

SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

PROBATION PROCEDURES FOR PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC STAFF

1. Application

This procedure applies to all members of staff appointed to academic roles, whose contract of employment states that the appointment is subject to a probationary period. Staff who have completed an equivalent probationary period in another HEI may not be required to undergo a further probationary period.

Probation normally covers a period of 3 years from the date of the commencement of the probationary appointment, except that extensions may be made where targets have not been satisfactorily completed. The principle purpose of probation is developmental, to enable staff recruited to the academic profession to develop their skills and competences.

Academic staff on fixed-term contracts will normally be subject to probation, this does not indicate a commitment on the part of the University to extend the period of a fixed-term contract. By agreement with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and Academic Quality Enhancement) previous year(s) service under probationary regulations might be counted towards completing probation.

The probationary review system is intended to encourage the development of new members of staff and is complementary to the University's Performance Enabling Process. Professional Development Reviews will follow on from probation and should continue the developmental nature of the probation system. Professional Development Reviews will therefore not apply to probationary members of Staff.

2. Probation Procedure

Appointment of Roles

The Head of College should identify a Line Manager, Probation Supervisor and Mentor for each probationary member of staff, at the time of appointment. In the majority of appointments the Line Manager will be the Probation Supervisor. In some cases, notably in small Colleges, the Head of College may choose to act as the Probation Supervisor or as the Mentor. Crucially, however, no one may act as **both** Supervisor and Mentor to the same probationary staff member. In addition, where appropriate, Mentors may be nominated from cognate Colleges.

Target Setting

- a) On the commencement of the new member of staff, the Human Resources Department will notify the Probation Supervisor of the requirement to hold the target setting meeting within the first month of appointment.
- b) The Probation Supervisor should meet with the Probationer, to set targets for the probationary period. Further dates for informal review meetings should be set at this time to review and assess the Probationer's progress.
- c) The targets should be agreed by discussion between the probationary employee and the Probation Supervisor. Specific targets will be set in each of the areas of defined competence: teaching, research, administration, and, where appropriate, innovation and engagement. In order to assist probationary members of staff, appropriate targets will be defined for the whole three year period, and for the first year of appointment. The agreed targets will be recorded on form P1415-1385.
- d) Targets should be consistent with the agreed values of the University and College.
- e) It is essential that the targets set should be clear, measurable and achievable. This will enable the probationary employee to have a full understanding of what will be required to assess whether s/he has achieved the agreed standard of performance over the probationary term.
- f) The Professional Development needs should also be identified at this meeting and these should be a summary of what support the probationer will need to complete the probation targets. The learning needs may be a combination of formal training and on the job support. It is expected that that probationary staff will gain Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy during the probationary period. This will normally be gained through completion of PGcTHE but may be via peer accreditation.
- g) A copy of the target setting (P1415-1385) form should be forwarded to the Human Resources Department by the end of the probationers first month of employment. Targets will be reviewed by the Academic Staffing Sub-Committee or as delegated by the Chair of the Committee. When the Pro-Vice-Chancellor deems the targets inappropriate they may be revised in consultation with the Head of College.
- h) The Head of College will adjust the workload of the probationary member of staff to make allowances for the probationer to attend training, prepare teaching and establish a profile as an effective researcher and a publishing academic.

Please see guidance on target setting in Appendix 1.

Procedure where Progress is Satisfactory

- a) Eleven months and twenty three months after the commencement of appointment the first and second reviews should be held between the Probationer and the Probation Supervisor, to review the performance of the Probationer against the targets set.
- b) A record of the review should be made, utilising Form P1415-1386 stating:
 - Whether satisfactory progress has been made towards targets
 - Outlining areas for development/improvement and any action necessary
 - Any changes to the probationary targetsThis report should be agreed with the Head of College and forwarded with a copy of the probationers CV to the Human Resources Department.
- c) The report will be considered by the Sub-Committee of the Academic Staffing Committee. The Sub-Committee may write to the member of staff indicating suggestions for improving performance where progress is generally satisfactory. Alternatively the probationer will be informed of their satisfactory progress.
- d) Towards the end of the third year, if previous reports have been considered satisfactory, a final confirmation of satisfactory performance will be sought from the Head of College. The Academic Sub-Committee will make the final decision on whether or not probation has been satisfactorily completed.

