



## **Probation Policy**

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### **Policy Statement**

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) policy is to operate probation periods for all new employees.

This policy provides a framework for objectively assessing a new employee's suitability for their role, considering their overall capability, skills, performance, attendance and conduct in relation to the role they are performing during probation. It also provides information on holding probation assessments, formal probation reviews and appeals.

In order to achieve its organisational objectives, UKRI recognises the need for the setting and monitoring of realistic and measurable standards of performance for its employees, including during probation. To support this all new employees are required to undergo a period of planned induction, training and integration into the workforce.

Before following this policy, please consult the supporting HR Policy Framework.



### Management Statement

The UKRI Probation Policy and Procedure, the 'UKRI Probation Policy' has been agreed with the Trade Union Side and complies with statutory legislation.

The policy and procedure applies to all employees of UKRI for at least the first six months of employment. This includes those employed on permanent or temporary contracts, and for the avoidance of doubt, does not include visiting workers, students or those workers provided by a third-party agency.

### References

Managing Performance and Conduct Policy  
Sickness Absence Policy  
Appraisal & Personal Development Review policy

Version Number	Status	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
Version 1.0	Complete	January 2020	New policy created

## 1. Principles

- 1.1 All new UKRI employees will be subject to a probation period, normally of six months.
- 1.2 All new employees will receive assessments during their third and sixth months of employment.
- 1.3 Employees will only have one probation period, which occurs at the start of their employment. Probation periods do not apply to employees who have been promoted unless, exceptionally, they have been promoted during their probation period, in which case it will continue.
- 1.4 UKRI is committed to ensuring that a new employee will receive the training and support that is necessary for their role.
- 1.5 During the probation period the Capability procedure within the Managing Performance and Conduct Policy does not apply.
- 1.6 Where levels of absence become an issue during the probation period, line managers should deal with this under the framework of this policy whilst also bearing in mind the principles set within the Sickness Absence Policy. Further guidance on absence can be sought from HR.
- 1.7 A probation period, including any extensions, should not last more than 12 months.

## 2. Overview of Probation Procedure and Assessments

### 2.1 Purpose of probation period

- 2.1.1 The purpose of the probation period is to allow time for a line manager to determine whether a new employee has demonstrated the capability, skills and knowledge necessary to perform their role. During this time the line manager should assess the employee's performance, attendance and conduct and give the appropriate feedback and support to allow the new employee to develop within the role.

## 3. Length of probation period

- 3.1 The probation period will last for six months from the date the employee started their employment with UKRI.
- 3.2 In exceptional circumstances the probation period may be extended where the line manager has not been able to fairly assess the performance of the employee during the six months, or where the employee has been unable to meet the criteria for the job during their probation period. An extension to probation may only take place following a formal probation review.
- 3.3 Where a probation period is to be extended it must be for no longer than a further six months. Following the formal probation review meeting, the line manager will notify the employee of the extension in writing, the reasons for doing so and any objectives and/or targets that must be achieved within the extension period.

#### 4. Start of the probation period – Introductory meeting

- 4.1 As part of the induction process the line manager will arrange an introductory meeting with a new employee as soon as possible after the employee has started employment. At the meeting the line manager will discuss the key functions of the role and set performance and work objectives as well as a list of training or development objectives in line with UKRI induction arrangements.
- 4.2 The line manager will ensure the employee is notified of their probation period and will signpost this policy to the new employee.

##### **The line manager should:**

- Clarify for the employee:
  - Skills/competences required/that must be acquired
  - Standard of work expected (quality and quantity)
  - Deadlines to be met
  - Expected standards of behaviour/conduct (including timekeeping and attendance)
  - Any training needs
- Explain how objectives will be monitored and measured and how frequently this will be done
- Identify and provide relevant training
- Set a date for the three-month Probation Review
- Agree objectives using the SMART method:
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Achievable (bearing in mind the employee is new to the job)
  - Relevant – to the purpose of the job
  - Timebound

#### 5. Probation Assessments

- 5.1 The line manager will normally carry out two probation assessments with the employee, at three and six months following the start of the employee's employment.
- 5.2 The three and six-month probation assessments do not replace any regular formal or informal performance management arrangements in place locally e.g. one-to-one meetings and should complement these discussions.

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- 5.3 Probation assessments provide the line manager and the employee with the opportunity to review progress made since the employee started with UKRI.
- 5.4 The line manager should give the employee reasonable notice of the probation assessments to allow the employee to prepare.
- 5.5 Probation assessments must take place in private and be free from interruptions.
- 5.6 Line managers are responsible for ensuring the Probation Assessment is completed.
- 5.7 The six-month probation assessment should be completed before the date that the employee completes six months in employment.
- 5.8 Where a line manager fails to carry out the six-month probation assessment prior to the employee completing six months in employment, the probation period will normally be taken to be passed by default.
- 5.9 There may be a valid reason why a probation assessment meeting could not be held e.g. owing to absence.
- 5.10 If a probation assessment meeting could not be held, the employee's probation period can be extended temporarily to allow for the assessment and, if necessary, a formal review, to take place at the earliest opportunity thereafter.

The probation assessment is an opportunity to evaluate the employee's work performance and a summary of progress to date. The objectives set at the commencement of the employee's time with UKRI should be reviewed.

