

## **PROBATIONARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEWLY APPOINTED ACADEMIC STAFF**

### **1. Application**

These arrangements are in accordance with Statute XIII.6 and Ordinance XXVI.

They apply to all new academic staff (including teaching-focused staff) at grades 6, 7 and 8. The arrangements can be modified on a case-by-case basis (with the approval of Vice-President and Dean) to take account of previous experience (possibly including prior completion of a similar probationary period) at this or another University or Higher Education Institute. This can also include waiver of probation where this is considered to be appropriate.

### **2. General Principles**

a) The purpose of probation is to:-

- (i) ensure that the University appoints to its permanent academic staff those with aspirations, ambitions and professional accomplishments that are appropriate to its position as a world-leading institute of research and higher education.
- (ii) provide a newly appointed member of academic staff (a 'probationer') with effective familiarisation, training and support so that they may understand and contribute fully to the mission and objectives of the University.
- (iii) to allow academic staff to achieve their full potential and to satisfy their career aims in research and scholarship.

b) Probationers should be given appropriate support to enable them to complete probation satisfactorily. Such support should include a clear statement of the standards that probationers are required to meet, appropriate resources (especially time) to accomplish what they are required to do, guidance on how best to meet the standards, and early notice if they are failing to make the satisfactory progress at any stage in the probationary period.

c) The process of probation and confirmation in post complies fully with the University's stated policies of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity.

- d) Academic staff will have the opportunity and the academic freedom to follow lines of research and scholarship using their professional judgement.
- e) When a probationer fails to provide evidence of the necessary standards of professional accomplishment, the termination of his/her appointment will proceed in accordance with the University's Statutes and Ordinances.

### **3. Period of probation**

The probationary period will be not more than four years, and will end no later than 31 July in the fourth year of appointment. In some circumstances, a Vice-President and Dean may approve a shorter period of probation. Such circumstances may include for example, prior service at a University or Higher Education Institute, perhaps in another role (e.g. independent research fellow). The probationary period may be interrupted for good cause on application by the probationer and approval by a Vice-President and Dean. Probationers may apply to be considered for confirmation in post prior to the end of the probationary period.

### **4. Interruption to the Probation Period**

There may be occasions when the probationary period is interrupted. In such circumstances it should be made clear (and confirmed in writing) to the individual whether probation is continuing or is being suspended. If it is the latter an indication of the period it is suspended should be given.

### **5. Arrangements on appointment**

- a) The Head of School, or an appointed deputy, shall set out in writing the overall objectives for the individual in terms of research, teaching, academic enterprise and service, that are required for the satisfactory completion of probation. This will be provided to, and agreed, following discussion with, the probationer within three months from the date of appointment.
- b) The Head of School will also agree with the probationer, on an annual basis, an appropriate allocation of time and duties between research, teaching, academic enterprise and service, which will normally include reduced loads, in the early stages of probation, for teaching and service by reference to the School's normal academic workload management procedures. Typically the teaching and service duties will be approximately half the normal load in the first year, rising to two thirds in the second year. This will vary if the probation period is likely to be much shorter than four

years. This allocation of time and duties is designed to allow the probationer the scope to meet the objectives set out in paragraph (5a).

- c) Each probationer will be assigned a probation supervisor by the Head of school (or appointed deputy). The probation supervisor will be a more senior member of academic staff, and will be assigned to the role for the duration of the probationary period. The role of the supervisor is:
- (i) to oversee induction and integration into the School and University by devising an appropriate induction plan which will enable the probationer to meet key contacts and understand the roles and plans of different parts of the University;
  - (ii) to offer help with interpretation of the objectives and the assessment of progress against the agreed goals. Typically, the probation supervisor would provide information such as:
    - The norms and standards for research activity and research outputs in the School (these should be provided at School level as a framework for the probation supervisor to work within);
    - the norms and standards for teaching activity and the evaluation of such teaching, appropriate to the different levels of teaching activity (these should be provided at School level as a framework for the probation supervisor to work within);
    - advice with respect to mechanisms in place to support their ongoing personal and career developments as members of the University's academic staff;
    - the importance of the annual Personal Development Review (PDR: to be conducted by the Supervisor) as an agreed written record of objectives and progress with respect to research, teaching and other activities, again in the context of the likely requirements for satisfactory completion of probation;
    - the advisability of applying for confirmation in post earlier than the usual prescribed period of four years.
- d) Each probationer should attend the New Academics Programme (see section 8) normally in year 1. The Vice-President/Dean should ensure that there are no impediments put in the way of an individual satisfactorily attending and completing the New Academics Programme. The New Academics Programme is designed to give flexibility of delivery and much of it is based within each Faculty. In appropriate cases, the Head of School may make recommendations to the appropriate Associate Dean for a probationer to be exempted from part of the programme or for an individual to undertake additional development tasks as part of the programme.

