**UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE**

**ACADEMIC PROBATIONERS’ PACK**

**(To be read in conjunction with the Detailed Guidelines)**

**A Message from the University of Dundee**

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to the University of Dundee. As an academic probationer you have already come through a rigorous selection process and in appointing you to an academic post the University values you greatly as a person who has the potential to inspire and make a difference to students’ lives.

During your probationary period your aim will be to develop your skills and abilities to become an effective and stimulating academic, focussing on either teaching and scholarship or teaching and research. You will also become involved with the academic community within and outside the University.

The University is a triple-intensive institution, valuing equally teaching, research and involvement with the wider community, both nationally and internationally. In time you will be expected to specialise in at least two of these areas. The University aims to become Scotland’s leading University and to achieve this goal our academic staff must pursue excellence in everything they do. In order to help you attain these standards, you will be supported and challenged throughout your probationary period to help you reach your potential in all aspects of your academic role and have the best possible prospect of your appointment being confirmed at the end of probation.

We hope you enjoy the opportunities for ongoing learning and development, and we look forward to hearing that you are playing an important role in your School and the University community.

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**1.Your introduction to academic probation**

You will start your probation on your date of appointment to the University and will be guaranteed at least 3 years of supportive probation. All new academic staff appointed to Grade 7 and Grade 8, whether fixed term or permanent, participate in the academic probation process.

The Academic Probation Committee which considers probationary reports and confirmation of appointments at the end of probation meets twice a year in March and September so, depending upon your date of appointment, you could benefit from as much as 3 years 6 months’ probation. This precise timescale will vary from person to person.

With your offer of employment, you will have received a draft of standard objectives which new probationers need to achieve in their first year. Section 9 of this document provides the Criteria for Completion of Academic Probation which you need to evidence at the end of your probationary period.

The enclosed Schedule of Appointments details the meetings that have been arranged for you to meet your dean, academic line manager and mentor.

**2.Your first month**

As part of your induction, you will meet with your Dean who will ensure you understand the University and School strategies and the University Values within which you will operate.

Within the first week you will meet with your academic line manager to discuss the draft standard objectives for your first year and in the course of the discussion you will jointly decide whether these objectives require fine-tuning. At the same meeting you will also discuss your training and development needs.

The academic line manager will then produce your objectives, training & development plan, have it approved by the Dean and you can start working towards achieving your first year’s objectives. Your initial meeting with your mentor will also take place in your first week.

Without exception, you will need to complete the University’s Equality & Diversity, Health and Safety and Information Security Awareness training modules in the early weeks of your first year of probation and register to commence the Associate Module of the [Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education Programme (PGCAPHE](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/postgraduate/academic-practice-higher-education)) or the medical equivalent. The module is ideally completed in the first year and 200 hours is reduced from your teaching and assessment load in the year in which the module is taken.

**3.Your support**

You will have been told the name of your academic line manager and mentor prior to starting work.

Your **academic line manager** will operate as your line manager providing you particularly with academic support and will oversee your work. They will develop your objectives and training and development plan with you and have these approved by the Dean to ensure they comply with the Criteria for Completion of Probation (see section 9).

Your academic line manager will also monitor your workload to ensure you have a fair opportunity to concentrate on probationary activities to gain experience and competence in the relevant areas of your academic duties. They will observe your activities and speak to you regularly about the progress you are making with your objectives and training and development plan. They will also be responsible for initiating your probationary documentation.

Your **mentor** will be a supportive and experienced academic appointed by the Dean to whom you can speak confidentially about how the School and University operates more generally. They can provide a source of help and advice on all aspects of your role. However, they do not have line management responsibility for you. Their role is one of ‘critical friend’ outside the management structure so you should expect constructive feedback from them. You can consult your mentor at any time or ask for a meeting. You should ensure you make the most of their experience.

The Dean will also appoint a colleague within the School to co-ordinate the progress of all the probationers and they may be consulted on any matter relating to your probation.

Your Dean will have overall responsibility for ensuring that quality and standards are upheld within the School including the effective management of probationers.

**4.Your commitment**

No amount of support will work without your personal commitment. As a probationer you need to ensure that you take your objectives and training and development plan seriously. You should self-monitor to ensure you are developing and advancing as expected and proactively discuss your progress with your academic line manager. Ask for a meeting with your academic line manager or mentor at any time, even if it is just to reassure yourself that you are doing the right things within the expected timescales.

If you feel you are falling behind with any of your objectives, tasks or duties, identify the matter as early as possible and ask for help from your academic line manager. They will see it as a positive measure that you have proactively sought assistance. From your own perspective, it will be more effective to recover a difficult situation sooner rather than later so that supportive measures can be put in place.

