



SUPPORT STAFF PROBATIONARY PROCEDURE

1. Purpose of Probation

All new support staff appointments at the College are subject to the satisfactory completion of a probationary period. During the probationary period the new member of staff ('the probationer') will be introduced to the main duties and responsibilities of their role and the standards expected of them. The probationary period is designed as a supportive and positive two-way process to enable the probationer to receive sufficient support and guidance in order to be competent to carry out their role in the context of the College.

2. Length of Probationary Period

The length of the probationary period will be as specified in the probationer's contract of employment. The standard probationary period will normally be 6 months. This may be altered due to the nature of the contract. For example where an employee is on a fixed term contract of 12 months or less the length of probation may be reduced. In addition for senior position there may be a requirement for the initial probation period to be longer than 6 months, this will be determined prior to appointment.

Please note that the College reserves the right to extend the length of the probationary period under particular circumstances (see section 7 below).

3. The Line Manager's Role

During the first two weeks, the line manager will be required to meet the new member of staff to set the standard of performance required and to set objectives in accordance with the College Appraisal Scheme. At this stage the Induction Checklist for Departments should also be completed and returned to the HR Office (a copy can be found in the Induction Programme which is available in the Staff Handbook or on the Intranet).

The line manager with other staff will also provide any necessary information and training required to help the probationer undertake all aspects of their role. Line managers must ensure that there is necessary opportunity for support and monitoring of the probationer's work throughout the probationary period so that they receive reasonable assistance in order to meet the requirements of the role. It is recommended therefore that the line manager meets with the employee on a regular basis, at least once a month, to discuss progress (a brief record should be kept of any action points and concerns). The line manager should meet with the probationer for a two-way discussion about progress before making any assessment of performance in line with section 5.

4. The Probationer's Role

As the probation procedure is two-way the probationer should play an active role in the process. Probationers are therefore strongly advised to bring to the attention of their line manager any concerns and worries that they have at the earliest opportunity. In addition they should attend and actively participate in

meetings with their line manager regarding their progress and in the identification of additional support or training opportunities that may benefit them.

5. Review Process

Mid-probation review

Human Resources (HR) will send the line manager a review form at 3 months. This form will ask the line manager to consider the probationer's progress in relation to the following criteria:

- Job description requirements
- Ability to grasp the main elements of the job
- General performance
- Communication
- Decision-making (if required)
- Attitude
- Attendance level including punctuality and absence.

The line manager will also be asked to classify the probationer's progress as either:

- Satisfactory – the probationer has progressed to a suitable level of performance for the time in post.
- Unsatisfactory – the probationer has not progressed to a suitable level of performance and the line manager has concerns that the standard will not be achieved by the end of probationary review date.

At this stage the line manager should review the objectives and training needs with the probationer.

End of probation review

HR will send the line manager a further review form at 4½ months. This form will ask the line manager to consider the probationer's progress in relation to the criteria listed in the above section and will ask the line manager to select from the following options:

Option 1 - The probationer has fully satisfied the requirements of their role and the appointment should be confirmed at the end of the probationary period.

Option 2 - There are concerns with regards to the probationer's performance in the role and therefore the appointment should not be confirmed at this stage.

Option 3 - The probationer has not made satisfactory progress in the role and the appointment should not be confirmed.

HR advice should be sought when selecting option 2 or 3.

6. Option 1 outcome

Where the outcome of the review process is that the probationer has successfully completed the probationary period HR will write formally to confirm their appointment from the probationary end date.

7. Option 2 outcome

Where the line manager has concerns with regard to the probationer's performance but envisages that the required standard could be achieved in the near future, consideration will be given to extending the probationary period. For example this situation could occur due to a probationer's level of attendance making it difficult to assess performance. This could happen particularly because of periods of sickness absence or maternity leave. The line manager is required to meet with the probationer (and HR if necessary) prior to extending the probationary period so that they can explain the following areas:

- The reason for the extension period
- The length of the extension period
- Any assistance and/or training that will be given during the extension period
- The performance standard expected and the way in which the performance will be measured
- That termination of employment may take place if the agreed standard is not reached by the end of the extension period. See section 8 below.

Note: Probationary periods can be extended for a maximum of 4 months.

8. Option 3 outcome

Where the probationary report recommends that the probationer should not be confirmed in post a meeting will be arranged between the probationer, the line manager and a member of HR. The probationer will be given 5 working days notice of the meeting and details of the areas of concern. The probationer has the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative.

At the meeting the line manager will present the evidence of their concerns and would normally refer to previous review meetings held with the probationer. The probationer will then have the opportunity to comment and respond to the issues identified by the line manager. A decision will then be made by the line manager to either confirm the appointment, to make a final extension to the probationary period or to terminate the employment. Where the probationer's employment is to be terminated notice will be given in accordance with the terms of their contract. The College reserves the right to place the member of staff on garden leave for the duration of their notice period.

9. Discipline and the Probationary Procedure

It should be noted that any instances of misconduct on the part of the employee could lead to a review meeting being held in accordance with the Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy and Procedure, at any time during the probationary period (a copy of which can be found in the staff handbook or on the intranet).

Any case of misconduct during the probationary period may lead to dismissal and gross misconduct may lead to summary dismissal without notice.

10. Appeal

In the event that an probationer's performance and/or conduct is not deemed satisfactory and employment is terminated, the probationer will have the right to appeal against this decision within 5 working days of receipt of confirmation of termination. The appeal must be lodged in writing with the HR Manager. Within 5 working days of the receipt of such a notice of appeal HR will write to the probationer, giving not less than 5 working days notice of the hearing. The appeal will normally be heard by the Head of Department, or suitable alternative in the case where the Head of Department has made the decision to terminate employment. At such an appeal the probationer has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.