OUR PEOPLE PRACTICES/PROBATION SCHEME:

For professional, managerial, support & research staff

March 2017
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WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

We recognise the importance of welcoming our new staff to the University and providing you with support and guidance in your first months with us.

Our aim is to help you integrate effectively into your new role at the University, so that you:

- develop an understanding of how the University works and how your role contributes to its success;
- are provided with:
  - a clear understanding of your new role, our expectations, and,
  - the learning & development support needed;
- are able to effectively undertake your role so you can maximise your potential and gain confidence in your new role;
- can become familiar with the culture and working environment of the University of Kent.

The Probation Scheme at the University of Kent is the tool that enables us to do this.

The guidance documents that underpin the scheme explain the probationary process, what is involved and what is expected of staff undertaking a probationary period.

During probation your line manager will provide any necessary information and development that will help you to undertake all aspects of your role.

Your manager will ensure systems are in place to review your work during this period, so you receive assistance and support to help you fulfill the duties and responsibilities of your role.

Further guidance about the University of Kent Probation Scheme can be found on the HR website here.

The New Staff at Kent section of the HR website also provides useful information to help you settle in to working here and the Good Practice Guide for International Staff provides information for staff from overseas on settling in to life in the UK.

The Probation Scheme at the University of Kent is a four-stage process over six months:

**Stage 1 - Welcome**
End of week 1

**Stage 2 - formal review**
End of week 6

**Stage 3 - formal review**
End of month 3

**Stage 4 - Final review**
Start of month 6
WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY (CONT)

Key principles

1. Successfully completing the Probation Scheme is a requirement for all staff\(^1\) in professional, managerial, support and research roles and this requirement is stated in your Conditions of Service.

2. Under this scheme all staff will be subject to a six month probationary period\(^2\).

3. Probation is an ongoing process; it is about the day to day informal interactions between you, your line manager and other team members, as well as the formal reviews you will have at key stages during your probationary period. This will involve the giving of open and honest, constructive feedback.

4. Probation is closely linked to the University Induction policy, as well as wider staff development and, together, these processes create a positive and supportive working environment, which will allow you to settle in at the University and learn key elements of your role, within a reasonable and realistic timeframe.

5. The purpose of probation is to provide you with the necessary support and development required for you to be able to perform your role to the best of your ability. Your line manager will support you to do this.

6. The outcomes and objectives of your formal probation meetings must be recorded on the Probation Form. The form will be stored securely by your line manager but should be easily accessible by both of you, so you can review your progress against your targets. Probation Forms will not be static; they will be updated, amended and developed as your probation progresses, reflecting the developments you have made during this period. At the end of your probationary period a copy of your Probation Form will be sent to Human Resources (HR), who will store it securely on your personal file.

7. The University appraisal scheme, Reflect, Plan, Develop (RPD) does not apply during your probationary period. However, after you have completed probation, the Probation Scheme naturally develops into the RPD Scheme, as well as other University development and reward processes (such as Regrade and Salary Award), as appropriate. Further information about this is provided at Completing probation.

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\(^1\) The Probation Scheme applies to all substantive roles, be they full or part time, fixed term or open ended. Timesheet and Temp Bank staff are not covered by this scheme.

\(^2\) For those staff on a fixed term contract of less than 6 months, the probationary period will run for the duration of the contract. If the contract is extended, probation will continue until you accrue 6 months service, at which point your probationary period will end and you will be confirmed in post for the remainder of your fixed term period with us.

In exceptional circumstances you may be confirmed in post before the end of the probation period. Please refer to Early completion of probation for more information.

In addition, a probationary period may be extended to 6 working months in certain circumstances, such as prolonged absence or Term Time Only contracts.
8. Existing members of staff who are promoted, regraded or transferred within the University will not normally be subject to a probationary period. However, the best-practice principles laid out in this scheme can still be applied in this instance. For example, we encourage managers to regularly meet with, set objectives and identify development opportunities, for staff when they are promoted, regraded or transfer roles, to help them understand the requirements and responsibilities of the new role. In this instance, any performance issues would not be dealt with via the probationary process, but under Ordinance 37: Performance Improvement, as they would in any other instance where there are performance concerns.

