6.24 PROBATION - PROFESSIONAL STAFF AND SENIOR STAFF GROUP
PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION
The performance and development process at UTS provides a framework for identifying, evaluating and developing performance. For new staff this process commences during the period of probation and continues throughout employment at UTS.

The performance and development process described in these guidelines applies to professional staff and senior staff. For members of the senior staff, the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) exercises the delegations assigned within these guidelines to the Director, Human Resources or nominee (DHR).

The probation provisions of the relevant collective agreements are contained in:
- clause 47 of the UTS Professional Staff Agreement 2014
- clause 28 of the Senior Staff Group Agreement 2013

WHY DO WE HAVE PROBATION?
Appointing a new staff member is an important decision. Much of the University’s success depends on the quality of staff it selects, and how it develops them. For the staff member it is important that the job fits their skills and aspirations. Probation is a period of mutual assessment during which a decision about continuation of employment is made.

A successful probation period requires:
- support for the staff member taking on the new role
- effective monitoring and feedback of the staff member’s performance
- critical reflection and assessment of performance by both the supervisor and staff member.

PERIOD OF PROBATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Probation period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Support Staff Level 1 – Level 10</td>
<td>Up to six months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuing Senior Staff Group</td>
<td>Between six and twelve months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed-term staff</td>
<td>As above to a maximum of 1/4 of the period of the contract</td>
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The DHR may grant approval to waive or shorten a probation period for a staff member. Existing continuing UTS staff are not required to serve probation when appointed to a new position. Any further fixed-term appointments to the same position or to an essentially similar position with UTS will not contain a probationary period. A probationary period may be shortened where the staff member has prior relevant experience.
It is essential that the probation process be conducted within the period of probation. Probation periods cannot be extended unless the staff member has been absent on approved sick leave for a significant period during the probation. Where approved sick leave prevents a reasonable review of performance, the DHR (or nominee) may approve an adjustment to the probation period to provide the staff member with a total period of probation (excluding the sick leave) equivalent to that initially contemplated.

**THE PROBATION PROCESS IN BRIEF**

<table>
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<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Action</th>
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| Within the first week                                | The supervisor initiates a planning discussion to:  
- set objectives and expectations  
- agree support  
Probation plan documentation is completed, read and signed by staff member and supervisor.  
Plan is reviewed and signed by supervisor’s manager.                                                                                                                                 |
| Throughout the probationary period                  | Supervisor conducts and documents progress reviews and gives regular feedback. Both parties reflect on performance during progress reviews. The supervisor must inform the staff member in writing of any impediments to the continuation of their employment when such impediments become apparent. The staff member is given an opportunity to respond to any concerns and sufficient and appropriate support to improve their performance. |
| No later than four weeks before the end of the probation period (process to be completed before the end of probation period) | Supervisor undertakes formal probation review  
- reviews performance  
- documents review  
- recommends continuation of appointment, or termination of employment  
Review documentation is read and signed by staff member and supervisor.  
Review and recommendation considered by supervisor’s manager and Dean/Director. DHR (or nominee) considers recommendation if it is for termination of employment.  
Original documentation forwarded to HRU for filing.                                                                                                                                 |

Before the end of the probationary period, HR Client Services must receive probation documentation, normally through completion of the **Performance Review and Development: Professional Staff and Senior Staff Group Probation** form. The staff member’s employment will be confirmed if such information has not been received.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISOR’S MANAGER**

The manager of the work area is accountable for overseeing the performance and development process to ensure that:

- performance objectives and expectations are meaningful and reasonable
- the process is fair
• the staff member is given adequate developmental support and resources.

The supervisor’s manager will take appropriate action if resolution of differences is necessary, or if the agreed probation plan does not accord with position or workplace requirements.

PLANNING

The Planning Discussion
In the first week of the staff member’s employment, the supervisor and staff member participate in a planning discussion which will result in the development of an agreed probation plan. The planning discussion will:

• clarify the duties and responsibilities of the position (as set out in the position description) and establish how they relate to the work area’s strategic objectives
• clarify and outline objectives and expectations of performance within the probation period (further information is provided below)
• discuss and identify support and developmental needs (further information is provided below)
• ensure the staff member is aware of the University’s expectations as set out in the Code of Conduct
• identify any legal or ethical responsibilities of the job such as, the need to be sensitive to cultural differences, the importance of maintaining confidentiality of records, health and safety issues
• confirm any special performance requirements which would have been agreed prior to acceptance of the position (ie shift work, overtime, trade or driving licence etc.) Such special performance requirements should be documented within the probation plan.

The discussion may also incorporate longer-term actions and development that the staff member will be involved in after completing probation.

