

PROBATION POLICY

Policy Statement

It is a condition of appointment that all new members of staff, members of staff transferring between grades and/or positions, are covered by a probation scheme. Probationary periods should be viewed as a method by which the University and the member of staff can assess their competence within the job. The correct application of a probationary period will ensure that staff enhance the University's working standards and their individual career development.

New members of staff appointed to Grade 1 to Grade 5 inclusive are deemed to be on probation for the first six months of their contract whilst new members of staff on Grade 6 to Grade 9 inclusive serve a nine month probationary period. Members of staff whose contract is for twelve months or less serve a six month period. Subject to the completion of a satisfactory probationary period, staff are confirmed in their position until their contract expires, is renewed or terminated.

Staff transferring from a Grade 1-5 post to a Grade 6-9 post, who have already completed a six month probationary period, should serve a further nine month probationary period in the new position. Failure to satisfy the probationary period, which later results in dismissal from the higher level post, will not entitle the member of staff to return to his/her former position. Members of staff, employed on a fixed-term contract of 12 month duration, should serve a probationary period of 6 months. Where a contract is extended beyond the initial 12 month duration and the post is graded between Grade 6 to Grade 9 a further review of the past three months shall be conducted to ensure that, wherever possible, all members of staff in a Grade 6 to Grade 9 post will be subject to a nine month probationary period.

Procedure

The length of the probationary period will be specified in the contract of employment. On joining the University it will be the responsibility of the Head of Division to provide the necessary guidance and direction to enable new staff to achieve a smooth transition into their role within the Department and the University as a whole.

The Head of Division will normally be the person who provides the main point of contact and guidance for the member of staff. Where it is more suitable for another member of staff to act as Supervisor and mentor to the employee this should be clearly communicated to both members of staff.

It is expected that when a member of staff joins the University, or moves to a different position on a different grade, their Head of Division, or Supervisor, will define and agree with them the objectives of the post, specify expected outcomes and agree reasonable, and achievable, targets. Following this, a system of continuous review will begin with formal reviews taking place either on a two or three month basis.

The importance of continuous performance reviews, particularly in the first few weeks/months, cannot be stressed enough. However, more formal reviews are necessary in order to provide sufficient information on which a final assessment of performance can be made.

Members of staff on Grade 1 to Grade 5 should receive, at least, a bi-monthly review of performance. For members of staff on Grade 6 to Grade 9 this can be extended to a three month review period. This will enable a more concentrated period of monitoring and provide the new employee with the opportunity to

receive feedback on the work objectives, targets and standards set by the Supervisor in the first few weeks of the employee commencing the job. It will also provide an opportunity to highlight particular weaknesses, if any exist, giving the employee an opportunity to rectify any problems before their next review or the end of their probationary period.

The review meetings should concentrate on the employee's performance within their new role and where cause for concern is noted this should be conveyed to the employee to enable him/her to make the necessary improvements. Objectives should be reviewed and revised as necessary and the meeting should also aim to identify and review any training requirements. Details of training requirements should be forwarded to the Human Resources Team for action.

A note of the meeting should be taken to provide a formal record that it has taken place. Both the employee and the Head of Division, or other selected representative, should sign the note to confirm that the review has taken place and that both the employee and the person conducting the review are aware, even if they don't agree on certain points, of what has been discussed.

A copy should be retained by the Head of Division or Supervisor, the probationary employee and a copy sent to the Human Resources Team for file. It is expected that there will be at least two formal reviews during a probationary period.

One month prior to the end of the employee's period of probation the Human Resources Team will send a standard Probation Form, which, should be completed by the Head of Division, or elected representative, and returned to the Human Resources Team under confidential cover. The Human Resources Team will then arrange for confirmation of continued employment to be sent to the employee.

The review meetings are designed to ensure that unsatisfactory performance is identified early in a person's employment with the University. This should provide opportunities for the employee to modify their conduct and improve performance. Where it becomes apparent that an employee is incapable of reaching the level of competence required to adequately achieve the objectives of the post, the University has the right to end the employment during the probationary period, without recourse to the full disciplinary procedure. Such action would be rarely taken and would be subject to the contractual notice periods specified in the employee's contract of employment.

Where dismissal has not taken place but concern has been expressed over certain aspects of the employee's performance, it may be necessary to extend a person's probationary period beyond the standard six, nine or twelve month limit. Such extensions should be made on a three month basis and monthly, or if required more frequent, formal reviews should be conducted. The employee should be made aware that failure to achieve the desired improvements will result in dismissal. As before, such reviews should be noted, signed, and copied to the Human Resources Team for file. There should never be more than two extensions of three month duration before the employee is either confirmed in their appointment or served notice of termination.

Formal notification of the completion or extension of a probationary period will be sent to the employee by the Human Resources Team. Subject to the completion of a satisfactory period of probation, whether it is extended or not, the member of staff will be confirmed in their position until their contract expires, is renewed or terminated.