9. During probation you may resign from your employment by giving the University one week’s notice within your first three month’s service with us. Additionally, and where appropriate, the University of Kent may give one weeks’ notice to terminate your appointment during this period. From three months service, until the completion of your probationary period you will be required to give the University one month’s notice. Similarly, during this period the University will give you one month’s notice.

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3 Unless your six month probationary period is not completed prior to you changing role. In this instance, the remainder of your probationary period will be carried over into your new role and appointment will not be confirmed until you have successfully completed probation.
THE FOUR-STAGE PROBATIONARY PROCESS

The Probation Scheme at the University of Kent is a four-stage process that takes place over six months.

**Stage 1: first week**
You will meet with your manager at various points during your first week at Kent, to orientate you into your role and team.

**Stage 2: interim review**
Your manager will arrange an interim review to discuss your progress, review any objectives set, agree further ones as needed and discuss development requirements.
This should be done before the end of week six.

**Stage 3: interim review**
Your manager will arrange an interim review to discuss your progress, review any objectives set, agree further ones as needed, and discuss development requirements.
This should be done before the end of month three.

**Stage 4: final review**
Your manager will arrange a final review to discuss your progress during probation, sign off on your probation period and set on-going development objectives for your role.
This should be done before the end of month six.

In addition to these stages both you and your line manager will have to do some preparatory work prior to commencing your probation and there should still be informal conversations and one-to-ones with your line manager after the probation process is completed; these will naturally flow into your annual Reflect, Plan, Develop (RPD) conversation. Further information about the end of your probation process can be found in the Completing probation section.

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4 One-to-ones allow managers and staff to ‘check in’. They encourage better relationships and performance through regular, good quality communication. Holding regular, structured one-to-ones with staff are often regarded as the most important thing a manager does and are an effective way of improving and maintaining performance.
Setting the scene: preparing for probation

Prior to commencing your employment with us, you will be sent information about our Probation Scheme. We recommend you read this guidance before you start work.

Your line manager will ensure a structured Probation & Induction Programme is organised prior to your start date; outlining the standards and objectives that will be set in your new role and how you will be orientated into the role over your first few weeks.

Your Probation & Induction Programme may include such things as:

- orientation into the department, including showing you around the department and introducing the wider University campus;
- time to meet your team and the wider school/department, including one-to-ones with your manager, Director/Head of school/department and other team members as needed;
- introducing you to your Probation Mentor;
- meetings with the key stakeholders for your role;
- scheduling time for you to shadow work colleagues as needed;
- time set aside for reading of University-wide, Faculty and department-specific processes, policies and procedures;
- details of any key learning or development opportunities that have been organised for you. For example, time to spend at a PC undertaking the Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity (EDI) e-learning module, booking you onto relevant Health & Safety courses and any role-specific development felt appropriate;
- dates of your interim and final probationary review meetings, as well as any one-to-ones.

On your first day your line manager will talk you through the probation process and welcome you to your new role, providing you with information they have prepared in advance about the expectations regarding your work performance, conduct and attendance and (if they have not already sent it to you in advance) a copy of your Probation & Induction Programme.

Your manager will talk you through your job description and main duties of the role as required, detailing any key service and performance standards specific to your school/department. This may include:

- setting expectations of expected behaviours, in line with the principles set out in the University's Code of Conduct;
- quality and quantity of output expected;
- any skills you will need to acquire during your probationary period;
- protocols that you will need to learn;
- deadlines which will need to be met and how any changes to these will be communicated;

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5 A named member of your team will be briefed to act as a source of advice and guidance during your probation period. For further information, please see Support & development during probation.
THE FOUR-STAGE PROBATIONARY PROCESS (CONT)

- working relationships you will need to develop with
- key stakeholders, including other staff and students.

Your manager will make clear how these standards will be monitored throughout your probationary period and the frequency of your formal review meetings, in line with the Scheme’s guidance.

Your manager will also assign a Probation Mentor to support you during your probationary period. Your mentor will normally be a more experienced member of the team, who can help you settle during your probation, acting as a source of advice and information and as a confidential ear.

For more information see Support & development during probation.

You will also be given a Probation & Induction Checklist which details standard information and activities to undertake at the appropriate stages of probation. This should be referred to regularly throughout your probation period and any activities marked as completed once undertaken.

