Skills processes for PRD- Guidance for PRD Groups

31/07/2008

SKILLS AND PROCESSES FOR PEER REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

Guidance for PRD Groups

Introduction

This guidance for PRD groups focuses on the skills and processes that are likely to underpin PRD activity and does not attempt to dictate the ways in which reviews might be undertaken. This process-driven approach allows PRD groups the flexibility to use a range of appropriate methods of peer review and development, creating new and innovative ways of working where possible. The guidance is intended to help promote a consistent approach amongst PRD groups, without constraining progress or innovation through prescribed or imposed uniformity.

In forming their groups, organisations have for the most part self-selected into partnerships that they feel will maximise opportunities for constructive review and subsequent organisational development and improvement. Some of these PRD groups will have worked together in the past and have experience in undertaking peer review activities in some form. Other groups will be coming together for the first time through the Support for Excellence (SfE) programme and will have little or no experience of previous peer working. Experience to date suggests that there are a number of critical factors that tend to contribute to the success and effectiveness of a PRD group.

This guidance reflects that experience and is intended to support the work of the PRD groups by setting out the actions and protocols that have been found to be effective when adopted by members of the group who are representing their partner organisations at each stage of the review process. It should help groups to:

- Establish a common language, a process and understanding of PRD.

- Achieve a higher level of consistency and objectivity in planning, implementing and evaluating PRD activity.

- Provide a basis upon which individuals can identify current skills and plan their further professional development in this field.

It is important to note that the guidance is indicative at this stage and may be refined and developed by, or in consultation with, PRD groups, key stakeholders and the Support for Excellence Programme team.

The Peer Review and Development Process

The PRD process combines action research, evaluation, reflective practice and critical thinking processes. It follows the stages of planning, preparation, implementation and evaluation and integrates the principles underpinning the professional dialogue. This is not intended to be a linear process but should be cyclic, where each new review cycle is undertaken with the benefit of hindsight and includes plans to incorporate recommended improvements to the process.

The model is based on a nested process and includes a core of values and protocols for collaborative and partnership working that is carried though all the stages of PRD activity (see Fig 1 below).
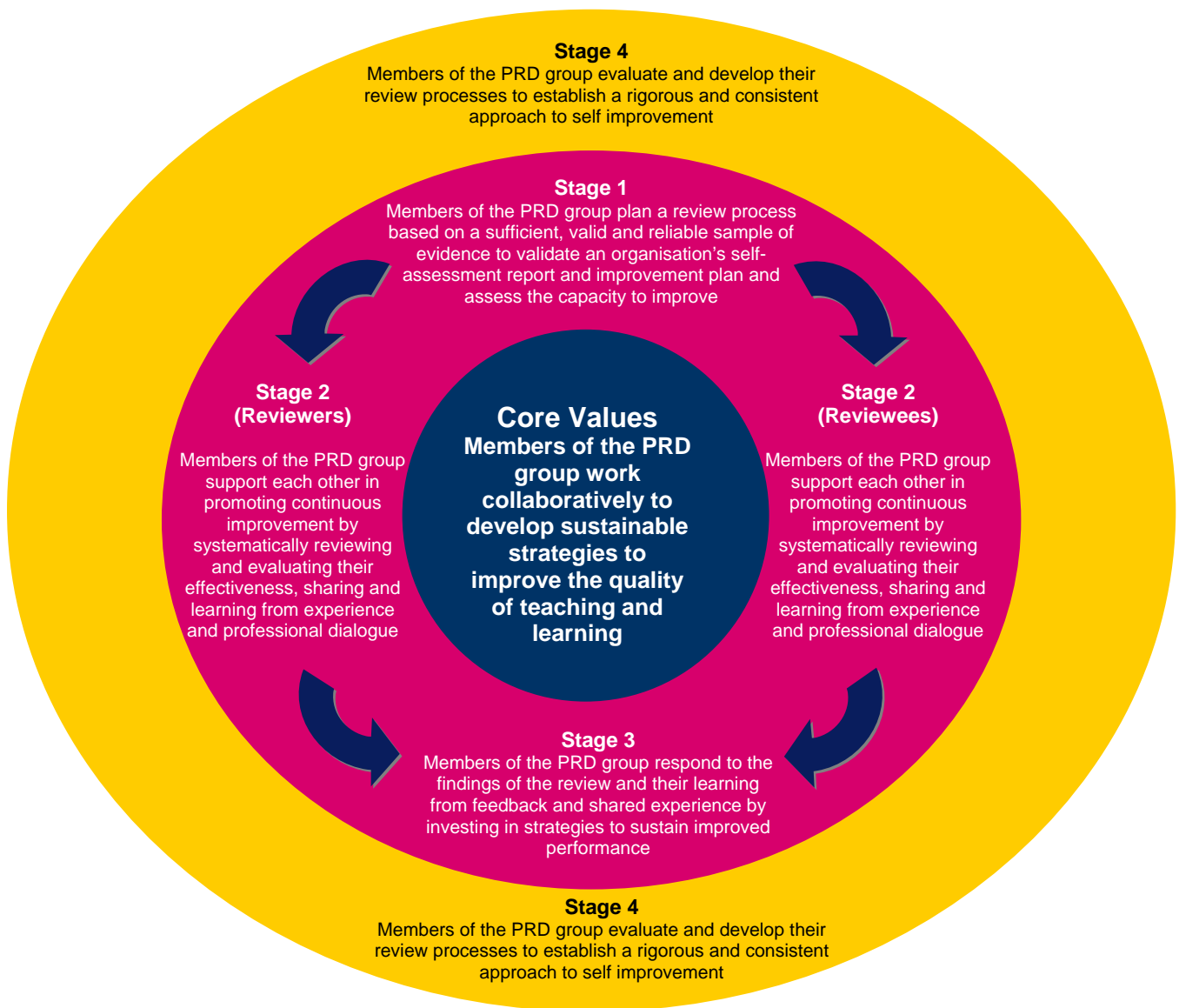

