

Guidance notes for the Management of Probationary Periods non Academic Support staff (Grade 1- 5)

Aims and Objectives of Probation

The aims of probation are to:

- Ensure that all probationary employees are given every opportunity to maximise their potential within the first six months of their employment; and
- Assist with induction and thus helping to ensure the effective and efficient management of Schools/Departments and the University.

The objectives of the procedure are to:

- Provide a supporting programme and environment, to allow the new employee to demonstrate their ability to meet the requirements of the post; and
- Identify the Probationer's individual training and development needs so that they are congruent with the demands of the post, the objectives of the school/department and the University's aims and objectives.

Application of the Procedure

The probationary period normally covers a period of six working months from the date of the appointment.

It is not normally appropriate to apply probation to those members of staff who have satisfactorily completed a period of probation in one post, at the same level, transfer to another comparable post, within a different School/Department. If however the duties are substantially different a probationary period may be appropriate even if the post is at the same grade.

Any period of maternity or adoption leave taken during a specified probationary period will not count towards the completion of the probationary period. In such instances the probation period should be suspended and an equivalent amount of time added when the Probationer returns to work.

Probation Standards and Responsibilities

On the appointment of a new member of staff, the Head of Department will select the line manager who will set the standards and responsibilities for the Probationer and monitor progress. This will normally be the member of staff's line manager.

The line manager is responsible for ensuring that on appointment it is made clear to the Probationer what the requirements of the job are and the aspects of the work i.e. standards, responsibilities and competency indicators¹ to be assessed at the end of the probation period. This should normally be communicated to the Probationer within the first week of appointment. Appropriate induction, training and

¹ **Competency Indicators:** When setting the probationary activities cognisance should be taken of the 'key' competency indicators depending upon the grade and job family; aiming for the probationer to progress from the entry/developing stage (i.e. stage 1) to the core/expected stage (i.e. stage 2) by the completion of the probationary period.

development should also be identified with the Probationer. The line manager should ensure that this information is documented on the Probation Activity Form (Appendix 1). This will enable the Probationer to have a full understanding of what will be required to be assessed to determine whether s/he has achieved the required standard of performance over the probationary period. At specified periods during the probationary period (normally at the end of three months and five months) the line manager will formally review the Probationer against the standards and responsibilities that have been set at the beginning of the probationary period. (Appendix 2 includes the Probation Review Form for support staff)

Informal reviews of progress will be more frequent where any deficiencies in performance have been identified and advice given to help facilitate improvements, giving adequate time to improve. Where deficiencies have been discussed, the Probationer should be advised of these in writing and of the potential outcome i.e. failure to successfully complete probation and termination of employment.

Responsibilities

The Induction Colleague

It is recommended that where practicable line managers formally nominate a colleague who is not on probation to act as an Induction colleague to the Probationer and who should be introduced to the Probationer on their first working day. The Induction colleague will be expected to be available to meet regularly with the Probationer to give guidance and help on all aspects of the work but will not be expected to formally report on progress. (Appendix 3 – identifies the role of the Induction colleague)

The Head of Department

- Will determine/nominate who will be responsible for overseeing the probationary process for the new member of staff and may choose who will act as the Induction colleague (if appropriate).

The Line Manager

- Should be sensitive to issues of equality and diversity and adopt their approach accordingly.
- Will meet with the Probationer within the first week to clarify their duties and responsibilities, the standards and responsibilities to be assessed during the probationary period, identify appropriate training and development needs and set dates for the probation review meetings at the 3 and 5 month stages.
- Continuously review the Probationer's performance, reviewing progress towards the set activities and training/development needs through the formal review meetings as well as through on-the-job discussion.
- Communicate regularly with the Probationer about their work throughout the probationary period, giving open, honest, constructive feedback on performance at the time it occurs and at the review meetings.
- Raise issues of underperformance during the probation period with the nominated HR Business Partner for the School/Department in order to ensure remedial action is taken as appropriate.
- Ensure that the Probationer is fully aware of the probation reports to be submitted to the Human Resources Department following each formal review meeting.

Human Resources

- On the appointment of a new member of staff, the Human Resources Department will notify the Head of Department of the requirement to complete the Probation Activity Form within the first week of appointment.
- To request the formal review reports following the 3 and 5 month reviews.
- To advise the Probationer of their satisfactory completion, or otherwise, of the probationary period of employment.

