

Academic Probation Guidelines

1. Pre-Probation

1.1. Where appropriate, a selection panel may require an appointee to serve for a pre-probationary period which will normally be up to one year's duration, with two years as the maximum. A pre-probationary period is normally required where an appointee is studying for but has not yet completed a PhD or equivalent. The criterion for passing the pre-probationary year is the submission of the PhD thesis. The pre-probationary period may count towards the probationary period in some cases (for example, where the doctorate has been awarded early in the pre-probationary period and the member of staff has made excellent progress during the first year).

2. Length of Probation

2.1. The normal length of probation is five years. However, in exceptional circumstances, Chairs of Selection panels may recommend a shorter period for more experienced academic staff. This may be extended up to five years if necessary. In addition, Heads of Departments may recommend staff for early completion of probation in terms of performance where they deem it appropriate.

3. Family/Carer's Leave and Sick Leave

3.1. Probation will be extended automatically when a probationer is on maternity, family leave or extended sick leave, in order to provide an extended period of protected time to meet the required criteria. The length of the probation break will be extended by one and a half times the period of absence (e.g. 12 months of maternity leave would equate to an 18 month extension to probation). A form to request an extension is available here: [Probation Extension Request Form](#). **It is the joint responsibility of the probationer and the Head of Department to inform Academic Processes of their leave in those circumstances.** Note these arrangements do not preclude a Head of Department eventually recommending early completion before the extended period has been served.

4. Criteria

4.1. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to set out explicitly how the general criteria will be interpreted within their discipline area and the procedures that will be used within their department to assess the standards expected of probationary colleagues. These will be approved by the Academic Staff Committee and then must be published and made available to all staff within the department so that the expectations of probation are clear to all.

4.2. At the beginning of the probationary period, the Head of Department must discuss and agree explicitly with the probationer the specific expectations in each key area for completion of probation, paying particular attention to being clear as to what would be appropriate given the nature of the discipline. This should be within the framework of a general University statement about the standards expected of colleagues if they are to have their appointments at the University confirmed.

4.3. The broad criteria against which colleagues' contribution will be assessed are as follows:

4.3.1 Research and Scholarship - This activity includes discipline-based and interdisciplinary research, whether theoretical or empirical that makes an original contribution to knowledge, it can also encompass the academic impacts of the research for developments, across and within disciplines. Within this category you may also wish to provide evidence of research work undertaken with business that may lead to other forms of research output including patents, reports, presentations and guidance to non-academic organisations. Research and Scholarship also encompasses pedagogical and teaching related research, practice focused research and broader scholarship within and across disciplines, as well as, if not claimed elsewhere, the public impact of research and scholarship. Grant capture, PhD supervision and external presentations will also be considered as part of this activity, where relevant. In making any evaluations of individual research and scholarship, the Probation Review Group, a sub-group of the Academic Staff Committee will abide by the [‘Leiden Principles’](#) for the evaluation of research.

4.3.2. Teaching and Learning - This activity includes the development and delivery of teaching and learning at all levels (and can include teaching and learning in informal settings and research supervision such as might be undertaken by research focused staff in a research setting). PhD support and supervision may also be included provided it has not been used as evidence in other areas of activity. It also includes activity that develops and enhances the practice of teaching and learning within and beyond the curriculum as well as encompassing activity which enhances the broader student experience. Also relevant to this activity are engagements externally with teaching and learning related events, organisations and policy.

4.3.3. Impact, Outreach, Engagement - This activity encompasses a broad range of activities that are focused on taking academic activity and academic knowledge out into the world and translating it into meaningful practice. This is a broad category and it is recognised that impact may be both academic (the contribution that research and teaching makes within and across disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory, application and academic practice) as well as the broader impact that academic activity has on the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond academia. This category also incorporates the related processes of engaging with stakeholders and building meaningful partnerships whether regionally, nationally or internationally. Warwick Institute of Engagement has identified the following activities as examples of the types of evidence that you **may wish** to draw on for this activity:

- Knowledge Exchange.
- Licensing and spinout.
- New commercial products, processes or services, or contributions thereto.
- Assisting business through specialist facilities, consultancy and services.
- Connecting employers with Warwick talent.
- Research presentations to non-academic organisations.
- Provision of CPD for external organisations.
- Involving business with curriculum development and delivery – degree, degree apprenticeships, research degrees.
- Creation of Impact Case Studies.
- Outreach/Inclusion.
- Contributions to professional/scholarly bodies/government/third sector.
- Community Engagement.
- Public Engagement with Research (including Research Impact).
- Engagement-related Awards and Recognition.

