New Probation Procedures for Professional & Support, Research and Teaching and Scholarship Staff

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Who does the new Probation Procedure apply to?

The new procedure covers Professional and Support (P&S) staff, Research staff, and Teaching and Scholarship (T&S) staff.

* It excludes Academic Staff (who remain under separate policy).

* Comes into place on 1 January 2015.

* Applies to NEW staff joining the College after this date.

* Current staff already on probation remain under existing terms.

* Information by HR will be sent to the line managers of new starters PRIOR to their appointment to help them manage their probation and induction.
Overview of Process (Part 1)

Length of probation varies according to the nature of the duties of each staff group:

- **P&S:** 6 months (unchanged from previous policy)
- **Research:** 12 months (this was 6 months under the previous policy)
- **T&S:** 18 months (T&S have not previously been managed under probation)

Mid Point Reviews should be completed as follows:

- **P&S:** 3 months
- **Research:** 6 months
- **T&S:** 9 months

NB: Where staff are appointed on a fixed term contract of less than the periods stated above, then the full-term of their appointment shall be considered to be probationary. The probation period is not reduced.
Overview of Process (Part 2)

Core Process Steps:

- **Induction**: Line managers should meet with new staff, confirm objectives and explain the probation process.

- **Mid Point Review**: Managers should review and discuss progress with staff half way through probation and take steps to address any concerns and/or training needs. (The Mid Point Review form must be completed and returned to HR.)

- **Final Review**: Before the end of the probation period managers should discuss progress with staff and confirm whether they have passed their probation or if other action (i.e. extension/dismissal) is necessary. (The Final Review form must be completed and returned to HR. Where concerns exist these must be shared with HR with as much notice as possible.)

- Probation can be extended beyond the Final Review date if an individual has not fully performed to expected standards or there are other relevant factors suggesting an extension will enable goals to be met.

- Employees can be dismissed at the end of the probation period (or before if appropriate), or at the end of an extension period if this has been used. Appeal against dismissal is permitted.
Why is probation important?

Probation provides a framework for assessing and managing new employees. It is essential for the effective management of staff and services.

In particular it supports the following:

• Work management – probation helps managers manage individual and team objectives and workloads.
• Staff engagement – probation helps new staff understand their duties and how these contribute to their team and wider College.
• Performance management – probation helps managers and new staff identify areas where improvements are needed so these can be addressed.
• Training and Development – probation helps managers identify training and development needs to enhance the skills and performance of new staff.
• Career development – probation helps managers explore wider career development opportunities for their staff and supports talent management and succession planning strategies.
How was the new Procedure developed?

• The current policy was reviewed by HR and stakeholders in 2014. Processes for P&S and Research staff required re-focusing and procedures needed to be harmonised for T&S staff.

• A Working Group of over 20 representatives from across the College was convened, including academic and research staff and senior managers from Schools. Three streams were set up to explore how best probation should be managed for P&S, Research and T&S staff.

• Feedback from the Working Group helped shape the new procedure framework.

• Subsequent consultation and discussion took place with the College Trade Union side.

• The procedure was discussed and approved by the HR Strategic Planning Committee in October 2014.

• In addition to the development of the procedure, Guidance Notes for Managers for each of the three staff groups were developed with stakeholder support.
Is probation mandatory?

• YES. The new procedures apply to all P&S, Research and T&S staff. The core principles of managing induction, setting objectives, supporting learning and managing performance apply to all staff.

• HOWEVER, the College recognises that the procedures require a flexibility of approach according to local business needs and, in particular, according to the nature of an individual’s appointment to our staff.

• For example, Departments may wish to use a flexible approach to managing probation for Research staff appointed on contracts of very short duration, or Teaching & Scholarship staff engaged to deliver a very low number of teaching hours, or on ad hoc or infrequent modules.

• Circumstances will vary, but further advice can be found in the accompanying Guidance for Managers or can be obtained from your HR Partner.
Implementation Support

- **Guidance for Managers**: Following feedback during the development of the policy, three separate notes for managers have been developed, one each for P&S, Research and T&S staff.

- **New Reminder System**: From January 2015 HR will launch an automated reminder system where the managers of new staff on probation, and the staff themselves, will receive notification of when the mid-point and final stage probation reports are due.

- **Skills Workshops**: Lunch time workshops are being set up to run in early 2015 for managers and PIs wishing to understand more about their responsibilities for managing probation and the various practicalities involved. (Further details will be published shortly.)

- **New HR letters, forms and contracts**: All relevant documents have been revised.
Next Steps for Managers

• Please cascade the launch of the new policy and procedures to your teams.

• Please ensure your managers understand their responsibilities in managing probation and know the key process steps.

• Please liaise with your HR Partner if you need support in implementing the new policy in your team.

• Please review the new (forthcoming) monthly probation reminders from HR and ensure your managers are completing probation reports for their staff.
Further Information & Support

- The new Procedure and Guidance Notes for Managers can be accessed at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hr/

- General advice on any aspect of the probation process, or help with queries about the new reminder system, can be obtained from humanresources@bbk.ac.uk

- Help with implementing the new procedure, or specific case advice, can be obtained from your HR Partner:
  - Cara Eden c.eden@bbk.ac.uk (Arts; BEI; College Secretariat; Planning & Business Systems)
  - Ben Spittles b.spittles@bbk.ac.uk (Law; Science; Estates & Facilities; Library)
  - Gareth Stirrat g.stirrat@bbk.ac.uk (SSHP; External Relations; Finance; IT Services; Lifelong Learning Network; Registry Services)