

# (Draft) GHC MR review policy

**This is a draft suggestion only! Please suggest improvements.**

The GHC Team is the core group that develops and maintains GHC (see <https://gitlab.haskell.org/ghc/ghc-hq>). We propose that the GHC Team will be collectively responsible for ensuring that all MRs are reviewed in a reasonable time frame..

Of course, many GHC contributors will not be members of the GHC Team, but they are still strongly encouraged to review MRs where possible. We should avoid the existence of the group being perceived as a barrier to others submitting reviews. The group exists as a backup plan, to ensure that ready-to-go MRs do not fall between the cracks.

Membership of the GHC Team is open to everyone actively contributing to GHC. We need volunteers to make this effort succeed! Can you help?

## Responsibilities of the GHC Team

The GHC Team will be collectively responsible for:

- Establishing and communicating standards for MR quality (e.g. keeping the wiki up to date with what is required of MRs, and pointing out where certain improvements are needed for an MR to be mergeable).
- Establishing processes (e.g. GitLab labels) for keeping track of MRs in different stages.
- Identifying MRs that are in need of review and assigning them to appropriate individual reviewers (inside or outside the GHC Team).
- Encouraging reviewers to review MRs promptly and helping reassign MRs where a reviewer is not able to do so.
- Helping resolve disagreements about whether a particular MR is acceptable.
- Accepting and landing MRs once they have passed review.

Members of the GHC Team **will not** be expected to review every single MR among themselves. Rather we expect them to solicit and rely on reviews from other trusted members of the community

## Responsibilities of users assigned to MRs

Gitlab allows MRs to be assigned to an individual or group. The assignee will be responsible for moving the MR forward in some way. For example:

- MRs can be assigned to the GHC Team if review is needed but an individual reviewer has not yet been identified.
- Individuals assigned to perform review (whether in the GHC Team or not) should either do so promptly, or if they are not in a position to review (e.g. due to lack of time or necessary expertise) reassign the MR appropriately. Being assigned as a reviewer does not compel the individual to submit a review, but they should feel an obligation not to be a bottleneck.

“Moving the MR forward in some way” includes requesting changes or giving the author feedback that the MR is unlikely to be accepted, then assigning it back to the author. Reviewers are not necessarily expected to finish off MRs that are not yet in a state to merge.

## Authors of MRs

The authors of merge requests are the part of the life-blood of GHC. Our goal is that their efforts should be focused on the MRs themselves; we do not want them to get discouraged by a lack of reviews, or inability to land a MR.

At the same time, reviewing is painstaking work, also done by volunteers, and authors cannot expect a blank cheque on reviewers time.

MRs often go through an extended period of drafts, sharing with specific colleagues, using CI to discover problems. But at some point an author may think

- This MR is done; it is ready to land; or
- I have a good draft, but I need guidance before investing more

At this point, an author can add a "Submitted for Review" tag, as a specific request to the GHC Team for feedback.

Landing MRs that make significant changes has a deliberately high bar, because changes can potentially lead to significant problems later (e.g. outright bugs, code quality issues, performance regressions). Authors of MRs cannot necessarily expect others to do work for them: if an MR does not meet these high standards, the author themselves needs to take responsibility for improving it until it is ready to land.

Some patches are difficult to review due to their complexity or due to the limited number of individuals with knowledge of the code in question, so authors may need to be patient and accept that reviews take time.

## Expectations of GHC Team members

TODO: the following doesn't really belong in this document any more, but we might want to incorporate some aspects into the GHC Team description at <https://gitlab.haskell.org/ghc/ghc-hq?>

The expectations and requirements for any individual member of this group will be:

- They have expressed willingness to join the group.
- They are available to triage and review contributor work within their area of expertise (within reason, but for at least a few hours a week on average).
- They have contributed to the GHC project in the past and have proven to be aware of the expectations and standards for the project.

- They are trusted by GHC devs to enforce the minimum standards we expect (not just in code quality but also documentation, commit messages, CLC approvals and the like).
- They are using 2FA on their Gitlab account.