Procedure where Progress is Unsatisfactory

The Head of College should IMMEDIATELY contact their Human Resources Officer where there is concern about lack of progress.

- a) If at the eleven month review the Head of College is concerned about lack of progress or where there is disagreement about progress made, the Head of College should discuss this with the probationer and record their concerns on the report form (P1415-1386). If the Academic Staffing Sub-Committee deems that progress is unsatisfactory they shall recommend remedial action as may be necessary. These recommendations shall be communicated in writing to the probationer, the Head of College and the Academic Staffing Committee.
- b) If at the twenty three month review, progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the Chair of the Academic Staffing Sub-Committee or an appropriate member of that committee shall meet with the Probationer and Head of College. The probationer may be accompanied at the meeting by a Trade Union representative or colleague. During this meeting progress against targets will be reviewed and relevant circumstances will be considered. Recommendations for remedial action will be made and if necessary the probationer may be advised that failure to achieve the targets may lead to the appointment being terminated. This will constitute a formal probationary warning under the Ordinance for the Termination of Probationary Appointments. The recommendations will be confirmed in writing.

- c) Toward the end of the third year of probation, if unsatisfactory performance has previously been identified or is identified at this stage the Head of College will produce a full report on the entire probation period. This report will be submitted to the Academic Staffing Sub-Committee. The Chair of the Academic Sub-Committee or an appropriate member of that committee shall meet with the Probationer and Head of College. The probationer may be accompanied at the meeting by a Trade Union representative or colleague. During this meeting progress against targets will be reviewed and relevant circumstances will be considered. The outcome of this meeting may be to recommend to the Academic Staffing Committee that the probationary period be extended for a fourth year or that the appointment be terminated. This will constitute a formal probationary warning under the Ordinance for the Termination of Probationary Appointments. If the outcome is to recommend extension of the probationary period the Academic Staffing Committee will set the targets for the fourth year.
- d) At least one formal probationary warning must be given prior to the recommendation that the appointment be terminated. Termination of appointment on the grounds of non completion of probation should be carried out in accordance with the Ordinance for the Termination of Probationary Appointments.
- e) Where probation has been extended for a 4th year the Head of College will produce a final report on the probationary period for the Academic Staffing Sub-Committee. If the performance remains unsatisfactory the Chair of the Academic Staffing Sub-Committee or an appropriate member of that committee shall meet with the Probationer and Head of College. The probationer may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or colleague. The outcome of this meeting may be to recommend to the Academic Staffing Committee that the appointment be terminated.
- f) If at any time during the probationary process, before the final report is required, the Head of College considers that performance is so unsatisfactory that the employee is incapable of meeting the agreed targets then the Head of College should contact the Director of Human Resources. Termination of the appointment will then be considered in accordance with the Ordinance for the Termination of Probationary Appointments.
- g) The Probationer will have the right of appeal against a decision not to confirm his/her appointment and will be informed in writing that he/she may do so. The appeal should be submitted in writing, stating the grounds for the appeal, within fourteen calendar days of receipt of the written notification, to the Registrar who would be required to convene a panel to hear the appeal. The Appeal will be in accordance with the University's Appeals Ordinance.

3. Responsibilities

The Probation Supervisor

The appointed probation supervisor will be expected to:

- a) Clarify the duties and responsibilities of the probationary member of staff.
- b) Agree and set dates for the Probation Review Meetings and informal review meetings.
- c) Plan and agree with the probationary member of staff his/her work and development targets to be achieved during the probationary period.
- d) Act upon the work / training / development targets and evaluate and determine their completion.
- e) Act as a role model for the application of the College's and University's Values.
- f) Continuously review the probationary member of staff's performance, reviewing progress towards the set targets and training / development needs through the formal review meetings as well as more frequent informal meetings.
- g) Communicate regularly with the probationary member of staff about their work throughout the period, giving open, honest, constructive feedback on performance, good or bad, at the time it occurs and at the review meetings.
- h) Ensure that the probation reports are submitted to the Human Resources Department at the appropriate time and the probationary member of staff is provided with copies of the reports.
- i) [Appropriate training will be available for probation supervisors.](#)

The Probationer

The probationary member of staff will:

- a) Seek clarification on any probationary targets they feel are either not clear or not achievable.
- b) Work with the probation supervisor to identify training needs which will enable the achievement of targets.
- c) Work towards the attainment of the probation targets and be prepared report on progress at review meetings.
- d) Bring to the attention of the Probation Supervisor anything that may prevent the completion of probationary targets.
- e) Endeavour to work to the values of the College and University.

