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## **Probation Review Policy for Professional, Research, Administrative, Library, Technical and Support Staff of Trinity College Dublin<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. Purpose**

The probation period and review process sets a defined period of time during which the suitability for employment of the staff member is assessed by the Line Manager /Principal Investigator.

### **2. Scope and Eligibility**

This document covers all staff in the grades outlined in the title. There is a separate policy for academic staff <sup>1</sup>.

This policy is applicable to all new staff members appointed to these grades, and any staff member successful in a competition within the University where a change in grade is involved. The policy applies to all contracts of employment; i.e. permanent, contracts of indefinite duration, fixed term, and specified purpose.

### **3. Duration of the Probation Period**

3.1. The standard probation period in Trinity College Dublin is 12 months, with the exception of those specified in the Academic Probations Policy<sup>1</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> There is a separate policy for the following Academic staff - Professors, Consultants, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, and Lecturers.



Probation period should not exceed 12 months, unless for reasons stated in Section 6.7.

- 3.2. **Short Term Contracts.** Where the contract is for a fixed period of less than 12 months, Probation Reviews should still be completed with the staff member. The Contract of Employment will specify the correct probation review periods for the contract. If a contract is subsequently extended or renewed, all continuous employment service at that grade will count towards the 12 month Probation period.
- 3.3. **Staff on probation moving to posts on the same grade.** Where a staff member changes area and will be on the same grade prior to the completion of the full probation period, (1) a Probation Review should be completed prior to the staff member moving to the new area, and (2) the staff member will continue their probation in their new area for the duration of the probation period.
- 3.4. If a staff member moves to a different grade a new 12 month probation period will apply.

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for the conduct of reviews under the terms of this policy is outlined below:

- 4.1. **All staff with line management roles** have responsibility for (1) setting objectives for staff members at the start of their contract; (2) conducting Probation Reviews for their own team members and completing the required Probation Review Form; (3) notifying staff where difficulties arise with their performance and drawing up a Performance Improvement Plan for staff when required; (4) notifying to HR long absences and leaves which require extension of the probation period; (5) making the decision to confirm the



staff member in post; (6) notifying staff of the termination of employment due to their unsuccessful review.

- 4.2. **Deans and Heads of Division** are accountable for ensuring that Probations are completed within their Faculties/Divisions, and ensuring Schools and Areas return all the Probation Reviews. HR will notify the Deans and Division Heads of incomplete probations through the escalation process where the Probation Reviews have not been completed at the appropriate level within the university.
- 4.3. **Heads of School/Areas** (1) have overall responsibility for the completion and return of Probation Reviews in their School/Area. HR will notify the Heads of School/Area of any incomplete probations. (2) Will confirm staff in their School or Area in their current contract upon successful completion of the relevant Probation Period.
- 4.4. **Line Managers /Principal Investigators** will conduct the reviews for their own team members as outlined in 4.1 above.
- 4.5. **Human Resources , Staff Performance and Review** will (1) notify Line Managers/Principal Investigators when probation reviews fall due; (2) where probation reviews have not been completed, escalate it through the Line Management Structure; (3) produce Key Performance Indicators for reporting.
- 4.6. Line Managers/Principal Investigators may seek advice and support from their **Faculty/Division Human Resources Partner** if needed.



4.7. **Staff members** are required to participate fully in the Probation Review Process in a timely manner, to fill in the form as requested, and to attend scheduled Review Meetings. To successfully complete the probationary period, staff members must satisfactorily meet the performance standards set by their line manager and as prescribed in any performance improvement plan that may be put in place.

## 5. Induction & Objective Setting

It is the responsibility of Line Managers/Principal Investigators to ensure staff members are inducted locally and given the relevant information necessary to enable them commence work. Line Managers/Principal Investigators should meet with the staff member during their first week of employment to set out the objectives and requirements of the post, on which the staff members' progress will be reviewed and assessed throughout the Probation Period using the Probation Review Form as a basis.

From time to time the University may set specific objectives aligned with the University's prevailing strategic objectives.



## 6. Probation System and outcomes following review

### 6.1. Rating System

The rating system outlined below will be used in relation to all probations.

