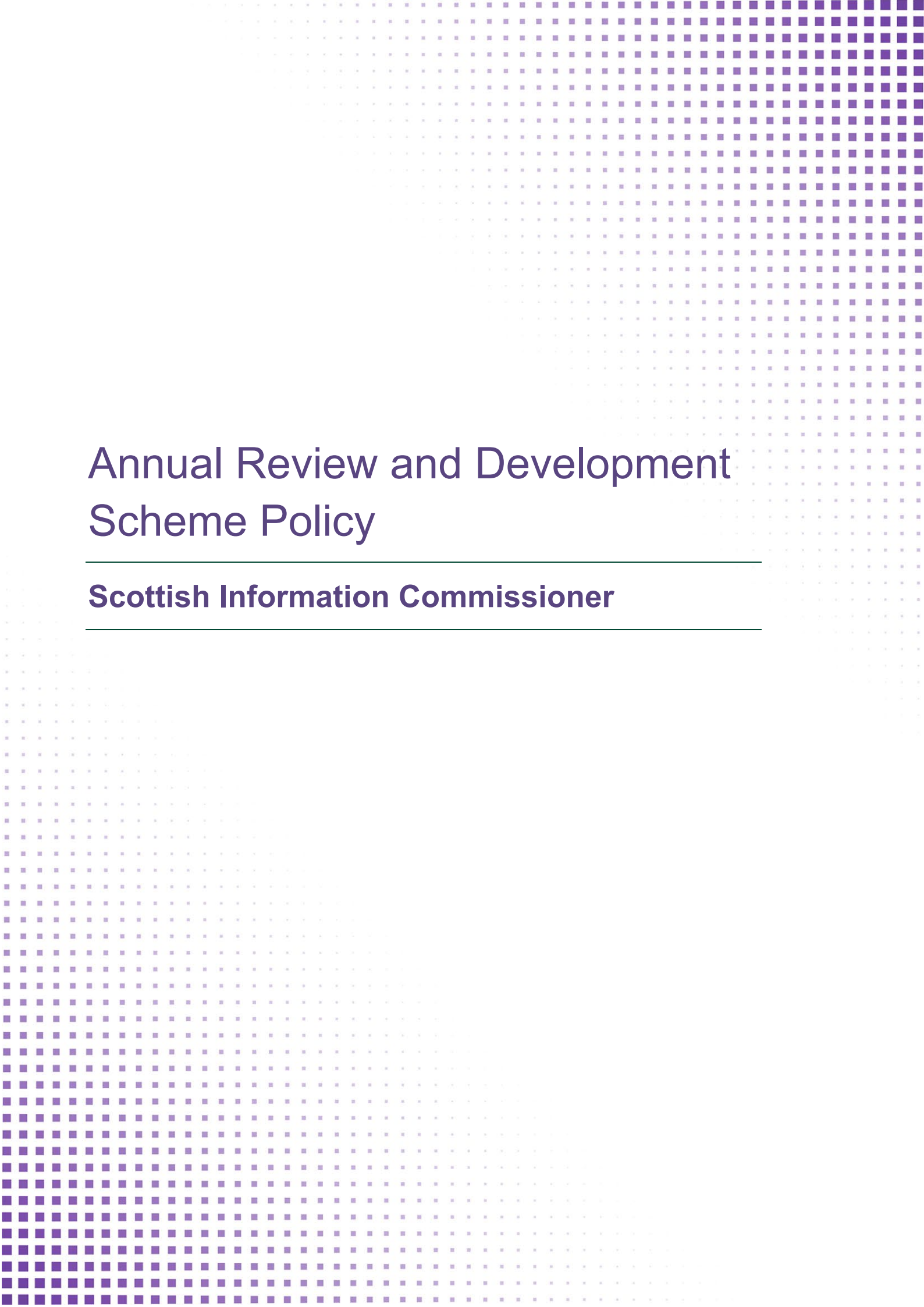




Annual Review and Development Scheme Policy

Scottish Information Commissioner

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Purpose

1. The annual review and development scheme (ARDS) is a supportive process focusing on a two way conversation between a staff member and their manager (a reviewee and the reviewer). It provides an opportunity to:
 - Reflect on the past year, including what has gone well and key achievements
 - Discuss learning, growth, and overall wellbeing
 - Explore interests, aspirations, and development goals for the year ahead

This is not a performance management process. Any concerns about formal performance issues should be addressed separately through the organisation's performance policy and procedures. However, honest reflection, including areas that have not gone as well, is encouraged as part of developmental approach.

Performance issues should be addressed at the time they occur, not as part of an annual review and development scheme.

General Principles

- Developmental focused rather than performance driven
- Open, honest, and two-way conversations
- Supportive of individual wellbeing and career growth
- Space for balanced reflection, including challenges and areas for improvement
- Proportionate and light touch in preparation and documentation
- Flexible and adaptable to different roles, teams, and individual preferences within the organisation

Setting the direction

2. The Head of Department will provide a high-level summary of the department's contribution to the organisation and its priorities over the past year and coming year, which will be included in all staff review forms within that department. This is intended to help frame individual discussions, giving context on priorities, achievements, and direction and will be shared in advance of the meeting. The review takes both a retrospective and forward looking perspective.