**5.Your evaluations**

Periodically, throughout your probationary period you will be evaluated in a range of situations. Evaluations may take the form of observed teaching, a seminar, presentation, or other related activity. You will be given adequate time to prepare and an audience, invited by the Dean, may be present. Formative feedback will be provided after such evaluations by your academic line manager or Dean.

**6.Your progress**

Towards the end of your first and second years of probation your academic line manager will complete the Annual Probationary Review Progress Report, commenting on your achievement of the objectives set and your progress in general.

By the end of your 3rd/final year of probation you should be meeting the requirements of an established member of academic staff both in terms of volume of work and responsibilities. Your Dean will also consult with other senior academics who can comment on your development. You will see their comments and be able to add your own. Your report will then be considered at the Academic Probation Committee (consisting of your Dean and Deans of other Schools) and chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost.

The committee will decide on the feedback to be provided to you. The feedback can range from the very positive: confirming satisfactory progress, to highlighting areas of performance improvement and, if there are serious concerns about a probationer’s performance, the committee is obliged to emphasise that confirmation of appointment may be in jeopardy.

The purpose of the feedback is so that adjustments can be made, additional support given, objectives amended to give the probationer the best possible opportunity of having their appointment confirmed at the end of the probationary period.

**7.Your outcome**

The same report will be completed for your 3rd/final year of promotion, the difference being that your Dean will make a recommendation to the Academic Probation Committee as to whether or not your appointment should be confirmed.

It is this committee which makes the final decision. If confirmed you will receive a letter to this effect. If not, the Academic Probation Committee has the option of extending probation by one year to give a further opportunity for the probationer to meet the Criteria for Completion of Probation (see section 9).

(Reviewed November 2023)

1. **Frequently asked questions**

**When are my probationary reports considered by the Academic Probation Committee?**

If you were appointed between 1 October – 31 March, your probationary reports will be considered at the Academic Probation Committee in the March after you have completed a full year. If appointed between 1 April – 30 September your probationary reports will similarly be considered at the Academic Probation Committee in September.

**Can my probationary period be reduced?**

We are keen that new academic staff have the benefit of the full period of probation but if you can provide evidence that you have completed probation at an equivalent UK University or international institution you may be eligible for shorter probation. The Senior Vice-Principal will decide whether a complete or partial reduction can be granted. In exceptional cases where an individual meets the Criteria for Completion of Probation early, the Academic Probation Committee can confirm appointment prior to the expiry of the 3 year probationary period.

**Are there situations where the probationary period is extended?**

The probationary period can be extended in certain circumstances. If a probationer is appointed on a part-time basis they may require additional time to meet the requirements of probation. The University is keen to support probationers who take a period of maternity/adoption leave; have been absent on long-term sick leave during probation or has a disability and in these circumstances probation will be extended, typically by one year.

In cases where a probationer has just fallen short of achieving all of the Criteria for Completion of Probation the Academic Probation Committee may decide on extending probation by one year in preference to dismissal.

**What should I do if I have difficulties with my academic line manager or mentor?**

You should immediately raise the matter with your Dean and explain the situation. The Dean may well arrange for an alternative academic line manager or mentor.

**Must I agree to undertake the Associate Module of the** [**Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education Programme (PGCAPHE)**](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/postgraduate/academic-practice-higher-education)**?**

Yes. The module provides high quality, master’s level continuing professional development, accredited by Advance HE. If, however, you believe you could be exempt from undertaking the module based on an existing teaching qualification or category of HEA Fellowship, your Dean (or their representative) can make an exemption claim on your behalf. The Head of the Academic Skills Centre is responsible for assessing possible exemptions and making a recommendation to the Senior Vice-Principal , who is authorised to make exemptions.

**What happens if I do not undertake the Associate Module of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education Programme (PGCAPHE) or the medical equivalent or the mandatorymodules in Information Security Awareness Training and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?**

If either are not completed, your appointment cannot be confirmed.

**Do I have to take part in the Academic Appraisal process while I am on probation?**

No, while you are on probation you will not participate in Academic Appraisal. As soon as your appointment is confirmed you will transfer to the Academic Appraisal process.

**What happens if a probationer does not meet the standard of performance required by the Criteria for Completion of Probation?**

If it appears, in the probationer’s 3rd/final/extended year, that a recommendation will be made against confirmation of appointment, the probationer must have the opportunity to state their case. A Pre-hearing will be arranged and the probationer has a right to be accompanied by their trade union representative or a work colleague. The panel will be chaired by the Dean of School, and comprise a Professor or Senior Lecturer from another School and a member of Human Resources. The panel will hear the case and make a recommendation to the Academic Probation Committee as to whether or not the probationer should be dismissed. The Academic Probation Committee makes the final decision.

