

Probation for Academic Staff - Procedures

1. Purpose of procedures

1.1 These procedures outline the process for probation for academic staff and make clear the requirements of supervisors and senior officers of the University to ensure academic and administrative responsibilities are fulfilled and policy principles are maintained and implemented. Effective induction and probation are important components of developing a successful academic career at the University.

2. Scope and application

2.1 These procedures apply to all Academic staff who are required to complete a period of probation at the University.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to these procedures and are critical to its effectiveness:

Probationary period means a defined period of time during which a new staff member's performance is subject to formal review for the purpose of determining whether or not the contract of employment should continue. During this time, the staff member is provided with clear job expectations, constructive guidance, feedback and support to confirm progress and/or identify concerns or deficiencies in performance and conduct and provide opportunities for their resolution.

Probation Plan is a document developed by a new staff member and their supervisor that establishes appropriate performance and development goals, which are based on the requirements of the position as outlined in the position description, the Academic Performance Standards, and includes a schedule of formal meetings to monitor and review progress.

Work Allocation refers to the distribution of work across the three domains of academic activity – teaching; research; and engagement.

4. Induction

4.1 Induction, which is the systematic introduction of a new staff member to the organisation, their new job, colleagues and the work area, aims to enable a new staff member to settle and be productive in their job as quickly as possible.

4.2 On the first day of employment at the University, an academic staff member meets with their supervisor to commence induction. The new staff member's work allocation is discussed during induction. The workload of each academic staff member is allocated in accordance with the principles stated in the University's Enterprise Agreement.

4.3 If the new staff member's supervisor is not available on the first day of employment, an alternative appropriate academic staff member is nominated to initiate induction.

4.4 Within one week of commencement, all health and safety induction requirements need to be completed by the staff member and within one month, the staff member should be familiarised and be aware of the requirement to comply with other important University policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct and the policy on Intellectual Property, as specified in the contract of employment.

4.5 Induction checklists for new staff and supervisors are available from People and Culture.

5. The Probation Plan

5.1 As soon as practicable after commencement of employment, the new staff member meets formally with their Supervisor to begin to discuss and develop a Probation Plan.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Chief Operating Officer

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Director, People and Culture

FIRST APPROVED

6 June 2017

LAST AMENDED

4 September 2024

REVIEW DATE

6 June 2022

STATUS

Active

5.2 A Probation Plan:

- (a) ensures role clarity;
- (b) establishes performance and development goals based on the requirements of the position as outlined in the position description and the staff member's work allocation;
- (c) ensures the expectations and priorities of the position the staff member holds reflect the expectations of the Academic Performance Standards;
- (d) records progress and achievement of performance and development goals;
- (e) documents concerns or deficiencies in performance and/or conduct and action taken to remedy them; and
- (f) lays out a schedule of formal meetings to discuss progress, monitor and review the achievement of performance and development goals and ensure implementation of the Probation Plan.

5.3 The Probation Plan is to be completed by no later than six weeks after the new staff member's commencement date.

5.4 To ensure successful implementation of the Probation Plan, throughout the probationary period, the responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- (a) encouraging engagement within and commitment to the University's mission and goals and establishing and maintaining a strong collegial relationship;
- (b) clarifying teaching commitments and roles, research directions and outputs, engagement opportunities and outcomes, and professional expectations and practices, for example, the requirements of the Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching – Academic Policy;
- (c) mentoring and giving constructive guidance, feedback and support;
- (d) enabling other appropriate mentoring relationships, both as mentor and mentee;
- (e) maintaining records of meetings, agreements and outcomes, copies of which are given to the staff member;
- (f) ensuring the collation of evidence of progress and achievement of performance and development goals;
- (g) when necessary, discussing any deficiency in performance or conduct with the staff member and providing the opportunity to take corrective action;
- (h) reporting regularly on progress and achievements; and
- (i) conducting a final review of probation to determine whether or not the staff member's employment should be recommended for confirmation of appointment.

5.5 To ensure successful implementation of the Probation Plan, throughout the probationary period, the responsibilities of the staff member include:

- (a) participating actively and positively in the probation process;
- (b) taking reasonable action to achieve performance and development goals;
- (c) collating evidence of progress and achievement of performance and development goals;
- (d) seeking clarification about any aspect of their role, performance and development goals and expectations that are unclear;
- (e) seeking early guidance and support from their supervisor when difficulties are encountered; and
- (f) countersigning any report to verify that they have seen its content. If the staff member disagrees with any aspect of a report, they may make a written response which is attached to the supervisor's report.

5.6 Throughout the probationary period, the roles of People and Culture include:

- (a) liaising with the supervisor to ensure the development and implementation of an effective Probation Plan and provide guidance and support, as required
- (b) liaising with the new staff member to provide guidance and information to facilitate successful probation, as required.

5.7 Where an Academic probation period of three years applies, the supervisor and the staff member meet formally, at least annually throughout the probation period, unless there is reason to meet more frequently, to review performance and monitor the achievement of performance and development goals in the Probation Plan.

5.8 Throughout the probationary period, the staff member does not participate in the annual PPR process.

5.9 Regardless of the requirement for regular formal meetings, feedback should be given regularly, and formal and less formal meetings can be had at any time.