4.3.4. Collegiality, Leadership and Management - This activity encompasses both working style – being willing to share responsibility within a broader community - and working activity which supports the operational and

strategic needs of the institution. These are activities that provide the infrastructure to allow academic activity to prosper within the institution. The most obvious examples are the various administrative and support activities that are required within a Department and within the broader university, or where colleagues assist in the development of scholarly activities of members of the wider community, including the building of interdisciplinary networks or multi-participant partnerships with business. Activity external to the University within a discipline or another form of academic activity may also be relevant to performance in this category.

4.4. These criteria have been designed to provide transparent information on what is needed to successfully achieve probation. They show clearly the expectation for each area at every level of promotion and in conjunction with the [career pathway matrix](#), allow the individual to proactively manage their successful completion of probation and on-going career.

5. Probation Review

5.1. Probation and the development of new staff are key responsibilities for departments and those charged with their management. Progression through probation is not an automatic right and probationary colleagues have a right to expect that their Head of Department will set out, and then provide an opportunity for the probationer to perform to the required standards. The roles of the Academic Staff Committee and Heads of Departments are set out below.

5.2. Academic Staff Committee (ASC) Responsibilities - A small sub-group of the ASC, the Probation Review Group, with representatives from each Faculty, has the following terms of reference:

1. To confirm that a probationer should move from pre-probationary to probationary appointment (where applicable).
2. To consider annual reports on the progress of all probationers (through a submitted proforma and current CV).
3. To advise departments of concerns therein, and to decide whether probation can continue.
4. To make the final decision to confirm appointment at the end of probation.
5. To agree remedial action either if alerted by a department that it considers a probationer is at any point in their career likely to fail to reach the required standard, or in cases where the Head of Department recommends that a probationer's appointment should be terminated at the end of the probationary period.
6. To submit an annual report to the ASC detailing decisions the Group has taken.

5.3. Head of Department's Responsibilities - Departments are required to review regularly and to report annually the progress of probationers and to provide realistic and constructive feedback as follows:

1. An initial meeting within three months of appointment to set out expectations for the probationary period within the University's overarching statements about what is required to pass probation or pre-probation (where applicable).
2. An annual meeting between the Head of Department or nominee (note: this should not be the mentor), to discuss with the probationer progress to-date, to explore the probationer's perspective on the previous year, to provide feedback on progress to passing probation and to agree work for the next review period.
3. If at any stage a Head of Department feels it likely that a probationer is not on track to pass probation, the individual concerned should be alerted and given advice about remedial action. The Head of Department should also alert the Probation Review Group as early as possible through the Academic Processes Team.

4. To submit to the Probation Review Group a brief report on each probationer in the department, including progress against objectives and objectives for the coming year.
5. In the final year to recommend to the Probation Review Group whether or not progress against probationary criteria has been satisfactory. The paperwork for this will be simple and will comprise:
 - A completed proforma from the Head of Department which explicitly covers research and scholarship; teaching and learning; impact, outreach and engagement; and collegiality, leadership and management, setting out an explicit recommendation in respect of whether or not to confirm appointment.
 - A current CV prepared by the probationer to the standard format provided for promotion cases as can be found at the following link: [CV template](#).

5.4. Adverse Cases

5.4.1. Responsibility for decisions on adverse recommendations is delegated to the Probation Review Group by the Academic Staff Committee.

5.4.2. The Head of Department shall inform the member of staff at the same time that they submit an adverse recommendation. The adverse recommendation shall be in the form of a written statement in the probation form, setting out the reasons for the recommendation and the Director of Human Resources shall forward a copy of the statement to the member of staff with a covering letter, explaining the process.