Ratings	Descriptors
Below Expectations	Performing in some areas only, needs significant improvement to achieve the required standard. There are weaknesses apparent in the performance of the staff member.
Met Expectations	Good performance, all objectives were delivered and expectations were met to the required standard. Overall staff member is effective in the role.
Expectations met at High Standard	Very good performance, staff member performing very well to a noticeably good quality, with a high level of output to a high standard.

Each area of work under assessment should be rated. A summary rating should also be given on the overall performance across all areas.

### 6.2. Timing of Probations

The Line Manager/Principal Investigator is required to complete at least two Probation Reviews. The review is captured in a Probation Review Form. The Line Manager/Principal Investigator is responsible for arranging the review meeting, which the staff member is required to attend.

The first probation review should be completed within the first 4 months of employment, unless extended for reasons stated in this policy. Subsequent probation reviews or Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) reviews should ideally take place within the first 9 months of the probation.

Where the probation is extended, or a PIP is put in place, new review dates will be set.



### 6.3. Outcomes following Review

Following the **first**, and any other probation review, including the review of Performance Improvement Plans (PIP) the Line Manager/Principal Investigator makes the final decision on the performance rating and records this decision and any actions on the probation review form. The Line Manager/Principal Investigator will:

- confirm successful Probation/PIP Review or,
- confirm the requirement for a Further Review and PIP.
- extend the Probation Period for stated reasons or,
- Terminate the appointment.

Following the **final** Probation Review (on completion of all initial reviews, including PIPs) the Line Manager /Principal Investigator makes the final decision. The Line Manager /Principal Investigator makes one of two possible decisions:

- Confirmation of successful Probation Review; or
- Termination of appointment.

### 6.4. Probation Review(s) and Assessment

The Line Manager/Principal Investigator should assess and discuss the performance on the objectives set for the staff member.

Staff members must receive at least a rating of “Met Expectations” across all the areas/categories identified and in their Overall Rating in order to be successful in their Probation Review.

Staff members who are successful in their Final Probation Review will be confirmed in their current contract at the end of their Probation Period.



Staff members may be required to successfully complete a further review (or PIP) if performance issues arise in the period between the Final Probation Review and the end of the probation period.

### 6.5. Performance Improvement Plan

If performance is not to the required standard, and below expectations the staff member should be given a Performance Improvement Plan. Such a staff member may typically have one or more areas marked 'Below Expectations' on the probation review form.

When on a Performance Improvement Plan, additional Probation Review meetings will be required during the Probation Period. These will be arranged by the Line Manager/Principal Investigator. The Performance Improvement Plan and objectives must have been completed successfully prior to the Final Review and confirmation in appointment.

Line Managers/Principal Investigators may access advice and support from their Faculty/Division Human Resources Partner, if needed.

### 6.6. Extension of the Probation Period

Exceptionally, the University reserves the right to extend the probation period where it has not been possible to adequately assess the staff member's performance in the period for such reasons as, for example:

- Sick Leave;
- Family/Protective leave e.g. maternity leave/ carer's leave or other leaves.



## 6.7. Confirmation of Appointment

On the expiry of the probation period (after 12 months normally), and the successful completion of the probationary reviews, the Line Manager/Principal Investigator will confirm the successful completion of the probation period to the staff member.

## 6.8. Terminating the Appointment

Where a staff member does not satisfactorily pass their probation, this shall result in their appointment being terminated on providing the appropriate notice. Line Managers/Principal Investigators will notify the staff member of their decision in consultation with their Faculty/Division Human Resources Partner.

# 7. Probation Process

## 7.1. Notifications when a Probation is due

Human Resources will notify the Line Managers/Principal Investigators when a probation review falls due four weeks in advance of the due date. Line Managers/Principal Investigators will receive a communication with the applicable policy, probation review form and instructions on completing the probation review.

## 7.2. Completing the process

Following the Probation Review meeting the Probation Review Form should be completed and signed by the Line Manager/Principal Investigator and the staff member. Both parties will retain a copy of this Review.

The Line Manager/Principal Investigator should forward the signed Review form to Human Resources within two weeks of the Review due date.





Completed Review forms will be placed on the staff member's personnel file in Human Resources.

### 7.3. Escalation of incomplete probations

Where probation has not been completed by a line manager it will be escalated by Human Resources to the Head of School/Area. If, following this stage, the probation remains incomplete the probation will be further escalated to the Dean of the Faculty or the Head of Division.