Stage 4
Members of the PRD group evaluate and develop their review processes to establish a rigorous and consistent approach to self improvement

Stage 1
Members of the PRD group plan a review process based on a sufficient, valid and reliable sample of evidence to validate an organisation's self-assessment report and improvement plan and assess the capacity to improve

Stage 2 (Reviewers)
Members of the PRD group support each other in promoting continuous improvement by systematically reviewing and evaluating their effectiveness, sharing and learning from experience and professional dialogue

Core Values
Members of the PRD group work collaboratively to develop sustainable strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning

Stage 2 (Reviewees)
Members of the PRD group support each other in promoting continuous improvement by systematically reviewing and evaluating their effectiveness, sharing and learning from experience and professional dialogue

Stage 3
Members of the PRD group respond to the findings of the review and their learning from feedback and shared experience by investing in strategies to sustain improved performance

Stage 4
Members of the PRD group evaluate and develop their review processes to establish a rigorous and consistent approach to self improvement

Figure 1: The PRD Process

Scope of the guidance

The guidance focuses on the specific activity of the PRD group at each stage and does not extend to the area of work under scrutiny in any review undertaken. Therefore, it needs to be used in conjunction with the Framework for Excellence, the Common Inspection Framework and other standards or benchmarks used to support review. In particular, it should take account of any guidelines or benchmarks used to measure organisational effectiveness and/or the success of any particular curriculum or service area.

The guidance sets out the core elements and the focus of each stage of the PRD process. These are unpacked to identify the actions and/or behaviours involved and the skills, and knowledge/attributes used to ensure success. The core elements and stages 1, 3 and 4 apply to all members of the PRD groups; stage 2 separates out the roles, responsibilities and personal skills of reviewers and hosts.

