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V1	Previous policy pre 2008
V2	New policy November 2008: aligned with new performance policy
V2.1	Reviewed November 2010
V2.2	Reviewed September 2015 internal review: minor changes
V2.3	Review Dec 2021 minor changes
Next review date:	2025 3 years unless legislative update needed



## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR THE REVIEW OF STAFF ON PROBATION**

### **Introduction**

The probationary period provides the opportunity for managers to assess the suitability of new members of staff for the position to which they have been appointed. It also provides the opportunity for staff to develop their skills, knowledge and experience, as well as understanding how their role fits in with those of their colleagues and how the University operates. Whilst in many cases experienced staff are appointed to posts, managers should bear in mind that all new members of staff require a settling in period. In some instances some duties will be new to them and some procedures will differ from those of other organisations at which they have worked.

These guidelines are intended to support the University's probation process. They are designed to provide a clear and simple process to assist managers with inducting new employees and to ensure equality of opportunity for all employees.

The guidelines have been designed to maximise flexibility to meet the needs of all stakeholders, any significant variations should be discussed with Personnel.

All HR Managers are able to provide professional advice and support at all stages of the process.

**A formal probation procedure** helps to ensure that:

- The performance, conduct, attendance, timekeeping and training/support needs of all new employees to the University are assessed fairly, consistently and equally, across the organisation through regular two-way communication with the line manager.
- Managers provide new employees with the appropriate support, guidance, training, encouragement and feedback.
- Both managers and probationers understand the purpose of the probation.
- The probationary period will be as outlined in the employee's employment contract. Existing members of staff who are promoted, re-graded or transferred within the University will not normally be subject to a probationary period unless their initial probation period is not yet completed. In this case, the probation period will be carried over to the new contract and the appointment will not be confirmed until the original period has been successfully completed.

### **Responsibilities Under this Policy**

**Employee Responsibilities:** All employees have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a professional manner and with consideration for others. To enable this all employees have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with, and adhere to, the University's rules and procedures which are available on the University intranet.

**Management Responsibilities:** University managers are responsible for supporting, monitoring and reviewing employee performance and conduct, and for addressing problems as soon as they are aware of them.

**Personnel Department Responsibilities:** The Personnel Department is responsible for providing advice and guidance to managers on the application of the policy and procedure, and has a specific role to fulfil during any formal stage of the Procedure.

## **Induction for New Employees**

All new employees are required to attend the overall University Induction, details of which will be sent to the new employee when they start.

The line manager is responsible for ensuring that the new employee is inducted locally (i.e. in the School/Department) and given the relevant information necessary to enable him/her to commence work.

The line manager should normally arrange an appointment with the new employee during their first month of employment. During this meeting, the line manager should clarify the duties and responsibilities of the new employee, in line with the job description as well as the following:

- Policy and procedures (e.g. absence reporting) that must be followed.
- Key aspects of role, structure of the department and how it fits within the University structure
- Skills/competences to be attained
- Standard of work expected (quality and quantity)
- Deadlines to be met
- Behaviour/conduct (including timekeeping and attendance)
- Working relationships
- Working environment
- Training needs including any 'on the job' training
- Identifying a mentor
- Any other issues specific to the role/grade.

The line manager should set objectives of what should be achieved in the role during the probationary period, which should be clear, specific to the role and measurable.

The line manager shall give the employee the appropriate support/guidance (including training) necessary to help them achieve the set objectives.

## **Standard Probationary Periods**

The probation period for all staff will be 12 months

## Probationary Reviews

The line manager must ensure he/she meets regularly with the probationer in the early stages of appointment to discuss the probationer's progress. In addition, if concerns arise during the probationary period the probationer and line manager should discuss these as and when they arise rather than wait for the next formal probationary review meeting.

As a minimum requirement three formal probationary review meetings should be held as outlined below.

- **Initial Review:** Within the first month of employment
- **Interim Review:** Halfway through Probationary Period 6 months
- **Final Review:** At 8 – 9 months

Prior to holding a probationary review meeting the line manager should discuss the probationer's progress with any other relevant member of staff.

Personnel will remind the relevant line manager of the need to complete these reviews. The line manager should confirm the agreed dates and times with the employee.

During the formal reviews, line managers should cover the following:

- Praise good performance/achievements so far
- Review timekeeping/attendance, including sickness absence
- Discuss the employee's performance to-date against the objectives set at induction
- Review/agree training/development needs
- Identify aspects of performance/conduct that need improving through constructive feedback
- Explore any problems the employee has encountered in their role
- Provide guidance/support as appropriate
- Introduce/agree any changes to the objectives set
- Confirm the next review meeting
- Role Profiles and Job Description
- The objectives and role of the University/Department

This should be facilitated by the use of the Probationary Review Forms, as described below.

Line managers are advised to hold frequent informal meetings with their employee in order to ensure a good working relationship and feedback on the employee's progress.

