



# Participative Process Reviews

**Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development**

and

**Belanda Consulting**



# Introduction

The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD) has been running Participative Process Reviews (PPRs) for several years. After taking part in internal workshops, teams in Oxford Brookes University have changed their practices to be less complicated, more streamlined and more cost effective.

Participative process reviews (PPRs) are a means of bringing about change in organisational processes that have become burdensome, complicated and costly.

The participative nature of a PPR encourages a range of views from the stakeholders in a process. These may include employers, employees, customers and investors. In Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), these may involve staff across departments and faculties, administration staff members and students.

By eliciting such a breadth of viewpoints, it is the aim of a PPR to map out each part of a process to identify points in the overall process that are inefficient and can be improved.

The OCSLD has developed an innovative format for PPRs, drawing on existing good practice (Sarchet and Kenward 2006; SUMS 2009). This project sought to trial these PPRs in the wider higher education sector by facilitating external teams to carry out their own process reviews.

The workshops and the resources have been evaluated and the resources made available to other HEIs that wish to review their processes.

This report identifies specific benefits and impacts of the PPR approach, provides advice on where PPRs work well, and what performance indicators can be measured to evaluate their impact.

# Project aims

The PPR project aimed to evaluate the Participative Process Review intervention that had been used at Oxford Brookes University. While early findings indicated that PPRs had been successful in giving teams ownership of the changes that affect them, there was a need to establish what adjustments may need to be made to the workshops for other institutions.

The project examined how the workshop and workshop tools can be developed for HE and examined the outcomes of PPRs.

In order to conduct an evaluation of a PPR, the project developed evaluation tools that identify and measure some of the improvements that PPRs make.

Therefore, the objectives of the project were to:

- Determine measures for evaluative participative process reviews, which will be of use to other universities.
- Evaluate the intended and unintended consequences of undertaking process review in academic and professional service contexts.
- Provide evidence for the impact of participative process reviews.
- Document lessons learned, from which the wider sector can learn.
- Provide the sector with the rationale and tools required to undertake a participative process review.

## Overview

- An evaluation of the existing workshops
- Production of an evaluation toolkit
- Refining of workshop materials
- Evidence of benefits of a PPR
- Case studies of internal and external workshops

# Approach and activities

## Literature review and evaluation metrics

A review of existing business, management and higher education literature helped to identify the possible effects of PPRs on individuals, teams and processes involved in the review. The literature review also suggested ways in which these changes can be measured and reported. These included the use of surveys, interviews and artefact analysis to obtain rich qualitative data and measures for improvement for each process.

## Conducting PPR workshops

The team in the OCSLD conducted fourteen internal and six external PPR workshops, from which eight were considered suitable for producing case studies. The workshops were conducted at the location of each team and lasted for a day. A facilitator and a researcher from the OCSLD attended each workshop to maximise the learning and progress during the workshop and to collect and record data. These data included

- Photos of the process maps — both before and after redesigning the process.
- Photos of SWOT analyses.
- Feedback sheets conducted at the end of each workshop.

## Evaluation and development

A follow-up survey was sent to each team member of each external workshop in

addition to the feedback sheet they had completed on the day. These surveys examined initial changes that individual team members have experienced to the process and their work more generally since the workshop.

The survey conducted on the day of the workshop was used as a means to evaluate the workshops and to aid the facilitator to make improvements to the teaching materials.

An external consultant interviewed the process leader and a nominated stakeholder of the process to get a deeper appreciation of the changes that have taken place since the workshops.

## Dissemination

All of the documents produced for the workshops — including presentations, handouts and documentation — are to be made available to the wider sector. They will be available via a web interface with facilitator notes so that workshops can be conducted elsewhere.

The seven case studies, with analyses from interview and survey data, will be published in a report. This report will also contain findings and recommendations following our experience of conducting PPRs.

The findings from the project will be delivered to the Midlands Staff Development Partnership and SDF conferences.



# Findings

## What is the impact of PPRs?

- What is the impact of process reviews?
- What are the intended and unintended consequences?
- Confidence to conduct further process review

## Key lessons and challenges

Even in the first few months following PPR processes, early evidence suggests there is plenty of promise of successful change.

Reaching consensus on the aims of a review and mapping the process in a structured and participative manner has proved transformative, in most cases: far more so than the process leaders had experienced elsewhere.

Early results are encouraging. They indicate significant efficiency savings and improvements in team working and staff morale. From the interview and survey data, there is emerging evidence of a broad range of tangible benefits in how teams operate and cooperate, and in reductions to workload and stress.