The case studies undertaken in 2008 indicate that groups tend to take a similar approach to PRD and have identified four key roles to support the process.
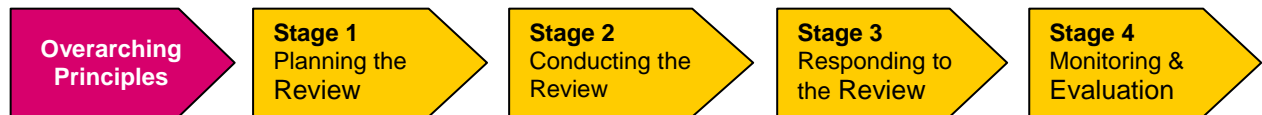
PRD Group Coordinator	is a key member of the PRD managing group and coordinates the activities of the management group
Host Team Leader	leads the review from the perspective of the host organisation; ensures that information needed for the review is prepared and distributed and that all those involved in the review are fully briefed
Review Team Leader	liaises with the host team leader to prepare for the review and leads the review team during the review
Review Team Member	works with others to undertake the review and engage the host in feedback

Indicative role descriptors and skills outlines are available for each of these roles.

Underpinning the approach is a collaborative group learning level approach that facilitates the embedding of a continuous improvement culture with all of the member organisations within the PRD group.

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SKILLS AND PROCESSES FOR PEER REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

Guidance for PRD Groups

| **Overarching Principles** | **Stage 1** Planning the Review | **Stage 2** Conducting the Review | **Stage 3** Responding to the Review | **Stage 4** Monitoring & Evaluation |

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES
Setting up the group to work collaboratively

Members of the PRD group work collaboratively to develop sustainable strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning

In order to do this effectively, the representatives of each organisation within the group are likely to:

establish:
- a clear focus on developing the capacity to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- a shared philosophy, values and terms of reference within the group
- ground rules and protocols for the conduct of the group
- systems, processes and communication channels that allow members of the group to maximise their contributions to and benefits gained from the PRD activity
- systems to ensure an effective and equitable distribution of resources to support the planned PRD processes
- criteria for evaluating the PRD process and activities
- strategies for standardising and quality assuring the PRD process within the group

demonstrate:
- accountability for the resources and the success of the review process
- confidence/belief in their own and each other's capacity to improve
- equality of status within the group
- empathy with each other's organisational context
- respect for the unique nature of each organisation
- discretion
- trust
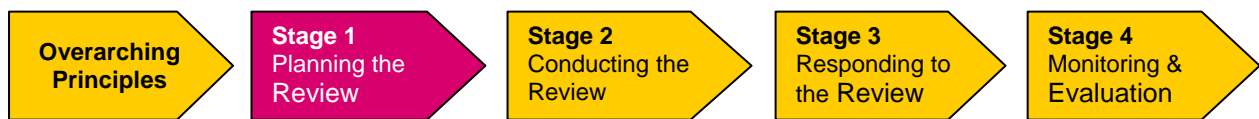- reflective practice

make a commitment to:
- supporting group processes and PRD activity at senior/executive management level

- collaborative leadership and management
- engaging in professional dialogue and active, experiential sharing
- upholding the rules of confidentiality and agreeing what should be shared
- establishing common operating standards
- recognising that each individual is a learner and each participant organisation is a learning organisation
- promoting an open culture for reflective practice and continuous improvement
- acting as critical friends rather than judges of each other
- contributing to wider sector development in relation to PRD
- continuing professional development and self improvement in relation to PRD

use effective skills and knowledge of:
- promoting equality and engaging with diversity
- professional dialogue
- communication/interpersonal skills
- collaborative leadership
- quality assurance and quality improvement

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THE REVIEW PROCESS

| Overarching Principles | Stage 1 Planning the Review | Stage 2 Conducting the Review | Stage 3 Responding to the Review | Stage 4 Monitoring & Evaluation |

STAGE 1 (Pre-review)
Planning the review

Members of the PRD group plan a review process based on a sufficient, valid and reliable sample of evidence to validate an organisation's self-assessment and improvement plan and assess its capacity to improve

In order to do this effectively, the representatives of each organisation within the group are likely to:

agree:

- which organisation will be reviewed and what aspects of the organisation will be sampled
- the purposes and outcomes that each participating organisation expects from the review
- the key data to be examined in order to determine the validity and reliability of the reviewed organisation's self-assessment process and its capacity to improve
- the timescales for the review, how it will be conducted and the personnel to be involved
- the resource allocation, monitoring and recording required to support the review process
- how the processes and findings of the review will be recorded and presented in order to support the reviewed organisation in developing their self-assessment and capacity to improve
- strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of the planned review

use effective skills and knowledge of:
- negotiation
- project planning
- time management
- resource management
- benchmarking
- quality improvement and quality assurance
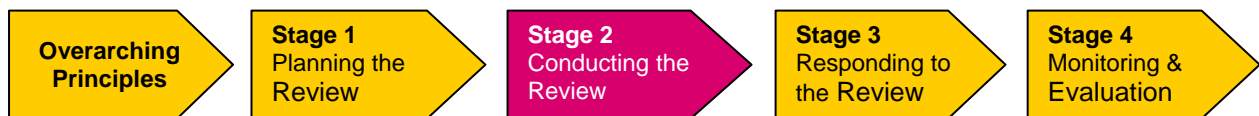
STAGE 2
Conducting the review

This stage involves members of the group working together to conduct fair, open and honest review of one organisation. The reviewers are likely to undertake an in-depth scrutiny of one or more aspects of the reviewed organisation's work in order to assess the accuracy of the SAR.

Members of the PRD group support each other in promoting continuous improvement by systematically reviewing and evaluating their effectiveness, sharing and learning from experience and professional dialogue

In order to do this effectively, the ***reviewers*** will aim to:

- establish productive relationships with reviewees enabling them to maximise benefit from the review by, for example, facilitating their active engagement and ease with the review process
- prepare for the review by:
    - carrying out detailed analysis of data presented and identifying any additional information required
    - scheduling appropriate opportunities for meetings, discussions, observations or other activities to be undertaken
- examine evidence gathered in the review in order to validate assertions made in the SAR, assess the capacity to improve and identify any inconsistencies
- test the organisation's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and engaging with diversity
- continuously share and explore with reviewees the findings of the review and their implications for the SAR
- summarise and present findings, supported by appropriate examples, about the validity of the reviewed organisation's self-assessment and the extent of their capacity for self improvement
- Identify the key strengths and learning points for:
    - leadership and management of the area(s) under scrutiny
    - the organisation's policies and practices in relation to self-assessment and their capacity for self improvement
- engage in professional dialogue with the reviewed organisation, articulating the strengths and areas for development in relation to their self-assessment and quality improvement processes and practice
- actively and constructively manage expectations and disappointments

use effective skills and knowledge of:
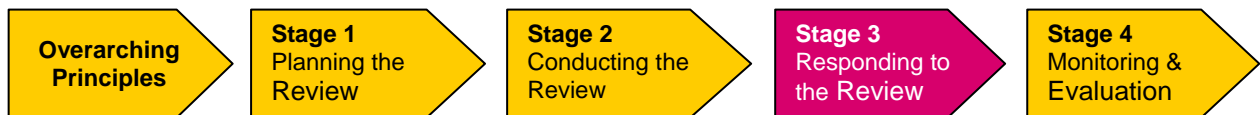- relationship building
- data analysis

- critical analysis
- communication/interpersonal skills
- equality and diversity
- constructive feedback
- empathy

At the same time, ***members of the host review team*** will aim to:

- welcome reviewers and develop relationships conducive to open and constructive review
- prepare and enable an appropriate range and number of managers, practitioners and others to be engaged in the review
- identify and present an evidence base that is sufficiently comprehensive and transparent to enable an accurate and in-depth scrutiny of the area(s) to be reviewed
- encourage all participants to engage in the spirit of reflective practice and collective responsibility for learning and improvement
- invite feedback and engage in constructive professional dialogue on strengths and areas for improvement in a way that promotes continuous improvement
- actively and constructively manage own expectations and disappointments

use effective skills and knowledge of:
- data handling and presentation
- relationship building
- openness
- engaging with feedback
- individual and organisational learning and change
- promoting a non-judgemental/"no-blame" culture
- action research and reflective practice
- teamwork
- benchmarking
- wider sector practice

