

University of Aberdeen

Policy Statement for Probation Procedures

1. Policy Statement

The University recognises that a supportive and developmental probation process is vital in providing the appropriate level of support and training for new members of staff on commencement of their employment.

This policy sets out the University's approach to probation for new members of staff, aiming to ensure the University meets its commitment to the fair, equal and consistent treatment of staff with regard to the probation period.

Probationary procedures providing guidance on the management and implementation of the policy for differing staff categories are available as follows:

- Probation Procedure for Support Staff
- Probations Procedure for Academic Related, Research and Teaching Staff
- Probation Procedure for Academic Staff (defined as Lecturer/Senior Lecturer)

The relevant procedure should be read in conjunction with this policy statement.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy relates to all newly appointed staff, whose terms and conditions of employment state that their appointment is subject to a probationary period. This includes academic staff, support staff, academic related staff, teaching staff and research staff.

2.2 The length of the probation period will be stated in the terms and conditions of employment and is dependent on the skills and competencies required for the role. However, the length of probation period will normally be;

- 6 months for support staff within Grades 1 – 4
- 12 months for Academic Related, Research and Teaching Staff
- Maximum of 3 years for academic staff (excluding Professorial staff)

2.3 It will not normally be appropriate to apply probation to those members of staff, who having satisfactorily completed a period of probation in one post, are then transferred to another comparable post within a different department of the University, unless the new role is substantially different and requires a new range of skills and attributes. Similarly, it will not normally be appropriate for academic staff to serve a three-year probationary period, or indeed any staff member to undergo a probationary period, where it is deemed by the University that such a period of probation has been partly or wholly served elsewhere. Where this situation arises advice should be sought from the appropriate HR Partner.

2.4 In cases where a member of staff has been redeployed to another role within the University, a trial period will be a more appropriate method of ensuring that the redeployment is satisfactory to both the individual and the department. Where this situation arises, advice should be sought from the HR Partner. The detail of such trial periods is contained in the Consultation on Avoidance of Redundancy Policy.

2.5 Staff on probation will not be subject to the annual review process until such time as their probation period is successfully completed.

3. Aims

The policy aims:

- To ensure that the probation process is undertaken for all staff and is applied in a fair and consistent manner, within a supportive framework and in line with employment legislation requirements.
- To ensure the University is provided with an opportunity to assess the skills, conduct, capability and attendance of new staff before deciding whether or not to confirm their appointment.
- To identify the link between induction, probation and developmental processes (e.g. mentoring opportunities) and emphasise the need for all to underpin the support and development of a new member of staff.

4. Principles

4.1 The University aims to secure equality of opportunity in all its activities, and in this respect, the probation process must be objective, clear, transparent and free from discrimination. Head of Schools / Line Managers are expected to have undertaken equal opportunities training.

4.2 The probation process should work alongside the induction process to help create a positive and supportive working environment, allowing new staff to settle into the University and learn the key elements of the job within a reasonable and realistic timescale.

4.4 Clear, comprehensive and accurate records of probation review meetings must be maintained, including how standards are set, what methods are used for measuring them and what timescales are given for reaching them. A Probation Review Form is provided for this purpose and must be signed by the employee and his/her line manager at each review point, to provide a formal record of the probationary period. Induction materials may be used to inform the initial probation review meeting i.e. to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the new employee in line with their terms and conditions of employment, their job description and the policies and procedures which must be followed.

4.5 In circumstances where problems arise during a period of probation, the line manager should raise these with the member of staff in a timely manner, and the member of staff must be given an opportunity to respond to any concerns. Line managers should discuss the action required by the member of staff to address the problem, and where necessary, give clear, unambiguous warnings if standards are not met. The manager should use the Probation Review Form to keep a record of the discussion and ensure that this is signed by both parties (i.e. the line manager and the employee).

4.6 Members of staff have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative, at any formal meetings held to address serious performance issues that have arisen during probation and where dismissal is a possible outcome. This right will not apply in the case of informal discussions between the employee and line manager or at the normal review meetings.

4.7 Documentation relating to staff will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and related documentation will be subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) as appropriate.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsible for
New Employee	Demonstrating their suitability for the post for which they are appointed Participating as required in their induction Meeting any reasonable objectives within deadlines set Identifying to their line manager at the earliest opportunity any difficulties they are experiencing Raising with their line manager any training, development or support which they believe to be

necessary in order for them to fulfil the requirements of the role

Line Manager	<p>Establishing the standards of performance consistent with the requirements of the position, in line with the job description</p> <p>Communicating the required standards, responsibilities and objectives to the new staff member</p> <p>Ensuring the new employee is inducted locally</p> <p>Making sure that the employee is aware that records of induction activities may be used to support the probation process</p> <p>Maintaining induction records which will provide complete and documented evidence to support the probation procedure</p> <p>Providing training and guidance as necessary</p> <p>Monitoring the performance of the employee</p> <p>Holding regular one-to-one meetings with the employee in order to ensure a good working relationship and provide feedback on the employee's progress</p> <p>Arranging and conducting formal probation review meetings at the intervals prescribed in the probation procedure</p> <p>Providing appropriate supervision to monitor progress or identify difficulties and provide opportunity for resolution</p> <p>Timely conduct and documentation of probation reviews</p> <p>Advising Human Resources of the outcome of the probation period including any extension of or difficulties during the probation period</p> <p>Confirming verbally whether or not the employee has completed their probationary period successfully at the final review meeting.</p>
Human Resources	<p>Providing HR advice on the probation period for both line managers and the new employee</p> <p>Advising on cases of unsatisfactory performance/progress and, where appropriate, supporting line managers during formal meetings to address serious cases.</p> <p>Confirming in writing the outcome of the probation period.</p>