Once you have started in post the Learning & Development team will also write to you to invite you to the next Induction & Information Fair. Further information about the Induction & Information Fair is available by contacting the Learning & Development Team at ldev@kent.ac.uk, extension 7713 or via the Learning & Development website.
Stage 1: your first week

At the end of your first week your line manager will meet with you to check how you have settled in and to start to set some objectives and goals to work towards over your probationary period.

1. Your line manager will clarify the duties and responsibilities of your role in line with your terms and conditions of service and job description (which should be provided, if not already). This will include:
   - key aspects of the role
   - policies and procedures that must be followed
   - deadlines that need to be adhered to
   - working hours – including any flexitime arrangements/processes
   - working environment.

2. Depending on the role and where appropriate, initial objectives may also be set. These objectives should be SMART® (See Support & development during probation) and clearly detail how your performance against these will be monitored.

3. Your Probation & Induction Programme will be reviewed and any further meetings or development activities added, as needed.

4. You line manager will establish the standards of performance and conduct required and any action necessary (for example, on-the-job learning) to ensure you can meet them over the rest of your probationary period.

5. The relevant parts of your Probation & Induction Checklist will be completed as appropriate.

6. Any actions and objectives from this meeting must be recorded on the Probation Form so that you can both refer to it throughout your probation.

Stage 2: first interim review

By the end of your sixth week your line manager will schedule a first interim review meeting to review your progress against your objectives and more generally.

1. Comments made at your Stage 1 meeting and any objectives set will be reviewed and updated as needed.

2. Any further objectives or development needs will be identified and recorded.

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® SMART = Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Realistic and time-based.
THE FOUR-STAGE PROBATIONARY PROCESS (CONT)

3. Where there are any areas of concern your manager will raise these with you and talk honestly about expectations, so you can work together to identify any additional development or support you may need to improve these areas.

4. Where problems are performance related, clear objectives and timescales will be set so you can work towards improvement. In some instances this may involve the identification of specific courses (where available through Learning & Development), further practice, on-the-job training, additional reading materials, shadowing or meeting with others.

5. Your interim review meeting also provides you with the opportunity to discuss any concerns or queries that you have, or to discuss any development opportunities you may have identified during your first few weeks in the role.

6. The relevant parts of your Probation & Induction Checklist will be completed and your Probation Form updated as required.

Stage 3: second interim review

By the end of your third month your line manager will schedule a second interim review meeting. This meeting will follow the same format as detailed above. Where any areas of concern were raised at your last meeting, your manager should also discuss your progress in these areas and look to find further support, where practicable.
Stage 4: final review

By the start of your sixth month in post your manager will schedule your final review meeting. In most cases, if probation and induction has been delivered effectively, standards have been set and understood and any necessary supportive action taken, then the probationary period will be successfully completed. The final review meeting provides an opportunity for your manager to highlight positive aspects and areas for further attention, and set any ongoing objectives, which can then be taken up in future one-to-ones and via RPD, the University appraisal process.

A record of this meeting should be detailed on the Probation Form so that you can both refer to it in future.

A copy of the completed form, along with your completed Probation & Induction Checklist should also be sent to HR Operational Services. Upon receipt they will formally write to you to confirm you in post.

HR will not confirm you in post until all the necessary paperwork has been received and relevant activities have been signed off as completed. Where this information is not received HR will liaise with your line manager for further information.

In some cases the required standards for the role (for example, progress, attendance, timekeeping) will not have been met at the end of a probationary period. Concerns about your probation will not be first raised at your final review meeting (unless they have only just occurred). In these instances your manager will have kept you informed of concerns throughout your probation and will have worked with you at your interim review meetings to put in place any necessary additional support or development activities to help you meet these standards.

Where this is the case your manager will inform you at your final review meeting (and follow up in writing) that they intend to extend your probationary period to enable you further time to meet the required standards.

Information about this process can be found in the Completing probation guidance.

Early completion of probation

In exceptional circumstances you may be confirmed in post before the end of your six-month probationary period, for example where you are performing at a level over and above what would be expected at this stage of employment.

