

Probation Policy

People and Organisation Development

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. All new staff to UWE Bristol, including senior staff and individuals on fixed term contracts, are appointed subject to satisfactory completion of a probation period. Different arrangements exist for [temporary staff](#).
- 1.2. The probation process is an important means of ensuring that new appointees settle into their roles and are able to confirm their ability to satisfy their role requirements. The probation process is therefore extremely important for both the University and the new employee, and successful completion of the probation period is required in order to confirm continuing employment.
- 1.3. The probation guidance should be read in the context of the University's [values, vision and strategy](#).

2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1. The purpose of this process is to:
 - a) Provide guidance to new employees and managers on the standards expected.
 - b) Provide support to individuals to help them to meet those standards.
 - c) Confirm the appointment of individuals in post who meet the required standards.
 - d) Identify those individuals who have not met the required standards in order that their contract can be reviewed under this procedure.

3. Arrangements

- 3.1. The following arrangements will apply during the probationary process:

Assessment process

- 3.2. An assessment process will be used to enable managers to monitor progress and therefore assess competence in the role. Performance expectations will be made clear by the line manager at the start of the probation period; these will be related to the role requirements and other relevant standards, as below:
 - [UWE Bristol manager responsibilities](#)
 - [Leadership behaviours](#)
 - [Academic performance standards](#)
 - [UWE Bristol role descriptions](#)

- [UWE competency framework](#)

3.3. Regular meetings will take place throughout the probation period between the line manager and probationer.

The line manager would normally be a person at grade E and above for professional service staff and at grade I and above for academic staff. When a more junior manager is implementing the probation process, they should seek support from their manager.

Line managers are responsible for arranging meetings, recording and retaining the main points of the discussion.

3.4. Probation records will be completed by the manager; passed to the probationer for comment and signed off by both the manager and the probationer at each stage of the process. The line manager's manager or a more senior manager (who will be at grade H or above), will also sign off each probation report.

3.5. The HR Online system will send automated reminders by email to managers when probation reports are due for completion, alongside prompts being visible in [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#). Managers will then ensure that reports are completed by the due date.

3.6. Managers are required to keep probation reports in a secure place and in accordance with the UWE Bristol [Data Protection Policy](#). The manager and employee have responsibility to ensure initial and interim reports are completed via [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#) / [Employee Self-Service \(ESS\)](#), and the manager, senior manager and employee have responsibility to ensure the final report is completed via MSS/ESS.

3.7. If performance issues arise during the probationary period, then the manager should raise these with the probationer at the earliest opportunity in order to enable them to be addressed within the probation period. The manager should also contact [People and Organisation Development](#) (People and OD) for guidance.

Provision of support

3.8. Probationers will be provided with appropriate levels of support to assist them to successfully complete the probation period. This will include discussion and agreement of a development plan at the start of the probation period.

Incremental progression

3.9. Individuals will only be eligible to be considered for incremental progression on confirmation of the successful completion of probation.

Appointment of existing UWE Bristol staff

3.10. Existing staff who are regraded, promoted or transferred to a different role and who have already completed probation will not be subject to a second probation period, except where the role is significantly different, for example, a member of professional service staff moving into an academic role.

Performance for these staff will be monitored through the normal [performance and development review](#) process, although managers will need to confirm the standards expected of the individual in their new role.

3.11. Temporary staff who are appointed to a permanent role will be subject to these probation procedures.

Academic staff

3.12. Additional information about the probation process for academic staff is given in [Appendix 1](#).

3.13. Staff appointed into management roles are required to attend and complete the [UWE People Manager Programme](#) during their probation period. This programme consists of a series of modules which offer support to new managers so that they are able to fulfil the role requirements. People and OD will liaise with managers to book them onto the relevant training courses.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. During the probation period new appointees are responsible for:

- a) Demonstrating their suitability for the post that they have been appointed to.
- b) Meeting reasonable objectives and performance standards within set deadlines.
- c) Participating in the regular review meetings held during the probation period.
- d) Participating in the induction process and any training and development that has been identified.
- e) Raising with their manager, at the earliest opportunity, any difficulties they are experiencing and identify training or support they believe to be necessary to help them fulfil the requirements of the role.

