

Academic Probation (Higher Education) Procedure

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Table of Contents

Purpose	1
Scope	1
Legislative Context	1
Definitions	2
Actions	2
Extending Probation Periods	3
Termination of Appointment	4
Appeal on decision to terminate employment	4
Responsibility	4
Supporting documents	4
Implementation	4

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a positive structured process in order to:

- establish whether an appropriate match has been made between the employee, the position and the work environment, and whether the employee is able to perform the duties of the position as required;
- ensure employees are clear about the roles and responsibilities of the position they hold;
- ensure manager/supervisors are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the development and performance of employee;
- develop open and effective communication between manager/supervisors and their employee;
- identify training and learning needs; and
- commence building the commitment of new employee to the values, and goals of the University.

Scope

This procedure applies to all continuing and fixed-term academic appointments of six months or more that include a probationary period.

Legislative Context

- [Federation University Australia Union Enterprise Agreement 2019–2021](#)

Definitions

Term	Definition
Performance	Work related activities expected of an employee and how well those activities are executed. This includes inappropriate behaviour and conduct.
Probationary Period:	The probationary period is a defined period of time during which a new employee's performance and conduct are subject to formal assessment. During this probationary period, the employee is provided with continuing constructive counselling and support to confirm progress and/or identify difficulties and develop strategies for their resolution.
Probation Plan	A formal probation review form used to capture information on an employees' probation progression, assessment and performance.
Manager/supervisor or nominee:	An employee who has designated responsibility for managing and/or overseeing the performance, development and conduct of other employees.

Actions

1. As soon as possible after commencement of employment the manager/supervisor will meet with the newly appointed employee to explain the probationary period and requirements including (as appropriate):
 - teaching requirements including the workload allocation model;
 - research direction and expected research outcomes;
 - completion of the University's Academic Induction Program;
 - enrolment in, and completion of at least 50% of a Graduate Certificate in Education (Tertiary Education) or equivalent;
 - completion of other relevant qualification or professional development (as identified);
 - mentoring arrangements for the employee;
 - performance and development objectives and performance standards for a successful probation, including participation in peer reviews; and
 - the plan of formal and informal reviews during the probation period.
2. At regular intervals throughout the probation period the manager/supervisor will meet informally with the employee to review progress and to consider any guidance, support, training and/or assistance that may be appropriate.
3. The employee's probation plan and formal review progress will be noted and outlined on the probation review form.
4. The initial probation meeting should occur no later than four weeks after the employee commences. Formal meetings should continue as per the table below depending on the total length of the probationary period:

Classification and length of appointment	Probation period
Less than 12 month probation period	Three month intervals

12 month probation period or more up to 36 months.	Six month intervals
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As part of the review, the manager/supervisor will consult colleagues, consider feedback from colleagues and students, and have a discussion with the employee regarding their probation goals.

5. Probation reviews are to be an interactive and positive process to provide the manager/supervisor with the opportunity to:
 - Interact closely, provide support and encouragement and review progress;
 - Provide regular constructive feedback on the employee's performance;
 - Discuss challenges and concerns;
 - Provide guidance, assistance and advice;
 - Identify any training needs or other supports;
 - Provide on-going clarification of the requirements of the position.
6. Where performance concerns are identified, a clear statement of the issues and improvements required will be outlined on the probation review form and discussed with the employee. The employee is to be provided with the opportunity to respond to performance concerns raised and discussions with the manager/supervisor need to include identifying any assistance that can be provided to the employee to meet the performance expectations.
7. At the conclusion of each formal review meeting the manager/supervisor will make a record of the meeting together with feedback notes on the probation review form and provide a copy to the employee and to People and Culture.
8. The final review is to be conducted no later than four months prior to the conclusion of the probationary period. Following this review, the manager/supervisor will within five working days prepare a comprehensive report on the employee's performance, development and conduct over the probationary period.
9. The Dean or nominee will decide on the action to be taken based on the probation review information.
10. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Dean or nominee may decide that:
 - the appointment be confirmed in accordance with the contract of employment; or
 - that a recommendation be made to the Director, People and Culture that the probation be extended by a period not more than six months; or
 - the appointment be terminated.
11. In the case of a decision to extend or terminate, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Dean or nominee will consult the Director, People and Culture and written notice provided to the employee.

Extending Probation Periods

1. Prior to the conclusion of the initial probation period, the Director, People and Culture may on a recommendation from the Dean or nominee, approve an extension to the probation by a period of not more than six months to allow the employee to address performance and/or conduct issues. The employee will be advised of the reasons, the justification for the decision and have the opportunity to respond.
2. If an assessment of performance cannot be made due to an employee taking a period of approved leave (e.g. leave without pay, annual leave, parental leave) that is greater than four weeks, then the end date for probation may be extended. The Director, People and Culture on a recommendation from the Dean or nominee, may approve to adjust the probationary period to provide the employee with a total probation period equivalent to that outlined in the contract of employment.
3. In all cases related to extending the probation period, the employee will be advised in writing prior to the conclusion of the initial probation period with the reasons and justification for the decision and given the opportunity to respond. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor or nominee will consult with the Director, People and Culture on considering employee responses and the employee is to be informed of the outcome in writing.

Termination of Appointment

The University may terminate an appointment if:

- an employee is unsuited to the position they hold, either by reason of performance or conduct; and/or
- claims made by the employee during the selection process were either untrue or not substantiated by performance in the position.

Any decision to terminate employment during the probationary period is unlikely to be made until the employee has completed 12 months service, unless a probation period of less than 12 months is stipulated in the contract of employment.

Appeal on decision to terminate employment

Where the final probation report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or nominee indicates a recommendation to terminate the appointment, the employee will be advised of the reasons for the decision, given an opportunity to respond within five working days of being advised and be able to appeal the decision to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic or nominee. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or nominee will endeavour to make a determination within five working days and their decision will be final.

Any decision to extend or terminate a probation period must be agreed to by the Director, People and Culture. Where employment is to be terminated following a probation review, three months' notice will be given, or by mutual agreement, payment in lieu can be made.

Responsibility

1. People and Culture is responsible for:
 - providing assistance and advice to employee and manager/supervisors about managing probations in accordance with this procedure and its implementation;
 - coordinating implementation of this procedure, including preparation of appropriate correspondence; and
 - providing guidance as required to manager/supervisors to ensure effective implementation of this procedure.
2. The academic managers/supervisors have a specific responsibility for ensuring that this procedure of academic probation is implemented for all employees with probationary appointments for whom they are nominated as line manager/supervisor.

Supporting documents

- [Federation University Australia Union Enterprise Agreement 2019–2021](#)

Implementation

The [Academic Probation \(Higher Education\) Procedure](#) will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. An Announcement Notice under *the 'FedNews'* website and on the *University Policy* website to alert the University-wide community of the approved Procedure, and/or
2. Information Sessions to Deans, Deputy Deans and academic managers/supervisors.