**What happens if a probationer is recommended for confirmation of appointment by the Dean but the Academic Probation Committee collectively decides upon their dismissal?**

As before, it is essential that the probationer is able to state their case at a hearing and be accompanied by their trade union representative or a work colleague. A Post-hearing will be convened to hear the case, chaired by a Vice-Principal other than the Senior Vice-Principal, and comprise a Professor or Senior Lecturer from another School and a member of Human Resources. The Post-hearing Committee will decide whether the probationer will be dismissed or not.

**Is there an appeal process if a probationer is dismissed?**

Yes, an independent solicitor external to the University would chair an appeal hearing.

**What support does the University offer a probationer if they are dismissed?**

Honest and straightforward feedback will be provided to the probationer throughout the probationary period so if there have been performance issues or it looks possible that the probationer’s appointment may not be confirmed these matters will have been, and will continue to be, discussed. In those circumstances the Dean and HR Business Partner will discuss with the probationer alternative career options and provide sources of guidance and support.

**How does the University ensure the same standards are applied in all nine Schools?**

To ensure consistency the Senior Vice-Principal will chair all of the Academic Probation Committees.

**How does the University ensure that women or minority groups are not disadvantaged?**

The University takes equality and diversity very seriously and an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken for the outcome of probation in each School and across the University.

1. **Criteria for Completion of Probation**

As part of the probationary objective-setting process the Probationer, with their academic line manager and Dean, will agree the Probationer’s objectives each year over the 3 year probationary period together in addition to their training and development plans. Your personalised annual objectives will be based on the following criteria and the draft probationary objectives you received with your contract of employment. The information below indicates the standards of performance which, at the point of confirmation of appointment, a probationer is expected to demonstrate.

**INTRODUCTION**

The following framework for considering academic Probationers’ confirmation of appointment seeks to outline the level of performance expected (recognising the need for inflection according to disciplinary norms).

The 3 year academic probationary period aims to ensure probationary objectives are tailored to individual needs and disciplinary norms, around the over-arching expectation of excellence in teaching and research. Newly appointed academic staff will be equipped with the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes necessary to be a fully functioning and contributing academic on confirmation of appointment.

A Probationer is expected to achieve all the relevant criteria set out belowby the point at which their confirmation of appointment is being considered (i.e. at the Academic Probation Committee) and must be able to demonstrate or evidence the components of assessment detailed in this document. At the same time the Probationer’s Academic Line Manager and Dean of School have responsibility for ensuring that the Probationer’s plans and workload allocation are such as to ensure that the Probationer has every opportunity to fulfil the criteria and have their appointment confirmed.

In assessing whether the Probationer has achieved all the relevant criteria, due account will be taken of any personal circumstances which may have impacted on the Probationer during their probation period, or any protected characteristics.

**OUTCOMES OF PROBATION**

By the Academic Probation Committee preceding the end of probation, the Probationer will be able to:

1. Demonstrate skills and competence in the full range of teaching and assessment activities required of a Lecturer at the University of Dundee.
2. Evidence knowledge and understanding of scholarship activities (relates to Probationers on Teaching & Scholarship contracts only) and the impact these have had on the Probationer’s teaching throughout the probationary period (see Criteria for Successful Completion of Probation below).
3. Evidence knowledge and understanding of the full range of research activities (relates to Probationers on Teaching & Research contracts only) in the Probationer’s discipline (see Criteria for Successful Completion of Probation below).
4. Evidence positive and collegial contribution made to the School’s cultural and administrative/management activities, and to the delivery of the University’s strategies as appropriate.
5. Evidence the personal and professional development undertaken and the learning benefits.

Information on the methods of demonstrating these outcomes are detailed below:

**CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF PROBATION**

(**N.B.** All sections apply to Probationers on Teaching & Scholarship and Teaching & Research contracts, unless indicated otherwise)

**Teaching**

The Probationer will be able to demonstrate evidence of:

* Successful completion of a profile of teaching and assessment normally at various levels in a variety of formats appropriate to the discipline (e.g. 1:1 tuition or supervision, lecturing to large groups, seminars and workshops, distance learning, studio, laboratory or clinically based teaching and assessment);
* Excellent feedback on teaching, assessment and module administration by peer review of colleagues, external examiners and by students through evaluation questionnaires;
* Successfully developing or incorporating own sub-specialism into a taught programme, and contributing to curriculum planning and development;
* Implementing, teaching and managing at least one module in discipline to a high standard;
* Adherence to all quality assurance procedures and demonstration of a commitment to enhancement of student learning and the wider student experience;
* Contributing effectively to student support, including dealing timeously with questions and communications from students;
* The impact self-reflection and training has had on improving pedagogy and the organisation and management of teaching over the probationary period.