## **6. Progress subsequent to appointment**

The progress of a probationer will be kept under review through regular documented meetings with the probation supervisor. Each year there will be a PDR interview held between the probation supervisor and probationer to provide an agreed record of:

- (i) progress during the previous year with respect to research, teaching, academic enterprise and service, by reference back to the original statement of objectives for probation issued by the Head of School and previous PDR reports if any;
- (ii) assessment of the likelihood of satisfactory completion of probation;
- (iii) actions for the future year, in particular actions designed to address any shortcomings in previous progress. In the second and subsequent years, these reports will be available to the School Promotions Committee (see Appendix A).

## **7. Selection of a Mentor**

Each probationer will be assigned a mentor by the Head of School. The mentor will be an experienced member of academic staff different from the supervisor. The role of the mentor and the responsibilities of the probationer are outlined in the University's Mentoring Scheme (see Appendix B).

## **8. The New Academic Programme**

The University operates a New Academics Programme. Satisfactory completion of this programme is normally required as part of the probationary process. The allocation of duties and time referred to in paragraph 5(b) should ensure that the probationer has time to participate in the New Academics Programme.

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## Appendix A

### Procedures for confirmation in post of probationary appointments

The process will follow procedures analogous to those in place for promotions, and will be considered at School and Faculty levels.

- a) The progress of each probationer in the second and subsequent years will be reviewed by the School Promotion Committee (SPC).
- b) The reports of the PDR process (see section 5) will be sent to the SPC.
- c) A record of SPC advice and decisions on individual cases will be sent to the probationer and supervisor to inform future PDRs (where relevant). Where concerns on progress are raised, SPC must inform the probationer and supervisor of those concerns in writing and suggest appropriate courses of action to address the concerns (especially where these differ from actions already proposed in the PDR report).
- d) The question of confirmation will be normally considered in the third year of the probation period (but may be considered earlier) and will be based on:**
  - (i) the original letter of objectives issued by the Head of School (see 4(a));
  - (ii) the record of past PDR reports and SPC reports;
  - (iii) the current PDR report;
  - (iv) evidence of satisfactory completion of the New Academics Programme;
  - (v) a clear recommendation from the Head of School.
- e) The SPC will decide whether to:
  - (i) confirm appointment in post from the first day of August following SPC;
  - (ii) decline confirmation in post, with reconsideration of the case after 12 months, with a recommended set of actions for that period;
  - (iii) decline confirmation in post. This recommendation would normally only be made following recommendation (ii), when after the 12 months the probationer is deemed not to have satisfactorily completed the actions specified.
- f) Where confirmation in post is declined (paragraph e, decision ii), SPC must inform the probationer of the decision, the reasons for it, and any steps to be taken in the next 12 months in writing. Where confirmation in post is declined (paragraph e, decision iii), SPC must write to the probationer giving the reasons for the decision and informing the probationer of the right of

appeal. In the case of decision (iii), the appointment will terminate normally on the last day of July following the SPC meeting.

- g) The probationer has the right of appeal (on either substantive or procedural grounds) against the decision of SPC to extend probation (paragraph e, decision ii) or not to confirm appointment (paragraph e, decision iii). The probationer may exercise that right by writing to the Registrar and Secretary within 10 days of receipt of SPC's decision. The appeal will be heard by Faculty Promotions Committee (FPC). In the event that the appeal involves the submission of evidence not available to SPC, FPC will refer that evidence to SPC and ask if that would have changed their decision. There will be no further right of appeal in the University. In the Faculty of LifeSciences, where the SPC and the FPC are the same body, such appeals will be heard by the University Promotions Committee (UPC) or a group constituted by the UPC for that purpose.