Depending on the type of job and the date the staff member commenced at UTS, the supervisor, in consultation with the staff member, may choose to develop a workplan that includes objectives and activities that extend beyond the probationary period up to the end of the Performance and Development Cycle (refer to Managing Probation). The supervisor and staff member will agree on what part of this plan is to be accomplished within the probationary period.

Performance Objectives and Expectations
Before the planning discussion, the supervisor should be aware of the new staff member’s background and experience and how they relate to the requirements of the position. Performance objectives and expectations will be based on the following:

• the main responsibilities of the staff member’s position
• major activities or tasks in which the staff member will be engaged and expected to achieve during the probation period.

Success criteria should be identified for each objective and expectation. Such criteria explain the agreed standard of performance and how it will be measured. Criteria may be quantitative (time, quantity, etc) or qualitative (clarifying the quantity or distinctive nature of the work).

Development and Support
Development and support will be made available to new staff to assist them to adjust to the University environment and to develop the necessary skills for their position. The staff member’s development and support needs may include:
on the job training – how it is envisaged the staff member will learn to do the job:
through coaching from the supervisor, participation as a team member, procedures, manuals etc

- access to, or provision of, suitable facilities such as equipment and manuals
- training course attendance.

The staff development plan may be modified later in the probation period as the staff member’s support and development needs are identified.

**Documenting the Probation Plan**

The agreed probation plan will be documented on a “Performance Review and Development – Professional Staff and Senior Staff Group Probation” form. During or following the planning discussion the following steps will be taken:

- the supervisor and staff member complete and sign the form
- the staff member retains a copy of the form
- the supervisor forwards the original signed form to the supervisor's manager for review and signing
- the supervisor retains the original form signed by the staff member, supervisor and supervisor’s manager

**PROGRESS REVIEWS**

Progress reviews occur regularly throughout the probation period. The frequency of these may be agreed during the planning discussion (frequency will vary depending upon the type of position and experience of the staff member).

In preparation for a progress review, both the supervisor and staff member should reflect on the staff member’s performance and experience during probation. The purpose of the progress reviews is to:

- discuss progress toward meeting objectives and expectations
- recognise achievements and successes
- reflect on performance and skill levels exhibited
- identify any performance issues, problems or difficulties and how these can be addressed
- identifying changing priorities or circumstances and discuss how these will be handled
- discuss and assess development and support and identify any further development and support required
- adjust the probation plan, if required

Progress reviews should be documented and the staff member must be informed in writing of any impediments that may prevent continuation of employment. When the supervisor believes there are impediments to continuation of employment the following steps should be followed:

- the supervisor must contact their HR Partner, HRU as soon as possible for guidance and advice
- the supervisor documents the impediments
- the staff member is given an opportunity to respond to any concerns
- plans are put in place to address the performance issues within a specified timeframe, with the provision of sufficient opportunity and appropriate support to improve performance
- the staff member is advised that if performance does not improve the supervisor will recommend termination of appointment
- both the supervisor and staff member sign the documentation
- the staff member retains a copy of the documentation
- the supervisor forwards the original signed documentation to the supervisor’s manager for review and signing
- the supervisor retains the original documentation signed by the staff member, supervisor and supervisor’s manager
- a copy of the documentation is forwarded to the relevant HR Partner, HRU.

**FORMAL REVIEW**

The formal review should be scheduled two months before the end of the probation period (it must be no later than four weeks before the end of the probationary period).

It is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the formal review is conducted and documentation provided to HRU before the end of the probationary period.

If regular progress reviews take place during the probation period, the formal review should contain no surprises for either the staff member or the supervisor, unless something unexpected occurs.

In preparing for the review, the supervisor should:
- be able to give specific performance-related feedback, using examples
- seek input from others, such as clients or colleagues as appropriate
- take into account all factors which may have affected the achievement of the performance expectations
- provide the staff member with advance notice of the time and place for the review.

The staff member should prepare for the review by reflecting on their performance and assessing it against the objectives, expectations and success criteria established.

During the review meeting, the supervisor should:
- review the staff member’s progress against the objectives, expectations and success criteria agreed during the planning discussion and documented in the performance plan
- identify strengths, recognise achievements and praise successes
- identify any performance problems and/or areas for development, and how to address these
- discuss any extenuating circumstances which have impeded performance
- inform the staff member of the recommendation for either continuation or termination of appointment and the reasons for the decision
- allow the staff member to comment on their performance and provide any documentation to support their continuing appointment.

The following steps will then be taken:
- the formal review and the supervisor’s recommendation for either continuation or termination of appointment (also refer to sections below) will be documented on the “Performance Review and Development Professional Staff and Senior Staff Group Probation” form.
- both the supervisor and staff member sign the form
- the staff member and supervisor retain a copy of the form.