5.4.3. The member of staff will have an opportunity to make representations to the Probation Review Group against the adverse recommendation. The representation can take the form of a written submission, and the member of staff may have the opportunity to appear in person before the Probation Review Group.

5.4.4. If appropriate the Probation Review Group will seek advice from up to three external referees nominated by the probationer. Full contact details of all referees should be provided where requested. 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.

5.4.5. Before reaching a final decision on a recommendation, the Probation Review Group may ask the Head of Department (or their representative) to amplify or clarify their statement either in person at the meeting of the Probation Review Group, or in writing.

5.4.6. 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:

- That the probationary period, where less than five years, be extended.
- 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.
- That the probationer be issued with a final year's notice and will be offered the right of appeal.

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

6. Development and Guidance of Probationers

6.1. An essential element of the probation review arrangements is the provision of advice on career development to staff.

6.2. Accordingly, it is recommended that:

- All departments be required to provide probationers with a mentor drawn from among senior members of the department, who will provide support and advice throughout the probationary period.
- The choice of mentor should be agreed by the probationer.
- The mentor must meet with the probationer at least twice a year.
- The precise details of the mentoring arrangements should be agreed at a departmental level; however, whatever arrangements are put in place should follow the basic principles agreed at a University level.
- Advice and guidance in establishing and maintaining mentoring arrangements will be available through link HR Business Partners.

6.3. Section 10 sets out some guiding principles for a University-wide approach to mentoring within the probationary context.

7. Probation Annual Review

7.1. At least annually, the Head of Department should formally review with the probationer progress since their last meeting and agree from the original workplan the areas to be prioritised for the coming period. The annual review should also cover the mentoring process, allowing the probationer to express any dissatisfaction with arrangements. In order to do this, the Head should invite the probationer to submit in advance of the meeting, a brief self-review based around the following headings:

- What is your assessment of progress and achievements in each area of research, teaching and general/administrative contributions to the department/University?
- How well did this meet your plans agreed at the outset of the period?
- What, if anything, adversely affected your ability to make as much progress as you would like and what might be done to improve the situation?
- What do you think should be your objectives in each area of research, teaching, and general/administrative contributions to the department/University for the coming review period?

7.2. The probation review interview should be conducted following the standard University advice on good practice to ensure that the probationer has an appropriate opportunity to discuss progress to-date in confidence. At the end of the interview, the Head of Department should complete a proforma which summarises:

1. Performance against the previously agreed workplan.
2. The key issues discussed.
3. The principal aims and agreed plans for the coming review period.

7.3. This report should explicitly address issues from the previous report including any feedback from the Probation Review Group. The form should be signed by both the Head of Department and the probationer. Please note the proforma should be completed by the Head of Department, not the probationer - any forms received which have clearly been completed by the probationer will be returned. If the probationer is unwilling to agree to the summary as drafted by the Head of Department and agreement cannot be reached on an amended draft within the department, the probationer and/or the Head of Department should refer

the matter to the Director of Human Resources who will arrange for someone outside the department to facilitate an agreed statement.

7.4. The statements agreed following the probation review will be retained in the department and HR files and will be used as part of the material on which assessment about performance during probation is assessed.

7.5. Probation review meetings may take place sometime before the Probation Review Group meeting that the individual is considered at. Outcome letters may not be distributed until a few weeks after the meeting takes place, due to procedures that need to be followed.

8. Research Fellowships

8.1. If a probationary member of staff has taken up a Research Fellowship which extends up to or beyond the probation period, they will need to demonstrate teaching proficiency prior to completion of probation. This can be achieved in two ways:

1. By undertaking the Academic and Professional Pathway for Teaching Excellence (APP TE) during the period of the Fellowship (provided they undertake sufficient teaching during this period in order to complete practice-based assessment).
2. By extending the period of probation by one year after the end of the Fellowship in order for APP TE to be completed.

9. Mandatory Professional Development Activities

9.1. Academic and Professional Pathway for Teaching Excellence (APP TE).

9.1.1. Probationary staff are required to successfully complete the Academic and Professional Pathway for Teaching Excellence (APP TE). If they hold Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, have gained an equivalent qualification or have appropriate and significant prior experience (over three years FTE) they may be eligible for partial exemption. More details on how to apply for partial exemption will be made available at the start of the APP TE programme.