Keeping the whole team aware and knowledgeable of the changes is important for maintaining individuals' motivation and commitment to agreed changes.

## Measuring change resulting from PPRs

The process leaders were asked about broad and specific indicators of change, including:

- How they interpreted "success" as a result of taking the PPR approach, and how they monitor processes and process improvement on an on-going basis;
- The kinds of metrics they are using as evidence of quantifiable measures of improvement.

The evaluation findings show the role of PPRs in business improvement and efficiency: they highlight the context, techniques and skills required for success.

**Table 1** summarises the shifts in thinking, behaviours and practices for individuals, teams and the organisation as a result of engaging in PPRs. For example, through the PPRs, solutions become apparent and team engagement and co-operation is fostered. PPRs are a robust approach which makes processes visible and facilitates decisions being made to streamline processes and pressures on staff.

## Confidence to replicate a PPR

One of the aims of the PPR workshops was to distribute knowledge and skills so that participants can run their own PPRs for other processes in their institutions. At the end of the workshops, participants were asked about their confidence to be able to perform each stage of the PPR themselves.

Of the 53 respondents to the feedback survey, most were very or quite confident in all aspects of conducting a PPR other than using process mapping software (**Figure 1**).

	Individual For process owners and team members personally (knowledge, skills, attitudes)	Team How the process improved	Institution Building capacity and preparedness to incorporate business process thinking
<b>Information and planning</b> <b>Shifting thinking</b>	Reviewing a big process can be daunting until it is mapped	A more formalised, participative process than is often undertaken internally by teams	Visualisation of the process map, tracking what is done, when, and by whom
	Awareness/understanding of information needs between individuals/ teams (and impact of not having quality/accurate/ timely information)	Techniques to capture what we did/didn't do, where the gaps were and help to reassemble it (not making a new process, stripping back the old one)	Action plan helps keeps momentum going/ use existing forums/ communication channels
	Real quality time drilling right down into the detail avoids missing assumptions about other people's parts of the process	Broker mismatches/ satisfaction; highlight what is essential/non-essential; creating a single source/point of information	Oversight of the process from different perspectives; sharing good practice across units (services/faculties)
	Validating and giving confidence to team leader's way of thinking about process management or helping you to be open to seeing things from those 'on the ground' rather than assuming you know	Simple issues and solutions become apparent that have not materialised before	Identifying which processes are most important to improve
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b> <b>Shifting behaviours</b>	Deeper thinking and reasoning; surface underlying assumptions	Structured reviewing process increases clarity; stay focussed on key aims/objectives	Identify criteria and standards to apply for consistency and compliance
	Level of useful discussion and communication that combines input from team members who are data-oriented with those that are people-oriented	Internal team working and inter-team working; (albeit some resistance to change that needed overcoming/managing)	Skills developed to apply for other project
	Inclusiveness and sense of co-ownership; fostering engagement and cooperation across teams/ departments  Appreciation of diverse/different roles and responsibilities and perspectives to remove difficulties/obstacles	Perceptions about the volume of paper involved and the volume of work being done by fairly high grade staff	Changing the way people/ teams work (get faster at process mapping, communication etc.



	Individual For process owners and team members personally (knowledge, skills, attitudes)	Team How the process improved	Institution Building capacity and preparedness to incorporate business process thinking
Activity and cooperation Shifting practices	Collaborative nature of the exercise that develops an appreciation of what's involved and the work that goes into a process	Robustness of a detailed approach, 'visible' evidence/ data of number and timing of tasks/interactions	Getting more of a handle/grip where process review is laying the foundation
	Ease workload/timing issues by stripping out time- consuming, non-critical tasks	Making decisions there and then with everyone present Rationale/ justification can be used to request resource	Internal efficiency/ streamlining of processes and pressures on staff
	Reducing pressure points and improving staff well- being	Catalyse for other process reviews	Creating precedents for undertaking process reviews and developing appropriate institution wide metrics
	Learning and developing skills in how to do the process reviews and support participative workshops	Capacity building within the team for structured participative process review	

**Table 1** Specific benefits and impacts of the PPR approach, including preparation and actions following, identified by team participants in the interviews

