

HR Services

Employee Handbook

Probationary Policy for Management Grade and Support Staff



1. Scope of the Policy

1.1 The following procedures apply to all newly appointed permanent staff and to temporary staff initially appointed on a fixed term contract for six months or more.

Section 6 of this Policy specifically refers to new staff who have a role in delivering learning and teaching and there are specific requirements for those who fall into this category, e.g. some librarians, technicians, Graduate Teaching Assistants.

We have a separate Probation Policy for Academic staff.

Once the probationary period has been successfully completed and the appointment confirmed, UEL's Staff Development & Review Scheme will come into effect. This enables performance to be continually assessed and provides opportunities for career development.

1.2 The Policy shall not normally apply to existing staff who are promoted, re-graded or transferred to another similar post within UEL. Where the post is substantially different, probation may apply on appointment.

1.3 In a redeployment situation, under UEL's Managing Organisation Change or Redundancy policies, a trial period may apply but this is not covered in the scope of this policy.

1.4 Our Disciplinary Procedures will not apply during the probation period.

2. The Probationary Period

2.1 The length of the probationary period for managers and support staff will be 6 months. The length of the probationary period will also be specified in the contract of employment. The probationer will be made aware of the

expectations of what is required of him/ her.

3. Purpose of Probation

3.1 A probationary period is an opportunity for a probationer to understand UEL and its vision and values, to be provided with a set of performance standards and to be given guidance and support to become effective in their role.

Probation allows time for the newly appointed staff member to become effective as soon as possible, and for his or her Line Manager to make a realistic assessment of performance and capability to enable an informed decision to be taken in relation to the confirmation of the staff member's appointment.

3.2 During the probationary period the onus is on the Line Manager to provide the necessary information and training that will equip the probationer to undertake all aspects of their role at UEL and on the individual, to demonstrate their suitability for the post. Systems should be in place to support and monitor the probationer's work throughout the probationary period which will include a defined staff induction process and the assignment of an induction mentor (please refer to our induction policy).

3.3 We place great value on the probationary process in terms of individual development of new staff and as a means of assessing their suitability for the post to which they are recruited.

4. Principles of Probation

4.1 The probationary period is used to assess the suitability of a probationer for the post. The Line Manager will assess the performance and competence to ensure he /she meets the required standards. It is important that no probationer is left with little or no supervision for lengthy periods of time.

4.2 The newly appointed staff will be given suitable guidance and support during their probationary period and will be provided with appropriate development and training opportunities.

4.3 Performance will be assessed periodically (see Section 7) throughout the probationary period and where areas for development are highlighted, every reasonable opportunity will be provided to assist in the improvement of performance. The Line Manager will make clear how these standards will be monitored and the frequency with which they will be formally reviewed.

4.4 Line Managers should seek advice from the Director of HR Services (or nominee) should a probationer's performance or conduct give cause for concern as early as possible.

4.5 Apparent misconduct which results in serious misgivings as to the suitability or competence of the member of staff for continued employment should be dealt with immediately under section 8.0, thereby bypassing the 13-week review in Section 7.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Probationers

The newly appointed member of staff is responsible for demonstrating his or her suitability for the post and is responsible for highlighting to their Line Manager any training needs they may have. It is also the responsibility of the new member of staff to attend any induction or other appropriate training events that are held in order to assist with their development.

5.2 Line Manager

It is the responsibility of the Line Manager to define clearly the set of performance standards and the required procedures to ensure the newly appointed member of staff understands what is required of him or her. The Line Manager is also responsible for providing guidance and support and ensuring the newly appointed member of staff receives an effective induction.

It is also the responsibility of the Line Manager to ensure that probationary reports are completed and returned within the required timescales.

In addition, newly appointed staff will receive an appropriate induction programme, which will include equal opportunities and health & safety training.

6. New members of staff who have a role in supporting learning and teaching

6.1 New support staff with a role in learning and teaching are strongly encouraged to become Associate or Fellow Members of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) through UEL's Professional Standards Framework which offers any one of the following pathways:

A staff member can undertake to study modules from the MA in Learning and Teaching or the MA in On-Line and Blended Learning. Successful completion of one module leads to Associate membership of the HEA and successful completion of two modules will lead to HEA Fellow membership.

The two modules from the Certificate Level of the MA in Learning and Teaching are generally recommended for those new to this role, as well as experienced staff members as a useful introduction to Pedagogy and Learning and National Policy and Context. The modules on the MA in On-line and Blended Learning are appropriate for those who are involved in this area.

If a staff member does not wish to undertake a programme of study but wants to gain HEA membership, the UEL CPD pathway, approved by HEA is another alternative. Here, a staff member presents CPD evidence that is matched to the HEA Professional Standards for Learning and Teaching and presented to a UEL panel. The panel will award either an Associate or Fellow membership of the HEA, depending on the staff member's application and evidence. The CPD activity must cover a minimum of one year period

Finally, staff members can apply directly to HEA through their professional recognition scheme. This is recommended for those with a substantial role in supporting learning and teaching.

See - <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/professional/recognition/scheme>.

6.2 New members of staff with a role in learning and teaching will have a mentor who is familiar with our Professional Standards Framework and who will be able to provide guidance and support on the best route for an individual to gain Associate Membership of the HEA.

