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## **Probation (Fixed-Term Academic Staff): Guidelines for Supervisors**

### **1. What is probation?**

The purpose of a probationary period is to establish whether there is an appropriate match between the person, the job and the organisation ie the University. Probation should be viewed as a period of mutual assessment for both the staff member and the University.

### **2. Do all academic staff appointed to fixed-term position have a probationary period?**

All new academic staff appointed to a fixed-term post will normally be required to serve a probationary period. Staff appointed to a second or subsequent fixed-term position with the University are not generally required to serve an additional probationary period unless the second or subsequent appointment is significantly different in duties and/or classification academic level from the original appointment.

### **3. How long is the probationary period for fixed-term academic staff?**

The length of the probationary period depends on the duration of appointment and nature of the position, and is specified in the letter of offer. A probationary period cannot be extended.

### **4. What is the supervisor's role during the probationary period?**

A supervisor is responsible for:

- discussing with the staff member the requirements of the position and of the probationary period
- providing appropriate feedback, support and training to the staff member during the probationary period
- in circumstances where the supervisor has determined the position is prescribed, ensuring the staff member has a valid child-related employment screening and does not work with students on an individual basis unsupervised until clearance has been obtained, and
- determining whether the staff member's employment is to be confirmed.

### **5. How should performance and conduct be reviewed during the probationary period?**

#### **In the first week**

The supervisor should discuss and confirm with the staff member:

- the requirements of the position, including the duties and expectations of the position, with regard to the relevant academic profile
- orientation and induction training requirements
- the outcomes expected during the probationary period (including that, if in a prescribed position, they have obtained a valid child-related employment screening or have an application in progress), and

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- general obligations with respect to due care, diligence and skill in the performance of their work and compliance with University policies and directions.

Resources on the University's Staff Development and Training web page for new staff may be used to assist with this process.

### **Regular meetings to review progress**

The supervisor should meet with the staff member regularly during the probationary period. At these meetings, the supervisor should:

- provide feedback on the staff member's performance to date
- clarify any outstanding matters with respect to the requirements of the position and/or the probationary period (including, if they are in a prescribed position, having a valid child-related employment screening)
- identify any support or training required
- identify any gaps in performance or conduct.

### **Concerns with performance/conduct**

Where a supervisor is concerned about any aspect of the staff member's performance or conduct, advice should be sought from the [People and Culture Business Partner](#) (see 7 below).

### **Approximately 8 weeks prior to the end of the probationary period**

The supervisor of a staff member whose probation is due to end will be notified by People and Culture (by automated email) normally 8 weeks in advance of the probationary end date.

Around this time, the supervisor should meet with the staff member to confirm the outcome of the probationary period.

### **Documentation**

A supervisor should record briefly the outcome of discussions with the staff member at the regular meetings held during the probationary period. A more comprehensive record should be kept if the supervisor has concerns about the staff member's performance or conduct.

## **6. What criteria should be used to assess whether the staff member has satisfactorily completed the probationary period?**

A supervisor must be satisfied that the staff member has:

- performed satisfactorily overall in the position
- completed relevant orientation and inducting training as required
- a valid child-related employment screening if the staff member is in a prescribed position, and
- complied with general University policies and directions.

Given the length of a probationary period it is unlikely that a staff member will have performed all requirements of the position. The supervisor therefore needs to form an overall view of whether the staff member has demonstrated:

- a capacity and willingness to undertake the duties of the position (in particular, that the staff member's knowledge base/skill level is appropriate to the requirements of the position and the relevant academic profile)
- a capacity to achieve outcomes as required of the position
- a willingness to respond to direction, and

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- satisfactory conduct.

Poor performance in teaching or research may provide grounds for not confirming employment notwithstanding satisfactory performance in other areas.

## **7. What if a staff member's performance or conduct is less than satisfactory?**

If a supervisor is of the view the staff member's performance or conduct is less than satisfactory at any stage during the probationary period, the supervisor should contact the relevant People and Culture Business Partner to confirm the steps that must be taken to counsel the staff member about gaps in performance or conduct. It is most important that action is taken quickly and as early as possible in the probationary period in these circumstances.

## **8. What must the supervisor do to confirm/not confirm employment at the end of the probationary period?**

No later than six weeks prior to the end of the probationary period, the supervisor must recommend to People and Culture that:

- the appointment be confirmed  
In most cases, the supervisor will be able to advise the staff member that a recommendation will be made to People and Culture that their probationary period has been completed satisfactorily, OR
- the appointment not be confirmed on the grounds that the performance and/or conduct during the probationary period has not been satisfactory.

People and Culture will advise the staff member whether their appointment has been confirmed.

### **Related Links:**

[Probation for Academic Staff](#) (Flinders University Enterprise Agreement 2023 to 2026 clause C63)