## Best things about the workshop

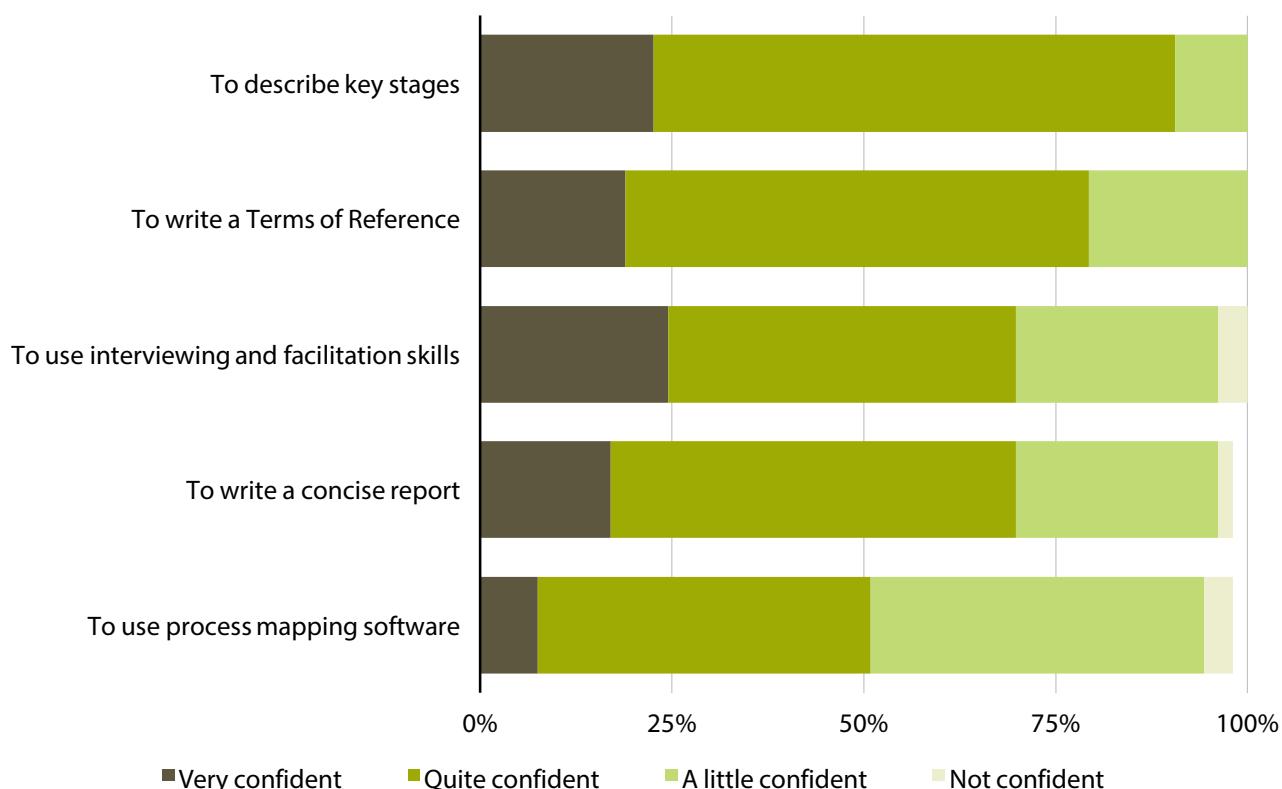
There were 53 responses to the open question about 'best things' on the feedback sheet, covering the following issues:

- Seeing the whole process, clarification and mapping of existing processes
- Working with others from different areas, getting a diversity of views, having honest conversations and gathering ideas
- Having a dedicated time to look at the process and discuss a way forward
- Looking at a real process that needs changing and learning how to process map at the same time
- Well facilitated, clearly outlined programme, relaxed atmosphere, breaking tasks into bite-sized chunks, practical activities.

## Things that could be changed

There were 35 responses to the open question about 'things that could be changed' on the feedback sheet, although many of these said nothing needed to be changed. Responses covered the following issues:

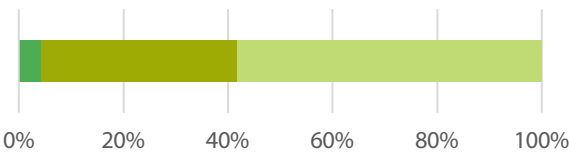
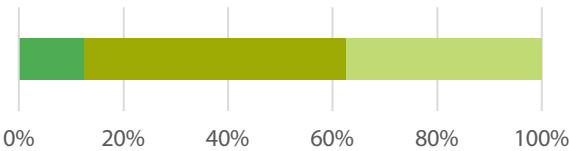
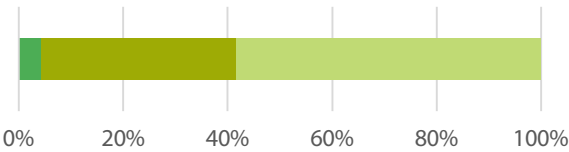
- Ensuring all stakeholders are represented
- Participants need to have knowledge of process under review
- Less introduction, move faster through earlier slides or provide background reading in advance.