In these instances managers may confirm you in post at an interim review meeting. Confirmation in post will be subject to any outstanding actions on the Probation & Induction Schedule still being completed and continued support and throughout what would be left of your probationary period, by your line manager.
SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT DURING PROBATION

Your line manager

Your line manager will act as your probation supervisor throughout your probationary period. They will ensure you understand the duties and responsibilities of your role, provide you with relevant learning and development opportunities as needed and formally review your progress during your probation.

Your manager will:

- Prepare for you joining the University by:
  - creating a Probation & Induction Programme (this may be done in conjunction with others where necessary);
  - becoming familiar with the University Probation Scheme, particularly the Monitoring performance during probation: manager guidance section
  - liaising with the Employee Relations & Business Partnering team in HR if they have any questions or queries on the process;
- clarify the duties and responsibilities of your role;
- ensure you undertake a full probationary process and complete the necessary paperwork to demonstrate this, in accordance with the Probation Scheme;
- agree and set dates for review meetings during your probationary period;
- act upon any learning and development objectives and evaluate them;
- continuously review your performance, reviewing objectives and development needs through the formal review meetings, as well as more frequent on-the-job discussions;
- communicate with you about your work throughout your probationary period, giving open honest and constructive feedback on performance (good or bad) at the time it occurs and at the formal review meetings;
- ensure the Probation Form and Probation & Induction Checklist are completed, before returning them to HR Operational Services after the end of your probation period to advise on the outcome of your probation.

Your probation mentor

A named member of your school/department will be identified by your line manager and fully briefed to support you through your probationary period.

They will be expected to meet with you regularly to give guidance and help in all aspects of your work and to help you settle in at the University, but will not report formally on your progress.

The responsibilities of a mentor will vary according to your role; they may be someone within your immediate work team who can provide on the job training and support and answer ad hoc queries as you are learning your role. Alternatively they may be someone from the wider
University working in a similar role to yours and who is able to provide you with any broader support and guidance you may have.

In all instances the main aims of your probation mentor are to:

- provide general induction support;
- provide a source of help and advice on all aspects of your role;
- support the translation of your skills into the workplace;
- provide constructive feedback;
- provide a ‘critical friend’ outside the management framework;
- act as a ‘confidential ear’.

Whilst your probation mentor is specifically there to offer you advice and support during your probation period, should you both wish to continue the arrangement after your probation you are encouraged to do so.

The HR team

The HR team are responsible for ensuring the University has appropriate mechanisms for helping staff to successfully complete probation. All the necessary guidance and information is provided on the Human Resources website and you are recommended to look their first if you need to find further information. In addition:

1. HR Operational Services will:
   - write to you to with your formal offer of employment and provide you with details on the University Probation Scheme;
   - contact your line manager to provide them with details of your terms and conditions of employment and provide them with the details of the Probation Scheme and their responsibilities;
   - write to you to inform you that you have been confirmed in post, following completion of a successful probationary period and all relevant documentation including the Probation & Induction checklist have been completed.

2. Employee Relations & Business Partnering team:
   - If you have read the website documents and need some further information, your ER Adviser can assist with this during the probation process.
   - They will support you and your line manager if there are issues during the probationary period, such as if probation needs extending or if probation leads to non-confirmation in post.
   - They will also ensure that there is consistency of application in the use of the Probation Scheme at the University of Kent, by giving briefing sessions to line managers on the practical application of the Scheme and providing advice and guidance to managers as and when needed throughout the probation period.
Your responsibilities in preparing for review meetings

In advance of your review meetings you may wish to consider the following points to help you to demonstrate your progress to date and capture any key points on your Probation Form:

- **Standard of work:**
  How do you think you have demonstrated the required skills and knowledge required of you in your new role?

- **Work output:**
  Do you feel you are making progress in the amount of work you are doing? What can be done to help with this? What progress do you feel you have made against the objectives previously set?

- **Communication:**
  How well do you feel other people within the department have communicated with you? Have you built any external relationships with stakeholders, if so with whom and how did you go about this?

- **Support:**
  What training, development and support have you had to date? Are there any areas where you feel you would benefit from additional training, development or support?
SMART Objectives

As part of your probationary period your line manager may set you SMART objectives to work towards; these will help to provide clarity on what and when specific activities need to be achieved during your probation. They could be linked to learning new processes or systems, or meeting key stakeholders and clarifying any job-specific development needs you may have.

