

Probation Policy & Procedure

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1. Policy

- 1.1 This documents sets out the University's policy and procedure for providing:
- a structured probationary period for all new employees to introduce them to the main duties and responsibilities of their post and to help ensure they get the necessary support and training to help them become proficient in the role;
 - the opportunity for both the individual and the line manager to objectively assess whether the employee is suitable for the role;
 - a framework for addressing any concerns, offering support and training to address perceived unsatisfactory performance or conduct at an early stage; and
 - a process to end employment fairly and consistently during, or at the end of the probationary period, where it becomes clear that no further training or support would allow the employee to reach the required standards.
- 1.2 Managers should also refer to [St Mary's Induction Guidance for Managers](#) to support new employees' orientation in new roles.

2. Scope of the Procedure

- 2.1 This Policy and Procedure applies to all employees who are new to the University, including those on fixed term contracts. It does not apply to agency workers or self-employed contractors.
- 2.2 This Policy and Procedure applies to 'Holders of Senior Posts' and these are identified in the University's Articles of Association, as the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, any Pro-Vice Chancellors, any Assistant Pro Vice-Chancellors and the holders of such other posts as the Governors may determine.
- 2.3 This Policy and Procedure does not apply to existing employees who have already successfully completed a probationary period with St Mary's University and who are appointed internally to a new role. Employees appointed to a new role during their probationary period will continue to complete their probationary period, which may be extended in light of a change of role and objectives amended accordingly.
- 2.4 This Policy and Procedure does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and the University may make amendments to the Policy and Procedure including varying of procedures and time limits, where it considers it appropriate, and in accordance with appropriate consultation with recognised Trade Unions.
- 2.5 All employees have a responsibility to ensure the fair application of this Policy and Procedure.

3. Probation Periods

- 3.1 For professional services staff - 6 months.
- 3.2 For academic staff and holders of senior posts - 12 months.
- 3.3 For employees with a fixed term contract or funding end date shorter than the length of the relevant probationary period, the normal probation process will be followed for the duration of employment. If employment is

subsequently extended, the probation period will be extended up to the standard period.

4. Essential Training

- 4.1 There are a number of essential e-learning training modules which all employees are expected to complete during the course of their probationary period.
- 4.2 It is important for the modules to be completed to ensure new staff are fully aware of and understand their responsibilities in relation to key topics and areas of compliance. These relate to (for example) equality and inclusion, unconscious bias, dignity at work, health and safety, data protection and information security.
- 4.3 When completing the Final Probationary Review Meeting report, managers should check the new employee has successfully completed all of the essential training modules before confirming a successful probation. Managers can do this via their SMILE dashboard.

5. Probation Procedure

- 5.1 The role will be explained to the new employee by their line manager who must make clear any service standards of the Department/Faculty/Service within which the employee works and the performance standards related to their particular post in terms of:
 - Skills that must be acquired
 - Protocols that must be learnt
 - Working relationships that must be developed with employees and students
 - Behaviours
 - Timekeeping and attendance
 - Overall contribution to the team
- 5.2 The manager will hold an objective setting meeting with the employee, this will normally take place within the first 2 weeks of employment. The objectives agreed at this meeting will be assessed and monitored throughout the probation period.
- 5.3 During the employee's probation period, the manager will complete formal review meetings and regular informal reviews. A final probationary review meeting will take place towards the end of the probation process.
- 5.4 For academic staff and holders of senior posts there should be four probation meetings during the 12-month probation period; at the 3, 6, 9 and 12-month stages.
- 5.5 For professional services staff, there should be three probation meetings during the 6-month probation period; at the 2, 4 and 6-month stages.
- 5.6 The probation meetings should provide feedback to the employee on their performance and progress and are also an opportunity for the employee to provide feedback. Any problem areas should be raised with the employee as soon as possible with a view to resolving them.

- 5.7 If performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory during the probation period the line manager must discuss this with the employee and issue a Performance Improvement Plan (see Appendix 1) setting out the performance issue, the improvement that is required, the timescale for achieving this improvement, review dates and any support that will be given to assist the employee achieve the standard required.
- 5.8 The employee should be asked if any further assistance and/or training is necessary to enable them to complete tasks to the standard expected of them.
- 5.9 A clear record should be kept of each meeting using either the Professional Services Probationary Report or the Academic Staff Probation Report forms. A copy of the relevant form should be sent to the HR Department after each meeting to hrhelpdesk@stmarys.ac.uk.
- 5.10 Managers are advised to schedule probation review meetings at the commencement of employment. This should include a meeting to set probation objectives, which will normally be held within 2 weeks of the employee commencing employment.

6. End of Probation Review

- 6.1 A final probation meeting should take place towards the end of the probation period and before the date on which the employee has been in post for 6 months for professional services staff or 12 months for academic or holders of senior posts.
- 6.2 The final review meeting will discuss the employee's performance and progress throughout the probation period and consider the following factors in terms of the employee's contribution to the University:
- Behaviour and conduct demonstrated towards colleagues (and customers if appropriate to the role)
 - Timekeeping and attendance
 - Whether the probation objectives have been met
 - Mandatory training has been completed
- 6.3 Where it is apparent during the probationary period that the employee is unsuited to the role and that training or development is unlikely to achieve sufficient improvement, the manager may bring forward the final review to an earlier point in the probation period.
- 6.4 The line manager must complete the probationary outcome on the Final Probation Review Meeting section of the Probation Form.
- 6.5 Where probation has been completed satisfactorily, including any essential training modules, the line manager will advise the employee at the final review meeting and the appointment will be confirmed in writing to the employee by the HR Department.
- 6.6 Following satisfactory completion of probation, new work objectives should be set and the employee's performance will then be reviewed in line with the University's annual appraisal process.
- 6.7 The probation period will automatically continue until the employee is notified by the Human Resources Department that they have been confirmed in the role.

