

Probation Procedure - Professional Staff (Grades 4-10)

Introduction

Scope

Length of Probation

Responsibilities

Confirmation of Appointment

Performance Issues

Extension of Probation Period

Termination of Appointment

Issued by: Human Resources (HR)

Issue Date: 1 December 2019

Version 1.0

Review Date: January 2025

Introduction

This procedure outlines the University's approach to Probation for new General and Professional members of staff. This includes the support, training and guidance that should be provided during the probation period, and the formal reviews that should take place to assist in the assessment of suitability for the role.

1. Scope

This procedure applies only to General and Professional staff newly appointed to the University, both permanent and fixed term whose terms and conditions of employment state that their appointment is subject to a probationary period.

The Probation process is designed to confirm the suitability of the new employee to the post they have been appointed to. Key areas or assessment during this period will include standards of conduct, capability, and attendance

This process will not apply to 're-deployees' who will be dealt with in accordance with the Managing Organisation Structures Procedure.

2. Length of Probation

The length of the probation period is stated within an employee's terms and conditions and will normally be 6 months.

3. Links to Induction

The Probation period works alongside the Induction process which details the support, development and training that will be provided to ensure new starters settle into the University.

New starters will receive instructions on how to familiarise themselves with how the University works. Information will mainly be made available via StaffSpace.

New starters are invited to attend a series of 'Welcome to Kingston' events which provide key information from across the University. Each Faculty and Directorate provides information to support the new starter's local induction, as detailed in the "Welcome to Kingston Guidelines for Managers".

4. Responsibilities

Line managers are responsible for the following:

- Providing local information to support the new starter's induction. Induction guidance for managers is available on StaffSpace.
- Welcoming the new member of staff to the team and explaining overall aims/expectations during the probation period
- Ensuring the probationer understands what is required of them in the role
- Oversight of the probationer's workload to enable them to achieve the required standard within the probationary period
- Setting the required standards to be met during the probationary period as per the Job description and person specification
- Identifying probation objectives at the start of employment (within the first month). This should be in line with the formal Performance & Development Appraisal procedure using the appropriate Probation Review Form
- Meeting with the new member of staff monthly during probation to discuss progress and provide feedback and guidance.

- Undertaking both informal and formal reviews during the probationary period including setting, reviewing, and recording progress against objectives. The relevant New Starters Probation Review Form is used to record the main points of the meeting
- Working with the probationer to support them and identify key development needed during the probation period
- Identifying any issues and highlighting them to their own line manager; seeking advice from HR as appropriate
- Completing a review one month prior to the end of the probation period which will include an assessment against objectives and a recommendation regarding confirmation of employment
- Completing probationary documentation and ensuring these are returned to HR.

New staff members (probationers) are responsible for the following:

- Acquainting themselves to the University's policies, processes and procedures
- Demonstrating suitability for the role
- Meeting probationary objectives
- Understanding and familiarising themselves with the required standards to be met during the probationary period as per the Job description and person specification
- Highlighting any difficulties at the earliest opportunity and sharing them with the line manager (or nominated individual)
- Highlighting any reasonable and relevant training or development needs that they consider they have
- Participating in their induction and any training events required
- Completing their induction programme.

5. Confirmation of appointment

At the conclusion of the probationary period, subject to satisfactory performance, conduct and attendance the appointment will be confirmed in writing to the probationer.

6. Performance issues during probation

As performance issues can be dealt with through the probation policy and procedure the University's capability and disciplinary procedures will not normally apply to probationers except for cases of gross misconduct which may result in summary dismissal under the disciplinary procedure.

Any performance or conduct problems that emerge and highlighted to the line Manager (and/or Dean/Director should be brought to the immediate attention of the probationer) and if necessary, discussed with HR. The probationer must be given clear information concerning where and how performance, conduct or attendance is falling below acceptable standards.

The probationer must be given the opportunity and support to make necessary improvements in a reasonable timeframe. If a performance improvement plan is appropriate it should include review periods leading up to the final probationary review meeting.

The probationer should be informed in writing of any underperformance, the improvements required within the timeframe and possible consequences of failing to meet the required standards e.g., termination of employment.

7. Extension of Probation Period

In exceptional cases, an extension to the probationary period may be granted. An extension will only be granted where it is considered that a further opportunity for the probationer to demonstrate suitability for the post is likely to result in confirmation of the appointment.

Before extending a probationary period, the line manager will consult with their own line manager and with HR. A formal review meeting will be held one month before the end of the extension.

Any extensions would not normally exceed 3 months.

8. Termination of Appointment

A decision whether to terminate employment should be made by the line manager as soon as it is clear that an employee will not meet the required standards, or after the final review meeting at the latest. After this final review, if performance, conduct or attendance has not improved to the satisfaction of the line manager and the line manager considers that a potential outcome could be termination, a formal probationary meeting should be convened.

The line manager will chair the hearing and a representative from HR will also attend. The probationer should be invited to the hearing and be informed of their entitlement to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

If the line manager is below grade 9 the hearing can be chaired by an appropriate alternative manager (who is grade 9 or above) as discussed and agreed with HR.

If the line manager does not chair the hearing, they will normally attend the hearing to present the management case and explain why it is felt the probationer has not met the requirements expected of the role.

After the formal hearing, should the decision to terminate employment be confirmed; a letter will be sent to the probationer stating the final date of employment and any final pay arrangements. They must also be advised of the right to appeal.

9. Appeals

Appeals against termination of employment should be made in writing. Delegated authority to hear the appeal process sits with the Dean or Director from the Faculty or Directorate.

10. Governance and Review

HR owns this policy and will review at least every three years.