4.2. During the probation period managers are responsible for:

- a) Ensuring that the new appointee has a local induction to the role in line with the [standard UWE Bristol process](#) (a checklist is provided by People and OD).
- b) Establishing and communicating standards of performance, responsibilities and objectives required for the post.
- c) Ensuring appropriate [training and development](#) opportunities are made available.
- d) Holding regular [one to one meetings](#) with the new appointee to provide constructive and positive feedback on achievements, and where appropriate, identifying areas for improvement. Meetings should be held weekly during the first month and then at least monthly during the remainder of the probation period.
- e) Arranging a [mentor](#) or [buddy](#).
- f) Ensuring that relevant documentation is completed and provided to People and OD within required timescales.
- g) Raising issues with [People and OD](#) at the earliest opportunity where performance issues or concerns arise.

4.3. During the probation period People and OD are responsible for:

- a) Providing advice and guidance on the probation review.
- b) Reminding managers when the initial, interim and final reports are due for completion through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#).
- c) Receiving the completed documentation at the end of the probation period via [MSS/ESS](#).
- d) Reminding managers when any probation reports are overdue.
- e) Confirming in writing the outcome of the probation period to the member of staff.
- f) Briefing managers on the probation policy and procedures.

5. Length of probation period

5.1. The period of probation will normally be as below:

Grades A – F	6 months
Grades G and above	12 months

5.2. Probation periods will not normally exceed 12 months but may be longer in particular circumstances, examples include where there has been extended sickness or maternity leave.

5.3. Where specific roles are related to the completion of the academic cycle and it is, therefore not possible to complete a full review performance by the end of the 6 month

probation period, an extension beyond 6 months may be considered with the individual.

5.4. Associate Lecturers will have a probation period of 12 months.

5.5. Temporary staff are reviewed during a one week trial period which occurs following appointment to each assignment. Further information about temporary staff is available on the [staff intranet](#).

6. Procedure

Initial probation meeting – to take place during the first week of employment

6.1. The manager should arrange to welcome the new employee to the department on the first day of their employment and ensure local induction is completed.

6.2. The manager should then arrange a meeting with the new appointee within the first week of them starting in the post. The purpose of this meeting will be to:

- a) Discuss and clarify job expectations, and the standards expected of the individual in their role. These will include reference to the individual's responsibilities as outlined in the job description and their expected level of competence as outlined in the person specification, [competency framework](#), [Academic performance standards](#), [UWE Bristol manager responsibilities](#), [Leadership behaviours](#) or other relevant documents, such as the [induction checklist](#).
- b) Agree the work and development objectives to be achieved during probation.
- c) Identify development and support required; this may include attendance at the [UWE People Manager Programme](#) and/or the academic professional development options outlined in [Appendix 1](#). The manager should also consider whether any development needs were identified during the appointment interview and, if so, include these in the training and development action plan.
- d) Identify a mentor/buddy, where appropriate. Please see [Appendix 4](#) for further information on mentoring and buddying.
- e) Reference should also be made to the discussion at the appointment interview if development support was discussed.

6.3. The [initial probation review form](#) (form 1) should be completed following the meeting and retained in the college/service.

Interim probation review meeting – to take place at 3 or 6 months depending on the grade of the probationer

- 6.4. The manager should arrange to meet the probationer and review the progress made in relation to the standards and objectives identified at the initial meeting.
- 6.5. The manager should normally complete the [interim review form](#) (form 2) within five working days of the meeting. This should be passed to the probationer for comment and signature and then sent to People and OD through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#). If there are concerns about performance, contact [People and OD](#) as soon as possible, who will arrange a follow up discussion to agree any appropriate action. See section 7 of this policy and the [Extending or not meeting probation](#) guide for further information.