Procedure where Progress is Satisfactory

- At least 2 formal reviews should be held throughout the probationary period –(at the 3 and 5 month stages) during which progress should be noted relating to the activities set at the commencement of the probationary period.
- All meetings should be a two way dialogue in which the probationer is given the opportunity to highlight issues which may help in their development during the probationary period.
- The record of the review should state:
 - Whether satisfactory progress has been made towards objectives set; and
 - Provide an account of any areas of concern towards failure to meet objectives where this is due to unforeseen circumstances, rather than any failing on the part of the Probationer.
- The formal record should be signed by the Line Manager and the Probationer and submitted to the Head of Department and Human Resources Department.
- Following receipt of the 5 month review the Human Resources department will write to the Probationer to confirm their appointment.

Procedure where Progress is Unsatisfactory

- In cases where there is concern about lack of progress the Line Manager should **immediately** contact the nominated HR Business Partner for the area to highlight potential problems and seek appropriate advice/guidance on how to deal with such matters.
- Should the interim review identify any areas of unsatisfactory progress, which may lead to non-confirmation of appointment, this should be brought to the attention of the Probationer by the Line Manager. Also the Line Manager will advise the Probationer of such remedial action as is necessary to improve their performance and will set a timescale to enable the Probationer to achieve the required improvement and informal review dates.
- Should progress still continue to be unsatisfactory at the 5 month review, the Line Manager must advise the Probationer of this and arrange a meeting with the Probationer giving them 5 working days notice, outlining the purpose of the meeting. The meeting should refer to the evidence gathered on the lack of progress to include the number and dates of any informal review meetings and the Probationer will be given an opportunity to respond. A representative from Human Resources should also be in attendance at this meeting and the Probationer may be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative at this meeting and will be given the opportunity to present their case, including any mitigating circumstances.
- All meetings should be a two way dialogue in which the probationer is given the opportunity to highlight issues which may help in their development during the probationary period (including extension, if appropriate.)
- Following this meeting the Line Manager may decide:

- that the probationary period may be extended for a further period of up to 3 months, on the understanding that only one extension² may be granted; **or**
- that the appointment is **not** confirmed at the end of the probationary period and therefore their employment is terminated.
- Following the final review meeting, Human Resources will within 5 working days, notify the Probationer, in writing, of the reasons for the extended probationary period, outlining what improvement is expected during this extended period and informing them that only one extension to the probationary period may be granted; or notify the Probationer that their employment will be terminated at the end of the probationary period confirming their final date of employment. In either case the Probationer will be informed of their right of appeal against the decision.

Appeal

The Probationer will have the right to appeal the decision to have their probation extended **or** the termination of employment. This appeal should outline the grounds on which the appeal is based, and be submitted in writing to the Head of Department within 5 working days from the date of the letter of notification.

However, if the Head of Department is the Probationers line manager, then an appropriate other person at the same level will be appointed by Human Resources to hear the appeal. In such instances the grounds of the appeal should be submitted in writing to Human Resources within the above timeframe.

The Head of Department (or appropriate other person) will convene a meeting, normally within 5 working days, inviting the Line Manager and Probationer to attend and will consider the evidence provided by both parties. The Probationer must take all reasonable steps to attend the appeal meeting and/or any adjournment or postponement of such meeting. If the Probationer or the Probationer's chosen work colleague or trade union representative cannot attend at the time specified for the meeting, the Probationer must inform the University's Human Resources Department immediately, and the University will make reasonable efforts to arrange an alternative time. Normally only one postponement will be granted. A representative from Human Resources will be in attendance and the Probationer may be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative at this meeting.

Following the meeting the Head of Department (or appropriate other person) will communicate their decision in writing within 5 working days to the Probationer. The decision of the Head of Department (or appropriate other person) will be final.

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² Extensions to the probationary period can only be granted in very exceptional circumstances. Normally if performance remains unsatisfactory at the end of the 6 months probationary period employment will be terminated. Extensions are only appropriate where there has been a very significant improvement in performance since the interim review meeting and it is reasonable to expect that the required standard will be achieved within the extension period.

University of Ulster
Non-Academic Support Staff Probation Activity Form
 (Grades 1-5)

Name (Probationer):	Date of Appointment:
Job Title:	Probation End Date:
Department:	Line Manager:

To be completed by the Line Manager and the Probationer during the first week of the Probationer's appointment.