The topics covered in probation assessments are:

- Work activity
  - Quality of work
  - Output of work
  - Planning of work
  - Time management
- Attendance
  - Time keeping
  - Time off for sick absence
  - Communication with line manager about absence
- Performance
  - Measured against probation plan
- Conduct and behaviour in line with UKRI Code of Conduct
- Communication

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- Written and oral communication
- Management (if applicable)
  - Management of employees/potential to manage employees
  - Management of resources
- Working Relationships
  - Building and maintaining effective working relationships
  - Stakeholder engagement
- Overall Strengths and Improvement areas
- Training
  - Any specific training needs identified

**6. Raising concerns about attendance, performance or conduct**

- 6.1 Concerns about attendance, performance or conduct should be raised immediately with the employee in informal discussions in order to address any issues and followed up through the probation assessment meetings.
- 6.2 Line managers should hold discussions with employees about concerns before the first three-month probation assessment.

Informal discussions about under-performance should normally be carried out on a 1:1 basis.

The line manager should document all discussions that take place regarding performance.

Where under performance could be caused by an employee's disability the line manager should contact HR for further guidance.

**7. Holding Probation Assessment at three and six months**

- 7.1 The line manager should arrange to meet with the employee to conduct the probation assessment.
- 7.2 At the assessment the line manager should review the employee's attendance, performance and conduct during probation, considering any goals and objectives set.
- 7.3 The line manager should review the above using the Probation Assessment form, ensuring that any concerns raised are clearly documented for use in any future discussions.
- 7.4 If the probation assessment is taking place at three months, the line manager should either:

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- 7.4.1 confirm that the employee's performance is of a satisfactory standard; or
- 7.4.2 follow up on any issues of attendance, performance or conduct.

7.5 If the probation assessment is taking place at six months, the line manager should either:

- 7.5.1 confirm the employee's appointment if the performance is of a satisfactory standard; or
- 7.5.2 explain to the employee there are concerns over their attendance, performance or conduct and invite them to a formal probation review meeting to discuss this in more detail.

**8. Dealing with attendance, performance or conduct at a three-month Probation Assessment**

8.1 Where concerns have been raised over an employee's attendance, performance or conduct during the three-month probation period the line manager should:

- 8.1.1 Make clear the specific areas in which the employee's attendance, performance or conduct is below expectations,
- 8.1.2 demonstrate and explain the grounds and/or evidence for this view,
- 8.1.3 explore with the employee with a view to identifying possible reasons for the concerns,
- 8.1.4 give the employee the opportunity to explain their under-performance and to raise any concerns that they may have about the job,
- 8.1.5 ensure that the employee is aware of the required improvements, and that further training and job shadowing is arranged where appropriate.

8.2 If there is insufficient improvement within a previously agreed timeframe, the employee may be invited to a formal probation review to discuss the concerns in more detail.

Line managers should remind the employee that there will be a six-month probation review, and that failure to improve by that time may lead to their employment with UKRI being terminated.

Any review of an employee's performance after the six-month point will take place in line with the Appraisal and Personal Development Review Process (ADPR).

Where concerns over attendance, performance or conduct have been raised, the line manager will confirm the points raised at that meeting in writing to the employee (copied to HR), normally within five working days of the Probation Assessment.

## **9. Holding a Formal Probation Review meeting**

- 9.1 If the employee's attendance, performance or conduct has not improved or is not of satisfactory standard following the three-month probation assessment or by the six-month probation assessment stage, or if new concerns over performance have arisen between the three and six-month probation assessment meetings, then the line manager will invite them, in writing, to a formal probation review meeting to discuss their performance in further detail. A member of HR should also attend the meeting.
- 9.2 The letter of notification must indicate that:
- 9.2.1 the purpose of the formal probation review meeting is to review, in further detail, progress made since the probation assessment discussion.
  - 9.2.2 the potential outcomes of the review meeting – please see paragraph 9.4.
  - 9.2.3 the meeting is being held formally under the UKRI Probation Policy; and,
  - 9.2.4 at all stages of the formal procedure, the employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or by a Trade Union representative.
- 9.3 At this meeting the line manager will:
- 9.3.1 make clear the specific areas in which the employee's performance is below expectations,
  - 9.3.2 demonstrate and explain the grounds and /or evidence for this view,
  - 9.3.3 explore with a view to identifying possible reasons for the under-performance,
  - 9.3.4 give the employee the opportunity to explain their under-performance and to raise any concerns that they may have about the job,
  - 9.3.5 review the history of the case, including the steps taken to assist the employee in their achievement of the requisite standards of performance.
- 9.4 Dependent on whether the formal review was undertaken following either three or six-month assessments the line manager should then decide, taking advice from HR, on the course of action to be taken:
- 9.4.1 Review following a three-month assessment:
    - 9.4.1.1 Where necessary, seek approval from a senior manager who has the delegated authority to terminate the employee's employment. Managers who have authority to dismiss are described in UKRI's Delegated Authority Framework or by contacting HR; or
    - 9.4.1.2 Continue with the probation until the next assessment.
  - 9.4.2 Review following a six-month assessment:
    - 9.4.2.1 confirm the extension of the probation period in accordance with this procedure, ensuring that the employee is aware of the required improvements in relation to each element of the duties about which there



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is a concern, and confirm the date for a second and final probation review;  
or

9.4.2.2 where necessary, seek approval from a senior manager who has the delegated authority to terminate the employee's employment. Managers who have the authority to dismiss are described in UKRI's Delegated Authority Framework or by contacting HR; or

9.4.2.3 confirm the appointment. Following this meeting, the line manager will confirm the outcome in writing to the employee, normally within five working days.

9.5 In the case of the probation period being extended a second and final probation review meeting should be held as set out above. Following this review the employee's appointment will be confirmed or if they are still not meeting the required standards, approval to terminate the employment in line with UKRI's Delegated Authority Framework should be sought.

## **10. After the probation period**

10.1 When the probation period is successfully completed the line manager will initiate the APDR process in line with the Appraisal & Personal Development Review Policy.