



Probation Policy



Introduction

The University asserts that its staff are its greatest asset and that it holds all the various categories in equal esteem. This Policy sets out the guidelines and processes to be followed in relation to the application of a probationary period for staff members upon appointment and promotion within Dublin City University (DCU). Probation is the process of ensuring that a new or promoted employee is meeting the required standard of performance. It is a support mechanism for the Probationer to assimilate into the role and be given every opportunity to achieve the required standard of performance through honest, fair and supportive feedback.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure a staff member's overall suitability for a role is formally assessed during the probation period. Probation is intended to be a positive, collaborative process, which provides an opportunity to allow:

- 1) the newly appointed or promoted staff member to assimilate into the Role, Department and University;
- 2) for a fair assessment of a staff member's performance, behaviour and overall suitability to the role; &
- 3) a recommendation in relation to the staff member's suitability for continued employment (or continuation in the promoted role) to be made by the Line Manager.

Scope

This Policy will apply to all staff members, either newly appointed or promoted, within the University. This Policy does not apply to the associated companies of the University who may have their own separate probation policies.

Policy Statement

The probationary period is viewed as an extension of the University recruitment & selection process and recognizes the initial period of employment or promotion as unique and requiring special attention by both the Probationer and the University. Assessment of the individual's suitability for the post to which they have been appointed will be on-going during the probationary period.

This Policy promotes the on-going and essential dialogue and assessment between Line Managers and Probationers and while formal Probation Assessments should take place at set times in the year this should not prevent or in any way discourage this constant and necessary dialogue and assessment.



The effectiveness of the probation assessment process can be significantly improved by regular, honest and constructive dialogue between the Line Manager and the Probationer. Therefore, both the Probationer and the Line Manager should prepare for the probation assessment process by familiarising themselves with this Policy and associated procedures. For guidance on how to conduct a probation assessment meeting, please refer to the Probation Toolkit

A) Duration

A probation period of 12 months¹ will normally apply to all permanent and fixed term appointments. Should the fixed term appointment be less than 12 months the probation period will apply for the duration of the contract. In the event that the contract is renewed the probation period will continue to apply until a total of 12 months service has been achieved.

Where a staff member has been promoted to a higher grade, a probation period of 12 months will also apply and the assessment of the individual's suitability for the post to which they have been promoted will be on-going during the probationary period.

B) Extension of Probation Period

In certain instances, the University reserves the right to extend the probation period.

In cases where a staff member is absent from work during their probation period on protective leave, such as Maternity Leave, Sick Leave etc., the probationary period shall be deemed to be suspended for the duration of the absence and shall be resumed and completed on return to work from such absence. This may also apply in other cases where the University is not in a position to fully assess performance due to significant or frequent absence during the probationary period due to illness or other reasons.

The University reserves the right to extend the probation period in any case, where there is a reasonable expectation that the difficulties outlined in continuous adverse assessments can be overcome.

C) Frequency

The formal assessment process will normally comprise of three assessment meetings conducted at regular intervals (e.g. 3, 6 and 9 months) by the Line Manager during the 12 month probation period. The dates of these formal assessments (for contracts in excess of 12 months) will be notified to the Line Manager by the Human Resources Department. More frequent assessments may take place where specific issues arise. While the frequency may

¹ As outlined in the contract of employment the University reserves the right to terminate at any time during or at the end of the probationary period.



vary slightly the principle of regular assessment with a period to allow for improvement or change should apply.

D) Probation Assessment Principles

The following principles apply in relation to probation assessment:

- 1) The probation assessment process is a mechanism for the Line Manager to assess the performance of the newly appointed or promoted staff member and to regularly communicate that assessment with the Probationer.
- 2) The process is also a mechanism for the Probationer to gain feedback on their performance and talk to their manager about their experience of the role to date. This gives an opportunity for discussion on all aspects of the role and whether additional supports or adjustments are required.
- 3) The process should allow for two-way dialogue between the Line Manager and the Probationer in relation to performance.
- 4) If aspects of a Probationer's performance are not satisfactory, this needs to be clearly communicated to the Probationer as early as possible in the process. An opportunity for improvement and reasonable supports should be provided.
- 5) While the Probationer has a right of reply in relation to the performance assessment, the Line Manager ultimately decides on whether performance standards are acceptable in relation to the requirements of the role.
- 6) The onus is on the Probationer to perform or to improve performance if required. Failure to do so means the Probationer is at risk of failing their probation period.
- 7) The onus is also on the Probationer to bring to the attention of the Line Manager any aspects of the role he/she feels is problematic or any additional supports they may require.
- 8) A Line Manager's negative assessment of a staff member's performance does not necessarily constitute bullying.
- 9) The probation process will normally be managed by the relevant Line Manager, transfers or the assignment to another manager will not normally be facilitated.
- 10) The Probationer will normally be ineligible to compete for other vacancies in the University while under probation.

