



Keele University

Staff Probationary Procedure

Human Resources Department

Lead Director: Director of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Student Support
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STAFF PROBATIONARY PROCEDURE

Note: This Procedure is not applicable to newly appointed Lecturers with less than three years experience in an academic role, who are appointed with 'Academic Probation' (see 1.2, below).

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is Keele University policy that all staff who are new to the University, including those on part-time and fixed-term contracts, are given a probationary period during which they will be introduced to the main duties and responsibilities of their post and the performance standards expected of them.
- 1.2 This procedure is applicable to all University staff, except Academic Staff with less than three years experience in an academic role and who are appointed subject to the academic probationary process.
- 1.3 Academic staff are not subject to the provisions of the University Statute 35 during the probationary period.
- 1.4 The Staff Probationary Procedure provides guidance on:
 - a) The appropriate use of probationary periods,
 - b) The responsibilities of the line manager and member and the probationer;
 - c) The probationary review process.
- 1.5 The Procedure also provides for a set period in which new staff can expect more intensive guidance and encouragement and appropriate early training that is often not required by more experienced staff. The probationary period is a key element in the induction of new staff, providing the opportunity for both the manager and the new entrant to make soundly based decisions on their future in the University.
- 1.6 It is anticipated that the majority of those to whom the Procedure applies will be successfully confirmed in post at the end of the probationary period. However, this Procedure also provides for the appropriate management of emergent concerns or problems. In a small number of cases where a probationary member of staff fails to achieve the expected standards, this Procedure also exists to ensure that fair, equitable and consistent processes are applied in respect of termination of the appointment within, or at the end of, the probationary period.
- 1.7 Staff will not be expected to participate in the Staff Performance Review and Enhancement (SPRE) process during the probationary period.

- 1.8 The University is committed to ensuring that the effect and application of this procedure accords to the commitments set out in its Equality and Diversity Strategy and will monitor this as appropriate

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 The primary purpose of a probationary period is to ensure an individual's capability, reliability and suitability for continued employment. The University's Staff Probationary Procedure will ensure that:
- a) Performance, conduct and attendance are assessed throughout the probationary period;
 - b) Managers provide guidance, encouragement and appropriate training to ensure positive development;
 - c) The member of staff is fully informed of progress throughout the probationary period and any issues that do arise are discussed at the earliest possible date.
- 2.1.1 Whilst misconduct is addressed through the Staff Disciplinary Procedure, probationary assessments cannot be considered in isolation from matters connected with a member of staff's conduct.
- 2.2 During the probationary period the line manager¹ should ensure provision of appropriate information and training to equip the member of staff to undertake all aspects of his or her role at the University. The member of staff is expected to demonstrate his or her suitability for the post.
- 2.3 Assessment of performance and active support and development should be an ongoing process throughout the probationary period (and beyond) and not just undertaken at formal reviews. Informal meetings may take place at any time to discuss any aspect of performance.
- 2.4 Existing members of staff who are re-graded or transferred within the University, or whose fixed-term contracts are extended, will not be subject to a probationary period unless their initial probationary period is not yet completed. In this case, the probationary period will be carried over to the new contract and the appointment will not be confirmed until the original period has been successfully completed.
- 2.5 For most staff groups, the probationary period is usually **six months** in duration. Staff appointed to the Teaching and Scholarship job family will normally be appointed with a probationary period of **nine months**, although such staff who have previous experience of at least 12 months in a similar role at a UK University will be appointed with a six-month probationary period. Managers have some discretion to set a longer probationary period where he or she

¹ In this context line manager can also refer to the immediate supervisor or other appropriate person who supervises the work and/or performance of the member of staff.

determines that the member of staff will not have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate suitability for the post within that timeframe. Managers should seek advice from HR if they wish to set an initial probationary period of longer than the six or nine month periods specified above.

3. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LINE MANAGER AND NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF DURING THE PROBATIONARY PROCESS

3.1 Line Managers:

- a) Clarify the new member of staff's duties, responsibilities and expected standards of performance;
- b) Ensure appropriate instruction/guidance/assistance/training/mentoring is provided;
- c) Explain performance standards;
- d) Set objectives/targets with the new member of staff and determine how they will be monitored/measured;
- e) Monitor/review progress;
- f) Provide encouragement/feedback and recognition of achievements
- g) Arrange and conduct probationary reviews;
- h) Highlight areas for improvement;
- i) Seek advice from HR in cases of poor performance and take appropriate action;
- j) Determine the probationary outcome (i.e. confirmation or non-confirmation of probation);

3.2 New Members of Staff:

- a) Work to expected standards and meet the agreed objectives/targets within set timescales;
- b) Be proactive in seeking support from their line manager if they have concerns about the requirements of the job or their ability to meet the them. Also to discuss their needs for training/guidance/support they feel are necessary to help them achieve the expected standards of performance.

