

## FACULTY OF SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

### ACADEMIC PROBATION TOOLKIT

#### Introduction

A probationary period is a trial period for a new employee. It allows both the manager and the employee to assess objectively whether the new employee is suitable for the role, taking into account their overall capability, skills, performance and general conduct in relation to the job in question.

#### Length of Academic Probationary periods:

##### 4 years for Academic Staff

- a. Required to complete a probationary period of 4 years from the date of commencement of employment to your probation end date<sup>1</sup>.
- b. The first year of appointment of a person who assumes duty between **1 August and 31 January inclusive** is deemed to end on **31 July immediately following**.

The first year of the appointment of a person who assumes duty between **1 February and 31 July inclusive** is deemed to end on **31 July of the following calendar year**.

- c. During the probationary period you are required to attend the University's teaching and learning course for new academic staff (the "New Academics Programme"). Satisfactory completion of the course is a pre-requisite for satisfying the probationary period and forms part of the process of assessment of teaching performance prior to confirmation of appointment.
- d. The University reserves the right to extend your probationary period if, in its opinion, circumstances so require.

A probationary period must be properly planned if it is to be effective. Planning should commence prior to the individual starting, so that a framework is in place at the induction stage. See **APPENDIX A** for the **Academic Probation: New Starter Checklist**.

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: in situations where the length of the probation period is greater than the length of the initial contract, if the contract is extended the length of the probation period in your contract extension will take account of any period of probation already served.

The process of probation should include regular progress meetings between the line manager and the employee spaced at regular intervals throughout the probationary period. Progress meetings should be planned and scheduled at the outset of the employee's employment. It will be the line manager's responsibility to ensure that all probationary reviews are completed on time.

**Line Managers/Probation Supervisors should:**

- Put together a formal induction and learning and development plan – engaging the member of staff with discussions on what will help them succeed.
- Conduct regular meetings with new members of staff throughout the probation period and provide feedback on a regular basis. At least once a month is good practice.
- Set clear objectives for the duration of the probation period – what will the individual need to do and achieve to successfully complete their probation period?
- Promptly address any issues of performance or behaviour that arise, and making staff aware at the earliest opportunity of any factors that may lead to them failing their probation period. Put an action plan together in the event of any problems or concerns. Document discussions.
- Take feedback from others on the performance of the new member of staff.
- Provide positive feedback on work completed well.
- Determine what will help the member of staff be successful – e.g. formal training, assignment of a buddy or mentor, developmental activities, relevant meetings and information.
- Discuss and agree whether or not any specific training or coaching is required
- Discuss any other relevant matters such as timekeeping, attendance, general conduct or attitude.
- Invite the employee to comment on issues such as the extent to which s/he has integrated into the School/Function and how well s/he is getting on with colleagues;
- Give the employee an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns about any aspect of his/her employment.

**Above all – encourage an open dialogue.** A probation period is more likely to be successful if both the manager and member of staff have had regular conversations and raised areas of concern.

At each stage and after discussion with the employee, describe and record on the progress template how well the person has performed in the role, highlighting where s/he has met, exceeded, or not achieved performance standards (use the job description as guidance). If you have any concerns about an individual that is not achieving the required performance standards then you should contact your local HR Partner for further advice.

See **APPENDIX B** for the **Academic Probation Objectives / Progress** template.

See **APPENDIX C** for the **Academic Probation: School Promotion Committee (SPC) review** template.

See **APPENDIX D** for the **Learning & Development Plan**