



PROBATIONARY PERIOD PROCEDURE

1. About this procedure

- 1.1. All new employees appointed to St George's, University of London (SGUL) will normally serve a probationary period. The probationary period provides a specific period of time during which the employee is expected to establish their suitability for the post, with regard to performance, attendance and conduct. The assessment of the employee is concerned with their potential to carry out the full duties of the post.
- 1.2. This procedure applies only to SGUL employed staff who have not completed their probationary period and been confirmed in post, with the exception of the Principal, who is subject to a different procedure.
- 1.3. For clinical academic staff, the relevant Trust's policy and procedure for Maintaining High Professional Standards in the Modern NHS will apply in the application of any formal procedure.

2. Confidentiality

- 2.1. SGUL's aim is to deal with probationary matters sensibly and with due respect for the confidentiality of those individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with a probationary matter.
- 2.2. Audio/Visual recordings are not permitted at any meetings or hearings under this procedure and will not be admissible within this process, unless permitted by SGUL in special circumstances, for example to accommodate a disabled employee by way of a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010.

3. Duration of probation periods

- 3.1. Probation periods will be set out in an employee's employment contract. The following probation period will apply:
 - Lecturers and Senior Lecturers will normally be required to serve an initial probation period of 12 months.

- All other employees will serve a probation period of 6 months.
- 3.2. A recommendation to waive or to shorten the probationary period of a Lecturer or Senior Lecturer will be discussed and agreed by the Institute Director.
- 3.3. Employees appointed to fixed-term contracts will serve the probationary periods stipulated above. Appointments to contracts of 6 months' duration or less will be probationary throughout. If such a contract is subsequently renewed, the total probation period will not exceed the periods outlined above (subject to satisfactory performance, attendance and conduct).
- 3.4. Notice periods are shorter while employees are on probation. For employees with a 6 month probation period, the notice period to terminate employment is 4 weeks' notice on either side. For employees with a 12 month probation period, the notice period is 6 weeks' notice on either side. On confirmation of appointment, notice periods will be as set out in an employee's contract of employment.
- 3.5. Existing employees who are appointed to a new post will not be subject to a formal probationary period; they will however have their objectives set and performance formally reviewed by their line manager. Support and guidance should be given to ensure that they reach the required standards of performance and conduct. Should any issues arise with an employee's performance or conduct, guidance should be sought from the Human Resources Department (HR).

4. Support for employees during the probation period

- 4.1. Line managers will establish and monitor arrangements for integrating new employees into their role/team/institute and for supporting them throughout the probationary period. This could include finding a buddy or mentor for the new employee. A friendly and supportive environment during the induction process and the probationary period will be crucial in influencing an employee's ability to contribute to a team/institute.
- 4.2. The line manager will inform the employee of their duties and the standards of performance expected. The manager is responsible for ensuring provision of training and support to the employee and for monitoring and regularly reviewing the employee's progress and performance. Should there be any issues or concerns with the employee's performance, attendance or conduct, guidance should be sought from HR.
- 4.3. All new Lecturers should be allocated an academic mentor. The purpose of an academic mentor is to offer guidance and advice on all aspects of academic life including approach to grant and fellowship funding, research group development and management, project and PhD student supervision, good teaching practice, curriculum development, interactions with more senior staff and any other matter of concern to the Lecturer. They will be a non-judgemental and friendly senior colleague whose role is to support progress independently from the line manager.

4.4. The mentor should not have a direct managerial role for the Lecturer, and could be an academic member of staff from another Institute. The relationship between the mentor and the Lecturer is very important, they should be someone with whom the Lecturer can discuss any questions or issues.

4.5. Coaching and mentoring is available to all employees within the University. Both support personal development and advancement. Details are available from the Learning and Development manager.

4.6. Specific learning and development opportunities are available to all employees. Line managers should ensure that new employees receive the appropriate training to ensure they have the correct knowledge and skills to be able to perform their role at the required standard.

5. Mandatory training

5.1. All SGUL employees are required to undertake mandatory training as a condition of their employment. Failure to do so could result in non-confirmation of appointment (ie the probation period not being successfully completed).

