

IMPERIAL

Procedure for Managing the Probation Period

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Procedure for Managing the Probation Period applies to all staff except Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Readers and Professors. The procedures governing these academic staff are separately prescribed in the [Annexes to the Appendix to the Ordinances - Annex H](#).
- 1.2 The procedure provides guidance on the appropriate use of probation periods and the support and training that should be offered to a member of staff during this time. The document also provides information on the formal reviews that should take place during the probation period and the procedure to deal with any problems that may arise.
- 1.3 Guidance on how to manage the review period for an existing member of staff who has been appointed to a new position is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.4 The university recognises its responsibility to ensure that no-one is discriminated against or disadvantaged either through membership of any particular group or on the grounds of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (including lack of belief), or sexual orientation. Please refer to the [university's Equality webpages](#) for additional information.
- 1.5 This policy has been assessed as being a key component in ensuring the university fulfils its duties under anti-discrimination legislation and the university has reviewed its impact on equality and diversity and will continue to regularly monitor the use of this policy and will take action where necessary.
- 1.6 Imperial recognises that probationary processes can sometimes be stressful and offers wellbeing support via [Confidential Care](#), the university's Employee Assistance Programme. The staff counselling team can be contacted by email at: assist@cicwellbeing.com or by telephone on 0800 085 4764.
- 1.7 Staff who are experiencing stress are encouraged to utilise Imperial's Occupational Health [Workplace Stressor Tool](#) and to inform their line manager, or where helpful the [People Partnering Team](#). Staff may find it helpful to refer to the [Workplace Stress and Wellbeing webpage](#).

2.0 Guidance on the use of probation periods

- 2.1 The probation period is used to evaluate the performance of a new member of staff. Probation periods are accepted as a legitimate management practice when they are used appropriately as set out below. Appointments "subject to a probation period" are made with a view to confirming the member of staff in either an open-ended or fixed term position.

- 2.2** Members of staff should be evaluated against the university's Values and Behaviours. The university's [Values](#) are at the very centre of our work and guide our behaviour as a community, across all levels of the university. This policy aims to protect and promote our Values of Respect, Collaboration, Excellence, Integrity, and Innovation.
- 2.3** It is recommended that induction training and regular performance reviews, ideally at least once a month, are carried out with both new starters, and with existing staff appointed to new positions, with oral feedback being provided as appropriate. Where there may be a concern about a member of staff's performance, it is recommended that feedback be confirmed in writing, encompassing key points discussed and a copy should be given to the member of staff.
- 2.4** Guidance on extending probation periods may be sought from the People Function. Probations should only be extended where there are mitigating circumstances such as serious illness, where external events have prevented important duties being covered, or where concerns with performance or other factors are identified on the [Probation Review Form](#). Where a member of staff's probation period is extended, the outcome of regular meetings should be confirmed in writing and a copy given to the member of staff.
- 3.0 Responsibilities of a line manager, team member allocated to support the new starter and the member of staff during the probation period**
- 3.1** During a probation period the line manager should confirm that the requirements of the job are clear to the member of staff and ensure that they have appropriate support and training for the new job. Guidance on the induction process is available from the [new staff](#) webpages and details will be provided to managers when new contracts of employment are issued by the People Function. During the probation period, the line manager and the member of staff should jointly identify any training and development requirements for the new role. Support in the planning of programmes is available from staff within the [Talent and Culture](#) team. The line manager is also responsible for providing regular feedback on progress to the member of staff and must conduct the formal probation reviews set out in section 4.
- 3.2** It is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that new members of staff complete the [Imperial Essentials](#) mandatory requirements during their first six months of service.
- 3.3** The line manager is ultimately responsible for managing the probation period. However, it is also useful to identify a member of the team who can provide informal operational guidance, outside of the line management role. A mentor can provide support in familiarising the member of staff with the new environment.
- 3.4** A new member of staff also has responsibilities during the probation period. Although there is a learning curve in any new job, a member of staff should work hard to achieve a good level of performance, and thereby confirm their suitability for the post. The new member of staff should be proactive in seeking support if they have any concerns about the requirements of the job or their capabilities to perform the role.

4.0 Reviews during a probation period

- 4.1 During the probation period, the line manager should meet with a new member of staff on a regular basis, ideally at least once a month, to discuss work and give advice and guidance on progress in the new role. These discussions should provide oral feedback on the member of staff's progress and advice on areas the member of staff needs to cover, learn or improve on, with guidance on how this may be approached or achieved. Where there may be a concern about a member of staff's performance, it is recommended that feedback is confirmed in writing, encompassing key points discussed and a copy should be given to the member of staff.
- 4.2 Where problems are identified the line manager should seek to resolve any issues at an early stage through discussion, coaching and training. Where the member of staff who has disclosed a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) and the concerns relate to their performance, then arrangements should be made to assess the impact of that disability upon the member of staff's role. An assessment should be made of any adjustments that might reasonably be put in place. The manager and member of staff should record and agree action from these informal meetings so that the actions to address the problems are clear. A People Representative can provide support in addressing the areas of concern.
- 4.3 The line manager should undertake a formal probation review mid-way through the probation period. The **Mid and Final Probation Review Form** ([Probation Review form](#)) will act as a record of the discussion and guides line managers on the areas that should be monitored. The Mid and Final Probation Review Form will guide this discussion and should be submitted to the Staff Hub via the dedicated [Portal](#) once completed.
- 4.4 Before the end of the probation period, a further formal review is carried out by the line manager. The People Function will again notify when this is due. The [Probation Review form](#) will guide this discussion and should be submitted to the Staff Hub via the dedicated [Portal](#) once completed.