Your objectives not only help you to understand what it is you are working towards but also help to provide line of sight, for example how your role fits within your wider team or department and how collectively we work to achieve the University’s goals.

We advise our line managers to set SMART objectives as this can be a useful tool to ensure the objective, its parameters and timescales, are clear and measurable:

S  Specific
   What, and how, it should be done

M  Measurable
   Identifies how it will be known that the activity has been achieved

A  Achievable or Action-orientated
   A plan to deliver the objective is identified

R  Realistic
   The staff member has the resources and is equipped to be able to do the activity successfully

T  Time-based
   Clarity on any date/deadline by which the activity needs to be completed. Allocating too much time can sometimes negatively affect the achievement of the objective

Essential learning & development

1. Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity

The University is committed to creating a positive working environment, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and is supported in the development of their career.

To support this cultural aim, you are required as part of your probation to undertake and satisfactorily complete the University Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity e-learning module. This can be accessed here.

The course covers an introduction to the concepts of diversity, equality and equal opportunities, an explanation as to why diversity is so important to us, an overview of relevant legislation and challenging unacceptable behaviour, as well as helping you to understand your responsibilities and rights as a member of staff.
SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT DURING PROBATION (CONT)

The whole module takes approximately two hours and you should ensure there is appropriate time during your probation to undertake this course.

2. University regulations

It is a requirement of the University that all new staff are made aware of specific regulations, for example in relation to IT systems and equipment, Data Protection and Health & Safety.

You should ensure there is appropriate time during your probation to familiarise yourself with these regulations.

Details on the relevant regulations can be found here:
- IT regulations
- Data Protection
- Safety, Health & Environment

3. Induction & Information Fair

The University Induction & Information Fair provides an important way to orientate you to the University of Kent and support you in your new role, helping you to feel part of the wider University. It is a requirement of your probation that you attend an Induction event.

The Induction & Information Fair is a half day event which introduces you to the University of Kent, our aims, direction and wider issues. It will provide you with an overview of key information about the University and will allow you to meet other new starters from across the University. The Fair also allows you the opportunity to find out more about different departments, activities, events and opportunities across the university.

As a new member of staff you will automatically be invited by the Learning & Development team to attend the Induction & Information Fair. To find out more about the event or to speak to a member of the Learning & Development team about induction, please contact them at ldev@kent.ac.uk, extension 7713, or via the Learning & Development website here.

4. Role-Specific development

Depending on your role there may also be the requirement to undertake role-specific learning and development; if this is the case your line manager will confirm what this will involve and will plan it into your Induction & Probation Programme.
MONITORING PERFORMANCE DURING PROBATION: MANAGER GUIDANCE

Preparing for your new member of staff

The Probation Scheme is a learning programme designed to support new staff settle into their role and welcome them to the University of Kent. The probation period should encompass planned and paced job-related development to enable your new staff member to become proficient in their role quickly and effectively, balanced by the need for them to understand the wider University context.

As part of this there will be mandatory steps that your new member of staff will need to undertake, for example equality, diversity & inclusivity, data protection, and safety, health and environment courses, as well as certain policies and procedures (both at University and local level) they will need to become familiar with, along with the specifics of the job.

It is, therefore, important that before your new staff member joins the University, you plan some of the key things they will need to undertake during their first few weeks, key people to meet and any on-the-job development needed.

The easiest way to do this is to draw up a Probation & Induction Programme. A template to help you do this is available on the probation section of the HR website.

Preparing for review meetings

As well as having frequent one to ones with your probationer as and when the need arises, you will be required to complete formal review meetings with them during the probation period; within their first week; at the end of week six; at the end of month three and a final review within the first two weeks of their sixth month.

We believe the provision of regular feedback at an early stage is beneficial to both your member of staff and the University, and allows staff a fair opportunity to improve their performance or change behaviour, where required. It is, therefore, important you both prepare for these meetings to ensure you both get the most out of this process.