Flexibility of approach

3. This process is intentionally designed to be flexible across departments and responsive to individual staff preferences.

- Each department within the organisation carries out different types of work with its own priorities; therefore, this scheme should not be a one size fits all approach.
- Some staff may prefer a very light touch conversation, while others may value a more in depth discussion – this may depend on a number of factors such as time in career, personal circumstances, overall approach to work communication style, the nature or complexity of the role, whether they are seeking progression or are more settled in role.
- Variations in approach are acceptable, provided the core purpose of reflection, development, and wellbeing is maintained.
- Line Managers should work with each staff member to agree the format, level of detail, and approach that best suits them

Preparation (ahead of the meeting)

4. Head of Department sets departmental narrative on the form.
5. Reviewer (usually line manager) completes their part of the form and sends to staff member.
6. Staff member (reviewee) reflects on the past year and when completing their part of the form considers:
 - Key achievements and what went well
 - Challenges, what has not gone as well, and lessons learned
 - Skills developed and areas of interest
 - Development goals and aspirations
 - Wellbeing and work-life balance
7. These sections of the form are all completed in advance of the meeting.

The Conversation (during the meeting)

8. A structured but informal discussion which could cover:
 - Reflection on the past year, including both positives and challenges
 - What has gone well and what has been most enjoyable or meaningful
 - What has been difficult or could have gone better, and what can be learned
 - Any support needed going forward
 - Career interests and development opportunities
 - Wellbeing and workload
 - Agreed development priorities for the coming year

Outcomes

9. The Line Manager completes the summary section of the form capturing the discussion during the meeting.

The discussion may include:

- A small number of clear, realistic development goals, which may include areas for improvement
- Agreed actions or support required (e.g., training, mentoring, new experiences)
- A brief summary (if required) to support follow up
- Anything relevant that was discussed

Follow Up

10. Regular, informal check ins throughout the year to review progress and adjust plans as needed, including informal catch ups, 1:1 meetings, and team meetings.

Workflow

11. The Head of Business Support initiates the process by writing to all staff to confirm the annual review cycle is beginning.
12. The Head of Business Support writes to Heads of Department:
 - Providing the review form
 - Confirming which staff require reviews
 - Identifying who will carry out reviews
 - Requesting completion of the Head of Department section and coordination within their teams
13. A timeframe of one month is normally set for completion of all reviews.
14. Reviewing managers (reviewer) complete a short written summary on the form, outlining:
 - Overall reflections on the individual's contribution
 - Key highlights from the year
 - Any development areas or challenges observed

15. The form is shared with the staff member (reviewee), who is given time to reflect and add their own written reflections, including any challenges or areas they wish to improve.
16. The review meeting takes place, focusing on:
 - The line manager's (reviewer's) summary and the staff member's reflections
 - Discussion of the past year (including positives and challenges)
 - Future development, interests, and wellbeing
17. Following the meeting, the line manager writes a brief summary of the discussion and shares it with the staff member for review and sign-off.
18. The line manager submits completed forms to the Head of Department.
19. The Head of Department reviews all completed forms across their area to identify any key themes, insights, or follow up actions.

Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- completing mandatory training within required timescales
- attending agreed training sessions
- applying learning in the workplace
- taking ownership of their development and discussing needs with their manager
- ensuring approval is obtained before booking paid for training

Line managers (Reviewers) are responsible for:

- identifying training needs within their team
- supporting staff training and development through supervision and annual reviews
- approving or declining training requests in discussion with the HOD
- ensuring mandatory training compliance
- supporting application of learning in practice
- ensuring training requests are consistent with budget and value for money principles
- ensuring training opportunities are considered and approved fairly and consistently across all team members
- identifying when similar individual training needs across multiple staff indicate a wider requirement, and escalating or organising group training where appropriate to ensure efficiency and consistency

Heads of Department are responsible for:

- ensuring training activity aligns with organisational strategy and workforce strategy
- discussing training requests within their teams and making recommendations for approval to HOBS
- overseeing training budgets and ensuring value for money is achieved
- approving high cost or strategic training where required
- ensuring consistent application of this policy
- monitoring compliance with mandatory training requirements
- supporting workforce planning, capability development, and succession planning
- identifying when similar individual training needs across multiple staff indicate a wider requirement, and escalating or organising group training where appropriate to ensure efficiency and consistency

Timeframe

20. It is expected that the Head of Business Support will initiate this process annually, each September, with the majority of the reviews carried out in September/October, although this may be subject to change.

Absence during the review period

21. In circumstances where an employee is absent during the annual review period due to long-term sickness, family leave, or any other extended period of leave, reviews should be deferred until the individual has returned to work and is able to participate. In all cases, managers should exercise discretion and sensitivity, taking into account the individual's circumstances, and seek guidance from the Head of Business Support where appropriate to ensure the review is carried out without putting undue pressure on the staff member.