5.2. Mandatory training includes the following but other local training may also be mandated by line managers:

- General Health, Safety and Environmental Awareness e-learning.
- Fire Awareness.
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment
- Manual Handling (where relevant).
- Equality and Diversity Essential e-learning.
- Working with the Prevent Duty e-learning.
- Data Security Awareness e-learning.
- Anti-fraud and Bribery e-learning.
- Unconscious bias e-learning (only applicable to employees with people management responsibilities).
- Recruitment and selection training (only applicable to employees undertaking recruitment interviewing).
- Data Protection Awareness e-learning (only applicable to employees dealing with sensitive/personal data).

5.3. As part of SGUL's commitment to high standards of teaching, all newly appointed academic staff without a teaching qualification will normally be expected to obtain Fellowship/Senior Fellowship of Advance HE through the in-house framework

(SHINE), or take the PG Cert in Health and Biomedical Education within the first 18 months of working at SGUL. Confirmation of appointment (ie completion of the probation period) is not contingent on having completed the PG Cert but new academic staff without a teaching qualification should complete four core workshops in EduFocus to have their appointment confirmed. Details of the core workshops will be provided to newly appointed academic staff on joining.

6. Progress meetings

6.1. The line manager will have regular discussions with the employee to provide feedback on performance and to provide encouragement and advice for further development. The line manager and employee should agree work priorities at an early stage.

6.2. Ideally, progress meetings should take place on a regular basis (eg weekly/bi-weekly for those on 6 months' probation and monthly for those on 12 months). These meetings are also an opportunity for the employee to raise any concerns or queries, to seek further support, etc. The manager should make brief notes of the dates and of the salient points discussed during the meetings and agree these with the employee.

6.3. Any concerns relating to the employee's performance should be raised and discussed in the regular progress meetings. Line managers should not wait until the mid or final probation review meeting before raising any concerns they may have. If performance issues are raised, the line manager will advise the employee of the standards of performance required and will agree an action plan to remedy the situation, together with monitoring arrangements and further review dates.

7. Mid-probation review meeting

7.1. For employees with a 6 month probationary period the Mid-Probation Review Meeting should normally be held at the 12 week stage. For Lecturers and Senior Lecturers the Mid Probation Review Meeting should be held 6 months into their appointment. Formal Review meetings may take place earlier if there are conduct or performance concerns and guidance should be sought from HR at the earliest stage.

7.2. The line manager will hold the Mid-Probation Review Meeting with the employee to discuss overall progress. The line manager and employee should complete the Mid-Probation Review Form and send a copy to HR for retaining in the employee's staff file. The employee should also be provided with a copy of the form for their own records.

7.3. It would be expected that any concerns about performance, attendance or conduct had already been raised at progress meetings and were not first highlighted at a Mid-Probation Review Meeting.

8. Final probation review meeting

8.1. Before the end of the probation period, the line manager should hold a Final Probation Review Meeting with the employee.

8.2. Should there be a possibility that the decision will be to extend the probation period or non-confirmation of appointment, advice should be sought from HR at the earliest stage. If performance issues have been identified throughout the probationary period then a member of HR will attend the Final Probation Review Meeting to advise and arrange for a record of the meeting to be taken.

8.3. The purpose of the Final Probation Review Meeting is to discuss the progress the employee has made. The Final Probation review meeting may result in one of the following outcomes:

- Confirmation of appointment
- Extension to probation period (see 9.2 below)
- Non-confirmation of appointment (see 9.5 below)

8.4. It would be expected that any concerns about performance, attendance or conduct had already been raised at progress meetings and the Mid Probation Review Meeting and were not raised for the first time at a Final Probation Review Meeting.

8.5. In the event of a confirmation of appointment, the Line manager and employee should complete the Final Probation Review Form and a copy sent to HR for retaining in the individual's staff file. The employee should also be provided with a copy of the form for their own records.