## Appendix B

### Mentoring Guidelines

#### 1) General

- a) Reference to 'mentor' or 'mentor supervisor' in this document should be taken to imply a reference to the person who undertakes the function described, rather than implying any particular job title or role.

Every probationer shall have a mentor within his or her School. A mentor shall be appointed by the Head of School (or an appointed deputy), with agreement of both the mentor and, preferably, the probationer. The appointment should be made as soon as possible after the acceptance of the post by the probationer.

- b) The mentor should be an established member of staff of the School and with broadly similar research and teaching interests. It is not appropriate for a Head of School, Supervisor or other line manager to be a mentor. Exceptionally, the mentor may be from another School, with the consent of the Head of that School and of the probationer. In appropriate cases the Head of School may appoint more than one mentor (for example to focus on research concerns or teaching concerns): in such cases one mentor must be designated as the principal mentor for that individual and should assume the role of personal advisor and guide. Moreover, the mentor should not be seen as the sole person responsible for giving such advice and guidance and it is expected that schools will make arrangements for appropriate supervisory support, for example in the preparation of bids for research funding.
- c) Each Head of School shall also appoint a senior member of staff ('mentor supervisor') whose task should be to supervise and assist the individual mentors, providing appropriate contacts where necessary.
- d) Neither mentors nor the mentor supervisor should play any formal part in the assessment of the probationer's progress or in his or her Performance and Development Review. The latter shall be by a person appointed through the Faculty's procedures and should be the individual's Supervisor or other line manager.
- e) The allocation of teaching and other duties to a mentor or mentor supervisor must take account of the load imposed by these activities.



## 2) The Mentoring Process

- a) The mentor provides encouragement and support at a formative stage of a probationer's career. The role is that of confidant and critical friend as well as of understanding and trusted colleague.
- b) Mentoring is an informal process in which a more experienced member of staff undertakes to help a probationer to become familiar with his or her job in the University. A mentor should advise on the expectations and responsibilities of a new member of staff and assist in managing the balance of academic life – research, teaching and contribution to the community. The mentor should be familiar with any university or faculty guidance on probation and promotion, and with the induction process.
- c) A probationer will be required to attend the New Academics Programme and as a part of this prepare a portfolio of reflective experience. The mentor should be aware of the programme and be able to guide and help the probationer in the compilation of the portfolio.
- d) Normally, the mentor should arrange to observe at least two teaching sessions conducted by the probationer, and to provide helpful feedback on these sessions. The number of sessions may be more in the case of a teaching fellow.
- e) A mentor may provide basic information on the operation of the School, mention deadlines for various activities, give advice on the writing of research proposals, help with the construction of examination questions and their marking, indicate the scope of various administrative tasks, if sensible share some teaching, and if appropriate advise on interviewing potential undergraduate or postgraduate students or post-doctoral staff.
- f) The mentor may also wish to advise on the supervision of research students and on the probationer's workload.
- g) The mentor should maintain liaison with the Faculty organisers of the New Academics Programme and be able to suggest other contacts for the probationer where appropriate.
- h) The initial meeting of mentor and probationer shall be arranged by the mentor as soon as possible after the arrival of the probationer in the School, preferably as part of the individual's induction into the School, and thereafter there should be regular meetings. It is not necessary to conform to any requirement of place or time for these meetings and any agenda should be set by the probationer. A mentor should also be available on request (within reason). The mentor may wish to keep a note of topics discussed and should respect the confidentiality of the process.

### **3) Change of Mentor**

- a) A probationer should normally have the same mentor throughout his or her probationary period. However, there may be circumstances in which a probationer may wish to change his or her mentor. This might, for example, be for personal reasons, or for a period when the mentor is on Study Leave. This should be expedited by the mentor supervisor<sup>1</sup> and there should normally be no need to enquire into the particular reasons for the request.
- b) Unusually, a mentor may ask for a change, and this can be dealt with in the same way.
- c) Where a mentor is no longer available to undertake the task, the Head of School, after consultation with the individual and his or her Supervisor and any co-mentors, will appoint a replacement. In the case of a lengthy illness, the Head of School may appoint a temporary, or with the agreement of the individual concerned, ongoing replacement.