



PROBATION GUIDELINES

Introduction

Staff who join Wivenhoe House are contractually required to complete a probationary period (typically 6 months, dependent on Grade), which serves to ensure that new employees are supported to perform to the standards expected and to ensure that they have the required knowledge and skills to carry out their appointed role. These guidelines outline how a new employee's probationary period should be managed in order to ensure a fair and consistent approach.

Scope

These guidelines apply to all Wivenhoe House employees working within a probationary period. Any performance issues which arise beyond this period should be managed in accordance with Wivenhoe House's HR policies.

These guidelines also apply to fixed-term employees irrespective of the length of contract and in recognition of the fact that fixed-term contracts may be extended.

Probation Period

Probation lasts for a minimum six months (dependent on Grade) from the date of appointment and may be extended in exceptional circumstances. Extensions do not typically extend more than a further three months, making nine months in total.

The probation period typically consists of the following structured meetings but may be subject to change subject to circumstances and employee performance:

- Induction meeting
- Mid-point meeting
- Probation end meeting

The aims of the probationary period are to:

- Maximise the support provided to new employees to assist them in the effective performance of their duties and ensure that they have the required knowledge, skills and ability for the role to which they have been appointed
- Encourage communication around performance during the early stages of employment
- Ensure Wivenhoe House acts in a fair, reasonable and consistent manner when dealing with performance management issues during the probationary period

Throughout the probation period any new employee's performance and development should be regularly discussed. This includes holding review meetings in addition to routine management.

Where conduct or attendance issues arise during probation these will be managed inline with Wivenhoe House's Disciplinary and Attendance policies as appropriate. Due to the short nature of the probationary period, such cases may progress immediately to the final stages of these policies.

Where there is an underlying medical condition or disability is affecting performance at work they will be managed under Wivenhoe House's Capability and Equal Opportunities policies.



Where it is established at an early stage that an employee is unsuitable for the role (and there is documented evidence that the need for improvement has been discussed previously) it may be appropriate for the line manager to consider ending the probation process without having to wait until the six-month point.

During the probationary period a staff member's employment may be terminated by giving the relevant period of notice (by either party). This is typically one week dependent on grade however this is highlighted within individual employment contracts.

Where an employee on probation takes maternity, adoption or shared parental leave then their probation period will be extended accordingly on their return from leave. Appropriate steps for support are available in Wivenhoe House's Maternity policy.

Starting the Probation Period

All new staff should be fully supported to integrate into Wivenhoe House, their new team, the working environment and their role.

Induction

The probation process should work alongside new employees' induction to support them in feeling welcome in their new environment and allowing them to learn the key elements of their role within a reasonable and realistic timescale.

Induction resources can be found on Wivenhoe House's shared drive and in the staff handbook.

Managers should make sure that new employees are fully aware of the expectations of them in their new role. This may involve outlining clear and measurable objectives or performance standards, particularly in respect of the requirements of the individual's job description.

Training needs should also be identified and fulfilled for all new members of staff to ensure they receive all relevant training required for their role.

Induction meetings should take place within the first week of employment to discuss requirements of the employee's role and the expectations both during the probationary period and beyond. Agreed standards and objectives should be discussed between the line manager and employee, agreed and signed by both parties and are to be reflected upon during any subsequent probation meetings.

Day to day discussions should take place as required at agreed intervals to ensure that support is available to the employee outside of the structured mid-point and end of probation review meetings outlined above.

Reviewing Progress and Performance

Ongoing review throughout the probation period and should be made up of both routine management and more structured review meetings. Structured meetings should take place at the mid-point of probation to allow for any concerns or problems to be raised and for early feedback and then at the end of probation. Additional meetings may be held as appropriate.

Where it is identified that improvement is required, line managers should discuss these areas with the employee and clearly outline the expected performance levels. Any relevant objectives or timescales



for improvement should be clearly outlined and recorded as should any supportive measures or adjustments put in place. In such circumstances it may be appropriate to hold structured review meetings on a more frequent basis. Dependent on the level and nature of underperformance it may be appropriate to outline the risks of the staff member's employment not being confirmed should performance not improve.

Satisfactory Probation Performance

The final review meeting should be held just prior to the end of probation date. Where satisfactory performance is demonstrated a final review should be held in the normal way and the employee informally advised of the outcome. The employee should then be managed in the normal way with any agreed supports maintained and reviewed on an ongoing basis as needed.

Unsatisfactory Probation Performance

In cases where satisfactory performance has not been demonstrated, despite additional support and reviews the employee should be invited to a more structured final review and should be made aware that dismissal is possible outcome of this meeting.

The employee should be given reasonable notice of this meeting in writing and be advised of their right to be accompanied. The following should be addressed:

- The issues or problems which have been identified and discussed throughout the probation period
- The level of support offered and consultation taken place to encourage improvement
- Mitigating factors
- Representation made by the employee

Following consideration of these points a decision will be made regarding the outcome of the probationary period. This decision may lead to dismissal. Full reasons for the dismissal will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

An extension to the probationary period may also be considered however the probationary period should not extend beyond nine months and review meetings should continue to be held at regular intervals.

In exceptional circumstances it may be evidenced that an employee is unfit for the role at an earlier stage despite a reasonable level of support given. In this case Wivenhoe House may move to dismissal prior to the end of probation however guidelines as above must be applied.

Appeals

An employee may wish to appeal the outcome of a decision taken at the final probation meeting. Any appeal should be submitted in writing to the General Manager of Wivenhoe House within seven days of the decision. The Appeals procedure as per Wivenhoe House's Disciplinary policy will then apply.