

PROBATIONARY PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION

The University recognises that a supportive and developmental probation process is vital in providing an appropriate level of support and training for new members of staff on commencement of employment. All staff who are new to the University are subject to a probationary period, during which they will be supported to achieve performance standards that are required to deliver the main duties and responsibilities of their post.

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 The Probationary Procedure provides guidance on:

- a) The appropriate use of probationary periods,
- b) The responsibilities of the line manager and the probationer;
- c) The probationary review process.

1.1.2 The Procedure also provides for a set period in which new staff can expect more intensive guidance and encouragement and appropriate early training. 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.

1.1.3 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 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.

1.1.4 The primary purpose of a probationary period is to ensure an individual's capability, reliability and suitability for continued employment. In line with the University's Probationary Procedure, it is expected that:

- a) Expectations and performance standards are clearly articulated and agreed and are aligned to the role expectations for the grade;
- b) Performance, conduct and attendance (consideration will be given to personal and family circumstances which may result in time away from work, see 2.4.1 d) below) are assessed throughout the probationary period;

- c) Managers provide guidance, encouragement, and appropriate training to ensure positive development;
- d) 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.

1.1.5 During the probationary period the line manager should ensure provision of appropriate information and training to equip the member of staff to undertake all aspects of their role at the University. The member of staff is expected to demonstrate their suitability for the post.

1.1.6 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.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 This procedure is applicable to all staff.

1.2.2 Staff will not be expected to participate in the Staff Performance Review and Enhancement (SPRE) process or the Professorial/Senior Managerial Performance Review and Enhancement (PPRE/PRE) process during the probationary period.

1.2.3 During probation staff will not normally be subject to the University's Disciplinary, Attendance Management or Performance Capability Procedures. Any issues relating to conduct, attendance or capability during probation will usually be dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

1.2.4 Existing members of staff who are re-graded or transfer/ are 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. Irrespective of whether probation has been completed it is important that staff moving internally are provided with an effective induction into their new role.

2. PROCEDURE

2.1 Duration of probationary periods

2.1.1 For most staff groups covered by this procedure, the probationary period is usually six months in duration. Staff appointed to Teaching Fellow or Academic Grade 7a roles will normally be appointed with a probationary period of nine months.

2.1.2 Managers have some discretion to set a longer probationary period where they determine that the member of staff will not have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate suitability for the post within that timeframe. Managers should seek advice from

People & Organisational Development if they wish to set an initial probationary period of longer than the six or nine month periods specified above.

2.2. Objective Setting

2.2.1 Objectives should:

- a) Enable the individual to work towards the required role expectations at the end of the probationary period.
- b) Be set and reviewed in line with the agreed timescales.
- c) Provide measurable targets which clearly demonstrate the requirements of probation.
- d) Take into account matters beyond the control of the individual.

2.3 Progress Reviews During the Probationary Period (see Annex A)

2.3.1 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.

2.3.2 Line managers should hold interim probationary review meetings as appropriate to outline the role expectations and review the individual's progress against the objectives set (see 2.4 for further details).

2.3.3 Towards the end of the probationary period the manager should meet with the member of staff to review performance during the probationary period and advise them of the next steps (the line manager will be reminded by email when the member of staff's probationary period is coming to an end). This may be to confirm the successful completion of probation, an extension to the probationary period or referral to a formal review meeting. See sections below.

2.3.4 Where the probation end date has passed and no concerns have been raised with the member of staff/People and Organisational Development, it will not be possible to extend probation nor will non-confirmation be an option. Once the probation end date has passed the University will have no option other than to automatically confirm satisfactory completion of probation. Line managers must ensure that the Employee Relations team (People and Organisational Development) is made aware, as early as possible, of any reasons why probation may not be confirmed.

2.4. Interim Probationary Review Meeting(s)

2.4.1 Line managers should ensure interim probationary review meetings are held to discuss the staff member's progress against the agreed objectives. Where problems arise with meeting the appropriate standard(s) and/or needs for relevant training are identified, the line manager should meet with the member of staff to 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) Consider the support provided by the School/ Department and any personal or family circumstances which may have resulted in a lack of opportunity for individuals to perform to their full potential;
- e) Discuss what remedial guidance and training will be provided;
- f) Advise the member of staff of the required standards and agree appropriate actions and/or objectives, clearly specifying the required improvements and timescales;
- g) Inform the member of staff of possible steps if required standards are not met (including that the appointment may be terminated).