**Figure 1** Aspects of the review process that participants felt they could replicate

Follow-up survey responses

The participants in the external PPR workshops were approached with a paper questionnaire three weeks after their workshop. **Figure 2** shows three ways in which the PPR has been useful to the external workshop teams: most participants realised changes that needed to be made as a result of the workshop and are working more effectively as a result.

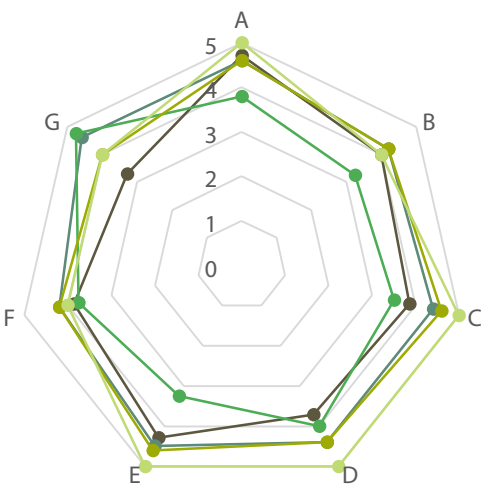


**Figure 3** shows the extent to which various factors will be affected by the PPR workshop. The participants recognised that there will likely be many and varied changes: most notably in the quality of their service to customers.

**Figure 2a** The PPR uncovered issues with our process which we need to change

**Figure 2b** Changes are planned as a result of the PPR

**Figure 2c** The team is performing better since the PPR workshop



- Case study 1
  - Case study 3
  - Case study 6
  - Case study 8
- A** The quality of services to students or other customers  
**B** Changing customer expectations  
**C** Performance issues, such as excessive response times  
**D** Resource constraints and controlling costs  
**E** Excessive or unbalanced workloads  
**F** Incorporating new technologies or exploiting new information systems  
**G** Introducing organisational and role changes

**Figure 3** Relevant factors in external PPR case studies (mean Likert scores)

## Where and why do PPR workshops work well?

- I What have we learned about conducting PPR workshops?
- I What changes were made to course materials?
- I What preparation is needed for PPR workshops?

### Techniques and timing

For many team members, there was a sense that the preparation and mapping the current process was a “slow fuse”; however, they acknowledged that the time spent on these tasks was important for focussing on the key objectives and accelerating the later stages in producing the refined new process map.

Detailed discussions and debates fostered a vital exchange of perspectives and a greater awareness and understanding of team members’ awareness of their own roles and tasks, and their impact on other team members’ roles.

*“Even just calling it a participative process using that adjective has an impact on how people engage with it.”*

*“The workshop felt quite informal compared to some business analysis tool which are hard and structured with boundaries around them.”*

*“When you're dealing with the actual people involved in the process, I think you have to be more fluid about it ... one of the benefits of the workshop is that it created quite an empathetic atmosphere... [and] a level playing field.”*

Ostensibly, the time spent focussing on the current process “as it is” can seem disproportionate against the time spent working on developing the new process. It is at this stage that anecdotes are exchanged,

which raise issues and terminal problems. Creating the new refined and streamlined process most often proceeds with surprising alacrity as a result. Indeed, the facilitator role diminishes over the course of the day as the group takes over.

Many team leaders and other participants reported that further iterations were needed to refine the new process over several meetings after the workshop. Some teams made minor refinements, while others needed further meetings and discussions with senior management before plans could be executed.

### Preparation and materials

Many participants commented on the contrast of the PPR against other business review approaches and tools. Some found the PPR to be more formal, while others felt it was more informal. Most remarked on the revelations encountered due to the participative nature of the review and the rapid progress made during the workshop, though some required further meetings if key stakeholders were not involved in the workshop.

Completing and agreeing the terms of reference and SWOT analysis were both found to be useful. Yet most participants identified the process mapping activity as the most impactful.