**PROBATION DECISION**

As part of the formal review, the supervisor will make a recommendation on the “Performance Review and Development - Professional Staff and Senior Staff Group Probation” to either:

- continue the appointment or
- terminate the appointment.

The supervisor’s manager may endorse the recommendation.

For Support Staff: The relevant Dean/Director has authority to approve continuation of appointment or endorse termination. The DHR (or nominee) approves termination of employment for all professional staff.

For Senior Staff Group (SSG): The Executive member responsible for the SSG member’s division has authority to approve continuation of appointment except for those staff who report directly to the Executive. The Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) approves recommendations for staff who report to members of the Executive and for all terminations of employment for staff in the SSG.

The supervisor’s manager or Dean/Director may seek further information from the supervisor regarding their recommendation. The relevant HR Partner should be contacted for assistance if either the supervisor’s manager or Dean/Director disagrees with the recommendation of the supervisor.

**Continuation of Appointment**

A decision on continuation of appointment will normally be effective from the next date following the completion of the probationary period. An earlier date may be approved where circumstances warrant.

HRU will formally advise the supervisor and the staff member of successful completion of probation after receiving the completed original “Performance Review and Development - Professional Staff and Senior Staff Group Probation” form documenting the formal review report and recommendation. The documentation is held on the staff member’s file in HRU.

When continuation of appointment is recommended the staff member and the supervisor will then engage in the Performance and Development process in accordance with [Probation, workplanning and review](#).

**Termination of Appointment**

If the staff member does not agree with the contents of the final review report they can submit a written response to the supervisor, supervisor’s manager and/or Dean/Director.

The supervisor’s manager and Dean/Director will review all documentation to determine whether:

- the supervisor’s recommendation is fair and reasonable in terms of the agreed objectives and expectations and any extenuating circumstances.
- appropriate support and guidance had been provided to the staff member throughout the probationary period.

The relevant HR Partner should be contacted for assistance if either the supervisor’s manager or Dean/Director disagrees with the recommendation of the supervisor.

The recommendations of the supervisor’s manager and Dean/Director will be recorded on the original “Performance Review and Development Professional Staff and Senior Staff Group Probation” form and forwarded to the DHR (or nominee).
The DHR (or nominee) will review the recommendation to determine that it is fair and reasonable.

Written advice of the staff member’s termination of employment will be forwarded by HRU to the staff member, supervisor and supervisor’s manager. The four weeks notice of termination will commence from the date the staff member receives the written advice. At the University’s discretion payment of up to four weeks in lieu of notice may be given. The effective date of termination may therefore be prior to the end of the probationary period.

**EARLY TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT**

The formal review may be conducted earlier under the following circumstances:

- if the supervisor believes that the agreed probation plan is not being met and the staff member is not able to demonstrate the standard of performance expected, and
- staff member has been informed in writing of any impediments that may prevent continuation of employment

The formal review will be conducted in accordance with the procedures set out above (refer to section, Formal Review). A recommendation for termination of appointment will be handled in accordance with the procedures set out above (refer to section, Termination of Appointment).

**REPRESENTATION**

A staff member may seek advice or representation from their chosen representative at any time during the probation planning and review process.

**CONTACTS**

For assistance in relation to probation please contact the following:

- Staff enquiries: hrclientservices@uts.edu.au or extension 1060
- Supervisor/manager enquiries: relevant HR Partner, HRU

Current Human Resources Unit staff and contact details can be found at [Staff Connect](#).
**ORIGINAL APPROVAL**

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<td>2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER</td>
<td>Director, Human Resources Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRENT INCUMBENT</td>
<td>Jennifer Gilmore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER</td>
<td>Workplace Relations &amp; Policy Specialist, HRU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRENT INCUMBENT</td>
<td>Virginia Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTACT NO</td>
<td>Extension 2166</td>
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**REVISION/MODIFICATION HISTORY**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Current title</th>
<th>Summary of changes</th>
<th>Approved/rejected</th>
<th>Approval authority</th>
<th>Resolution or file number</th>
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<tr>
<td>28/08/07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Probation – Support Staff and Senior Staff Group – Performance and Development Guidelines</td>
<td>Updated to align with 2006 Support Staff Agreement, removal of repetition, consistency with Performance &amp; Development – Principles and Procedures.</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Director, HR</td>
<td>UR05/119</td>
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<td>26/10/2011</td>
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<td>Probation – Support Staff and Senior Staff Group – Performance and Development Guidelines</td>
<td>Updated to align with 2010 Support Staff Agreement.</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>Director HR</td>
<td>UR05/119</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/03/16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Probation – Professional Staff and SSG – Performance and Development Guidelines</td>
<td>Update to Professional Staff Agreement 2014 and delete need to send draft plan to HR in first week</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>DHR</td>
<td>UR05/119</td>
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