4 PROGRESS REVIEWS DURING THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD

4.1 As part of the probationary review process, line managers should meet with the new member of staff on a regular basis to discuss work and give advice and guidance on progress in the role. These informal discussions should provide feedback on the member of staff's progress.

4.2 Interim Probationary Review Meeting(s)

4.2.1 Where problems with meeting the appropriate standard(s) are highlighted and/or needs for relevant training identified, the line manager should meet with the member of staff to identify and seek to resolve any issues at an early stage through discussion, coaching and training. The purpose of the meeting(s) is to:

- a) Discuss any problems identified;
- b) Explain what aspect of the work is not considered satisfactory;
- c) Explain which objectives/standards are not met and the shortfall between standards and timescales expected of the member of staff and those achieved;
- d) Discuss what remedial guidance and training will be provided;
- e) Advise the member of staff of the required standards and agree appropriate actions, clearly specifying the required improvements and timescales;
- f) Inform the member of staff of possible steps if required standards are not met (including that the appointment may be terminated).

4.2.1 These meetings are more formal in nature and the manager should record the outcome of the meeting, in writing, including agreed actions, and give a copy to the member of staff.

4.3 Extensions to the Probationary Period

Exceptionally, following advice from HR, the Line Manager may consider it appropriate to extend the probationary period, provided the manager has arranged at least one Interim Probationary Review meeting before deciding to extend the member of staff's probationary period. HR will confirm any extensions, in writing, to the member of staff.

4.4 Confirmation of Probation

If the member of staff's performance, conduct, timekeeping and attendance have been satisfactory and fully meet the University's expected standards for the relevant grade/post, the line manager will authorise confirmation of the appointment.

5. NON-CONFIRMATION OF PROBATION

- 5.1 Where a member of staff fails to achieve the expected standards, provided the manager has arranged at least one Interim Probationary Review meeting prior to this stage, the member of staff will be invited, in writing, to attend a formal Probationary Review meeting. The letter must advise the member of staff that a possible outcome of the meeting could be dismissal and that he or she has the right to be accompanied by a University employed colleague or Trade Union representative². HR will normally be present at this meeting to advise the Reviewing Manager.
- 5.2 At this meeting the case will be discussed with the member of staff, including details of the performance issues causing concern, the measures that have been implemented to assist the member of staff to improve his or her performance and any support that has been offered to the member of staff. The member of staff will be given the opportunity to put forward his or her case.
- 5.3 A decision will be taken, based on full consideration of the case and any other relevant information. The Reviewing Manager will consider whether, based on the circumstances of the case, the probation period may be confirmed, extended or the appointment terminated.

6. APPEALS

- 6.1 Any member of staff who is dismissed under this procedure will have the right to appeal to the designated Appeals Manager detailed in the letter confirming the outcome of the meeting.
- 6.2 Appeals should be lodged, in writing, within ten working days of the date on which the letter confirming the outcome of the meeting is sent.
- 6.3 The member of staff will be notified of the date of the appeal meeting within ten working days of the submission of the appeal (the meeting itself may not take place within this timescale although every effort will be made to hold the meeting as soon as possible). This timescale may be extended by mutual agreement. The letter must advise the member of staff that he or she has the right to be accompanied by a University employed colleague or Trade Union representative.
- 6.4 In advance of an appeal meeting, the member of staff must provide, in advance, copies of any documents on which he or she intends to rely and/or his or her statement of case. The member of staff will also receive copies of any documentation, which he or she has not previously received, which the University intends to rely on.

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 7.1 As a general principle, this Procedure will be reviewed after two years or where operational and/or legislative requirements change.

² Lay Trade Union officials not employed by the University will be required to provide proof in writing that they have been certified by their union as having experience of, or having received training in, acting as a representative at dismissal and appeal meetings.

- 7.2 This Procedure is not contractual and is not intended to be incorporated into individual terms and conditions of employment. It may be subject to review, amendment or withdrawal.
- 7.3 Further guidance on the application of this procedure is available from Human Resources.