*“I liked that we used the large piece of paper which showed the mapping out process in its entirety — highlighted how much work is involved!”*

*“I liked the use of the paper roll and post-its to map out activities ... the visual nature really helped everyone understand what was involved in the process, what happened when etc.”*

## Where and why do process reviews work well?

- I What are the conditions for success?
- I What skills do process leaders need?

### Context and factors affecting participative process reviews

Those processes that rely on tasks being carried out across different organisational structures appear to benefit most from PPRs. These PPRs involve tasks that are “done by” (locus of responsibility) and “done to” (locus of impact) people from different organisational structures. It is common for the number of steps in a process to grow organically over time, with many being done for historical reasons rather than necessity, resulting in feelings of these tasks becoming onerous and over-processed. The flow of information is often out of sequence, or tasks inappropriately timed, and this causes issues for team members and their managers.

*“[PPR] is a practical way of assessing the issues with how we do things and in terms of actually taking it further and embedding [improvements] across the University.”*

*“It’s really that critiquing, asking lots of why questions... [why do we do it like that?] ... people who are doing the nitty-gritty stuff can come up with some really useful suggestions.”*

At an organisational level, the key factors for achieving these benefits enable the process leader to:

- I Challenge established, often inefficient practices, driven and justified by a need to reduce workload and resource pressures and improve efficiency;
- I Minimise the time effort and financial cost as part of resource management;
- I Manage change and foster cooperation; deal with expectations and resistance to

change; come up with realistic proposals that can be implemented;

- I Develop and employ skills in critical thinking, modelling and analysis, as well as in communication, championing and negotiation;
- I Create a greater sense of shared understanding, involvement and cooperation in the process: internally and with stakeholders.

### 10 key characteristics of processes that benefit from a PPR

1. Processes which rely on tasks being carried out across organisational structures.
2. Large- to medium-scale, wide-ranging, ‘live’, self-contained and usually ‘linear’ processes that have become, or are prone to becoming, ‘over-processed’.
3. New or existing projects that have a complex set of tasks involving multiple stakeholders and strands, particularly when there are imbalances in the work burden between sides.
4. Large information networks with many directions of flow and exchange and in which the timing or sequence of events is important.
5. Processes where logistics are critical, perhaps where workload issues are evident; for example, there may be duplication of effort between departments, which may cause mistakes or pressure to meet deadlines.
6. Processes where day-to-day interactions between groups is low or problematic.
7. Ad-hoc or organically grown processes in which tasks have been added over time but not removed.
8. Processes where clarity, focus or efficiency is low or has reduced over time.
9. Processes that run concurrently with other systems or processes, which may have a big impact on customer experience.
10. Processes where regular monitoring of fitness-for-purpose or efficiency is needed.

Where and why do PPRs work well?			What is the impact of PPRs?	
Context and need	Process and experience	Workshop approach	Changes and outcomes	Indicators and metrics
Effective support and management	Works with familiar or new processes	Open to new insights Freedom to change the process	Scenario planning	Time taken to complete tasks; Monitoring and comparing processes; Aligning and splitting off tasks; Responsiveness; Benchmarking
	Number of aspects being changed Resource pressures and workload	Open-ended, flexible approach provides a framework and structure and time for a detailed review	Coordinated effort against individual outcomes	
	Challenging established procedures; need fresh views, not just senior staff	Stakeholder perspectives provide all-round view of issues and changes needed; PPRs provide a platform to see how these issues relate	Sense of control and understanding over the process	
Skills in critical thinking, modelling and analysis				
Team cooperation and collaboration	Individuals living with the problem on a daily basis	Consensus and dedication; shared achievable targets	Openness to selecting the process to review and being self-critical	Correlations between participative management and performance management
	Overcoming defensiveness and resistance to change	Realistic proposals implemented	Single or double loop learning — what works well and not so well	
	Focus on important parts of the process	Manage expectation of change	Terms of reference and facilitation of the PPR workshop	
Skills in communication, championing and cooperation; planning and implementing change				

**Table 2** A summary of the characteristics of processes and teams that lead to a successful PPR and the impacts that PPRs could bring to those teams

### Discoveries coming to light from PPRs

All process leaders and workshop participants interviewed remarked on having “light bulb moments” during the process mapping activity. In some cases, they were revelations of bottlenecks or ‘simple’ solutions, while in others it was how the sheer length of the mapped process was visualised in terms of the number of tasks, steps, handovers or people involved. For some institutions, there was an obvious gap between what senior managers expected and their employees wanted from the process.