Some of things you may wish to consider when preparing for review meetings are:

1. Prepare your probationer
   - Remind them of the date of your review meeting.
   - Ensure they have a copy of the relevant paperwork (a copy of the Probation Scheme, Probation & Induction Programme, Probation & Induction Checklist, Probation Form, their job description), as needed.
2. Prepare the situation
   - Ensure you have enough time to hold a review meeting. This will differ dependent upon role and objectives but you will need to ensure enough time is set aside to have a meaningful and effective conversation.
   - Book a suitable venue, free from interruptions and easily accessible for both of you.

3. Prepare yourself
   - Revisit the job description to ensure you understand the duties and responsibilities of the role.
   - Review the Probation & Induction Checklist to ascertain whether there are any areas they still need to undertake at a University level.
   - Review the Probation & Induction Programme to see if any meetings or development activities need to be carried forwards.
   - At the second, third and fourth stage review meetings, ensure you have revisited the Probation Form to review objectives set, their on-going relevance, and to consider progress against these.
   - Consider any informal conversations and one-to-ones you have had since your last formal review.
   - What role-specific learning and development is still required?
   - Are there any job or departmental changes that you can foresee for the immediate future that should be discussed?
   - Consider if your new team member requires any additional support with regard to any of the Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010), or any other support.
   - Finally, consider anything else that may be relevant for discussion. For example, ensure your probationer understands their personal responsibility to uphold the University’s safety, health and environment regulations.

Setting SMART objectives

For probation to be successful it is important you set your probationer clear standards and goals to work towards; something that you can then monitor performance against to monitor progress. Depending on the role and providing an agreement is reached, an effective way of doing this is by using **SMART objectives**.

The setting of objectives provides clarity on what and when specific activities need to be achieved. It helps not only your probationer understand what they are working towards but also allows you to ensure all the roles within your team are working towards the same goals and that this in turn supports your school or departmental targets and goals *(line of sight)*.

You should ensure any objectives set are discussed fully with your probationer, both at the formal review meetings and any informal one-to-ones you have with them.
This should be done in a way that you can both clearly understand and assess what needs to be done, when it needs to be done by, and any additional support (if needed) that will be given to help achieve the objectives.

It is possible that objectives will change or become obsolete during the probation period, as priorities for both the role and the wider team may change, or as your probationer successfully completes an objective. It is therefore important that these objectives are recorded on the Probation Form so that progress against them can be reviewed at the formal review meetings (or sooner if there are concerns) and amended or updated as required.

In order to set effective objectives, the acronym SMART is often seen as a useful tool. The key principles of SMART should be applied to each objective. Further information on the definition of a SMART objective is provided at Support & development during probation.

**Monitoring progress**

When monitoring your probationer’s progress you may wish to consider the following points to discuss at the formal review meetings (a summary of this conversation, along with any SMART objectives set should be captured on the Probation Form):

- **Standard of work:**
  Is your probationer starting to produce work that is relatively error-free and demonstrating that they are capable of performing at the level expected?
  To what extent have the skills and knowledge required for the role been demonstrated so far?
  How satisfactory is the quality and quantity of work? (Please remember to be realistic in the early stage of probation)

- **Work output:**
  Is your probationer making progress in the amount of work they are doing?
  What progress has been made against the objectives previously set?

- **Communication:**
  How well does your probationer communicate with you and others? (for example, in the team, the wider department, with stakeholders and external contacts)

- **Support:**
  What learning, development and support has your probationer been provided with throughout probation?
  Does your probationer feel they are getting all the support required?
  Does your probationer require any additional support with regard to any of the Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010), or any other support, and have there have been any changes for them in this area during the probation period?

- **Attendance:**
  Is your probationer punctual; what is their attendance and sickness records like? Are there sound reasons if there have been any attendance problems?
MANAGER GUIDANCE (CONT)

Difficulties during probation

If there are any difficulties in any of the above areas you should investigate why this may be the case. Talk to your probationer honestly about your concerns and indicate how an improvement can be made and offer support if required or requested.

Don’t wait until a formal review meeting to discuss this with your probationer (unless it is immediately prior to one of these meetings); instead talk to them as soon as the problems arise so that you can work on a plan of action with them to rectify the situation and which you can then review at the next formal review meeting.

Timescales for improvement should be discussed and agreed and confirmed in writing (on the Probation Review Form). You should also seek advice from your ER Adviser.

