



**UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK**

**OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH**

## **PROBATION POLICY**

*Approved by Governing Authority 23 November 2010*

## **1. Purpose of Probation**

- 1.1 The first 12 months of any new job can be challenging and it is critical that the new employee gains a clear understanding of and expectations around the job role during this time. To facilitate this process, a probationary period of 12 months applies to all new permanent and contract positions. If probation has been satisfactorily completed at the end of the 12-month period, the appointment is confirmed. The legal entitlements of Employees will not be affected by the application of this Policy.
- 1.2 The purpose of the probationary period is to:
  - a) Provide the University with an opportunity to establish the employee's suitability for the role
  - b) Provide the new employee with an opportunity to fully discuss and understand the role and to receive feedback on his/her performance

## **2. Applicability**

- 2.1 The probationary period applies to all new employees. The policy does not apply to existing employees who, having already completed a probationary period are promoted or appointed to another post within the University of Limerick.
- 2.2 Existing employees promoted will have their performance assessed in the normal manner through the PDR process.
- 2.3 New employees have a clause in their contracts stating that they must satisfactorily serve a probationary period before the appointment is confirmed. The probationary period is usually for a period of one year. The period may be extended beyond a year in cases where the employee is absent for a long period or has failed to meet the required standards but has, in the opinion of the manager, the potential to improve with further training.
- 2.4 The University reserves the right to extend the probationary period if deemed appropriate for a period of up to six months.

## **3. How the Probationary Period Is Managed**

- 3.1 The Dean/Division Head/Head of Department/Line Manager (who for the purposes of this document will now be known as the 'manager') should meet with new employees every three months. These meetings can be used to give and receive feedback, clarify priorities and set expectations.
- 3.2 Either party may terminate the employment during the probationary period. In circumstances where performance has not met expectations

and the University wishes to terminate the employment, notice of termination will issue in accordance with the University of Limerick's Statute on Employee Disciplinary Matters and Termination of Employment. Any notice to extend probation must also be issued by this date. Agreement to terminations and extensions must be sought and received from the Human Resources Division before this can happen.

#### **4. Periods of Leave during Probation**

- 4.1 If an employee takes leave (e.g. sick leave, maternity leave) during the probationary period that extends beyond one month, the probationary period will be extended beyond the initial 12 months. This applies both for new employees and for those appointed to a new role at a higher grade through open competition. The duration of the extension will be commensurate with the duration of leave.
- 4.2 Any such leave, and any associated pay, will be granted in line with the relevant leave policy.

#### **5. Probation Meetings and Documentation**

- 5.1 Probation meetings should be held between the employee and his/her manager after three, six and nine months of service. However, this does not preclude regular informal meetings being held to review progress.
- 5.2 At each probation meeting, the probation assessment form (see Appendix 2) is completed by the manager in consultation with the employee. A plan of action to be taken by the employee before the next meeting is agreed and recorded on the form. One copy of the form is held by the manager and one by the employee. The probation assessment form should provide a true and accurate reflection of what was discussed, including any performance issues. Each form (i.e. after three, six and nine months) should be returned by the manager to the Human Resources Division and a copy provided to the employee.

#### **6. Satisfactory Performance during Probation**

- 6.1 If the employee's performance during probation is satisfactory, Human Resources will confirm the appointment at the end of the probationary period and issue a letter to the employee to this effect.

#### **7. Unsatisfactory Performance during Probation**

- 7.1 While an employee on probation must clearly establish his/her suitability for the job, there is a corresponding obligation on the University to draw any shortcomings to the employee's attention to help him/her to improve and to give the employee a set time during which improvements will be monitored. Appropriate training will be provided if required.

- 7.2 It is the line manager's responsibility to deal with under performance specifying where performance is unacceptable and outlining the consequences for the employee of failing to reach the required standard. Refer to Appendix 1, *Guidelines for Managing Probation*, for more information.
- 7.3 If the performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the manager will liaise with Human Resources to consider and recommend an appropriate course of action. Such action could include but may not be limited to:
- Monthly assessment of the individual for the remainder of his/her probation
  - Extension of the probationary period for a limited time and with defined objectives
  - Termination of the contract. Any termination will be in line with the University of Limerick's Statute on Employee Disciplinary Matters and Termination of Employment.
- 7.4 An employee can raise an issue under the University of Limerick's Grievance Procedure at any stage during the probationary period.

