

Probationary Procedure for Professional Support Staff

Introduction

1. All professional support staff at the School have a probationary period included in their contracts of employment. The probationary period is normally three months for grades 1 – 4 and six months for grades 5 - 8. For Professional Support Pathway Staff Grade 9 there will be post specific arrangements for probation which will be detailed in the individual's contract. A copy of this procedure is given to all probationers with the contract of employment. Staff on probation are not given access to the School's full disciplinary procedures, but statutory procedures are followed i.e. the School will write to the employee inviting him/her to a meeting setting out the reasons before making any decisions about the probation. Probationers have access to the School's grievance procedures.
2. During the probation, employees are expected to demonstrate that they are capable of doing the job to which they have been appointed. The School, as employer, has a responsibility to provide the means whereby the probationer can demonstrate satisfactorily the skills and competencies which have been discussed at interview. Training will be provided on any aspects of the role that the probationer did not meet at interview. It is the duty of the line manager to help, guide, and direct the probationer. If the line manager will not be available for at least the first four weeks of employment then they must nominate and instruct a named contact to take on these duties.
3. The probationary period is a time of adjustment. New employees need to accustom themselves to the working practices of a new organisation and possibly to adjust to new and more demanding work patterns. It is to be expected that mistakes will be made during the probation period and line managers should allow for this.

Progress of probation

4. The line manager will explain, as fully as possible and in detail, the procedures which are to be followed in the post. The probationer should be provided with a check-list that can be signed off by the probationer and manager when this is completed to the satisfaction of both. If possible, a procedures manual should be provided. The employee should be informed why such procedures apply and be made aware of standards set and objectives to be achieved. Line managers should make themselves available at designated times to discuss any points concerning the post which may need clarification.
5. It is not always possible or appropriate to provide detailed procedures for more senior members of staff. However, such probationers should be made aware orally and in writing of the standard to which they are expected to perform and be given guidance to help them reach the required standards. Targets should be agreed with the line manager for at least the first three months of employment and this should be documented.

6. When monitoring the probationer's progress, the following points should be borne in mind:
 - a. Support- Does the probationer feel they are getting all the support they require?
 - b. Work output - Is the probationer making steady progress in the amount of work which is being done?
 - c. Work quality - Is the probationer beginning to produce work which is relatively error-free?
 - d. Standard of work - are probationers demonstrating that they are capable of performing at the level which is expected of them?
 - e. Attendance - What is the probationer's record for punctuality, attendance and sickness absence? Are there sound reasons for any attendance problems?
7. If there are difficulties in any of the above areas, the line manager should investigate why this is so, and indicate how an improvement is to be made and offer support if required or requested. They should give regular feedback to the probationer. If an area of dissatisfaction is discovered, the probationer should be informed immediately and be given advice and assistance to rectify it. Timescales for improvement should be discussed and agreed with the probationer and confirmed in writing. The Personnel Office can advise on this. The probationer may be accompanied at any such meeting(s), including subsequent meetings, by a colleague or union representative. A period of notice of at least three working days will be given to the probationer to attend a meeting called by the line manager.
8. Subsequent progress meetings should be held frequently whether difficulties arise or not. The probationer's performance should be monitored closely throughout and a brief record kept of improvements made or of failures to achieve set goals. The probationer should be given the opportunity to comment on any improvements or failures and these should be recorded. The probationer should be made aware that such a record is being kept. The Personnel Office may be contacted for advice at any stage.

Completion of probation

9. After the employee has completed two months in post (or five months for grades 5 – 8) the Personnel Office will send a Probationary Report Form to the Faculty Administrator or Head of Administrative Section. This must be completed and returned to the Personnel Office at least one week before the probationary period expires.

10. If probationers are deemed to have successfully completed the probation period, the Deputy Personnel Manager will confirm this to them in writing.

11. If the employee's progress/attendance/timekeeping has not been satisfactory, the line manager and/or Faculty Administrator will inform the Deputy Head Personnel, Pay and Pensions, who will advise on how to proceed. The probationer may be accompanied at any meeting by a colleague or union representative. A notice period of at least three working days should be given to the probationer to attend a meeting.
12. There will be an option to extend the probationary period by up to three months so that further assessment of performance may take place. Any decision by a line manager to extend a probationary period must be taken in consultation with the Deputy Head Personnel, Pay and Pensions.
13. If, after careful monitoring and guidance, probationers fail to make a discernible improvement in performance within the given timescale, the line manager must write a brief report and submit it to the Deputy Head Personnel, Pay and Pensions. S/he will invite the probationer to attend a meeting, which will also be attended by their line manager, where they will be given an opportunity to discuss the performance problems and offer explanation if appropriate. They will have a right to be accompanied at this meeting by a colleague or Union representative. Following this meeting, a decision will be made either to extend the probation for a further period, or to dismiss.
14. In the event of a decision being taken to dismiss, appropriate notice of the termination of contract will be given. At the School's discretion, the employee may be required not to attend for work or enter any of the School's premises for the duration of the notice period. Probationers will not normally be dismissed before the end of the probationary period except for gross misconduct.

Where appointments are not confirmed, all probationers are offered the opportunity to appeal against the decision.