5.0 Confirmation or non-confirmation of the probation period

- 5.1 Probation periods are automatically confirmed as successful at the end of the period unless the People Function are advised to the contrary via the returned [Probation Review form](#) via the dedicated [Portal](#). Automatic confirmation may be delayed if a member of staff has not undertaken or failed the mandatory courses outlined on the [Imperial Essentials webpage](#).
- 5.2 If there have been concerns during the probation period, these will have been identified throughout the informal and formal reviews. Where the issues of concern are such that they may result in the non-confirmation of employment, the manager should discuss the matter with their Strategic People Partner. Then a member of staff should be invited to a Probation Review Meeting prior to a decision being made. It is not necessary to wait for the expiry of the probation period to convene a Probation Review Meeting if the member of staff has been made aware of the problems and given the opportunity to improve.
- 5.3 A member of staff has a statutory right to be accompanied at a formal Probation Review Meeting by either a Trade Union representative or work colleague. Under exceptional circumstances the manager and People Representative will consider requests for accompaniment by a relative or friend, this individual must not be a legal

representative. In advance of the hearing the member of staff should advise the manager hearing the case of the name of the person who will be accompanying them.

- 5.4** The member of staff should be given in writing five working days' notice of the Probation Review Meeting and be provided with full details of the concerns that are being reviewed as good cause for the non-confirmation of employment. The opportunity of accompaniment by a trade union representative or work colleague must be offered to the member of staff. If a member of staff is unable to arrange accompaniment on the date proposed or fails to attend the meeting for reasons outside of their control then the formal hearing will be rearranged for a mutually suitable time, normally within one week of the original date.
- 5.5** Where a member of staff has a disability then arrangements for the Probation Review Meeting should include consideration of any requirements for reasonable adjustments.
- 5.6** Where a member of staff has difficulty understanding written or spoken English then appropriate accommodations should be made.
- 5.7** The Probation Review Meeting should be chaired by the second line manager, or suitable nominee, accompanied by a member of the People Function. The purpose of the Probation Review Meeting will be to enable the second line manager to review the case for non-confirmation of employment and to consider any views expressed by the member of staff before a decision is made.
- 5.8** If, following a Probation Review Meeting, non-confirmation of employment is considered appropriate, then the second line manager has the authority to implement this decision with agreement from the People Representative. Where there is a decision not to confirm the probation period, this will be communicated in writing. The letter will contain the reasons for the non-confirmation of the probation period, the date employment will end, and outline the member of staff's right to appeal.
- 5.9** Where a member of staff does not attend a Probation Review Meeting then the arrangements set out in the ACAS Code April 2009 will apply. In the event that a member of staff cannot attend a rearranged Probation Review Meeting, then they will be given the opportunity to provide a written statement. If a member of staff does not attend a rearranged hearing or submit a written statement, then the Chair of the meeting may make a decision that the meeting will proceed in the member of staff's absence, without the benefit of their oral or written statement. The member of staff will be notified in advance that this is a consequence if they are unable or unwilling to participate in the process, and the People Representative will provide guidance on this point in the event that it is necessary.
- 5.10** Notes and records of matters dealt with under the Probation should be handled on a confidential basis and stored securely, in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The covert recording of informal or formal meetings, e.g. by use of a mobile phone or other recording device will not be permitted and will result in disciplinary action.
- 6.0 Appeals**
- 6.1** A member of staff who does not have their probation confirmed may appeal against that decision. In the written notification of the non-confirmation of probation, the member of

staff will be informed of the name of the person to whom an appeal should be addressed and the timescale for doing so. If the member of staff wishes to appeal, they must set out the grounds of their appeal in writing. The appeal will be heard by the Head of Department/Division or their nominee. A member of the Employee Relations Team not previously involved in the case will also be present and the member of staff may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague. Under exceptional circumstances the manager and Employee Relations representative will consider requests for accompaniment by a relative or friend, this individual must not be a legal representative. Suitable administrative support should be present to take notes. All appeal hearings will be convened as soon as practicable.

6.2 Appeals against non-confirmation of probation will be conducted in accordance with the following terms of reference:

- To review whether the basis for non-confirmation of probation was adequately substantiated;
- To review whether the university's procedures were correctly and fairly implemented.

6.3 The decision of the appeal hearing will be issued within 10 working days. In the event that a probation appeal results in reinstatement then this will be done in a manner which maintains continuous service and without loss of pay (assessment will be made of any income received by the member of staff while not in university employment). The university regards the appeal decision as final.

Appendix A

Guidance for managing existing staff appointed to a new position

Introduction

It is recommended that Induction training and regular performance reviews are carried out with both new starters, and with existing staff appointed to new positions, with feedback being provided as appropriate.

Responsibilities of a line manager and the member of staff

The line manager should confirm that the requirements of the job are clear to the member of staff and ensure that they have appropriate support and training for the new job. Guidance on induction programmes are available from the Staff Hub and the [new staff](#) webpage. The line manager and member of staff should jointly identify any training and development requirements for the new role. Support in the planning of a programme is available from staff within the [Talent and Culture](#) team. The line manager is also responsible for providing regular feedback on progress to the member of staff and advice on areas the member of staff needs to cover, learn or improve on, with guidance on how this may be approached or achieved.

The line manager should meet with the new member of staff on a regular basis to discuss work and give advice and guidance on progress in the new role. These informal discussions should provide feedback on the member of staff's progress.

Where problems are identified then the line manager should seek to resolve any issues at an early stage through discussion, coaching and training. It is useful for the manager and member of staff to record and agree action from these informal meetings so that the actions to address the problems are clear. A People Representative can provide support in addressing the concerns.

Ideally performance issues identified should be resolved through informal discussion, coaching and training. If these do not address the issue, the line manager will need to initiate the formal part of the [Disciplinary Procedure](#).