## **Appendix 1: Guidelines for Managing Probation**

### **Manager's Responsibilities during Probation**

The manager is responsible for helping the employee to establish his/her suitability for the job. Specifically, the manager must:

- Ensure that the individual is properly inducted into the department and has the necessary resources and support to fulfil the role
- Conduct regular probationary review meetings
- On commencement, outline the duties and responsibilities of the role and ensure that these are clearly understood
- Have the information needed to hand to conduct each meeting effectively
- Set and agree the objectives for the coming three months
- Provide honest and constructive feedback to the employee
- Be specific and clear about performance, both good and bad
- Listen to the employee's point of view and take account of any concerns s/he may have
- Provide appropriate support for the new employee
- Re-establish expectations on an ongoing basis
- Identify training needs

### **Employee's Responsibilities during Probation**

The employee has a responsibility to:

- Ensure that the expectations and duties of the role are understood, and seek clarification when necessary
- Understand the overall work objectives/duties.
- Identify and discuss any training needs s/he may have and agree how they may best be addressed

### **Frequency of Meetings during Probation**

Meetings should take place at the following intervals:

- After three months' service
- After six months' service
- After nine months' service

### **The First Meeting**

The first meeting during probation takes place after three months of service. This meeting provides the employee with an opportunity to further understand:

- The key aims of the department/unit
- The skills/competencies that are expected.
- The breadth of working relationships that will be necessary to fulfil the role.

- Any initial training needs
- Any other necessary resources

### **Subsequent Meetings**

The probation meetings that occur after six months and nine months of service will cover:

- Progress with duties
- Discussion and resolution of any performance problems
- Clarification of expectations
- Identification of necessary support
- Agreement of action plan and next meeting, where applicable

### **Questions to Consider**

#### *Questions for the Manager to Consider*

- What areas of strength have I seen since the last meeting?
- What progress has been made towards the agreed objectives?
- What are the development areas?
- What support can I provide for development areas?
- What are the key priorities for the coming months?

#### *Questions for the Employee to Consider*

- What progress have I made?
- What I am finding difficult?
- What do I find most interesting?
- What support do I need?
- What training needs do I have and what are the options for addressing these?

### **Managing Under-performance**

Issues of under-performance should be discussed by the manager with the employee in the first instance and appropriate action agreed. If a problem persists, the manager, following consultation with Human Resources, should hold a meeting with the employee, outlining expectations and specifying where performance is unacceptable. Following this meeting, the manager should give the employee a written summary of the meeting, including a clear action plan with timescales. The consequences of failing to improve should be clearly outlined to the employee and documented appropriately.

**Any queries relating to these guidelines should be referred to the Human Resources Division.**

Appendix 2: Probation Assessment Form						
Probation review at	Month 3		Month 6		Month 9	
Employee Name:						
Line Manager's / HoD Name:						
Dept:						
Job Title:						
Date of Appointment:						
Date of Review:						

Performance Review – Please tick box as and if appropriate						
Coding:	3 = Meets expectations					
1 = Consistently top performer	4 = Needs improvement					
2 = Exceeds expectations	5 = Not satisfactory					
<b>As Per Performance Codes</b>	1	2	3	4	5	
Attendance ( <i>incl. punctuality and absenteeism</i> )						
Communication						
Adaptability						
Achievement of duties						
Suitability for the Role						
Teaching						
Research						
Academic Leadership						
Contribution to the wider Community						
Other:						

Training/Support Required		
Development needs/support needs identified during probation.		
Action agreed before next meeting:		
What action	Who is responsible	By when
e.g. Attend induction	Employee	Insert Date
e.g. Arrange access to equipment for employee	Manager	

Comments

Please confirm that the contents of the above assessment have been discussed with the employee.	Yes		No	
Signed: (Employee)	Date			
Signed: (Line Manager / Head of Department)	Date			