The Mentor

An appropriately experienced member of staff will be appointed as a mentor to assist the probationer with their new role. Where practicable, this should be someone who has similar academic interests to the probationer.

The mentor will be expected to meet regularly with the probationary member of staff to give guidance and help in all aspects of the work.

Please see guidance on mentoring in Appendix 2.

Guidelines for Setting Targets

Please note that in the context of this procedure “Targets” relates to objectives or the achievement of competencies.

Wherever possible, probation targets should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time bound (S.M.A.R.T.)

Specific:

Targets should be concerned with the specific activities of the probationary member of staff over the probationary period. They should be specific rather than vague generalisations open for interpretation by all parties. The targets will relate not only to the targets of the role but also the targets of the department. The targets should be challenging, designed to achieve performance and not simply a list of duties.

Measurable:

Targets should be clear and easily measured. Supervisors should be mindful of the availability of management information to allow for objective measurement of performance, e.g. customer feedback, or financial data. As a general principle, the Probation Supervisor, when setting targets should think about how they would know whether it has been met by the end of the probationary period.

Attainable:

Realistic targets should be set at the first and if appropriate subsequent probation review meetings. Some work projects may extend beyond the twelve months of the probationary period. In these cases it will be necessary to break the project down for the purpose of setting targets, considering what can realistically be achieved during the probationary period.

Relevant:

Targets should be set which will contribute to the College over arching objectives and consistent with the University’s strategic aims. Consideration should be given as to how the role will work within the agreed values of the College and the University.

Time bound:

During the probationary period some of the targets set may be achievable during the first few months of employment whereas other objectives may only be achievable within the year. Each target should specify an expected completion period. This will greatly assist with the assessment of progress. Review meetings should be arranged at appropriate points throughout the probationary period to reflect the timescale of the targets set.

Guidelines for Mentors

These guidelines are intended to clarify the mentoring arrangements to assist individuals taking on responsibility for mentoring. Mentors should also make themselves familiar with the University's policies and procedures concerning probation.

Mentoring is:

An informal and supportive relationship whereby a more experienced member of staff undertakes to help a new member of staff learn his/her job and its context in the university.

A mentor is not:

A substitute for effective line management and, therefore, should not be the new member of staff's Probation Supervisor.

A mentor should:

- Contribute to the departmental induction
- Provide the opportunity for the mentee to learn from the mentor's example
- Be a role model and provide examples of, and guidance on, acceptable standards of work, in accordance with the Departments agreed values.
- Give guidance and advice on the application of College and University procedures
- Respect the importance of confidentiality to enhance trust in the mentoring relationship
- Preferably be someone who broadly shares the probationers professional interests

The duties of the academic mentor will include:

1. meeting regularly with the mentee to give guidance and help in all aspects of the work of a university lecturer (at least twice a term in the first year, and at least once a term in subsequent years)
2. observing the teaching of the mentee and providing constructive feedback
3. allowing the mentee to observe his/her teaching, including lectures, tutorials, seminars and research supervision and discussing this with the mentee
4. discuss the construction of examination questions and advise on departmental marking conventions
5. offer feedback on the writing of research articles, conference papers and funding applications.
6. act as a role model and provide examples of, and guidance on, acceptable standards of work, in accordance with the College's agreed values.
7. acting as an advocate for the mentee within the department in order to protect the mentee's workload so as to ensure that the mentee has a work pattern which will enable him/her to develop to the full the skills of teaching, research and administration
8. assist with any problems relating to the performance of duties which a new member of staff chooses to raise