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| Overarching Principles | Stage 1 Planning the Review | Stage 2 Conducting the Review | Stage 3 Responding to the Review | Stage 4 Monitoring & Evaluation |

STAGE 3 (Post-review)
Responding to the Review

There is an expectation that the host organisation will respond to the feedback received to put in place appropriate strategies for improvement. Feedback to the reviewers on the experience of the review would help the group to refine PRD practice.
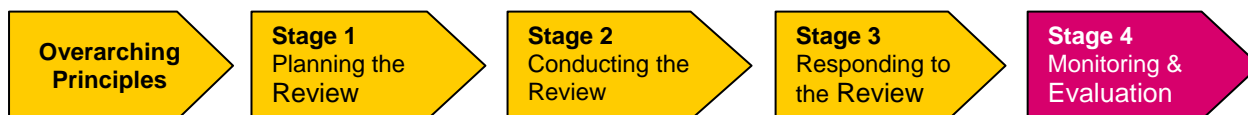
Members of the PRD group respond to the findings of the review and their learning from feedback and shared experience by investing in strategies to sustain improved performance

In order to do this, the representatives of each organisation within the group are likely to:

- support the host organisation in using the findings and feedback to develop, refine and implement their improvement plan
- devise opportunities to celebrate successes and showcase effective practice
- review and modify their self-assessment and self improvement processes in the light of the findings and feedback from the review
- engage reviewers in feedback and evaluation of the experience of the review process
- agree any further role of the PRD group in supporting the development plan

use effective skills and knowledge of:

- evaluation
- engaging with feedback
- organisational development planning
- quality assurance and quality improvement
- teamwork

| Overarching Principles | Stage 1 Planning the Review | Stage 2 Conducting the Review | Stage 3 Responding to the Review | Stage 4 Monitoring & Evaluation |

STAGE 4 (Post-review)
Monitoring and Evaluation
The most successful groups will pay consideration to how they will ensure that their judgements are fair and rigorous and consistent from review to review. They will evaluate their PRD activity and take steps to develop it further.

Members of the PRD group evaluate and develop their review processes to establish a rigorous and consistent approach to self-regulation and self improvement

In order to do this, the representatives of each organisation within the group are likely to:

- verify reviews undertaken using the agreed processes and criteria
- evaluate the completed review using the agreed criteria and identify key learning points for the PRD group
- evaluate the overall effectiveness of the group's processes, procedures and practices to improve the rigour, quality and consistency of future reviews
- contribute to sector development in relation to self-regulation and self improvement through formally recording and sharing the evaluation findings and recommendations, both within the group and more widely

use effective skills and knowledge of:
- evaluation
- validity, reliability, objectivity and sufficiency of evidence (evidence-based practice)
- sector developments and initiatives
- internal and external verification methods
- reflective practice for learning

Some useful questions that might be used by reviewers to support the critical analysis of the self-assessment process

- How does the organisation audit its provision?

- How does the organisation establish and use benchmarking data?

- How does the organisation identify and prioritise its development needs?

- How does the SAR relate to the development/improvement plan and the strategic business plan?

- What data sources are used for self-assessment?

- What steps are taken to ensure that the data collected and used is sufficient, valid and reliable?

- How is the data analysed and interpreted so that appropriate conclusions can be drawn about what needs to improve?

- What weighting is given to different types of data? (e.g. is achievement given a higher weighting than student satisfaction data?)

- How is qualitative data used to support/extend analyses of quantitative data?

- How are conclusions and recommendations reported and acted upon?

- How are others in the organisation engaged in and enabled to respond to issues raised through data analysis?

- How are strategies for improvement decided and agreed?

- How is the impact evaluated of any improvement strategies planned in the previous review cycle?

- How is the effectiveness of the self-assessment process evaluated within the organisation?

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