Final probation meeting – to take place 4 weeks before the end of the probation period

- 6.6. People and OD will request completion of the [final probation form](#), form 3 through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#). The manager should arrange to meet with the probationer and review achievements in relation to the standards and objectives set at the initial meeting.

The review form should be completed within five working days of the meeting and should be passed to the probationer for comment and signature. This should be sent to People and OD through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#) who will confirm successful confirmation of probation to the probationer, providing probation requirements have been successfully achieved.

The completed final report form should be returned to People and OD no later than two weeks before the date on which the probation period ends.

Extension of the probation period

- 6.7. The line manager may recommend an extension of the probation period. Extensions will need to be agreed by [People and OD](#). Extensions will normally be agreed in a relatively limited number of cases, for example, where:
- a) The individual has demonstrated progress however they do not yet fully meet the role requirements. However, there is confidence they will be able to fully meet these requirements within the extension period.
 - b) When there has not been an opportunity to fully consider the role requirements within the standard probation period, for example, because the individual has had a lengthy absence.

- c) Where some elements of the role responsibilities have not been undertaken within the standard probation period e.g. where the full academic cycle has not taken place
- d) Where the full academic cycle has been undertaken but the individual has not had the opportunity to demonstrate their performance across the range of role responsibilities.

6.8. Where the probation period is extended the reason(s) and length of the extension will be explained to the employee and confirmation will be provided in writing. The probationer will sign the report to agree the extension and actions to be taken. Where appropriate additional support tailored to the circumstances will be arranged by the manager.

6.9. Before the end of the extension period a [final report](#) will be requested by People and OD through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#). The manager will complete the report and recommend confirmation or non-confirmation of appointment. A further extension of probation will not normally be an option.

6.10. No incremental progression will be permitted where there has been a decision to extend probation, and until satisfactory completion of probation requirements.

7. Managing poor performance

7.1. If performance issues arise during the probationary period, then the manager should raise these with the probationer at the earliest opportunity in order to enable them to be addressed within the probation period. The manager should also contact [People and OD](#) for guidance.

7.2. Managers should meet with the person to make them aware of their concerns, discuss the reasons for the lack of progress, and ensure that appropriate support is available. The purpose of this meeting is to try to ensure that the individual is able to improve their performance so that they are subsequently able to meet the probation requirements.

7.3. This meeting should take place as soon as possible during the probation period. A record of the meeting should be written by the manager and copied to the member of staff. This should make clear the performance required, where the individual is falling short, and the actions that are needed to address the issues identified.

7.4. Monitoring of progress will take place through the regular [one to one](#), and probation meetings (see paragraph 4.2d). The manager will provide feedback to the individual so that they are clear whether adequate progress is being made. Additional support and/or development will also be provided as appropriate. A written record of all meetings should be retained by the manager and copied to the individual.

8. Formal review meeting

- 8.1. If it becomes clear that the member of staff is unlikely to meet probation requirements, then the manager should contact [People and OD](#) to discuss the action that should be taken. The manager will make a recommendation for action. This action will include requiring the member of staff to attend a formal review meeting to discuss their performance.
- 8.2. Where a formal review meeting is held, the individual will be advised in writing that this meeting constitutes a formal review and will be informed of the areas of performance where they are not meeting the required level. The individual will also be informed of their right to be accompanied by a work colleague or [trade union](#) representative, and that the outcome of the review meeting could be the termination of the contract of employment.
- 8.3. The Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) or the Director of People and Organisation Development (or nominee) will chair the meeting, subject to the chair not having been previously involved with this matter.
- 8.4. At the meeting the manager will be asked to present their case, and confirm their recommendation for action. The individual will be given an opportunity to respond.
- 8.5. At the end of the meeting the Chair will make a decision to either:
 - a) Take no further action; in this case satisfactory completion of probation would be confirmed.
 - b) Provide an extension of the probationary period to allow more time for the required standards to be met.
 - c) Take action short of dismissal; this can include transfer, redeployment or demotion to an alternative role.
 - d) Dismiss the employee.
- 8.6. If the decision is to dismiss the employee, then the individual will be given pay in lieu of notice, and the dismissal will be effective immediately. If the employee appeals, and is subsequently reinstated, then pay and service will be restored and backdated to the date of termination.
- 8.7. At any time during the probation period there may be a decision to dismiss the employee, on an exceptional basis. This is subject to there being clear documented evidence that the probationer's performance within their role is significantly below the required standards:
 - a) Evidence that meetings have taken place with the probationer, issues relating to poor performance have been raised, and relevant support has been provided.