7. Procedure

7.1 The probationer, via the recruitment and selection process, will be provided with an up-to-date job description.

7.2 Throughout the probationary period the newly appointed employee's work performance and conduct will be regularly assessed. The basis of the probationary period is to assess the probationer's performance in relation to his or her job description.

7.3 Probation Reports

It is the responsibility of HR Services to alert the relevant Line Manager that a probationary review is due. This will be sent in time for completion at 13 weeks and at 22 weeks. It is the responsibility of the Line Manager to ensure these forms are returned in the timescales required where applicable. The probationary review will cover the new employee's technical competence, skills and abilities, communication skills and personal competencies. A copy of this form is in Appendix A.

7.4 Attendance Record and Health

Consideration should also be given to the probationer's attendance record and health. Where a member of staff accumulates more than five working days intermittent sickness or more than ten working days medically certificated absence during the probationary period, the reasons and circumstances should be dealt with under section 8.0.

7.5 13 week review

(A) Satisfactory Review:

The probationary review should be held no later than the 13th week of employment. In the assessment of a staff member's performance, other criteria such as health, attendance record and conduct should be considered. The Line Manager should draw attention to any particular strengths as well as areas which need developing. If progress is satisfactory, the form is signed by both parties and a copy is kept by the Line Manager and probationer.

(B) Unsatisfactory Review:

If progress is unsatisfactory, the Line Manager should discuss with the probationer the areas of performance that are causing concern and should clarify objectives and timescales within which improvements will need to be made as well as identifying methods of achieving such improvements. The Line Manager should be encouraging, supportive and provide guidance where necessary to aid the probationer in meeting the objectives. Any additional training, re-training or support should be mutually agreed by both parties and appropriate action taken. This should be put in writing to the probationer in the form of an action plan. The probationer should also be advised that if the

specified improvements are not met by the 22 nd week review then a recommendation to the Dean of School or Director of Service for dismissal may be made.

7.6 The form is signed by both parties to confirm agreement and the original form and the Learning and Development & Review Action Plan, if applicable, should be kept by the Line Manager and copied to the staff member and HR Services who will place on the staff member's file.

7.7 22 week review -

Satisfactory Performance

The probationer should be given a reasonable amount of time to prepare for the probationary review which should be held no later than the 22 nd week of employment.

As per the 13 week review, if the work has been satisfactory it is good practice to praise areas of strengths and to identify any areas that may require further attention.

If progress is satisfactory, the form is signed by both parties to confirm agreement and the original form returned to HR Services who will place on the staff member's file. HR Services will then send a letter to the staff member confirming that their probationary period has been satisfactorily completed and their appointment therefore confirmed.

8. Unsatisfactory Performance

8.1 Where the Line Manager considers there has been apparent misconduct, unsatisfactory work performance, poor attendance or unsatisfactory progress, the Director of HR Services (or nominee) shall be consulted. A formal meeting between the Line Manager, the Dean of School/Director of Service and the Director of HR Services (or nominee) will be arranged to discuss the matter to determine whether the circumstances warrant a recommendation for dismissal.

8.2 The formal meeting should be arranged before the end of the probation (week 22) and the probationer should be informed in writing by the line manager on the advice of HR Services at least 10 working days in advance of the formal meeting and that a possible outcome is dismissal from UEL's

employment. The probationer will be advised of the right to be accompanied by a friend, colleague or trade union representative (in a non-legal capacity).

The Dean of School or Director of Service concerned will decide if the progress of the probationer is satisfactory or not.

8.3 At the formal meeting, the Line Manager will explain the severity of the issues of concern and should clarify that the problems have been identified and discussed with the probationer. The Line Manager will also provide any supporting information showing that the probationer has been given the opportunity to improve and support has been provided.

8.4 The staff member will also have an opportunity to explain and respond before a final decision is made by the Dean of School/Director of Service (or the member of the Vice-Chancellor's Group if the probationer is the Dean of School/Director of Service).

If the decision is dismissal the member of staff will be notified in writing that their employment is terminated with one week's notice, within the probationary period. The reasons for the termination will be included. The staff member will be notified that they will have the right of appeal under section 10 below.

8.5 Probationers may be dismissed at any stage during their probationary period for misconduct or gross misconduct.

In sections 8.4 and 8.5, dismissal may be with immediate effect if the circumstances warrant such action. The staff member will not be required to work out his or her notice period. He or she will be notified that they will have the right of appeal under section 10 below.

9. Extension of Probation

9.1 In exceptional circumstances, a probationary period may be extended beyond six months up to a maximum of a further three months. Extensions of probations may be appropriate where there are concerns about suitability whether it be in terms of attendance, conduct or performance late in the probation period. The Line Manager should consult HR Services if consideration is being given to such a course of action. There should be a good indication that the person will reach the standard required for extra time to be given.

10. Dismissal - Right of Appeal

10.1 A staff member on probation will have the right of appeal against the decision to dismiss him or her from UEL's employment in accord with Uel's Appeal Policy.

If the decision to dismiss is taken, the member of staff will be notified in writing that their employment is terminated by due notice, within the probationary period. The member of staff will be provided, as soon as reasonably practicable, with written reasons for the dismissal, the date on which employment will terminate and the right of appeal under UEL's Appeal Policy.

[Appendix A](#)

[Policy agreed by UMT and by our recognised trades unions in January 2009)
