

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PROBATION MEETINGS

**PURPOSE OF PROBATION**

The purpose of the probationary period is to ensure that a new employee is able to gain a full understanding of the requirements of the post and to achieve a satisfactory level of performance, within a reasonable period of time, in the early part of their job role. It is also intended to help identify any training and support that is needed for the employee.

Reviews during the probationary period will inform decisions on whether to confirm the appointment, extend the probationary period or, exceptionally, not confirm the appointment.

**PROBATIONARY MEETINGS**

Probation procedures start during induction, when you should ensure that the employee has a clear understanding of the role and set appropriate objectives for the next few months by completing the Objectives Setting Form (Appendix A). Formal probationary reviews should be carried out **halfway** through the probationary period (using the mid probation review form) and **before** the end of the probationary period (using the end of probation review form). However staff members and their line managers should still be meeting regularly, particularly in the first few weeks, and reviewing the objectives and progress.

**COMPLETING OBJECTIVES SETTING FORM (APPENDIX A)**

This should be a continuous working document, which should be reviewed regularly in 1-2-1s between staff members and their line managers, as well as at the mid and end of probation meetings. Completing this form will help ensure that new starters have clear objectives, and are able to quickly take responsibility for their job role and for their personal development. Once the probationary period is complete this will then feed into the Personal Development Review process.

Objectives can include both work objectives – for example, completing particular projects - and personal objectives, such as improving a particular skill. In the probationary period, you should be focusing on objectives over the next three to six months. All objectives set should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. The questions set out in the Objectives Setting Form (Appendix A) will help you to ensure that this is the case.

**CONCERNS ABOUT WORK OR CONDUCT**

If concerns about work or conduct arise at any stage in the probationary period they should be brought to the attention of the employee as soon as possible. Whenever possible, they should be resolved with the employee informally through discussions (see below). If this does not resolve matters or is not appropriate (for example, in the event of serious shortcomings), there are University procedures which should be followed. In this event, please seek advice from the HR team as early as possible.

**GUIDANCE ON INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT CONCERNS**

Often an improvement in conduct or performance can be achieved by simply clarifying what standard of conduct/performance is required, why it is important and by explaining the possible consequences of not meeting the standard, i.e. the need for more formal action. This process ensures that the employee clearly understands what is expected of them in order to achieve a satisfactory improvement and ultimately to pass the probation period successfully.

Prior to any discussion taking place, any relevant feedback and examples should be gathered. It is important that the manager makes and keeps a note of the meeting and writes to the employee afterwards to confirm the main points of discussion and the agreed actions and objectives.