

Academic Employee Probation

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1.0 Purpose

This procedure outlines the process to be followed by academic employees and supervisors during an employee's probationary period. The probation period is part of the appointment process and offers a period of mutual testing to determine whether there is an appropriate match between the individual, the job and the work environment.

2.0 Scope

This procedure applies to all continuing and fixed term academic employees. A probation period does not apply to casual academic employees.

3.0 Procedure

During probation, academic employees are required to demonstrate that they are able to perform the duties and responsibilities assigned to them to an acceptable level.

The 2023 - 2025 Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement (EA) determines the University's approach to managing employment within the Probation Period.

3.1 Probation period

The maximum initial probation period for an Academic position is three years. The probation period for a fixed term employee commencing their first appointment will be proportionate to the length of the fixed term employment period. The minimum probation period for a fixed term contract of 12 months or greater is three months.

Where the fixed term employment is renewed for a second or subsequent reasonably contiguous (i.e. the same or substantially similar) appointment in a position of the same or similar duties an additional probation period will not apply.

Where the employee is commencing a substantially new position a new probation period may apply.

3.2 Extending probation periods

The University may consider extending a probation period in the circumstances where an employee has had a significant period of continuous absence which has prevented them from performing the majority of the responsibilities and accountabilities of a position.

An extension can be approved by the Head of Element based on advice from the respective HR Business Partner.

3.3 Waiving or removing a probation period

A probationary period may be reduced or waived in circumstances where probation has already been successfully served in full at the University and/or in recognition of and as an attraction strategy for a candidate of exceptional standing and reputation verified through the selection process.

The Academic Group Pro-Vice Chancellor may approve waiving or removing a probation period after seeking advice from the respective HR Business Partner.

3.4 Managing performance

3.4.1 Setting goals and objectives

Regular engagement in the early stages of any probationary period is critical for a successful probationary experience. As soon as possible, and normally not more than six weeks after commencement of employment, the supervisor will meet with the new employee to discuss and develop an Academic Staff Performance Plan.

At the initial meeting, the supervisor and employee will discuss and set goals and objectives that reflect the accountabilities of the position and realistic to achieve within the probation period. The goals and objectives are informed by the Classification Standards in Schedule 1 and 2 of the EA.

The Performance Plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis and aligned with the Academic Staff Career Development (ASCD) process. It is recommended that a supervisor meet with the employee on a quarterly basis to track performance against the goals and objectives and provide feedback on progress.

3.4.2 Reviewing performance period and confirmation of probation

The ongoing monitoring of performance during probation the probation will align with the ASCD timeframes, however, it is appropriate that the supervisor provides feedback on performance in a timely manner, particularly where a goal or objective is not being achieved.

Prior to the expiration of the probationary period, the supervisor will conduct a final review of the employee's performance. Formal reviews should be undertaken at the midpoint and 2 months prior to the end date of the probation period.

The final review should assess the individual's performance against the goals and objectives set in the Probationary Development Plan, and a recommendation should be provided to the relevant decision maker outlined in the table below:

APPOINTMENT TYPE**CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENT DECISION-MAKER****FIXED TERM**

Head of Element to forward recommendation for confirmation of appointment to the relevant Dean (Academic).

CONTINUING

Head of Element to forward recommendation for confirmation of appointment to the relevant Group Pro Vice Chancellor.

Where the probation period end date has already occurred, the probation will be treated as confirmed, irrespective of the above approval.

3.5 Unsatisfactory performance during probation

When an employee's performance is below the required standard, the supervisor should engage with their HR Business Partner for advice and support.

Clause 33.1.3 of the 2023 - 2025 Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement outlines how to manage unsatisfactory performance during probation including the right to procedural fairness and representation by a nominated representative.

In accordance with the EA, the management of unsatisfactory performance will include the following phases and typical actions:

1. Preliminary Action and Counselling

- The manager will provide feedback verbally and in writing to the employee regarding the areas of unsatisfactory performance
- A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) must be utilised at this phase.
- This phase will be implemented for up to 6 months, or a reasonable period of time to assess the employee's performance against the position's key accountabilities.
- The manager will meet with the employee every two to four weeks to provide feedback and monitor performance.
- Where performance has not improved, the manager will inform (verbally and in writing) the employees that performance continues to remain unsatisfactory, and formal action will be initiated.
- Where the employee's performance aligns to the expected performance standards in the PIP, then this action will cease.

2. Formal Action

- The manager will advise the employee of the areas of underperformance, the nature of the improvement required, the timeframe, the dates to review the areas of performance and provide any documents or resources to improve performance.
- Formal action must be greater than 6 months.
- Where performance remains unsatisfactory the supervisor will make a formal report to the Head of Element in consultation with Director, HR.

3. Report to the Provost

- With support from the HR Business Partner, the manager will draft a report for the Head of Element, endorsed by the Dean (academic) and Director HR.
- The report will cover:
 - The areas of unsatisfactory performance
 - The completed PIP, including feedback provided to employee
 - A recommendation for disciplinary action
- The report will be provided to the employee, and the employee will have 10 days to provide a response to the Provost for consideration.

4. Decision of the Provost

- The Provost will review the report and the employee’s response and make a decision regarding disciplinary outcomes.
- The employee will be notified in writing of the outcome.
- Where the outcome is a termination of employment, this will be in accordance with Clause 36 of the EA.

4.0 Information

Title	Academic Employee Probation Procedure
Document number	2024/0001096
Purpose	This procedure outlines the process to be followed by academic employees and supervisors during an employee’s probationary period. The probation period is part of the appointment process and offers a period of mutual testing to determine whether there is an appropriate match between the individual, the job and the work environment.
Audience	Staff
Category	Operational
Subcategory	Staff
UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	This document aligns with Sustainable Development Goals: 4: Quality Education 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth 3: Good Health and Well-Being

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Policy advisor Director, Human Resources

Approving authority Provost

5.0 Related Policy Documents and Supporting Documents

Legislation *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement 2023-2025

Policy *Code of Conduct*

Procedures N/A

Local Protocol N/A

Forms Probationary Development Plan