- b) Evidence that the probationer fails to show necessary improvement in the level of their performance, despite review and support.

8.8. A formal review meeting (as outlined above) will always be held prior to any decision to dismiss.

9. Appeals against dismissal

9.1. Individuals will have the right of appeal against dismissal. A decision to dismiss will be confirmed in writing to the individual, and this will set out their right of appeal.

9.2. If the individual wishes to appeal against the decision, they must confirm this in writing stating the grounds of the appeal to the [Director of People and Organisation Development](#). The letter should be received within ten working days of the date of the letter confirming the decision to dismiss.

9.3. The appeal will be heard by the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) or the Director of People and Organisation Development (or nominee), subject to this person not having been previously involved with this matter. The decision of the person hearing the appeal will be final.

10. Notice periods

10.1. During the probation period, the probationer's appointment may be terminated by the University by giving the appropriate notice period as outlined in the relevant employment contract. Payment in lieu of notice may be made and any outstanding leave will be made as appropriate.

11. Equality issues

11.1. The University recognises the value of a truly diverse workforce and the contribution that every individual can make. It therefore aims to create an environment that respects the diversity of staff. To achieve this, it is important that managers are proactive about ensuring staff in their teams are treated fairly and they can achieve their full potential regardless of age, disability status, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or faith, sex or sexual orientation.

11.2. Therefore, in addition to the support identified in paragraph 4.2 above, managers should consider whether other support is appropriate for a new member of staff who

may have specific needs. The following are some examples of scenarios that should be considered, as appropriate;

- a) Disabled staff may need [reasonable adjustments](#) made to the working environment in order for them to be fully effective in the role. Also, they may be eligible for additional funding to support them in the workplace through the [Access to Work](#) scheme. [People and OD](#) will be able to provide further advice.
- b) Female or male staff who are prime carers may need additional [flexibility](#) in their working hours.
- c) Young staff who may be new to the workplace may value support to help them settle into working life. A [mentor](#) or [buddy](#) would also support them to do this.
- d) People who have religious/faith commitments may seek additional [flexibility](#) in their working hours, for example, to attend Friday prayers.
- e) Staff from different cultures, especially internationally recruited staff, may need extra time to adjust to UWE Bristol's working ethos and also to adjust to their new home/city etc.
- f) Starting a job with new people may affect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) staff who are 'out' and not 'out' at work. It could add a further level of stress in having to join a new team and [additional support](#) may be valuable.

See the [protected characteristics](#) intranet collection for further information.

11.3. In addition to the support that a manager and mentor/buddy may be able to offer, the [equality staff networks](#) may be a further source of support.

11.4. If a manager requires additional guidance in supporting a new member of staff on equality issues, [People and OD](#) will be able to discuss this.

Appendix 1

Additional information for academic and academic related staff

1. Probation criteria

1.1. The performance of academic staff will be considered in relation to the [Academic Probation Performance Standards](#) criteria.

1.2. Performance will be considered in four key areas:

- Knowledge of academic subject area, including feedback from student monitoring and evaluation.
- Teaching and learning.
- Contribution to research, consultancy/professional practice and scholarly activity (as appropriate).
- Professional conduct.