9.2. APP TE Registration.

9.2.1. The Academic Development Centre (ADC) will contact all probationary staff inviting them to register on APP TE. Staff should register as soon as possible on receipt of this invitation and need to begin the APP TE programme and attend the APP TE residential event within 8 months of joining the University. It is expected that participants will achieve Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) within 12 months of commencing the programme.

9.2.2. Probationary staff should undertake further teaching observations (2 per year – 1 mentor and 1 peer) and continue to engage in reflective practice by keeping an online portfolio after the completion of APP TE (i.e. years 2-5 of probation).

9.2.3. Below is the link to the APP TE website that has further information:

[Academic Professional Pathway for Teaching Excellence](#)

9.3. APP TE Mentoring.

9.3.1. Heads of Departments are required to identify a mentor from the department for APP TE participants. In addition to providing general guidance and support, the mentor observes the participant teaching on at least two occasions and provides both oral and written feedback. Ideally, the APP TE mentor will hold Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the HEA. If it is not appropriate for the member of staff formally identified as a probationer's mentor to undertake the aspects of the mentoring role associated with the APP TE, this will need to be discussed with the probationer at the initial meeting and appropriate arrangements made. Probationary staff must provide the names of their APP TE mentors when they complete the registration form, so they can be invited to the mentor's briefing event to receive updates on course developments, share experience and best practice.

9.4. Progress Reports.

9.4.1. Staff can review their progress at any time by logging into the course Moodle area and are expected to discuss their progress regularly with their Head of Department. ADC also provide a progress report to the Probation Review Group several times per year as requested.

10. Mentoring: Some Guiding Principles

10.1. The key to successful mentoring is the creation of an effective relationship between mentor and, in this case, probationer. This is a very personal matter over which it is not possible to legislate. However, so that the University can be certain that there is some measure of consistency between departments in the way that mentoring is introduced, the following broad guidelines have been agreed. They are intended to be helpful rather than prescriptive. Departments should also consider how the probationary mentoring arrangements connect with other support or mentoring practices (e.g. APP TE mentors).

10.2. The Role and Duties of Mentors.

10.2.1. The Mentor is expected to do the following for the probationer:

- Meet when agreed.
- Help the probationer identify their own goals and to advise the probationer on their professional development.
- Listen to issues the probationer wishes to raise.
- Provide advice to the probationer but ask awkward questions when necessary.
- Meet with the probationer and the Head of Department if either or both would find this helpful as part of the Head's role in making assessments about performance during probation.
- Give the probationer realistic and timely feedback and ask others for feedback on the probationer.
- Provide information both about the University and matters relating to teaching and research.
- Keep confidences.
- Help with departmental and University culture and practices.
- Provide introductions to peers and other staff.

10.2.2. The Mentor should not:

- Be the line manager.
- Do the work for the probationer.
- Spend an excessive amount of time in meetings.
- Support the probationer when the mentor believes their actions are wrong.

- Provide answers to all the probationer's questions; the mentor's role is to give guidance not to take responsibility away from the probationer.

10.2.3. The Head of Department's responsibilities are to:

- Identify a group of senior colleagues who understand the role and limits of a mentoring relationship and how it fits into the probation arrangements in the University.
- Clarify the department's expectations on research, teaching and administration.
- Give the probationer regular constructive feedback (with the mentor if requested).
- Meet the probationer at least annually (with the mentor if requested).
- There should be a review in advance of the submission of the annual report and it would normally be expected that the Head of Department and probationer are present; in exceptional circumstances the review may take place without the probationer but the probationer will be given the opportunity to provide an input in writing.

10.2.4. The probationer's responsibilities are to:

- Keep in regular contact with the mentor.
- Keep the mentor informed of research, teaching and administrative activities.
- Develop their academic career in line with the agreed criteria for probation.
- Maintain a portfolio of evidence to support claims.
- Flag up promptly any difficulties, either with the mentor or Head of Department as appropriate.