Probation – Academic and Research Staff
Notes for Guidance for Heads of Departments and Probationary Supervisors

This guidance applies to Academic and Research Staff appointed with a three-year probationary period

These Notes for Guidance should be read in conjunction with the Annual Review Procedures for Academic and Research Staff which contain the criteria for permanency and the procedures followed by Academic Staffing Committee when considering applications for permanency.

1. Probationary period
   1.1 The standard period of probation for Academic and Research staff appointed to a permanent contract at, or below, Grade 9 is three years*.
   1.2 There may also be instances where a member of Academic and Research staff appointed to a permanent contract at Grade 10 or above is appointed with a three year probationary period.
   1.3 This guidance should be followed for all Academic and Research staff appointed with a three year probationary period, regardless of their grade.

2. Appointment of probationary supervisor
   2.1 The Head of Department is required to assign a probationary supervisor to the probationer on appointment.
   2.2 The Head of Department must inform their Faculty Human Resources Manager of the supervisor’s name. The HR Manager should also be informed if the probationary supervisor changes at any point during the period of probation.
   2.3 The supervisor should be a senior member of the Department, not normally the Head of Department or the probationer’s line-manager.
   2.4 The Head of Department has overall responsibility for the supervision of probationary Academic and Research staff in his/her Department.
   2.5 Heads of Departments should ensure that the probationary supervisor is aware of, and follows, these Notes for Guidance.

* The probationary period may be extended by the amount of any unpaid leave of absence, sick leave or maternity leave.
3. The role and responsibilities of the probationary supervisor

3.1 The main purpose of the role of supervisor is to regularly review the progress of the probationer and to provide them with support, advice, guidance and feedback on their performance.

3.2 The supervisor should meet with the probationer at least once a term during the probationary period.

3.3 The supervisor should ensure that the probationer has a suitable induction programme within the Department.

3.4 The supervisor should ensure that the probationer completes all mandatory training i.e. attending New Staff Induction, completing Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity training and any other role-specific training.

3.5 The supervisor should make the probationer aware of the programme of events and resources provided by Learning and Development and encourage the probationer to attend appropriate, relevant events.

3.6 The supervisor should monitor the probationer's progress in relation to the targets agreed as part of their Probation Agreement and give feedback on that progress to the Head of Department at regular intervals.

3.7 The supervisor should encourage the probationer to discuss any feedback received on his/her teaching.

3.8 It is expected that in most cases, the supervisor will carry out the probationer's annual appraisal which complements the regular reviews taking place.

3.9 The supervisor should ensure that the probationer is aware of the University’s Annual Review procedures and that those procedures allow for the consideration of early permanency, provided that all targets identified in the Probation Agreement have been met and Fellowship of the HEA has been obtained.

4. Probation agreement

4.1 The Head of Department must discuss and agree with the probationer a set of expectations and objectives to be achieved to ensure confirmation of their appointment. This should be done within the first three months of appointment but no later than six months after appointment.

4.2 The Probation Agreement comprises of two parts. Part 1 consists of the agreed targets to be achieved for the interim review of progress (approximately 18 months after appointment). Part 2 consists of the agreed targets to be achieved for the final review of progress.

4.3 Targets need to be aligned with the appropriate annual review criteria. It is important that there is clarity about what is expected of a probationer in order to achieve permanency. It is advisable to agree the targets to be achieved for the final review of progress first as this will help to inform the development of the interim targets.

4.4 Both parts of the probation agreement must be completed within a maximum of six months of the probationer’s appointment. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to write up the Probation Agreement.
4.5 Once the targets for both the interim and final review of progress have been agreed with the probationer, the Head of Department must seek approval for these from their Faculty Executive Dean. The probationer, Head of Department and Executive Dean must all sign the Probation Agreement.

4.6 Once the Probation Agreement has been signed by all parties, it will be reviewed at a meeting of Academic Staffing Committee. The Head of Department is responsible for giving a copy to the probationary supervisor and to their Faculty Human Resources Manager.

