

Probation for Professional Staff - Procedures

Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to these procedures and are critical to its effectiveness:

Probationary period means a defined period of time during which a new staff member's performance is subject to formal review for the purpose of determining whether or not the contract of employment should continue. During this time, the staff member is provided with clear job expectations, constructive guidance, feedback and support to confirm progress and/or identify concerns or deficiencies in performance and conduct and provide opportunities for their resolution.

Probation Plan is a document developed by a new staff member and their supervisor that establishes appropriate performance and development goals, which are based on the requirements of the position as outlined in the position description, and a schedule of formal meetings to monitor and review progress.

1. Purpose of procedures

1.1 These procedures outline the process for probation for professional staff and make clear the requirements of supervisors and senior officers of the University to ensure administrative responsibilities are fulfilled and policy principles are maintained and implemented. Effective induction and probation are important components of developing a successful professional career at the University.

2. Induction

2.1 Induction, which is the systematic introduction of a new staff member to the organisation, their new job, colleagues and the work area, aims to enable a new staff member to settle and be productive in their job as quickly as possible.

2.2 On the first day of employment at the University, a professional staff member meets with their supervisor to commence induction.

2.3 If the new staff member's supervisor is not available on the first day of employment, an alternative appropriate staff member is nominated to initiate induction.

2.4 Within one week of commencement, all health and safety induction requirements need to be completed by the staff member and within one month, the staff member should be familiarised and be aware of the requirement to comply with other important University policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, as specified in the contract of employment.

2.5 Induction checklists for new staff and supervisors are available from People and Culture.

3. The Probation Plan

3.1 As soon as practicable after commencement of employment, the new staff member meets formally with their supervisor to begin to discuss and develop a Probation Plan.

3.2 A Probation Plan:

- ensures role clarity
- establishes performance and development goals based on the requirements of the position as outlined in the position description
- records progress and achievement of performance and development goals
- documents concerns or deficiencies in performance and/or conduct and action taken to remedy them

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Chief Operating Officer

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Chief Operating Officer

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Director, People and Culture

FIRST APPROVED

6 June 2017

LAST AMENDED

16 February 2022

REVIEW DATE

6 June 2022

STATUS

Active

- lays out a schedule of formal meetings to discuss progress, monitor and review the achievement of performance and development goals and ensure implementation of the Probation Plan.

3.3 The Probation Plan is to be completed by no later than six weeks after the new staff member's commencement date.

3.4 To ensure successful implementation of the Probation Plan, throughout the probationary period, the responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- encouraging engagement within and commitment to the University's mission and goals and establishing and maintaining a strong professional relationship
- mentoring and giving constructive guidance, feedback and support
- enabling other appropriate mentoring relationships, both as mentor and mentee
- maintaining records of meetings, agreements and outcomes, copies of which are given to the staff member
- ensuring the collation of evidence of progress and achievement of performance and development goals
- when necessary, discussing any deficiency in performance or conduct with the staff member and providing the opportunity to take corrective action
- reporting regularly on progress and achievements to the relevant senior staff member
- conducting a final review of probation to recommend whether or not the staff member's employment should be confirmed.

3.5 To ensure successful implementation of the Probation Plan, throughout the probationary period, the responsibilities of the staff member include:

- participating actively and positively in the probation process
- taking reasonable action to achieve performance and development goals
- collating evidence of progress and achievement of performance and development goals
- seeking clarification about any aspect of their role, performance and development goals and expectations that are unclear
- seeking early guidance and support from their supervisor when difficulties are encountered
- countersigning any report to verify that they have seen its content. If the staff member disagrees with any aspect of a report, they may make a written response which is attached to the supervisor's report.

3.6 Throughout the probationary period, the roles of People and Culture include:

- liaising with the supervisor to ensure the development and implementation of an effective Probation Plan and provide guidance and support, as required
- liaising with the new staff member to provide guidance and information to facilitate successful probation, as required.

3.7 Throughout the probationary period, the supervisor and the staff member meet regularly to review performance and monitor the achievement of performance and development goals in the Probation Plan.