It is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that reviews are conducted within the timescale described in this policy and that Personnel is supplied with the appropriate documentation as soon as possible.

During the final review, discussions should be held between the employee and their line manager about setting objectives and an individual development plan to be reviewed at their first performance review meeting.

## **Probationary Review Forms**

Before the new employee starts, the line manager should download the relevant Probationary Review forms from the Personnel Intranet pages.

The forms should be completed to record details of each review (including agreed objectives and set review dates) after each formal meeting. They should be signed by the employee and line manager and then kept in a confidential place for the next review. Any issues arising should be discussed with Personnel.

Written documentation is essential to the probation process, as it informs both parties for the forthcoming performance review process, on successful completion of the probationary period. Furthermore it will clearly document areas of concern and potentially why an appointment is not confirmed.

## **Confirmation of Appointment**

After the final review meeting a report should be completed by the Head of School/Department/Senior Manager making a recommendation in relation to either confirming employment, extending the probation period or terminating employment.

For consistency this report will be viewed by the DVC, for all staff, for a final decision. If the appointment is confirmed, Personnel will write to the employee to confirm the appointment.

## **Dealing with Unsatisfactory Performance**

Any difficulties should be addressed as early as possible, it is not necessary to wait for the next formal review and line managers should seek advice from their HR Manager whenever an employee's performance/conduct gives cause for concern. If appropriate, the HR Manager may be present at formal reviews.

If an employee has problems meeting the required performance standards, appropriate training and support for improvement will be provided.

The line manager should meet with the employee as soon as possible to:

- discuss any problems identified
- explain what aspect of the work is not considered satisfactory
- explain which objectives/standards are not being met as well as the shortfall between standards and timescales expected of the employee
- offer remedial guidance and training as appropriate
- give clear early warnings of what may happen if required standards are not met (e.g, extension of probationary period, and/or appointment may not be confirmed)

- clearly explain any necessary improvements
- agree an action plan for improvements and timescales
- record the outcome of the meeting in writing and give a copy to the employee
- If a member of staff has a disability, reasonable adjustments should always be considered

## **Extending the Probation Period**

The line manager may decide to extend the probationary period, if there are performance, conduct, attendance concerns etc and there is evidence that the employee is likely to improve given extra time.

Initially, the probationary period maybe extended for one month or more, to allow a reasonable amount of time to achieve the actions and standard agreed, however further extensions may be appropriate depending on the circumstances. The probationary period should never normally be extended for more than a total of six months except in exceptional cases.

Where the probation period is being extended, the following must be discussed between the line manager and employee:

- reasons for the extension
- length of the extension period
- identify any assistance/training to be given during the period of extension
- areas for improvement and indication of how these will be monitored and measured
- appointment will be terminated at the end of extension period if the employee fails to meet standards of performance expected for their grade/post

At the end of the extended period, the line manager and employee should meet to review progress. If progress, performance and/or attendance are satisfactory, the line manager will recommend that the appointment should be confirmed and will inform Personnel. Personnel will write to the employee to confirm the appointment.

If, at the end of the extended period, progress is still considered unsatisfactory, the line manager will inform the employee, and make a recommendation that the appointment be terminated, as per below.

## **Terminating the Appointment**

In the regrettable situation of a member of staff not performing to the required standard within his/her probationary period (or extended probationary period), despite any support having been given to improve his/her performance, it may be necessary to terminate the member of staff's appointment, during or at the end of the original probationary period or the end of the extended probationary period. In these circumstances, the line manager and HR Manager will meet with the probationer to advise him/her of the reasons for the decision and consider any mitigation put forward by the probationer before confirming any decision. The probationer must be informed of his/her right to be represented at this meeting by a work colleague or a Trade Union representative.

It should be noted that a member of staff on probation can have his/her appointment terminated earlier than the scheduled end date of his/her probationary period if the performance and/or conduct issue is considered that serious to warrant such action. In this circumstance, the individual will be invited to a meeting as highlighted above.

## **Right of Appeal**

An employee, whose employment is terminated during probation, will be given the right to appeal.

He/she should submit in writing to the Director of Personnel (or his/her nominee), notice of his/her intention to appeal within 10 working days of receiving the letter confirming the termination of employment during the probationary period.

Normally a more senior manager will view the written appeal and in assessing it will not re-hear the case but review the process that led up to the management decision, ensuring that the procedure was used correctly, the action taken reasonable and to consider any new evidence brought forward.

The manager viewing the appeal will confirm his/her decision in writing within 10 working days of receiving the appeal.

## **Equality and Diversity Statement**

Liverpool Hope University is committed to the principles of equality and diversity as well as the elimination of discriminatory practices. These principles apply to the treatment of all staff.

This policy, together with any supporting procedures, will be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner. Members of the University administering the policy are responsible for ensuring that in its application, those to whom the policy applies, shall not receive less favourable treatment on grounds of sex, marital status, gender reassignment, racial group, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, socio-economic background, trade union membership, family circumstances, or any other irrelevant distinction.