*“People do challenge what they do ... but it may be by changing processes at a very local level that are leading away the implications of those changes further down the line either within their own areas or in other departments or schools.”*

Many participants also remarked that it was surprising how differently people work on tasks, even those in a similar role.

*“The light bulb went on when people saw the duplication, the amount of waiting and effort [by course leaders] ... and we realised we had this assumption that it had to be done every year whereas someone pointed out the regulations only require it every three years.”*

The necessity of sharing important information and working documents was highlighted, since people are not all working from the beginning of a process or have little or no experience of some aspects of the process (such as finance, payroll, information systems or promotions).

A clear benefit arose from taking time out as a group to problem solve in a concentrated effort. Allocating time away from everyday tasks to question how things are done was felt to be an important factor in improving a process.

*“There was a general sense that finally some change is happening for something that had been a known problem for a few years.”*

Having the right people involved in the workshop meant being able to make decisions as a group on the day. This was an important factor in making significant progress and achieving the aims and objectives for the process review. Action planning and communicating with wider stakeholders kept implementation on track so the changes could happen fairly swiftly during the next cycle of the process.

*“Having the right people in the room allows you to do all of that iterative process at once.”*

*“The fact that we are engaging with the issues and proposing improvements is welcomed and one of my concerns now ... is to manage [stakeholders’] expectations about how much it can be improved given a short time.”*

While resource intensive, the mapping process produced ‘eye-openers’ for participants as the scale of information and activities were revealed. This highlighted the main causes of variation, duplication, inconsistencies, errors and workload pressure points for staff, which made it easier to see what could be improved or eliminated to streamline the process. As a result the dynamic and mood of the group notably shifted throughout the workshop.

*“[Through our review] we identified five key errors that accounted for 80% of incorrect applications.”*

*“When you have something tangible in front of you ... [and] you put numbers to that in terms of staff rate and staff time [it] would be about 2000 [person] days which is incredible.”*



# Resources and tools

From September 2015, project outputs will be at  
**[www.brookes.ac.uk/OCSLD/Research/participative-process-review/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/OCSLD/Research/participative-process-review/)**

## Literature review

A review of existing business, management and higher education literature helped to identify the possible effects of PPRs on individuals, teams and processes involved in the review. The literature review also suggested ways in which these changes can be measured and reported. These included the use of surveys, interviews and artefact analysis to obtain rich qualitative data and measures for improvement for each process.

## Case studies

Eight case studies have been produced using data from the terms of reference documentation and interviews with process leaders and stakeholders. Each case study is in a narrative format to capture the context, needs and emerging outcomes experienced by process leaders and end users as beneficiaries of process improvements.

**Table 3** summarises the case studies. Each case refers to one or more of five 'dimensions' in terms of an impact activity network: they are the direct and indirect stakeholders the process affects or is influenced by.

- | **Academic** — faculty/departmental input
- | **Admin** — professional support services
- | **Students** — as direct beneficiaries
- | **Institution** — central administrative process
- | **External** — regulating body

## Facilitator's toolkit

This toolkit has been specifically designed to enable staff to deliver their own Participative Process Reviews. This is an online toolkit for PPR workshops which contains all the resources that were used in the internal and external workshops. They are accompanied by guidance notes and instructions, evaluation tools and reports from the project.

## Evaluation toolkit

The evaluation toolkit contains:

- | interview protocol;
- | participant follow up survey;
- | participant workshop survey;
- | evaluation framework.

The PPR Evaluation Framework is offered as a template for good practice and as a set of tools for measuring tangible gains achieved through a PPR. These are created based on themes emerging from our evaluation study. It comprises two components:

- | Success factors and impact indicators identified from our literature review, workshop observations and discussions, and findings from interviews with participants and direct beneficiaries (**Table 2**).
- | Performance indicators being used in our participating institutions to evaluate PPRs on two axes: internal/external relevance for monitoring purposes and quantitative/qualitative metrics (**Table 4**).