9. Probation review outcomes

9.1. At the conclusion of the probationary period, subject to satisfactory performance, attendance and conduct, the appointment will be confirmed. The manager will advise the employee of the decision, prior to written confirmation from HR. A prompt response from the line manager to HR is critical. Once a probation period has lapsed, it is not possible for it to be extended. HR will confirm an employee's probation automatically unless notification otherwise has been received. Once the employee is confirmed in post the line manager and employee should agree work objectives for the coming year.

9.2. In exceptional cases, an extension to the probationary period may be agreed by the line manager with advice from HR. An extension will usually only be granted where it is considered that a further opportunity for the employee to demonstrate their suitability for the post is likely to result in confirmation of the appointment.

9.3. An extension of a 12 month probationary period would normally be for a period of up to 6 months. An extension of a 6 month probationary period would normally be

for a period of up to 3 months. Advice on the length of extension must be sought from HR.

9.4. A further Final Probation Review Meeting will be held at least one month before the end of the extended probation period.

9.5. If the employee has not demonstrated a satisfactory level of performance, attendance and/or conduct during the probationary period and is deemed unlikely to achieve confirmation of employment, the appointment will not be confirmed. Following consultation with HR, the employee will be formally advised of the decision in writing.

9.6. Non-confirmation of appointment is termination of employment with SGUL. HR will confirm the termination in writing, stating the reasons for the dismissal, the final date of employment, notice/pay in lieu arrangements and the right of appeal.

10. The right to be accompanied

10.1. An employee has the right to be accompanied by a companion who is a work colleague, trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union, at any formal review meeting held under this procedure.

10.2. The employee must make arrangements for their companion to attend the meeting and advise the manager who their chosen companion is, in good time before the meeting. If the companion is not available at the time proposed for the meeting the manager will postpone the meeting to a time proposed by the employee provided that the alternative time is both reasonable and not more than five working days after the date originally proposed. Other than in exceptional circumstances, only one postponement will be permitted.

10.3. The companion may address the meeting to put and sum up the employee's case, respond on behalf of the employee to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with them during the meeting. The companion does not, however, have the right to answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the meeting if the employee does not wish it or prevent the manager from explaining their case.

10.4. Acting as a companion is voluntary and colleagues are under no obligation to do so.

11. Appeal

11.1. An employee has a right of appeal against a decision to extend their probation period or non-confirmation of appointment. The decision taken will remain in place pending the outcome of any appeal.

11.2. The employee must send his/her written notice of appeal to the Director of HR&OD, or their nominated designate, within 5 working days from the date of receipt

of the document confirming the original decision, clearly stating the grounds for the appeal which are limited to:

- i. New evidence which was not previously available. This requires an explanation as to why this evidence was not presented at the first hearing.
- ii. The issues had been misunderstood resulting in a perverse outcome.
- iii. Procedural failure or irregularities.

11.3. A decision not to confirm appointment will be implemented immediately. In the event that the appeal is successful, the employee will be reinstated and given full continuous service.

11.4. Every effort will be made to hear the appeal as soon as reasonably possible. The employee will be given the right to be accompanied at the appeal hearing and an HR representative will be present. The appeal will be heard by another manager(s) (nominated by HR) not involved in the original decision, of equal or higher seniority.

11.5. The Appeal Chair will set the date for the appeal hearing, and will expect the employee to make all reasonable efforts to attend at the date stipulated.

11.6. The appeal will ordinarily be conducted by way of a review of the decision, as opposed to a rehearing of the case. That is, the appeal will involve a determination as to whether the decision was one which a reasonable person could have made, on the basis of the evidence and arguments which were presented to that decision maker, taking into account the employee's reason for appeal (within the appeal criteria above).

11.7. In exceptional circumstances the Appeal Chair will determine that the appeal will be conducted as a rehearing. Such a decision will be entirely at the discretion of the Appeal Chair.

11.8. The Appeal Chair will make their decision as soon as reasonably practicable after the appeal hearing, and will communicate that decision in writing to the employee, ideally within 10 working days. The Appeal Chair has the right to uphold or overturn the original decision either in part or in full. The written decision of the Appeal Chair will be final, and will conclude this procedure.