Academic Probation
Head of Department Guidelines

April 2023

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1. General Information

1.1. These guidelines are intended to provide Heads of Department with advice and guidance when considering the academic probation process and should be read in conjunction with the Academic Probation Guidelines.

2. Schedule

2.1.   The normal academic probation period is 5 years. There may be exceptions to this dependent upon the experience of the individual that could result in either a pre-probation period or a reduction in the timescale. Any exceptions will be agreed upon appointment.

2.2.   The Probation Review Group meet once a term and the meeting in which the probationer is reviewed is dependent upon their start date:

1 November – 28 February	Autumn
1 March – 31 May	Spring
1 June – 31 October	Summer

2.3.   Heads of Department should meet with the individual within three months of appointment to set out expectations within the University's overarching statements about what is required to pass probation or pre-probation.

2.4.   An annual meeting should take place between the Head of Department (or a nominee that is not the individual's mentor) to discuss progress. Following this meeting a brief report should be submitted to the Probation Review Group.

2.5.   If there are concerns that the individual is not on track to pass probation at any stage the Head of Department (or nominee) should make both the individual and the Probation Review Group aware.

2.6.   In the final year the Head of Department will submit a completed proforma to the Probation Review Group to recommend whether or not the progress against the probation criteria has been satisfactory.

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3. Departmental Probation process

3.1.   The department will communicate the criteria and process used for the assessment of the individual during the probation period. This should be published to all staff to ensure a fair and transparent process where all staff are aware of the expectations required. The criteria are available on the following link:
https://warwick.ac.uk/services/humanresources/internal/academicprocesses/academicpromotion/academic_promotions_criteria.pdf

Candidates close to completion of probation can continue to work with the original probational requirements in force when they started. More recent appointments (essentially those currently in years 1,2,3,4 of their probation) should have transitioned to the criteria used in the promotion and progression framework. This will familiarise them with the process of building a case for future progression.

One implication of this move is that you will need to articulate discipline specific expectations within the context of this overarching set of criteria.

3.2.   The department will provide support for the individual throughout the probation period to enable and encourage successful completion. Good practice will include the following:
- o The appointment of a mentor, a senior academic team member to provide support and advice.
- o A formal annual review with the Head of Department to discuss progress, agree future workplan and review the mentor provision.
- o Support in the completion of the APP TE qualification leading to the individual achieving the Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy within 12 months of commencing the programme.
- o Appointment of an APP TE mentor to support with completion.
- o Continuous review of progress with updates available on Moodle for access at all times.
- o There should be a review in advance of the submission of the annual report and we would normally expect probationer and Head of Department to be present; in exceptional circumstances the review may take place without the probationer but they should be given the opportunity to provide an input in writing.

4. Eligibility

4.1. The successful completion of probation submission should focus on the applicant's achievements in relation to the evidence and criteria for probation.

4.2. Where the Head of Department decides the individual has not successfully completed probation the submission should clearly detail where the applicant's achievements have failed to reach the criteria for probation.

4.3. Generally, unpublished work will not count as evidence of an applicant's research output, although it may provide information relating to a continued trajectory. Heads of Departments should clarify the position relating to unpublished work when submitting their comments.

4.4. Where individuals hold personal fellowships with a proleptic Research & Teaching appointment at the end of the fellowship, they may be appointed on a Research & Teaching contract to allow them to undertake probation rather than delaying this until their fellowship ends… Alternatively, fellowship holders may be appointed on Research focused contracts and then may start probation at the end of their fellowship.

5. Head of Department Recommendations

5.1. An annual report should be submitted to the PRG clearly stating achievements made in relation to the annual workplan and overall objectives considering the four essential criteria; research; teaching; impact outreach and engagement; and leadership, collegiality and management . An agreed workplan for the following year should be included.

5.2. The annual report should document any concerns about performance or potential for failure of probation including the remedial measures put in place to provide the necessary support.

5.3. In the final year of probation a recommendation is to be put forward to determine the outcome of the probation period. This is in the format of a completed proforma stating whether or not progress against the probationary criteria (research, teaching, administration and collegiality) has satisfactorily been completed. A clear recommendation must be made in respect of whether or not to confirm appointment. A current CV prepared by the probationer should accompany the recommendation.

6. Adverse Recommendations

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6.1. Responsibility for decisions on adverse recommendations is delegated to the Probation Review Group by the Academic Staff Committee and detailed in full in the University's policy for the management of academic probation.

6.2. The Head of Department shall inform the member of staff at the same time that they submit an adverse recommendation.

6.3. On the basis of the material submitted, where the Head of Department recommends that an individual has not fulfilled the requirements to complete probation, the Probation Review Group will make a preliminary assessment of the case. Where the Probation Review Group disagree with the recommendation, they can confirm completion of probation. Where the Probation Review Group decide that the adverse recommendation may have justification, the probationer will be informed. The Probationer will have the choice to accept the recommendation or will be invited to make their case to a sub-group of the Probation Review Group, alongside a representative from their department, selected by the Group.

6.4 Where the Probation Review Group makes or confirms an adverse decision in respect of confirmation of appointment to Associate Professor on a research and teaching pathway on completion or early completion of probation it shall, on the delegated authority of the Academic Staff Committee, resolve either:
　　(i) that the probationary period, where less than five years, be extended; or
　　(ii) that the probation period, if subject to lengthy periods of regulated absence under University policies on maternity, family or sickness leave be extended by one and a half times the length of absence; or
　　(iii) that the probationer be issued with a final year's notice.

6.5 In no case may the total period of probation (excluding regulated absence under University policies on maternity, paternity, adoption or sickness leave), be more than five years with a sixth and final year's notice.

6.6. If appropriate the PRG will seek advice from up to three external referees nominated by the probationer. Full contact details of all referees should be provided where appropriate. Supporting statements are also required on the standing and relevance of the chosen referees. The Head of Department or the probationer may contact the referees to notify them that they have been listed as a referee and that they may be contacted by the University.

7. Out of Cycle Cases

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7.1. In exceptional cases, the Vice-Chancellor has discretion to consider the early completion of probation cases outside the annual probation cycle. In such cases the Head of Department and applicant would normally be expected to provide the same paperwork as that required for an 'in cycle' promotion, together with a rationale detailing why the case should be considered out of cycle.

8. Feedback

8.1. The Head of Department will be informed of the outcome of the decision of the PRG and a letter of confirmation will be issued to the individual. Good practice would include the Head of Department providing the outcome personally to the individual.

8.2. In the event of successful completion of probation the promotion to Associate Professor would usually be applied.

8.3. On the occasion that the recommendation of the Head of Department is non-completion of probation a letter from the Provost will be issued confirming the procedure to be followed.

8.4. Where a positive recommendation is made by the Head of Department but is unable to be approved by the PRG, the Head of Department and the individual will be informed in writing with a statement of the reasons forits decision.

9. Data Retention

8.4. Any personal data collected or retained in relation to the academic probation procedure will be in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Further information is detailed in the University's Privacy Notice and Record Retention Schedule.

10. Probation Forms

Probation review report – staff on pre-probation
Probation review report – staff completing / continuing

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