7. Extension of Probation Period

7.1 The University reserves the right to extend an employee's probationary period. This is the line manager's decision, in consultation with their HR Business Partner, and will normally be limited to one extension, which should not normally extend beyond three months.

7.2 It may be appropriate to extend the probationary period if:

- Through the employee's sickness or other authorised absence, it has not been possible to assess performance; or
- The employee has not performed satisfactorily but the manager has evidence to suggest that performance is likely to improve with a further period of probation.

7.3 In all cases where probation is extended the following must be discussed with the employee and confirmed in writing before the scheduled end of the probation period:

- Reasons for the extension;
- Any assistance/training that will be given in the extension period;
- Period of the extension, the performance standards expected and how performance will be monitored;
- That if performance still fails to meet expectations at the end of the period of extension, employment is likely to be terminated.

7.4 The Final Probation Review Form must be completed and emailed to HR indicating that probation has been extended and the period of the extension. At the end of the extension period, an End of Probation Following Extension Form should be completed to show whether the employee should be confirmed in post.

7.5 Managers must seek guidance from their HR Partner if considering extending a probation period.

8. Consideration for Dismissal

8.1 If, during the probationary period or at the final probation meeting, it is clear that insufficient improvement has taken place and there is evidence that it is unlikely that further training or support would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, the manager must, in consultation with their HR Business Partner, arrange a formal meeting in relation to possible termination.

8.2 The Head of Service or senior manager will chair the meeting. The line manager who conducted the previous reviews will be present to outline the case for not confirming the employee in post.

8.3 In the case of holders of senior posts, the meeting will be held with the employee, Vice- Chancellor and the Director of HR.

8.4 The chair must give at least five working days' notice of the meeting.

8.5 The employee has the right to be accompanied by a St Mary's University work colleague or recognised trade union representative at this meeting.

8.6 A member of the Human Resources Department will also be in attendance at the meeting to advise on procedural matters. Notes will be taken by a note taker as a formal record of the meeting and provided to the employee following the meeting.

- 8.7 At this meeting a full review of progress should be held and a final decision made as to whether to terminate the appointment. The decision from the meeting should be confirmed in writing to the employee, in consultation with the HR Department.
- 8.8 If an employee is dismissed at the end of their probation period they will normally be given notice or paid in lieu of notice unless the reason for dismissal is gross misconduct. Any outstanding annual leave will also be paid on termination.

9. Appeal Against Dismissal

- 9.1 Employees will have the right to appeal against a decision to terminate their employment for failure to satisfactorily complete their probation period.
- 9.2 An appeal must be lodged in writing to the Director of HR within five working days of receipt of confirmation of termination stating the grounds of the appeal.
- 9.3 An appeal against dismissal will normally take place during the notice period. If the appeal is unsuccessful, any period of notice remaining following the appeal may be paid in lieu.
- 9.4 An appeal meeting will be arranged and chaired by a senior manager not previously involved. A member of HR will be in attendance to advise on procedural matters and notes will be taken by a note taker.
- 9.5 In the case of holders of senior posts, the meeting will be held with the employee and the Chair of Governors, or in the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair of Governors.
- 9.6 The employee has the right to be accompanied by a St Mary's University work colleague or recognised trade union representative at this meeting.
- 9.7 The chair of the appeal meeting will advise the employee within 5 working days of the outcome of their appeal.
- 9.8 There is no further right of appeal.

10. Relationship with Other Policies

- 10.1 The University's Disciplinary and Sickness Absence Management policies and procedures only apply to employees who have successfully completed their probation period. For employees on probation, all aspects of conduct and performance are subject to the regular reviews outlined in Section 6 above.

11. Misconduct During Probation

- 11.1 In circumstances involving alleged misconduct, the employee will receive written notice of a meeting which will set out the details of the alleged misconduct.
- 11.2 The employee has the right to be accompanied by a St Mary's University work colleague or recognised trade union representative at this meeting.
- 11.3 Any case of misconduct during the probation period may lead to dismissal. Any case of gross misconduct may lead to summary dismissal without notice.
- 11.4 The employee will be advised of their right to appeal against a decision to dismiss them on the basis of misconduct.

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Appendix 1 - Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Template

This performance improvement plan should be completed to support the employees progress through the monitoring/review period. It should outline the agreed objectives for the duration of the monitoring/review period, any developmental needs and support agreed. It can be used as a point of reference throughout the monitoring/review period and within 1-2-1 meetings to reflect on progress made and support required.

Name: [insert name of staff member] Title: [insert job title] Department: [insert department name]

Start Date: [insert] End Date: [insert]

Key Result Area	Identified Objectives	Evidence required to demonstrate improved performance	Support Agreed	Timeframe/Target date

Individuals signature..... Date

Managers signature..... Date.....