3.8 The first formal meeting is normally held no more than six weeks after the commencement date to discuss and finalise the Probation Plan.

3.9 Depending on the length of the probationary period, a formal interim meeting is held half way through the probationary period.

3.10 Regardless of the requirement for formal meetings, feedback should be given regularly and formal and informal meetings can be had at any time.

3.11 Performance evaluation during the probationary period is based on the quality, quantity and consistency of outputs and outcomes.

3.12 If, at any stage, the supervisor has concerns about the staff member's performance or conduct, People and Culture is to be contacted immediately.

4. Outcomes of Probation

4.1 An appointment can be confirmed or terminated at any time during the probationary period.

4.2 A final review of probation, which is summative, is completed at least six weeks before the end of the probationary period.

4.3 The supervisor advises the staff member that the final review of probation is to be conducted.

4.4 The supervisor prepares a written report on the achievement of the performance and development goals in the Probation Plan and makes a recommendation to confirm or terminate the appointment. The report, which is submitted to the relevant senior staff member, outlines the implementation of the probation process and the reasons for the recommendation.

4.5 Once satisfied with the report, the relevant senior staff member submits it to the Director, People and Culture for action.

4.6 If the recommendation is to confirm the staff member's appointment, the Director, People and Culture advises the staff member in writing that their ongoing or fixed-term employment is confirmed.

4.7 Extension of Probationary Period

Where a supervisor determines that exceptional circumstances warrant a period of probation to be extended to enable an appropriate assessment of performance, the supervisor will discuss this with the staff member and advise People and Culture. The Director, People and Culture will confirm with the staff member that the probation period has been extended.

4.8 Termination of Probationary Employment

(a) If the recommendation is not to confirm the staff member's appointment, the Director, People and Culture provides the report of the final review of probation to the Vice-Chancellor and President or other authorised officer.

(b) The employment of a professional staff member can be terminated when:

- the staff member has not met the requirements of the position as set out in the Probation Plan which was developed collaboratively with the supervisor; and
- the probation process has been implemented in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

(c) The relevant senior staff member and the supervisor meet with the staff member to advise them of the recommendation to terminate employment. The staff member is also given a copy of the report of the final review of probation.

(d) The staff member is entitled to respond in writing to the Vice-Chancellor and President (or other authorised officer) within five working days of being advised of the recommendation to terminate employment. The response is taken into account by the Vice-Chancellor and President or other authorised officer when considering the recommendation to terminate.

(e) The Vice-Chancellor and President's or authorised officer's decision is final.

(f) Within five working days of the staff member submitting a response to the Vice-Chancellor and President or authorised officer, the staff member is advised in writing whether their appointment is to be confirmed or terminated.

(g) If a professional appointment is terminated, at least two weeks' notice must be given and can be paid in lieu.

5. After probation

After successful completion of probation, the staff member and their supervisor participate in annual Performance Planning and Review (PPR) conversations to plan for performance and development and foster a successful professional career.

6. Authorities/Responsibilities

The following authorities/responsibilities are delegated under this policy:

ACTIVITY	UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE
Meet regularly with the staff member to develop and implement the Probation Plan; monitor performance and development; give guidance and support; and conduct a final review of probation to recommend to the relevant senior staff member whether or not the probationary staff member's appointment should be confirmed	Supervisor
Approve whether or not the employment of a probationary staff member should be confirmed	Relevant senior staff member
Determine whether a recommendation to terminate probationary employment should be enacted	Vice-Chancellor and President or other authorised officer
If probation is completed successfully, advise the staff member of the outcome of their probation in writing	Director, People and Culture
If probation is to be extended, advise the staff member of the extension to their probation in writing	Director, People and Culture

If probation is not completed successfully and employment is terminated, advise the staff member of the outcome of their probation in writing Vice-Chancellor and President or other authorised officer

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Performance Management - Operational Policy
- Resolution of Complaints (Staff) - Guidelines
- Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy
- Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching - Academic Policy

LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Performance Management - Operational Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- University of the Sunshine Coast Enterprise Agreement