

# Probationary Period

## Staff Guidelines

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Revised Mar-20

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## Staff Guidelines

### 1 General Principles

As a leading international technological university it is essential that all Strathclyde staff are encouraged to attain their personal and professional potential and, thereby, to achieve the highest possible levels of performance and strive for success and be ambitious. In this context the University places great importance on the use of a probationary period for all new staff and its successful completion is accordingly a condition of employment.

The primary purpose of the probationary period is to help the member of staff perform to the required standard and to ensure they are, in overall terms, the right fit for the role to which they have been appointed. The probationary period accordingly provides an opportunity for the member of staff to demonstrate that they are able to fulfil the role and undertake the key responsibilities of the post. However, it is recognised that the University has a responsibility to assist members of staff in achieving the required standards and therefore during the probation period the University will assist and support new staff to:

- be clear about and achieve the requirements of the post
- identify training and development needs and undertake relevant training
- where relevant, understand in which areas they are not performing to the required standard and what improvement is required
- where relevant, be given sufficient time and support to achieve the required improvement
- integrate into the University and become fully effective in the post as soon as possible

Performance will be assessed periodically throughout the probationary period and where areas for development are highlighted, every reasonable opportunity will be provided to assist in the improvement of performance. The relevant manager will make clear how these standards will be monitored and the frequency with which they will be formally reviewed.

Managers should seek advice from their Human Resources team at an early stage should a new member of staff's performance or conduct give cause for concern. Apparent misconduct which results in serious doubts as to the suitability of the member of staff for continued employment should be dealt with immediately.

### 2 Scope

These guidelines will apply to all newly appointed staff, including staff appointed on a fixed term contract basis unless the contract is for a duration which is shorter than the relevant probationary period. New members of staff are also expected to participate in the Accountability and Development Review process (ADR) from the date of their appointment. This will assist in ensuring objectives are set, training and development needs discussed and identified and performance assessed from the outset of employment with the University.

Probationary periods will not apply to existing staff who are promoted, re-graded or transferred to another similar post within the University unless their initial probationary period is not yet completed. In this case, the probation period will be carried over to the amended or new contract of employment. In a redeployment situation, a trial period may apply but this is covered in the separate University Redeployment Policy document, which can be found at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/hr/>.

### 3 Duration of the Probationary Period

The duration of the probation period will depend upon the complexity of the role and over what length of time the member of staff can reasonably be expected to complete most aspects of the role. The duration will be clearly stated in the letter of appointment and will normally be for the following periods:

Role	Period
Professors, Directors, Academic staff and APS, Teaching, Research, Knowledge Exchange and Technical staff grades 8 and above	12 months
APS, Teaching, Research, Knowledge Exchange and Technical staff grades 6-7	9 months
APS, KTP Associates, Modern Apprentices, Technical and Operational staff grades 5 and below	6 months

In the case of Academic staff, those who are early career and meet the relevant qualify criteria will also participate in the [Academic Career Development Framework](#).

In exceptional situations, for example where performance is not considered satisfactory but the manager believes there is a realistic chance of the member of staff meeting the required standards within a reasonable timeframe, the probationary period may be extended. Advice should be sought from the relevant Human Resources team in such situations and the position should be clearly outlined to the individual at a formal meeting and confirmed in writing. Normally no more than one extension will be made, with the period of extension normally being no longer than three months. The extension letter will be issued by Human Resources and will clearly explain the reasons for extension, as well as the actions required to improve performance. It will also be made clear to the member of staff that if they are not able to demonstrate the required standard of performance by the end of the extended period, their contract of employment will be terminated.

## 4 Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 New members of staff

The newly appointed member of staff is responsible for:

- Demonstrating their suitability for the post they have been appointed to;
- Fully participating in their induction and any training or development that is provided within the probationary period;
- Meeting those objectives that have been agreed in accordance with the range of duties set out in the job description for their post;
- Identifying with their manager any training, development or support which they feel is necessary to help them to fulfil the requirements of the role.

### 4.2 Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring the newly appointed member of staff understands the role and what is required of them;
- Clearly defining the standards of performance and objectives required in the role with reference to the relevant job description and any specific objectives for the forthcoming period;

- Providing guidance and support and ensuring the newly appointed member of staff receives an effective induction to the University both at corporate and local level (specific advice and guidance on induction training can be obtained from the Organisational and Staff Development Unit within Human Resources, with specific advice and guidance on health and safety related induction available on the Safety Services website.)
- Holding regular one-to-one meetings with the new members of staff to work in collaboration to create and maintain positive working relationships and provide constructive feedback on their progress;
- Ensuring that progress is reviewed and documented in line with these guidelines;
- Advising the relevant Human Resources team of the outcome of the probation period.

#### 4.3 Human Resources

- Providing advice and guidance on the probation review process, induction training and development for managers and new members of staff;
- Confirming in writing the outcome of the probation period to the member of staff.