2.4.2 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.

2.4.3 Where problems have been identified and an interim probationary review meeting has been held there is an expectation that the line manager will continue to meet with the individual on a regular basis during the remainder of the probationary period (including any extensions) to review progress against objectives, provide feedback and ensure the member of staff is supported. These meetings should be documented.

2.5 Extensions to the Probationary Period

2.5.1 Exceptionally the line manager may consider it appropriate to extend the probationary period. Careful consideration should be given to the length of the extension. Managers must ensure the duration of an extension is reasonable and provides sufficient time to enable the member of staff to demonstrate satisfactory performance. In such circumstances, provided at least one Interim Probationary Review meeting has been held with the member of staff, the manager should discuss the reasons for considering an extension and the proposed length of the extension with a member of the Employee Relations team (People and Organisational Development) before meeting with the individual.

2.5.2 At the meeting, the manager should explain the areas where the individual is not working to the required standards and should set further objectives for the extended period. Normally this meeting will take place on a 1:1 basis. However, there could be circumstances where it is appropriate for a member of the Employee Relations team (People and Organisational Development) to attend and in which case the member of staff will be given the opportunity to be accompanied.

2.5.3 People and Organisational Development will confirm any extensions, in writing, to the member of staff and will update Keele People with the new probation end date.

2.6 Confirmation of Probation

2.6.1 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 by completing the relevant section on Keele People. People and Organisational Development will write to the individual to advise them that their appointment has been confirmed.

2.6.2 Line managers should confirm ongoing role expectations and objectives, particularly those that are linked to academic progression, where appropriate.

2.7 Non-confirmation of probation

2.7.1 Where a member of staff fails to achieve the expected standards or there are other relevant concerns such as conduct, timekeeping and attendance, provided at least one Interim Probationary Review meeting has been held with the member of staff prior to this stage, the member of staff will be invited, in writing, to attend a formal Probationary Review meeting which will be chaired by a reviewing manager. The letter must advise the member of staff that a possible outcome of the meeting could be dismissal and that they have the right to be accompanied by a Keele University employed colleague or Trade Union representative. A member of the Employee Relations team will normally be present at this meeting to advise the designated Reviewing Manager.

2.7.2 The member of staff should be given a reasonable opportunity to consider their response to the issues to be discussed. The member of staff will receive the following, in writing, at least five working days in advance of the meeting:

- a) the date and time and location of the meeting;
- b) details of the concerns;
- c) the name of the person who will present the case to the reviewing manager;
- d) the names of any witnesses¹ (if applicable);
- e) the member of staff's right to be accompanied;
- f) any other documentation to which the University will refer.

2.7.3 Not later than two working days before the meeting the member of staff should similarly provide:

- a) the name and status of the member of staff's representative, if any;

¹ The reviewing manager reserves the right to consider the appropriateness of calling witnesses, taking into account the circumstances of the case, and to take a decision not to allow them.

- b) any documents the member of staff may wish to rely on at the meeting;
- c) the names of any witnesses² (if applicable).

2.7.4 At this meeting the case will be discussed with the member of staff, including details of the issues causing concern, the measures that have been implemented to assist the member of staff to improve their performance and other relevant issues such as conduct, timekeeping, attendance and any support that has been offered to the member of staff. The member of staff will be given the opportunity to put forward their case.

2.7.5 It is important that consideration is given to any special circumstances that may have resulted in a lack of opportunity for individuals to perform to their full potential and meet the requirements of their probation period. For example, due to time away from work because of family responsibilities, ill-health or disability. Advice and guidance on such cases must be sought from People and Organisational Development.

2.7.6 A decision will be taken, based on full consideration of the case and any other relevant information. The reviewing manager will consider whether to;

- a) confirm the individual's appointment
- b) extend the probationary period to recognise that performance is not yet at the required standard
- c) terminate the appointment.