1.3. In addition, consideration will be given to how the probationer is progressing in relation to decision making, communication skills, flexibility of approach, attitude and level of attendance.

2. Probation process

2.1. The process for academic staff will be the same as that outlined in the main part of this document, i.e. completion of an initial and interim report prior to the final report.

3. Final report

3.1. People and OD will ask the college to complete a final probation report through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#), towards the end of the probation period.

This will be completed by the line manager and will include a recommendation from the Executive Dean in relation to confirmation of employment.

The employee will also sign the probation report which will then be forwarded to People and OD through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#).

3.2. In addition to the final report the following documents will be provided:

- A copy of the probationer's work programme for the year.
- A copy of one of the [teaching observations](#) that has taken place in the college (at least two observations should take place during the year).
- The probationer will provide a short self-evaluation report which will include progress made during the probation period, the support received, together with any other comments they wish to make.
- Indicative future objectives applicable after the probation period has been completed.

4. Observation of teaching

4.1. At least two teaching observations should take place during the probation period. At least one of these observations will be undertaken by a member of the college management team.

The [observation of teaching feedback form](#) should be completed and discussed with the probationer following the observed session. One of these completed teaching observation forms should be submitted with the final probation report to People and OD through [Manager Self-Service \(MSS\)](#).

4.2. The [observation of teaching feedback form](#) should also be used by mentors when they are observing teaching.

4.3. Teaching observation may be applicable to academic related staff depending on the role.

5. Academic Professional Development

5.1. All academic staff who are new to teaching at UWE Bristol have a range of teaching professional development opportunities depending on their prior experience, leading to a credit-bearing qualification ([Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE \(PGCert LTHE\)](#)) and/or professional recognition through [Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy \(FHEA\)](#).

5.2. Deciding which professional development option is best for the individual will take place through a conversation with them, their line manager (or nominated

representative) and where appropriate, the [PG Cert Programme Leader](#) or a representative.

- 5.3. To complete academic probation there will be a minimum requirement to achieve the first module of the [PGCert LTHE](#) or to gain FHEA through the [UWE HEA Fellowship Scheme](#).

For staff on 0.5FTE and below who do not have FHEA or a PG Cert LTHE there is a minimum requirement, depending on what your line manager feels is most appropriate, either to:

- complete the first module of the [PG Cert LTHE](#), gaining Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA);
- or gain AFHEA through the [UWE HEA Fellowship Scheme](#);
- or complete the [Introduction to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education](#) course.

These routes are also available for Professional Services and Research colleagues who support learning.

- 5.4. To support new academic staff in their careers at UWE Bristol, 55 workload bundles will be allocated for each module of the PGCert LTHE they are required to complete for the duration of the programme.

- 5.5. Usually, staff on 0.6 FTE or above would be expected to complete both PGCert LTHE modules and would be allocated 110 workload bundles to do so.

- 5.6. For staff who are required to gain FHEA or AFHEA through the UWE HEA Fellowship Scheme this is supported through the current Academic workload model through Academic engagement and support.

- 5.7. For those undertaking the PGCert LTHE, this normally runs on two occasions during the year, commencing in approximately September/October and January/February. See the [Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education \(PG Cert LTHE\)](#) intranet guide for further information about the academic programme.

- 5.8. In exceptional circumstances, where a normal start is difficult for any reason, and a decision is made to defer starting the programme until a later date, the college should make the individual aware that this may lead to the probation period being extended to enable completion of the minimum requirement.

As a consequence, this may also result in a delay to the payment of their first salary increment (although this will be backdated).