### 5 Procedure

The new member of staff, via the recruitment and selection process, will be provided with an up-to-date job description. Throughout the probationary period the newly appointed member of staff's performance and development will be regularly discussed and assessed to ensure continuous development and progress in the role. Two formal probation review meetings should be held, with reports completed following the meetings.

Within the first week of the new member of staff joining the University (or later depending upon the level and complexity of the role), the manager will meet with the member of staff to discuss the role responsibilities as outlined in the job description, the performance standards expected and to agree appropriate objectives for the forthcoming period. Managers should arrange informal review meetings (one-to-ones) with new members of staff on a regular basis to ensure that the member of staff is settling into their role, review job responsibilities and discuss progress and to receive feedback from the member of staff on their experience so far, responding to any queries or concerns that the new member of staff may have. Managers should also ensure that staff induction training and procedures have been progressed as agreed.

#### 5.1 Interim Review

An interim review meeting should be scheduled by the manager halfway through the probationary period. The probation review meeting will cover the member of staff's technical competence, skills and abilities and personal competencies. Consideration should also be given to the member of staff's attendance record and any other relevant factors. Staff induction and the associated training and procedures should be normally be completed by the interim review meeting. However, if this has not been done arrangements should be made to complete this as soon as possible.

It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure, following the interim review meeting, that a Probation Review Form (Non-Academic) is completed. This can be downloaded from <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/hr/>. Where progress is satisfactory, this will be confirmed by the manager. The interim review report will be signed by both parties, with copies held by the department until the end of the probationary period.

If progress is unsatisfactory, the manager should discuss with the member of staff the areas that are causing concern and should clarify objectives and timescales within which improvement is expected, as well as identifying methods of achieving such improvements. The manager should highlight any concerns to their HR team to allow appropriate advice to be provided.

The manager should be encouraging, supportive and provide guidance where necessary to aid the probationer in meeting objectives. Any additional training, re-training or support should be mutually agreed in writing by both parties and appropriate action taken. The member of staff should also be advised in writing that if specified improvements are not made by the final review meeting that employment may not be confirmed. Managers will be supported through these meetings by Human Resources where requested.

## **5.2 Final Review**

The final review meeting should be arranged before the end of the probationary period.

At the final review meeting the line manager will discuss the member of staff's technical competence, skills and abilities and personal competencies. Consideration will also be given to the member of staff's attendance record and any other relevant factors.

Where progress is satisfactory Human Resources will write to the member following the final probation review meeting to advise that the probationary period has been satisfactorily completed and that their appointment is confirmed. Where the final review meeting is considering the progress of a member of Teaching or Research Staff, Dean level consultation and agreement is required prior to employment being confirmed.

There is an expectation that the University induction process will have been fully completed prior to the end of the probationary process. If this is not the case the reasons for not completing induction should be clearly explained in the probationary review form.

Where a possible outcome of the meeting is dismissal from the University's employment Human Resources should be consulted. Reasonable notice of the meeting should be given with the member of staff being advised of the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

During the meeting the line manager will outline the issues of concern, clarify that the problems have been identified and discussed with the member of staff previously and confirm that the member of staff has been given the opportunity to improve and that support has been provided. The staff member will have the opportunity to explain and respond before a final decision is made regarding the outcome of the probationary period.

## **5.3 Issuing Notice and Terminating the Contract of Employment**

If the decision is to dismiss, this will be confirmed in writing by Human Resources with due notice and a right of appeal being given. The reasons for dismissal will be outlined in the notice of termination of employment. The right of appeal against the decision to dismiss will normally be to the Head of School/Department and should be submitted in writing within five working days of receipt of the written notice of termination. The Head of School/Department will convene an appeal hearing, supported by a representative from Human Resources, at which the member of staff can make formal representations. Where the Head of School/Department is the direct line manager of the individual concerned or has played a direct role in the probation review process and decision to dismiss, an alternative senior manager will be identified to hear the appeal.

During the probation period, the new member of staff's appointment may be terminated by giving one week's written notice on either side or four weeks' where contractual notice is three months or more.

Where there is clear documented evidence that the new member of staff's performance within their role is significantly below the required standards and that this has previously been discussed, with the member of staff being given the opportunity to make the necessary improvement, the decision may be taken to dismiss prior to the end of the probationary period. Advice should be sought from Human Resources where this is being considered. New members of staff may also be dismissed at any stage during their probationary period for serious misconduct or gross misconduct.

## 6 Equality

It is recognised that there will be members of staff whose performance may have been limited during the assessment period by circumstances related to equal opportunities. These could include:

- a) absence due to maternity/parental/adoption leave
- b) absence due to other forms of carer leave;
- c) disability issues or absence due to ill-health or injury
- d) other exceptional and relevant reasons
- e) health and safety issues in relation to pregnant and breast feeding women

Submissions based on mitigating circumstances as listed above will be fully and carefully considered.