**Scholarship** (for Probationers on **Teaching & Scholarship** contracts only)

The Probationer will be able to demonstrate evidence of:

* A coherent and focused profile of relevant pedagogic or professional enquiry appropriate to the discipline and the requirements of their School, and showing potential to develop as a recognised specialist independently or while contributing as a member of a team.
* How this has underpinned and shaped the design and delivery of teaching.
* Productive engagement with external bodies (e.g. subject associations, professional and statutory bodies, the Higher Education Academy, the wider discipline) with demonstrable benefits for own scholarly development, teaching, personal standing in the profession, and reputation of the University.

The proportion of the Probationer’s time allocated for scholarship should be agreed with the line manager as part of the objective-setting process and be clearly indicated on Form 1.

**Research** (for Probationers on **Teaching & Research** contracts only)

1. Evidence of outputs (individual or collaborative) for publication/peer-review which meet the following thresholds of quality and volume:
* Some research outputs rated at least at 3\* by peer review. (This peer review process will be rigorous and involve judgments by more than one individual, with the process overseen by the School Director of Research.)
* Research outputs to be in high quality international fora, i.e. publications, conferences, venues – as appropriate to the REF criteria of the discipline.
* The quality of outputs will take precedence over the quantity a Probationer is expected to achieve; however these outputs should appear during probation, with further research carried out during probation that leads or should lead to 3\* outputs at least. In the case of collaborative outputs, the proportion and significance of the individual contribution of the Probationer must be evidenced. Reference should be made to citation indices where available and if appropriate to the discipline.
* A Probationer will be expected to publish peer-reviewed outputs in high quality international fora – as appropriate to REF criteria of the discipline, and should have at least sufficient quantity of outputs prior to completion of probation to be on track to make a full REF submission appropriate to career stage.
* As part of the probationary objective-setting process, the Probationer and their Academic Line Manager, in consultation with the Dean, will agree the Probationer’s research output strategy and the publication outlets (or other means of peer-reviewed dissemination in the case of atypical outputs).
1. In relation to research grant funding:
* Evidence of having written and submitted (as PI, or joint PI with major input) a significant research grant application to a research council or the EU (eg. FP7, Horizon, 2020, ERC) or other funding body with relevance to the discipline (e.g. Leverhulme, Wellcome Trust or major charities) and gained positive feedback from all the referees, prior to the end of probation. If the grant is not successful in being funded it should only be because of a lack of available funding rather than because the application falls short on quality. Particular attention will be paid to the feedback from the external funding body in assessing whether the grant application has reached the required quality threshold. Research grant application values should be at least at levels associated with disciplinary norms.
* Obtain some research funding (at least, for example, a small grant for the funding of travel associated with research).
1. In relation to research student supervision:
* Have begun to supervise research students as part of a supervisory team.
1. In relation to building external reputation and impact:
* Evidence of presenting papers at a minimum of 2 conferences / seminars exhibitions / workshops of international standing, where possible funded by a conference grant.
* Evidence of contribution to external activity in the discipline (e.g. refereeing papers, engagement in a research network)
* Demonstrate engagement in public outreach or business / industry collaboration by outlining achievements to date in disseminating work (e.g. public engagement contributions; contributions to adult education; radio; television; adoption of an idea or contesting accepted thinking).

The proportion of the Probationer’s time allocated for research should be agreed with the line manager as part of the objective-setting process and be clearly indicated on Form 1.

**Contribution to School and University**

The Probationer will be able to demonstrate evidence of:

* Positive and engaged contribution to School activities (e.g. health and safety; student support; disability support; library liaison, building external links) and committees, demonstrating collegiality and collaboration.
* Development of activities which contribute to the delivery of one or more of the University’s cross-cutting strategies (Wider Impact; Internationalisation; Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship) as appropriate according to School business needs and own skills and expertise.

**Personal and Professional Development**

The Probationer will be able to demonstrate evidence of:

* Undertaking such training and development as discussed and agreed with the Academic Line Manager and approved by the Dean of School..
* Actively engaging with their Academic Line Manager, Mentor, colleagues and other resources available to the Probationer to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to the School as an established academic.
* Completion of Associate Module of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education Programme (PGCAPHE) or medical equivalent.
* Completion of required online Information Security Awareness training.
* Completion of required on-line Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training.
* Undertaking professional CPD in discipline, where relevant.
* Progress towards membership of a relevant professional institution, where applicable.
* An awareness of University governance, structures, strategies, policies and procedures.