6. Mentoring

- 6.1. The University has a mentoring scheme for all new academic staff and the college will arrange for a mentor to be identified.
- 6.2. The mentor should not usually be the individual's line manager and should not be involved in the assessment process of the PGCert LTHE or in formal procedures leading to a decision on the outcome of probation.
- 6.3. The person identified as the mentor should be a committed academic who is a good listener, who is able to ask questions, offer tentative suggestions and generally talk issues through rather than provide quick solutions and 'expert' advice. A shared subject specialism may be an advantage however, personal qualities and a knowledge of departmental procedures are more important.
- 6.4. It is not essential for the mentor to be an academic of long standing, as someone who has recently had the experience of being a 'new lecturer' and undergoing a training programme may be well qualified to understand the situation faced by a new colleague. The attributes identified above are of greater importance than long experience or seniority.
- 6.5. The responsibilities of the mentor are to:
 - a) Provide a programme of planned and regular meetings.
 - b) Discuss teaching sessions, course planning and design (if appropriate to the role).
 - c) Undertake at least two [observations of teaching sessions](#) each teaching block (if appropriate to the role).
 - d) Offer a supportive and non-critical exploration of the sessions observed with an appreciation of innovative approaches to teaching and learning.
 - e) Help in identifying teaching resources.
 - f) Help the probationer to understand and meet the requirements of the UWE Bristol academic.
 - g) Participate in three-way discussions between the new teacher and the line manager who is preparing the probation report.
 - h) Take part in briefing and review sessions with other mentors.
- 6.6. The mentor might also invite the new member of staff to observe their own teaching.
- 6.7. Where a college has a number of probationers, it may be advantageous for a single mentor to be identified and for group, as well as individual, meetings to be held.

6.8. Mentoring duties will be taken into account in determining the total work programmes of individual mentors.

6.9. Queries about the mentoring scheme should be raised with the Executive Dean or manager.

Appendix 2

Teaching observation record (to be attached to final probation report)

You can find a copy of the [observation of teaching feedback form](#) on the [probation](#) intranet guide.

This form should be completed by the observer in conjunction with the probationer. Please note, the observer will normally be a more senior member of academic staff with management responsibility.

Appendix 3

Performance standards

This document outlines the [Academic Probation Performance Standards](#).

Appendix 4

Mentoring

A mentor is a person, who is not usually the probationer's line manager, but who is likely to be a more experienced person who can offer guidance, advice and support to the new employee. They can be from within the same work area though this may not be possible or preferred. In fact, there may be benefits in the mentor being identified from another department or service.

The mentor should be a good listener who is able to ask questions, offer suggestions and advice, and generally talk issues through.

The probationer's manager will identify a potential mentor and agree this with the probationer. This agreement is important as mentoring relationships will only be successful if both parties feel that the pairing is appropriate.

When the mentoring relationship is set up the mentor has a number of responsibilities to ensure that it works effectively and provides the probationer with the appropriate level of support. These include:

- Arranging regular meetings.
- Structuring the meetings so that they are effective for both people.
- Providing informal advice and guidance.
- Exploring any issues with the probationer including options and potential solutions.
- Supporting the probationer to develop an action plan, where appropriate.

The mentoring relationship is confidential to the mentor and probationer. The mentor does not provide any feedback from the meetings to the manager or into the probation process.

Mentors are encouraged to attend the [mentoring development workshop](#) before setting up a mentoring relationship.

Where a mentor is not appropriate a buddy should be identified.

Buddying

Having a 'buddy' at work can make a difference to the speed with which new recruits manage to settle into a new organisation. Just knowing that somebody is there to listen and is genuinely interested in helping can make staff feel very supported.

A buddy should be a peer/colleague who offers support and guidance to a new member of staff, but this relationship is less formal and/or structured than a mentoring relationship.

A buddy will be identified by the manager and agreed with the probationer. They will meet with the probationer in the first week of employment. They have a role, which could include some or all of the following:

- Introducing the probationer to other members of the department/service.
- Showing the probationer UWE Bristol facilities, campus etc.
- Providing an informal 'sounding board' for the probationer.
- Helping with practical day to day issues.