Instances of misconduct should also be dealt with during the probationary period. In instances of serious or possible gross misconduct a Probation Hearing may need to be held before the end of the six month period. For further information please see Completing probation.
COMPLETING PROBATION

In most instances the completion of a probation period will result in confirmation in post.

At the end of your probation your line manager should send a copy of your Probation Form, along with your completed Probation & Induction Checklist to HR Operational Services, who will then write to you to confirm you in post.

Your development doesn’t end here though. Your line manager should continue to meet with you informally to discuss your role, any changes to your work or the wider team, to explain the wider impact your role may have on your department or the University and to work with you to achieve departmental goals and objectives.

Continuing your learning

As you develop in your role over the coming months you may also want to look at other learning and development you feel may support you in your role; this should be discussed with your line manager in your one to ones and more specifically at your annual RPD conversation.

You may wish to look at creating a Personal Development Plan to help you do this and map out any future career progression or learning activities you wish to undertake.
COMPLETING PROBATION (CONT)

Difficulties during probation

We recognise that sometimes staff are not able to demonstrate the required level of performance after six months. In these instances we will work with you to try and make the necessary improvements so you are able to maximise your potential and fulfil the requirements of your role.

If there have been difficulties during probation these will have been explained to you throughout your probation period. Your line manager will work with you to address these concerns and put in place any necessary steps to help rectify these issues. This may include undertaking additional development activities, providing additional support or coaching via your probation mentor or other members of your team, or explaining the standards of work and conduct that are expected.

It is hoped that your probation period will allow time for you to improve where needed in these areas; however, we recognise that sometimes concerns come to light towards the end of a probation period, or that more time may be needed to work on certain areas.

Where this is the case and your line manager is not able to sign off your probation at your final review meeting, they will clearly explain the reasons for this and what the next stage of the process will be.

Extending probationary periods

In some instances it may be felt that an extension of the probation period will allow time for further improvements to be made. For example, it may be appropriate to extend the probation period if (this list is not exhaustive):

- through absence (be that sickness, working patterns or other authorised absence reasons) it has not been possible to assess performance;
- special factors that may have prevented a fully effective induction eg a lack of handover notes/arrangements due to the unexpected loss of the previous post holder and which mean that you may reasonably need to take longer to fully assimilate the requirements of the role and demonstrate competence;
- your performance has improved but is not yet at the required standard; however, your line manager has evidence to suggest that performance is likely to improve with support given over a further period of probation.

If your line manager feels that an extension of probation is warranted, they should clearly explain the reasons for this and the time period for extension (enough time should be given to reasonably allow an improvement to be made but should not normally be for longer than three months).

Your manager will complete a Probation Extension Form, which will summarise the reason for the extension, have clearly defined objectives to measure the improvements require against, and the timeframe of the extension period.
The Probation Extension Form must be approved by your line managers’ manager and sent to HR (Employee Relations & Business Partnering team) to sign.

HR will then formally write to you to confirm your extension and will provide you with a copy of the Probation Extension Form so you are clear on the objectives that have been set for you during this period.

The letter will confirm:

- the required length of the extension (which will not normally be longer than three months);
- details on the performance standards that will be monitored during this period, what is expected and the way in which performance will be monitored (this requirement may be waived where there are special factors as outlined above);
- an indication of the areas of the role where you have not yet fully demonstrated competence;
- any additional support or development that will be given during this period;
- confirmation that your line manager will agree with you dates for further interim and final review meetings as needed;
- that a probation hearing will be arranged (and that the outcome of that may be termination of employment), if performance has not improved following the extension.

During your probation extension, your manager should continue to meet with you regularly to provide you with any support and/or development that has been identified to help you meet the required performance levels. Progress against your objectives should be recorded on the Probation Extension Form.

Once you have reached the required level of performance (either at the end of your extension period or sooner if applicable), your manager should meet with you to confirm this and forward all paperwork on to the HR Operational Services team, for them to formally confirm you in post.

If however, despite a period of extension, the required improvements in your conduct/performance have not been made, your line manager should meet with you at the end of your probation extension and clearly explain the reasons for this and confirm that the next stage will be to arrange a probation hearing (please see Probation hearing, below)

A record of where the improvements fall short should be made on the Probation Extension Form and a copy of the form will be sent to HR Operational Services.

