**Probation Procedure**

This document sets out the principles for the operation of the probation process and should be read in conjunction with the Probation Guidelines for the 1-year and the 3-year schemes.

The procedure applies equally to part-time, full-time, open-ended and fixed-term contracts.

**1 Purpose**

The probation scheme is a clear framework for assessing an individual’s capabilities, reliability and suitability in respect of an appointment and ensures that probationary staff are given the necessary support, guidance and appropriate staff development to carry out the role effectively.

Confirmation of employment is subject to satisfactory completion of the probation period.

**2 Application**

Probation will normally apply to all new staff appointed to Grade 7 and below, with the exception of Grade 7 Lecturer appointments. Where appropriate\*, probation will also apply to existing staff taking up a new role within the University.

The probation period for Grade 6 Lecturers on ‘Teaching & Research’ and ‘Teaching & Scholarship’ career pathways is three years (thirty-six working months\*\*). If an individual can provide evidence of the completion, in full or in part, of a comparable probation process, consideration will be given to whether or not all or part of the probation period will be waived.

For Clinical Lecturers/Clinical Tutors on the Teaching & Research and Teaching & Scholarship pathways, probation will be one year (twelve working months\*\*\*).

The probation period for all other staff is also one year (twelve working months\*\*\*).

Where the contract is for a fixed term that is less than the normal probation period, the standard probation period will apply. In circumstances where contracts are renewed within the same post, the initial contract will contribute to the completion of the probation period.

**3 Responsibilities**

The Head of School/Department is ultimately responsible for the operation of probation within the School/Department, but the management of the process may be delegated to the probationer’s line manager/supervisor.

\* if there is a major change e.g. in career path

\*\*May be extended to forty-eight working months

\*\*\*May be extended to eighteen working months

**4 Mentoring**

Staff on probation may be assigned a mentor to provide independent support. A mentor and probationer should agree to meet regularly, and it is essential that the probationer is able to discuss issues openly and confidentially with his/her mentor.

**5 Operation of the Schemes**

During the probation period, the line manager must make the requirements of the post clear, with reference to the job description and person specification, and also ensure that the probationer is provided with adequate support and development for the new role, taking into account the contractual arrangements (full-time, part-time, job-share, clinical nature of the probationer’s employment), and other relevant factors\*. The line manager should meet with the probationer at the beginning of the probation period and on a regular basis thereafter to discuss work objectives, and give advice and guidance on progress in the new role. Formal review meetings will take place as outlined in the relevant guidelines. Where problems are identified, the line manager should seek to resolve these issues with the member of staff at an early stage through discussion, coaching and mentoring. A record should be made of these discussions and an action plan agreed. In such circumstances, it should be made clear to the probationer that failure to achieve an acceptable level of improvement is likely to result in a recommendation not to confirm the appointment. Providing all appropriate support has been given to assist the probationer achieve the standards required for the post, a recommendation not to confirm the appointment may be made at any time in accordance with section 6 of this procedure.

**6 Confirmation or non-confirmation of appointment**

6.1 Confirmation of appointment: Where performance is deemed to be satisfactory the Head of School/Department (or nominee) should forward a recommendation for completion of probation to Human Resources, and the decision will be confirmed in writing to the probationer. Early completion of probation will need to be supported with evidence of satisfactory performance in respect of the agreed objectives.

6.2 Extension of the probation period: If concerns have been identified during the probation period, which the line manager/supervisor believes can be overcome with further guidance and additional time, then the probation period may be extended. In this case, the line manager/supervisor should agree an action plan with the probationer and contact their local HR Manager/HR Business Partner for further advice. This recommendation can be made during the third year for those on a three year probation period, and at the nine month review stage for probationers on the one year scheme.

6.3 Termination of employment: If concerns have been identified during the probation period which have not been resolved despite appropriate support/training, the line manager/supervisor should advise the probationer that a recommendation not to confirm the appointment is to be made to the Head of School/Department (or nominee) and the probationer provided with reasons for the recommendation. A meeting must then be arranged to discuss the recommendation.

\*- absences for career breaks, maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods;
- part-time or other flexible working arrangements;
- periods of absence or flexible working arrangements or limitations on speed of working arising from a disability, ill-health or injury.

The probationer should be given five working days’ notice of the meeting and be provided with full details of areas where their performance is less than satisfactory. The opportunity of accompaniment by a trades union officer or colleague will be offered to the member of staff.

The meeting will be chaired by the Head of School/Department or his/her nominee, accompanied by a member of Human Resources, and may be adjourned if further information is needed.

If, following the meeting, the Chair considers termination of employment is appropriate then the Chair will implement this decision. The outcome will be communicated in writing to the probationer within one week. The letter will contain the reasons for the termination of employment, the date employment will end and details of the right to appeal.

The meeting may be rearranged once if there is good cause for non-attendance. Where the probationer is unable to attend the meeting then the meeting may be held in their absence.

**7 Appeals**

Within one week of receiving the written confirmation of termination of employment, the probationer may appeal against that decision, stating the grounds of the appeal in writing to the Director of HR.

The appeal will be heard by a Pro Vice-Chancellor or Chief Operating Officer and a senior member of staff from another School / Department. A member of Human Resources not previously involved in the case will also be present and the probationer may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a colleague. Appeal meetings will be convened as soon as practicable

The meeting may be rearranged once if there is good cause for non-attendance. Where the probationer is unable to attend the meeting then the meeting may be held in their absence.

Appeals against termination of employment will only be held to review:

a) whether the basis for termination of employment was adequately substantiated

and/or

b) whether the University’s procedures were correctly and fairly implemented.

The decision of the appeal hearing will be issued within two weeks. In the event that the probation appeal results in reinstatement then continuous service will be maintained.

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