2.7.7 Where probation is extended, regular progress reviews and interim probationary meeting(s) should be held to review performance. Towards the end of the extended probationary period the manager should meet with the member of staff to review performance and advise them of the next steps. This may be to confirm the successful completion of probation or referral to a formal review meeting to consider termination of employment. It is unlikely that a further extension would be agreed although there may be exceptional circumstances where this is relevant.

2.7.8 Should concerns regarding the individual's performance continue during the extended probationary period the member of staff will be invited to attend a further formal Probationary Review meeting.

2.8 Appeals

2.8.1 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.

² The reviewing manager reserves the right to consider the appropriateness of calling witnesses, taking into account the circumstances of the case, and to take a decision not to allow them.

2.8.2 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.

2.8.3 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.

2.8.4 The letter must advise the member of staff that they have the right to be accompanied by a University employed colleague or Trade Union representative.

2.8.5 In advance of an appeal meeting, the member of staff must provide copies of any documents on which they intend to rely and/or their statement of case. The member of staff will also receive copies of any documentation, which they have not previously received, which the University intends to rely on.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 For the avoidance of doubt, where a role title, department, faculty or professional service area is named and it is no longer in existence, it should be read as the equivalent role or department, faculty or professional service area. Should individuals remain uncertain, clarification can be sought from a senior member of staff within the management line.

3.2 Line Managers:

- a) Clarify the probationer'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 probationer and determine how they will be monitored/measured;
- e) Monitor/review progress regularly;
- f) Provide encouragement/feedback and recognition of achievements
- g) Arrange and conduct probationary reviews;
- h) Highlight areas for improvement;
- i) Seek advice where necessary from People and Organisational Development in cases of poor performance and take appropriate action;
- j) Determine confirmation or extension of probation (outside of non-confirmation process) and record this via Keele People.

3.3 Probationers:

- 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 them. Also to discuss their needs for training/guidance/support they feel are necessary to help them achieve the expected standards of performance.

3.3 Reviewing Managers:

- a) Chair formal probationary review meetings where an outcome could be non-confirmation of probation.
- b) Determine the probationary outcome (i.e. extension, confirmation, or non-confirmation).

4. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Progression Procedure

5. REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION

5.1 As a general principle, the Procedure will be reviewed by People and Organisational Development, in consultation with recognised Trade Unions after three years or where operational and/or legislative requirements change. Any revisions will be approved in accordance with UEC and Council procedures, where applicable.

5.2 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.

5.3 This Procedure will be published on the University policy zone web page and will also be accessible via People and Organisational Development web pages.

5.4 Equality issues have been taken into account during the development of this Procedure and all protected characteristics have been considered as part of the Equality Analysis undertaken.

5.5 The University will monitor the outcomes in respect of staff entering the formal stages of the procedures in order to meet its statutory equality duties.

6. ANNEXES

Annex A – Probation Review Process Flowchart

7. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Name	Probationary Procedure
Owner	Chief People Officer, People and Organisational Development
Version Number	1.1

Equality Analysis Form Submission Date	30 November 2022
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Approved By	Chief People Officer
Date of Commencement	26 January 2023
Date of Last Review	19 December 2025
Date for Next Review	19 January 2029
Related University Policy Documents	Progression Procedure
<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	

Annex A – Probation Review Process Flowchart

1. No concerns regarding meeting the required standards

Regular, informal probation reviews take place during probation period between manager and employee.

Towards the end of the probationary period manager confirms probation, and outlines ongoing objectives.

2. Concerns regarding meeting the required standards

Regular, informal probation reviews take place during probation period between manager and employee.

Manager identifies problems with the employee meeting the required standards.

Interim probationary review meeting held, required standards explained, objectives set, and support measures considered/ implemented.

Regular reviews continue to take place between manager and employee to assess progress against required standards.

Towards the end of the probationary period, line manager to consider whether required standards have been met.

Required standards have been met

Line manager confirms probation.

Some evidence of improvement but standards not fully met.

Line manager extends probation.

Standards not met.

Formal probationary review meeting Reviewing Manager considers case.

Confirmation of employment.

Extension of probation.

Non-confirmation of employment.

Appeal.