E) Outcomes

Recommendations regarding the outcome of a probation process will be made by the relevant Line Manager.



F) Successful Completion

Where the recommendation is that the Probationer is deemed to have passed their probation, they will receive confirmation from their Line Manager and subsequently in writing (via email) from the Human Resources department.

G) Extension

Where the recommendation is that the Probationer's probation period should be extended, the Probationer will be advised as to the reasons for the extension

H) Failure of probation in the case of a promotion

Where the recommendation is that the Probationer, following a promotion to a higher grade, has not met the expected standard of performance during the probation period the Probationer will revert to their previous permanent grade, or their previous grade for the remaining duration of their fixed term contract.

I) Termination of Employment

Where the Line Manager has determined that a newly appointed staff member's performance has not met the required standards during the probation period a recommendation will be made to the Director of HR. In such a scenario [Section 6.8 University Statute No. 5 Suspension & Dismissal of Employees](#) will apply and this in turn could lead to termination of employment.

Roles and Responsibilities

A) Probationer

The roles and responsibilities of the probationer within the probation process are outlined below.

- 1) Understand that the process is an assessment of performance and determines future suitability in the role.
- 2) Understand and accept that the onus is on the probationer to meet performance standards and take responsibility for future development.
- 3) Prepare adequately in advance of probation meetings.
- 4) Fully engage with process and respond with feedback.

- 5) Ensure that the expectations and duties of the role are understood, and seek clarification when necessary.



- 6) Understand the overall work objectives / duties.
- 7) Jointly formulate, with the Line Manager, objectives / milestones for the full 12 month period.
- 8) Be self-motivating and identify your development needs within the context of the role and how they may be addressed as early as possible.
- 9) Attend any training courses that have been identified as a requirement or support.
- 10) Take on board any suggested improvements and apply these improvements.

B) Line Managers/Heads of School/Unit

The specific responsibilities and supports available to Managers are outlined in the [Managers Toolkit](#). A copy of this toolkit will be available to all employees in a relevant Line Management role.

Definitions

No.	Word / Phrase	Definition
1	Probation Period	First 12 months of employment or promotion
2	Probationer	Newly appointed / promoted employee
3	Line Manager	Person to whom the probationer reports

Related Documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

No.	Document	Link
1	University Statute No.5	Click Here
2	Probation Assessment Toolkit	Click Here
3	Probation Assessment Form	Click Here
4	Conducting a Probation Assessment	Click Here
5	Dealing with Underperformance During Probation	Click Here

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Is this compulsory?

Yes, the probation process is a condition of employment and you are required under the terms of your employment contract to engage full in the process.

Q2: Do I have a choice of Reviewer?



No, the person whom you report directly to, i.e. your Line Manager, will be the person who conducts your probation assessments.

Q3: Who will have sight of my completed probation assessment form?

You, your Line Manager, Learning & Development, and in certain circumstances appropriate members of the Senior Management of the University, will have sight of your completed probation assessment form.

Q4: What happens if I disagree with the conclusions of my Line Manager with regards to my performance?

Should you disagree with any of the comments / conclusions of your Line Manager that were discussed during your probation assessment, you should outline these comments to your Line Manager and include them in the relevant section(s) of the form. Please note that while you may disagree with elements of the assessment the ultimate decision maker on your performance levels is your Line Manager. Therefore, the onus is on you to meet the required performance standards.

Q5: Can I apply for other roles while on probation?

Employees will normally be ineligible to compete for other vacancies in the University while under probation.

Q6: Is probation applicable upon promotion?

Yes, where an employee is promoted to a higher grade, a probation period of 12 months will apply.

Q7: I have been acting into a role for over 12 months and have just been regularised, does probation apply?

Where an employee is acting into a role and the acting arrangement is renewed, the probation period will continue to apply until a total of 12 months service at the higher grade has been achieved.

Q8: What happens if my Line Manager deems my performance to be below standard?

In the event that you receive a negative performance assessment through the probation process you will be given the opportunity to improve your performance and appropriate supports will be provided if applicable. If the negative assessment of your performance leads to the risk of the extension of your probation period, or to the risk of termination of your employment, you will be afforded the right to respond and the opportunity to improve performance levels.

Contact

In the first instance any queries regarding this policy should be directed to the relevant HR Business Partner.



Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed in line with appropriate legislation and/or circulars or updates as issued by Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, Higher Education Authority or Department of Education & Skills, from time to time.

Version Control

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End.