Please summarise the standards and responsibilities to be assessed during the probationary period. These should relate to the expectations in the Job Description/Personnel Specification & Generic Role Profile/Competency indicators relevant to the grade and job family.

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Please list any on-the-job training needs that have been identified and the induction support interventions to be considered.

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Preliminary Review Meeting Due: (at end of 3 months)	
Final Review Meeting Due: (at end of 5 months)	

Signed: _____
 (Probationer)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
 (Line Manager)

Date: _____

Copy to be retained by the Line Manager, with a copy to the Probationer and a copy forwarded to Human Resources for record purposes.

University of Ulster
Non-Academic Support `Staff Probation Review Form
(Grades 1-5)

Name (Probationer):	Date of Appointment:
Job Title:	Department:
Line Manager:	Date of Review: (3 Month or 5 Month or Other*) *Please delete as appropriate

To be completed by the Probationer and Line Manager during the Probationary Review Meeting

Summary of Performance During Probationary Period		
With reference to the performance and standards set at the beginning of the probationary period and provide comments on the Probationer's performance		
Standards & Performance	Assessment	
	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Job Performance		
Attainment of relevant job knowledge/skills		
Standard of job performance achieved		
Ability to learn new tasks in acceptable timescales		
Time Management		
Ability to prioritise tasks		
Completion of key tasks in acceptable timescales		
Working With Others		
Ability to communicate and interact effectively with others		
Time-Keeping		
Adherence to agreed start/finish/break times		
Attendance		
Number of days absence		days
Supervisory Responsibility		
If Yes, has the Probationer discharged their supervisory function effectively?		Yes/No
Is the Probationer making satisfactory progress towards the identified training needs following appointment?		Yes/No
Comments:		
Is there a need to revise the training needs initially identified or to offer the Probationer additional support?		Yes/No
Comments:		

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Probationer)

Preliminary Review

I consider that _____ is making /not making* satisfactory progress during their probationary period, the next review meeting is scheduled for _____. (*delete as appropriate) If unsatisfactory, the following remedial action is necessary:

Final Review

I confirm that _____ has met/not met* the standards and requirements of their probationary period and should/should not* be confirmed in post **or** extend* their probationary period for ____ months. (*delete as appropriate)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Line Manager)

Copy to be retained by the Line Manager, with a copy to the Probationer and a copy forwarded to Human Resources for record purposes.

Notes on Completion

In preparing the report(s) the line manager should meet with the probationer, taking cognisance of the probation standards, responsibilities and training needs identified at the beginning of the probation period. The report must be signed off by the probationer and the line manager.

On receipt of the final report, where progress has been satisfactory, confirmation of the probationary period will be sent, by the Human Resources Department, to the member of staff concerned.

If at the preliminary review meeting the probationer is not making satisfactory progress toward the standards and training needs identified the line manager must:

- Identify and record any area(s) in which the achievement of the targets set is less than satisfactory.
- Specify and reaffirm with the probationer the areas for improvement and any remedial action necessary along with any changes to the probationary targets.

If at the final review meeting the probationer is not making satisfactory progress towards the probation standards, responsibilities and training needs identified or has not improved in relation to the redefined criteria identified at the preliminary review meeting, the line manager must decide if:

- the probationary period may be extended for a further period of up to 3 months, on the understanding that only one extension³ may be granted; or
- the appointment **not** be confirmed.

When Human Resources receive a report indicating continuing dissatisfaction at the 5 month review they will:

- Notify the member of staff that their probationary period may be extended, only on one occasion, for a further period of up to 3 months **or** their employment will be terminated at the end of the probationary period **and** advise them of their right to appeal.

³ Extensions to the probationary period can only be granted in very exceptional circumstances. Normally if performance remains unsatisfactory at the end of the 6 months probationary period employment will be terminated. Extensions are only appropriate where there has been a very significant improvement in performance since the interim review meeting and it is reasonable to expect that the required standard will be achieved within the extension period.

The Role of the Induction colleague

The role of the Induction colleague is to share their experience and knowledge to enable a new colleague (i.e. the Probationer) to develop in their role and to familiarise themselves with the requirements of the University during the probationary period.

The Induction colleague will be involved throughout the probationary period – on an informal basis, for example in the following areas:

- Observation and hands-on experience of work tasks
- Instruction in work processes
- Information, advice and guidance on Departmental, Faculty or School procedures
- Reference onward to other sources of information and help
- A sounding board for the Probationer's reflection on experience
- Encouragement to take up learning opportunities within the University.