	Process reviewed	Stakeholders involved	Process owner
Case study 1	<b>Short course administration</b>  This case study centred around course administration for staff development. The process review aimed to get people to work together more cohesively as a team as well as to improve the efficiency of admin processes. The team were surprised to find such variety in the way they managed their courses. Most of the changes related to efficiency: saving staff time, managing workloads, reducing stress. The refined process resulted in a more standardised and consistent process with staff members able to help each other out during times of high workload.	<div>Academic</div> <div>Admin</div>	Admin (Professional service: staff and educational development)
Case study 2	<b>Course information management</b>  This case study centred around the process of managing the University's course and student data, which impacts the student experience. It highlights ways of streamlining activities and interactions between central administration and the faculties. The team were surprised to find how powerful a participative approach was for drilling down into the details and pricking up on assumptions and different perspectives. The revised process resulted in fewer conflicts in the scheduling of information going to and from the faculties, as well as increased engagement with faculty and confidence in the effectiveness of updating processes.	<div>Academic</div> <div>Admin</div> <div>Students</div>	Admin (Course and student administration team)
Case study 3	<b>Annual course 'health' evaluation</b>  This case study centred around improving the course evaluation process used by all academic departments for QAA and internal purposes in the light of institutional KPIs for reducing the admin burden. The team were surprised by the supportive appreciation and empathy arising in the group as well as how much positive work got done in a short space of time through the PPR, which highlighted all the duplication and time cost. The process review resulted in significant savings in staff time and improved engagement with the whole procedure, which has a big impact long term and university wide.	<div>Academic</div> <div>Admin</div> <div>External</div>	Admin (Planning and information services)
Case study 4	<b>Housing damages recovery</b>  This case study centred around damage recharges to shared housing contested by tenants who complain that the process is unfair or unclear/not transparent. The team do a lot of inspections in a very short space of time involving lots of different data and we had no clear audit line. In the review, they were surprised to find the simplest solutions came out of the discussions once the process map highlighted the sticking points. The participative review resulted in an improved, clearer flow chart that will reduce staff time due to fewer complaints and faster appeals, and in the longer term should increase student satisfaction.	<div>Admin</div> <div>Students</div> <div>External</div>	Admin (Accommodation office)

	Process reviewed	Stakeholders involved	Process owner
<b>Case study 5</b>	<b>Summer school accommodation bookings</b>	<div>Admin</div> <div>Students</div> <div>Institution</div> <div>External</div>	Institution (Commercial operations)
<p>This case study centred around managing University accommodation for 10 different summer schools, which happens once a year over 4 months. The check-in/check-out process involves managing a high volume of information and is a key area for maintaining good client relationships. The team were surprised to find how many steps were incorporated in the existing process and the pressure on staff and clients to provide unnecessary details. The review clarified the essential elements and resulted in better operating efficiencies, which will save resources, increase surplus, and minimise staff stress, as well as delivering a higher quality customer service.</p>			
<b>Case study 6</b>	<b>Academic promotions procedure</b>	<div>Academic</div> <div>Admin</div> <div>Institution</div> <div>External</div>	Institution (HR/Learning development)
<p>This case study centred around procedures for academic promotions across the organisation to improve workforce planning, link with career development support and reduce risk of any potential claims of unfairness. The team were surprised to discover conflicts in the different expectations and usages of the promotions process. The PPR resulted in improving our criteria in line with UK Professional Standards Framework, stronger links with staff review (PDR) in terms of better recording of needs and achievement, and clearer feedback to applicants used for development purposes, and thus greater confidence as an institution in our promotions and rewards process.</p>			
<b>Case study 7</b>	<b>Post offer conversion</b>	<div>Academic</div> <div>Admin</div> <div>Students</div> <div>Institution</div>	Academic (Faculty academic administration)
<p>This case study centred around a review of communications activity undertaken across faculty, University admissions and international office. The purpose was to improve post offer conversions, identify best practice and produce a conversion matrix to promote effective and new opportunities. The team were surprised at the array of touch points and inconsistency of information students received from different sources. The PPR resulted in greater clarity, consistency and choice in conversion activities, which impacts applicants' experience as well as in the long term Faculty meeting its enrolment targets.</p>			

	Process reviewed	Stakeholders involved	Process owner
Case study 8	Student expense claims	<div>Academic</div> <div>Admin</div> <div>Students</div> <div>Institution</div> <div>External</div>	Institution (HR/Organisation development)
	<p>This case study centred around improving the efficiency of services to students claiming expenses from their NHS work placements. Rejection of a large number of claims that are not compliant with procedures was causing long delays making payments. The team were surprised to find how labour intensive and complex the timeline had become in terms of the number of checking processes and duplication. The PPR resulted in identifying five most common errors and ways to rectify this earlier in the process. This significantly reduced faculty staff time, minimised time delays from submission to payment for our students, and longer term will improve customer satisfaction.</p>		

**Table 3** Summary of the eight case studies of participative process reviews

## Evaluation Framework

- What is likely to change as a result of engaging in a review?
- What should we be monitoring?
- How can we measure improvement?

