yield a better understanding of the
needs of our academic leaders and how to assist them in doing this important function to the best of their
abilities. We also plan to experiment with various workshop designs and formats (e.g., online; shorter duration).

Further, the presenters are planning a companion workshop to this one designed to aid faculty members in
preparing for their annual review. It takes reflection and dedicated preparation time in order for faculty
members to reap the most benefit from their annual review. Over time, the evaluation data from this future
workshop will inform our improvement efforts for the session intended for administrative leaders, and vice
versa.
References