



University of
St Andrews

Probation policy for support staff

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| Purpose | Outlines the procedure and management of the probationary period for Support staff. |

| Version number | Purpose / changes | Document status | Author of changes, role and school / unit | Date |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 All Professional Services (and Academic Related/Academic Research) staff appointed to the University are required to complete a probationary period. The length of the probationary period is linked to the grading of the post and is set down in the contract of employment. The length of any probation period may be reduced/waived/extended with the agreement of Human Resources.
- 1.2 Management of probation is the responsibility of the Head of School/Unit but day-to-day responsibility and monitoring can be delegated to a Line Manager. Where this is in operation, the Head of School/Unit must be kept informed of progress and issues as they arise and have sight of the agreed documents listed in this policy.
- 1.3 The purpose of the probationary period is to offer support and guidance to new employees in order that there is a clear understanding of the requirements of the role along with offering the necessary support to achieve the required standard during the initial period of employment. At the same time, it provides the University with an opportunity to assess the performance and future potential of the employee before deciding whether to confirm the appointment.
- 1.4 Please note, Professional Services staff are those that are aligned to the following job families:
- Clerical
 - Managerial
 - Specialist and Administrative
 - Technical
 - Operational and Facilities
- 1.5 Academic-related and academic research staff are also managed in line with this policy.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff (as per 1.4 and 1.5) who commenced employment with the University **prior to 1 March 2023, who are currently in their probation period, and did not transfer onto the new probation terms with effect from 1 March 2023.**
- 2.2 Employees who commenced employment with the University on 1 March 2023 and thereafter, and existing employees who have transferred onto the new probation terms should refer to the [Probation Policy](#).

3. At the start of employment

- 3.1 The Head of School/Unit/Line Manager will meet with the probationer at the commencement of employment and jointly complete section E of the [RDS form](#).
- 3.2 The purpose of this is to set down realistic objectives in relation to the role being undertaken that will allow fair judgement of the probationer. A clear focus should be given to the probationer at this meeting of the expected behaviours, level of collegiality and teamwork expected of them during their employment with the University along with defining training needs. The Head of School/Unit (or equivalent other) should send a copy of the RDS form to [HR Probation](#). The [HR Business Partner](#) will liaise with the Head of School/Unit/line manager to ensure that the probation is progressing satisfactorily.

4. Progress review

4.1 The Head of School/Unit/Line Manager will meet with and review the probationer's progress at formal regular intervals throughout the probationary period and ensure regular feedback is given (see [table](#) below). The purpose of these meetings is to review and record, in writing, progress with regard to the initial objectives, to have a general discussion with regard to performance and to allow the probationer to raise any issues regarding their duties. Any concerns regarding the probationer's performance must be raised at these meetings and formally recorded.

4.2 Formal reviews should be undertaken at the intervals shown below:

| Probation period | 1 st formal review | 2 nd formal review | Final Review |
|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 3 months | End of month 1 | | Last week in month 2 |
| 6 months | | End of month 3 | Last week in month 5 |
| 15 months | | End of month 6 | By end of month 13 |

5. End of probation

5.1 Grades 1-4

- HR Probation will write to the Head of School/Unit/line manager at least 6 weeks before the end of the probationary period as a reminder that the probationary report is due.
- The Head of School/Unit/Line Manager is required to meet with the probationer to discuss overall performance and to reflect on the probationary period. At this meeting, the Head of School/Unit/line manager should recommend whether the appointment is confirmed (successfully completed), the probationary period extended, or that they will be seeking to terminate the appointment.

5.2 Grades 5-9

- HR Probation will write to the Head of School/Unit/line manager and probationer during Month 12 of the probationary period as a reminder that the probationary report is due for completion and must be submitted by the Head of School/Unit/Line Manager at least 6 weeks before the probation end date.
- Month 13 after appointment - The probationer should update sections C, E of the [RDS form](#) and the [training and development form](#) (if relevant) and pass this to their Head of School/Unit/Line Manager prior to the review meeting. At the review meeting, the objectives will be discussed along with progress made.

6. Probationary satisfactory

6.1 Grades 1-4

- The [probation form](#) should be signed by the person undertaking the review. If this is not the Head of School/Unit, the form should be countersigned by them and returned to [HR Probation](#) **at least 4 weeks before the probationary end date.**

- The form should identify what the employee has achieved in relation to the objectives set down at the start of the appointment, how performance has been measured, and how satisfied the Head of School/Unit/line manager is with the overall performance in relation to behaviour, collegiality and teamwork. A copy of the future objectives should be included for information.