The literature review found that there are few examples where the outcomes of a PPR have been measured quantitatively. The trend among this kind of change implementation has been in the form of a narrative that describes the decision process for making those changes and a factual account of the changes that have happened as a result.

The interviews with process leaders and stakeholders elicited possible performance indicators that would demonstrate the impact of PPRs and these are shown in **Table 4**.

### Quantitative measure

<p>Move from reactive to proactive tasks</p> <p>Delineation of who owns each element of the process</p> <p>Manageable workload and reduced claims for overtime, reducing resource pressures</p> <p>Consistency and legislative requirements met</p> <p>Skills development applied to other tasks, including awareness of useful resources other departments have produced</p> <p>Efficiency of processes, stripping out unnecessary steps or those creating a negative ripple effect</p> <p>Clear and detailed instructions documented for each element of a process for new people to see and follow</p>	<p>Influence (demands, control and obstacles)</p> <p>Response times for customer experience</p> <p>Tangible reduction in delays, correspondence, appeals, complaints, queries, and so on</p> <p>Accuracy and timeliness of information passed</p> <p>Improved methods of recording and monitoring</p> <p>Reduced costs as a result of a more rigorous process for dealing with claims and collecting fees</p> <p>Saved time and pressure on individuals by removing unnecessary tasks</p>
Internally facing	Externally facing
<p>Attitudes: demeanour, engagement, team relationships, resistance, negative assumptions, worry, arrogance, loss of control</p> <p>Demystifying the reviewing process; people seeing their job as part of a process; team members feel more involved</p> <p>How people work with each other: moral, clear loci of responsibility, sharing best practice, feeling empowered</p> <p>Getting feedback from key staff: positives, workload, exertion, stress</p> <p>Staff members confident to apply process review in other work with direct and immediate consequences</p>	<p>Follow up as part of continued operation; communication and championing; acceptance of new process</p> <p>Improved insights and camaraderie, useful touch points, overcoming resistance to change, keeping people focussed on the new process</p> <p>Bring in stakeholders to identify expectations and challenge assumptions that existing tasks are useful; improve alignment and "dovetailing"</p> <p>Student input (from focus groups if not present at the PPR workshop)</p> <p>Review what worked well and make adjustments</p>

### Qualitative outcomes

**Table 4** Performance indicators for PPRs

# Recommendations

## **An effective way of shifting thinking, behaviours & practices**

Participative process reviews (PPRs) were found to be an effective means of bringing about shifts in thinking, behaviours and practices for individuals, teams and the organisation in a variety of HEIs.

Reaching a consensus on the aims of a review and mapping the process in a structured and participative manner has proved transformative.

From the interview and survey data, there is emerging evidence of a broad range of tangible benefits in how teams operate and cooperate. For example, through the PPRs, solutions become apparent and engagement and co-operation is fostered within and between teams.

PPRs provide a visual method to facilitate decision-making for streamlining processes and pressures on staff. Workshop participants were confident they would be able to perform similar reviews of other processes.

## **A forum for discussion and debates**

PPRs work well because detailed discussions and debates foster a vital exchange of perspectives and a greater awareness and understanding of team members' awareness of their own roles and tasks, and their impact on other team members' roles.

Process mapping was perceived to be the most powerful activity, although establishing a terms of reference and conducting a SWOT analysis are required to reach this stage. All process leaders and workshop participants interviewed remarked on having "light bulb moments" during the process mapping activity.

## **Guidance for facilitators of process reviews**

This project has established a clear rationale for using the Oxford Brookes PPR workshop format. Although this intensive, day-long event is a crucial springboard for starting a process review, many team leaders reported that further iterations were needed to refine the new process over several meetings after the initial workshop.

Processes that benefit most from the PPR approach are those which rely on tasks being carried out across different organisational structures, particularly those which have become, or are prone to becoming, over-processed. The project generated a set of 10 key characteristics of processes that benefit from a PPR which can be used to assess and select processes for review. The case studies also provide vivid illustration of the PPR process and its impact.

Facilitators or process leaders preparing to conduct PPR workshops can use the Facilitator's toolkit, which contains all the resources that were used in the project workshops, accompanied by guidance notes and evaluation tools.

## **Tools for researchers and evaluators**

The evaluation framework provides a valuable addition to the academic literature for researchers and process leaders looking for ways of measuring the impact of process reviews. This includes a range of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators suitable for internally or externally facing evaluations.

# References

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## Project team

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