

Probationary Management Policy for non Statute XXXIII Staff (non-academic staff)

1. Introduction

When a new member of staff is appointed there is an expectation and belief that the individual is capable of performing their duties to a satisfactory standard. All newly appointed non-statute XXXIII staff will, unless otherwise agreed with Human Resources, be subject to a period of probation, normally 6 months in duration.

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of probation is to ensure that the performance of the new member of staff (from here on referred to as “probationer”) is monitored regularly, problems are resolved at an early stage, and any inability to meet the requirements of the job is recognised and necessary action taken promptly.

The University acknowledges that in addition to the formal processes contained within the policy, informal guidance and support will be given to the probationer during and after the probationary period.

The policy applies to all non-academic staff including Contract Research Staff (CRS). Academic staff to whom the provisions of Statute XXXIII apply have their own probationary arrangements set out in accordance with the National Agreement concluded in October 1974.

In this policy the following terms are identified:

“Line Manager” as the person to whom a member of staff reports and is directly responsible.

“Head of School or equivalent” is the appointed Head of Academic School, the appointed Head of the Administrative Office or the Warden of a Hall or where the aforementioned do not apply, the Dean or Directorate Head.

The probationer's Line Manager will normally be responsible for managing their probationary period. However, it is accepted that in some instances the probationer's Line Manager may not have the experience or skills to carry out all stages of the policy. Where this is the case a more senior colleague may become involved during the probationary period, for example, when conducting a meeting to confirm that their probation has been extended or their employment terminated.

It will be important at the start of the probationary period to identify who will be responsible for managing the probationer's probationary period and make it known to all parties.

3. Procedure

3.1 Before Probation starts

In the offer letter that the probationer receives from Human Resource Office, it will be clearly stated that the contract is initially for the period of probation. The standard probationary period for non-academic staff should be 6 months with a possible extension of 3 months. It is possible that a probationer's employment may be terminated before the expiry of the probationary period provided the Line Manager can clearly demonstrate that performance problems have been identified, communicated to the probationer and a period of time given to allow performance to improve.

3.2 Beginning of Probation

Once the probationer is in post it is the responsibility of the Line Manager to communicate with them the following four points:

- The duration of the probation;
- What standards of performance the probationer is supposed to attain over this period.
- How their performance is going to be assessed.
- The result of not meeting the standards required.

This should be done in an initial probationary meeting and the probationer should be given a copy of the information in writing and be asked to sign that they have understood what is being asked of them. The Line Manager has to establish how s/he is going to measure whether the probationer is meeting performance standards. The probationer should know how s/he is being assessed. This process should be as transparent as possible. The Line Manager will expect the probationer to demonstrate the ability to fulfill the core requirements of their new position. This does not necessarily mean that the probationer has to fulfil the requirements during the six month period, but rather must demonstrate the ability to do so.

3.3 During the probationary period

This A member of staff may have met the criteria set out for them and therefore can finish probation early. Line Managers need to apply for permission to do this from the relevant Human Resource Officer responsible. Normally this would happen after three months but it could be at any time during probation.

If for some reason the probationer is transferred to a different role during their probationary period then the Line Manager needs to set up a dialogue with the relevant Human Resource Administrator and the new Line Manager to agree how the probationary period will be assessed and any changes deemed necessary. The normal expectation is that a probationer will not be promoted during their probationary period.

During the probation period it is crucial that Line Managers contact the relevant Human Resource Administrator immediately if they start to have concerns about the ability of the probationer to successfully complete their probationary period. Straight after this the Line Manager should have a meeting with the probationer to inform them of what the problems are, what improvement is necessary, and what can be done to assist them in meeting the performance level required. The probationer should also receive a copy of the latter points in writing. They may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague at that meeting. A record of this meeting should be kept by the Line Manager. If the probationer's performance does not improve then it may be necessary to repeat this meeting.

All staff on probationary contracts should be given regular feedback on how they are doing by their Line Manager who should be monitoring their progress closely. At the half-way point of their probationary period the probationer should have a formal meeting with their Line Manager where they can discuss his/her own performance. The probationer may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague at that meeting. A record of this meeting should be kept by the Line Manager and be included in a final report on the probation.

3.4 The end of the probationary period

The Human Resources Office will write to the Head of School or equivalent six weeks before the end of probation asking whether the probationer's employment should be confirmed or not. The Head of School should liaise with the Line Manager who should then assess the performance of the probationer and arrange a further meeting with them if necessary. A meeting will only be compulsory if the individual's probation is to be extended or employment terminated. Should the individual's probation be confirmed a meeting will only be required if either the Line Manager or probationer makes a specific request. Before communicating these conclusions to the probationer the Line Manager should inform his/her Head of School or equivalent. The assessment should conclude whether

- The probationer has satisfied the requirements for continued employment and that as a result the employment is confirmed; or
- There is a need for the probationer to continue probation for a set period, normally up to a further three months.
- The probationer has not satisfied the requirements and the employment is terminated. (In this situation the probationer has the right of appeal to the Director of Human Resources).

These conclusions should be communicated to the probationer at the meeting. They should be given a copy of the information in writing. Any of the above results need to be communicated to the relevant Human Resource Administrator in a report on the probation.

3.5 Extension of probationary period

The extension of the probation should be treated in the same manner as the initial period. As such it should follow the pattern of meetings and clear communication established in

the first six months. Meetings should be held at the beginning, middle and end of the extension period between the Line Manager and the probationer. The probationer should receive written copies of the information given to them in meetings. The probationer may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague at the meetings with their Line Manager. The relevant Human Resource Administrator should be informed of any further problems with the probation. The Line Manager should write a final report at the end of the period that should go to the relevant Human Resource Administrator assessing whether the probationer has or has not satisfied the requirements necessary to have their employment confirmed.

3.6 Appeals

Should the probationers employment be terminated they will have the right of appeal to the Director of Personnel. Appeals must be lodged within 10 working days of receipt of the letter confirming the decision.

The grounds of the appeal will be limited to a review of the reasonableness of the decision to terminate the probationers employment.

The appeal will be heard by the Director of Human Resources (or by the Director of Academic Services if the decision to terminate the probationers employment was taken by the Director of Human Resource and a senior colleague who is independent of the process to date.

4. Staff Development Review

After the probationary period has ended the Line Manager (or in the case of CRS a manager who is not their line manager) should conduct a Staff Development Review (SDR) with the member of staff. This would enable the agreement of performance standards for the following year and assess any further training needs for the member of staff.

The extent of the SDR will depend on the nature of the discussions during the probationary period. If performance standards and training needs for the forthcoming year have been discussed and recorded then it is possible that an SDR needn't take place. Probationary Management Policy for Non Statute XXXIII Staff.