5.10 Performance evaluation during the probationary period is based on the quality, quantity and consistency of academic outputs and outcomes in accordance with the Academic Performance Standards.

5.11 If, at any stage, the supervisor has concerns about the staff member's performance or conduct, People and Culture is to be contacted immediately.

6. Foundations of University Teaching

6.1 All new academic staff, except where approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), are required to:

(a) successfully complete the University's Foundations of University Teaching ('Foundations') professional development course during their probationary period; or

(b) provide evidence that they have successfully completed a comparable course at another university.

Academic staff appointed to a Research only position may request approval for an exemption on the understanding that, should their position change and teaching become a part of their academic profile, the requirement to successfully complete the Foundations course will apply.

6.2 An academic appointment will not be confirmed without fulfilment of the above requirements.

6.3 The supervisor determines whether or not the staff member needs to complete 'Foundations' during the probationary period, based on the new staff member being able to provide evidence of completion of a comparable professional development from another university.

(a) If a staff member needs to complete the 'Foundations' during the probationary period, this is recorded in the Probation Plan and needs to be taken into account and monitored throughout the probationary period.

6.4 Comparable Professional Development at another University:

(a) If a staff member has completed a comparable professional development course in Learning and Teaching at another university, evidence is provided to the supervisor within one month of the staff member's commencement date.

(b) The supervisor can consult with the Director, Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching (C-SALT) about the comparability of the completed course with the 'Foundations'.

(c) The supervisor forwards the evidence and any advice from C-SALT to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for approval.

(d) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) advises People and Culture and the supervisor of the outcome and a record of the approval of exemption and evidence provided is retained on the staff member's file.

7. Outcomes of Probation

7.1 An appointment can be confirmed or terminated at any time during the probationary period.

7.2 A final review of probation, which is summative, is completed at least twenty weeks before the end of the probationary period.

7.3 The supervisor advises the staff member that the final review of probation is to be conducted.

7.4 Depending on the academic profile of the staff member, evidence of effectiveness as a teacher and/or researcher/scholar in accordance with the Academic Performance Standards is fundamental to the final review.

7.5 If a staff member was required to complete 'Foundations' during the probationary period, the supervisor confirms successful completion in the report of the final review of probation.

7.6 The supervisor prepares a written report on the achievement of the performance and development goals in the Probation Plan and makes a recommendation to confirm or terminate the appointment. The report, which outlines the implementation of the probation process and the reasons for the recommendation, is submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for review and approval.

7.7 Once satisfied with the report, it is then forwarded to the Director, People and Culture for action.

7.8 If the recommendation is to confirm the staff member's appointment, the Director, People and Culture advises the staff member in writing that their ongoing or fixed-term employment is confirmed.

7.9 Termination of Probationary Employment

- (a) If the recommendation is not to confirm the staff member's appointment, the Director, People and Culture provides the report of the final review of probation to the Vice-Chancellor and President.
- (b) The employment of an academic staff member can be terminated when:
- (i) the staff member has not met the requirements of the position as set out in the Probation Plan which was developed collaboratively with the supervisor; and
- (ii) the probation process has been implemented in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.
- (c) Following the provision of the report to the Vice-Chancellor and President, the Supervisor meets with the staff member to advise them of the recommendation to terminate employment. The staff member is also given a copy of the report of the final review of probation.
- (d) The staff member is entitled to respond in writing to the Vice-Chancellor and President within five working days of being advised of the recommendation to terminate employment. The response is taken into account by the Vice-Chancellor and President when considering the recommendation to terminate.
- (e) The Vice-Chancellor and President's decision is final.
- (f) Within five working days of the staff member submitting a response to the Vice-Chancellor and President, the staff member is advised in person by the supervisor, and subsequently in writing, whether their appointment is to be confirmed or terminated.
- (g) If an academic appointment is terminated, at least sixteen weeks' notice must be given and can be paid in lieu.

8. After probation

8.1 After successful completion of probation, the staff member and their supervisor participate in annual Performance Planning and Review (PPR) conversations to plan for performance and development and to foster a successful academic career.

9. Authorities/Responsibilities

9.1 The following authorities/responsibilities are delegated under this policy:

| ACTIVITY | UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE |
|--|--|
| Meet regularly with the staff member to develop and implement the Probation Plan; determine whether or not the staff member needs to complete 'Foundations' of University Teaching and plan accordingly; monitor performance and development; give guidance and support; and conduct a final review of probation to recommend to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) whether or not the probationary staff member's appointment should be confirmed. | Supervisor |
| Advise the staff member in person of the outcome of their probation. | |
| Approve the recommendation to confirm or terminate an academic staff member's appointment. | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) |
| Determine whether a recommendation to terminate probationary employment should be enacted. | Vice-Chancellor and President or nominee |
| If probation is completed successfully, advise the staff member of the outcome of their probation in writing. | Director, People and Culture |
| If probation is not completed successfully and employment is terminated, advise the staff member of the outcome of their probation in writing. | Vice-Chancellor and President |

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Academic Position Classification - Guidelines
- Performance Management - Operational Policy
- Resolution of Complaints (Staff) - Guidelines
- Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy
- Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching - Academic Policy

LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Performance Management - Operational Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- University of the Sunshine Coast Enterprise Agreement