6.2 Grades 5 – 9

- The [probation form](#) should be completed and signed by the Head of School/Unit and returned to HR Probation **at least 6 weeks before the probation end date**. The report should identify what the individual has achieved in relation to the objectives set down at the start of the appointment, how performance has been measured, and how satisfied the Head of School/Unit/line manager is with the individual's overall performance in relation to behaviour, collegiality and teamwork.
- In addition, the Head of School/Unit/Line Manager should discuss and agree a set of objectives for the next RDS review period. This will produce an agreed RDS form which both parties sign off and will move the Probationer into the normal RDS review cycle for the School/Unit.

7. Probation not satisfactory – appointment to be extended

- 7.1 Where the probationary period has not been completed satisfactorily but where a further period of probation is judged to provide realistic opportunity for a satisfactory outcome, the Head of School/Unit/Line Manager may, in agreement with their HRBP, seek to extend the probationary period for a further period.
- 7.2 Any extension to the probation period must be with good cause and the Head of School/Unit/line manager must be able to demonstrate the benefits of such an extension. The Head of School/Unit/line manager must inform the probationer of the decision and provide them with an action plan for completion during the extended period.
- 7.3 The Head of School/Unit/line manager should complete the probation form recommending that the probation period should be extended, indicating the period of the extension and including a copy of the action plan.

8. Probation not satisfactory – appointment to be terminated

- 8.1 Where the probationary period has not been completed satisfactorily and where a further period of probation is judged not to provide a realistic opportunity for a satisfactory outcome, the Head of School/Unit/line manager must inform the probationer of this and complete the [probation form](#) recommending that the employment should be terminated.

Please note: If performance is clearly unsatisfactory, the contract can be terminated **before** the end of the probationary period. It is essential that any concerns with performance should have been discussed with the probationer and necessary improvement strategies put in place in advance of the final report on the probationary period.

- 8.2 Where improvement is still unsatisfactory, the probationer should be informed of this and the Head of School/Unit/line manager should implement the termination process. Please

note that the contract can be terminated prior to the end of the probationary period in circumstances of particularly poor performance and/or unsatisfactory improvement.

- 8.3 The recommendation to terminate the appointment should outline the issues/concerns, provide details of training/support put in place to assist the probationer and state clearly the reasons for the termination of the appointment.
- 8.4 The following documents should be submitted to the Director of Human Resources with the completed [probation form](#).
- A copy of the RDS form setting out the objectives at the start of the appointment along with any other notes/paperwork issued at this time.
 - A copy of the notes/progress reports from the progress review meetings.
 - Any record of the advice and guidance given to the probationer and details of any discussions regarding underperformance and how they might be remedied.
 - Any other relevant information.
- 8.5 On receipt of the probation form and related information, Human Resources will write to the probationer to arrange a hearing to discuss the recommendation and to provide them with an opportunity to state their case. This will normally be dealt with as a “dismissal” under the [University’s Poor Performance \(Capability\) Procedures](#) except where Conduct is the reason for action. In this situation the [University’s Disciplinary Procedure](#) will apply. The process outlined in the relevant procedure will be actioned with the following exceptions:
- No investigation will be required in view of the extant probationary documentation
 - The case will be presented by the designated manager
 - The authority of the panel is to make one of the following judgements:
 - Find that the employee has no case to answer and probation period should resume, or confirm the employment with the University without any further probation period.
 - Extend the period of probation, and require satisfactory completion of a course of training or developmental activity.
 - Dismiss the employee with the appropriate period of notice or payment in lieu of notice.
 - Dismiss the employee without notice and without pay in lieu of notice.
- 8.6 This list is not exhaustive and only gives an indication of what action the University might take following a hearing. Any alternative proposals must be approved by the Director of Human Resources.

9. Version control

| Version number | Purpose / changes | Document status | Author of changes, role and school / unit | Date |
|----------------|---|-----------------|---|------------|
| 1.0 | Migration of policy to the Governance Zone. | Published | Lisa Stewart Human Resources | 27/06/2019 |
| 1.1 | Minor change to 2.1 to refer staff to the correct | Published | Lisa Stewart HR | 16/01/2020 |

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|-----|---|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| | section of the RDS form. | | | |
| 1.2 | Change to review date only. | Published | Lisa Stewart HR | 07/06/2021 |
| 1.3 | Broken link @ 2.1 | Published | Lisa Stewart HR | 27/01/2022 |
| 1.4 | Broken link to RDS form amended. | Published | Lisa Stewart HR | 23/03/2022 |
| 1.5 | Change to review date only. | Published | Lisa Stewart HR | 07/12/2022 |
| 1.6 | New section "Scope" in recognition of the new probation policy which launched 01/03/23. | Published | Lisa Stewart HR | 01/03/2023 |
| 1.7 | Amending broken links only. | Published | Lisa Stewart HR | 23/04/2024 |