**Conduct & behaviour during probation**

The purpose of probation is to equip you with the skills and knowledge to be able to effectively undertake your role. It is also about detailing the standards of behaviour and conduct we expect our staff to uphold.

Where conduct or behaviour falls below acceptable levels your line manager will discuss this with you during your formal review meetings and any one-to-ones, as appropriate.
COMPLETING PROBATION (CONT)

They will explain to you what behaviour/conduct was unacceptable and why, will clearly outline what the expected levels of behaviour/conduct are, and will monitor this as part of your probationary period.

In some instances, where conduct or behaviour during probation has fallen below acceptable levels and may constitute serious or gross misconduct, a probation hearing may be held before the end of the probationary period.

In these instances the below procedure for convening a panel shall be followed:

- Prior to any disciplinary action being taken a full and thorough investigation will be carried out. In most cases this will be undertaken by the line manager, or where appropriate, an independent investigating officer and will be in liaison with Human Resources;
- Investigatory meetings will be held where required, any relevant witnesses will be interviewed and relevant evidence gathered to understand the circumstances;
- The line manager/investigating officer will gather the facts and understand the circumstances and will conclude by deciding whether there is a case to answer;
- If it is felt there is sufficient evidence that there is a case to answer a probationary hearing will be arranged, as detailed below (see Probation hearing).
- The outcome of such a hearing could be the issuing of an appropriate disciplinary sanction, or termination of employment, either with or without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

Where a further hearing is required at the end of your extension, your ER Adviser will confirm this in writing and will give you appropriate notice of the date. You will have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work-place colleague and HR will be present at the hearing to provide advice to the panel. The panel will consist of three independent and appropriately senior members of staff.

At the hearing your line manager will summarise the reason for the extension and performance during this period and you will be given the opportunity to comment on the areas of concern and put forward any mitigating circumstances you feel may be relevant.

The panel will consider the information presented to them and will either confirm you in post or terminate your employment. In either instance the outcome will be confirmed in writing.

**Probation hearing**

The purpose of a probation hearing is to determine the appropriate course of action, which may be a (further) extension of probationary period or ending your employment with the University (non-confirmation).

Non-confirmation of appointment should only be considered when support and development have been given during probation (or following an extension to the probation period) and you have failed to attain the required standards, or where a serious act of misconduct has occurred that needs to be investigated and considered before the end of probation.
HR will write to you to confirm the date of the hearing, the reasons behind the requirements for a hearing and your right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or workplace colleague.

You will be given adequate notice of the hearing and the letter will explain the possible outcomes.

At the hearing your line manager will provide a brief summary of the concerns, actions taken to date to remedy the situation and why any actions have not yet worked. You will also be given the opportunity to comment on the areas of concern and provide any mitigating circumstances you feel may be relevant.

The hearing will be heard by three independent and appropriately senior members of staff and they will consider the information given to them, in conjunction with HR, to determine the best course of action.

Where necessary, the panel will consider any conduct or behaviour issues raised during your probation when deciding whether or not to confirm you in post.

Where appropriate, evidence or examples of the probationary issues, the support given to help you achieve these and the reasons for non-achievement should be clearly discussed. In these instances it is important you have the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised and to ask any questions you may have. HR will ensure that due consideration has been given to your individual circumstances.

Where the panel decide not to confirm you in post this will be followed up in writing, confirming the reasons for the decision, your notice period (if applicable), final date of employment and your right to appeal the decision.

**Right of appeal**

You will have the right of appeal against the decision of the probation hearing. To do this you must write to the Director of Human Resources, or their nominee (as detailed in your hearing outcome letter) within five working days of receipt of the outcome letter.

Appeals will be heard by two independent and appropriately senior members of staff, who have had no previous involvement with your probation.

You will have the right to be accompanied at your appeal hearing by a Trade Union representative or workplace colleague and HR will be in attendance to provide advice to the panel.
For further information about probation and the Probation Scheme, please visit the probation section of the Human Resources website.

Alternatively you can contact your designated HR representative, details of whom are available on the Who to Contact section of the HR website.