5. Support for professional development and training – responsibilities of Heads of Departments

5.1 Probationers should be given a lighter than average workload. If necessary, Heads of Departments can discuss this with their Faculty Executive Dean.

5.2 The Head of Department must ensure that the probationer is aware of the requirement to become a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and that s/he is either pursuing recognition through CADENZA or has registered on the University’s PG Certificate in HE Practice. This should be included as a target in the probationary agreement. Learning and Development can advise on the most appropriate route if required.

5.3 The Head of Department must ensure that probationers on Academic (ASE/ASER) contracts are given support to develop their Scholarship and/or Professional Practice activities by, for example, allowing time for these activities in workload allocation models, asking staff to submit plans for this work in the same way as is required for research activities.

5.4 The Head of Department must ensure that probationers on Research (ASR) contracts are given support to develop their activities in areas other than Research and Leadership/citizenship.

5.5 The Head of Department must ensure that training and development needs of probationers identified in the annual appraisal are regarded as a priority by the Department.

6. Reviews of progress

6.1 The progress of a member of probationary staff should be reviewed on a regular basis. At each review, progress made against the agreed targets in the Probation Agreement should be monitored.

6.2 The first formal review of the progress of a member of probationary staff occurs approximately 18 months after their appointment. This is the Interim Review of progress. During this review, the reviewer (either the probationary supervisor or the Head of Department) must refer back to Part 1 of the Probation Agreement, the Agreed Targets for Interim Probationary Report and document the progress made against each target.

6.3 Following this review, and the subsequent consideration of the probationer’s performance by senior staff in the Department, an Interim Probationary Report form must be completed by the Head of Department and submitted to the next meeting of Academic Staffing Committee (ASC). Meetings of ASC will take place five times per year – all five meetings will consider probationary reports and applications for permanency.
6.4 The final review of the progress of a member of probationary staff occurs towards the end of the probation period. During this review, the probationary supervisor or Head of Department must refer back to Part 2 of the Probation Agreement, the Agreed Targets for Final Probationary Report and document the progress made against each target within the final report form, which will be attached with the permanency application and HoDs report for consideration by ASC.

6.5 Following this review, and the subsequent consideration of the probationer’s performance by senior staff in the Department, a permanency application should be completed by the probationary member of staff, and a departmental permanency report must be completed by the Head of Department and submitted to the next meeting of Academic Staffing Committee (ASC). It is at this meeting that ASC will decide whether to confirm the appointment as permanent, to decline permanency, or under certain specific circumstances (unpaid leave, sick leave or maternity leave), to extend the probationary period.

6.6 All reviews of a probationer’s progress can be carried out either by the Head of Department or the probationary supervisor.

6.7 If the review is carried out by the probationary supervisor s/he must provide the Head of Department with the information required to complete the relevant paperwork to be submitted to Academic Staffing Committee.

6.8 The Probation Agreement should be attached to both the Interim Probationary Report and the permanency application.

7. **Addressing areas of concern**

7.1 The probationary supervisor should alert the Head of Department as soon as they have any concerns over the progress of a probationer.

7.2 Any capability or conduct issues identified should be discussed with the probationer as early as possible so that the opportunity is given for performance/conduct to be improved to the required level.

7.3 Heads of Departments should make their Faculty Human Resources Manager and Faculty Executive Dean aware of any issues that arise in relation to probationers within their Department at the earliest opportunity.

7.4 Heads of Department can expect to be supported by their Faculty Human Resources Manager and Faculty Executive Dean in addressing issues arising in relation to the performance/conduct of probationary staff.

7.5 The capability procedure outlines the process to follow in rare circumstances where performance falls short of expectations. This will involve regular informal documented performance review meetings as well as formal meetings with the Executive Dean. The Faculty HR team will support Heads of Department in managing this process.

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