

Probationary Review Policy

Purpose

A probation period is a trial period for an employee who is new to the Company. It allows both the line manager and the employee to assess whether or not the new recruit is suitable for the role, taking into account the individual's overall capability, skills, performance and conduct. The objective of the probationary review process is to assist new employees to understand and identify with the work and conduct ethic of the business.

Probationary periods can increase the chances of the new employee succeeding in their employment. Alternatively, the review period may identify and address unsatisfactory performance or behaviour and it may conclude that an employee is not suitable

The review period involves two way communication, individual development and feedback and this subsequently builds relationships and commitment. Managers must endeavour to tackle problems shortly after they arise and to give immediate feedback giving fair opportunity for the employee to improve performance or change their behaviour. Line managers must take responsibility to support the employee and communicate with them to help make the probation period a success.

Length of Probationary Periods

This will be written in the employee's contract of employment. Generally probationary periods will last up to six months though may be longer or shorter depending on the complexity of the role.

During Probation

During a new employee's probationary period the line manager should follow a formal structure that is aimed at assessing and reviewing the employee's performance, capability and suitability for the role.

It will be the manager's responsibility to structure the programme in such a way that both parties are clear about what to expect. The programme should include:

- Regular monitoring of the new employee's performance through progress meetings (recommended monthly reviews)
- Identification and discussion of any problem areas at the earliest possible time
- The provision of regular constructive feedback
- Supervisory support and guidance
- The provision of any necessary training and coaching

Although the HR team will be available to provide support and guidance where required throughout the programme, all these actions will be the responsibility of the new employee's line manager.

A probationary period must be properly planned if it is to be effective. The programme also needs to be agreed with the new employee, who must be clear on what is expected of him or her. This information will include:

- Clear job outputs, i.e. what the new employee is expected to achieve during, or by the end of, the probationary period
- The standards of performance that are required in respect of the job duties
- The standards or measurements against which the employee's performance will be assessed
- Any agreed development activities
- A description of any relevant standards of behaviour, for example in relation to liaison with customers, clients and colleagues

If the employee is unclear about any of these areas, he or she may lack commitment to the programme.

Progress meetings

The process of probation should include regular progress meetings between the line manager and the employee. It is advisable to conduct these at least once a month during the probation.

Monthly meetings throughout the probation period will allow the employee's performance and progress to be monitored on a 'little and often' basis. Less frequent meetings may result in important issues being overlooked, or delays in the resolution of performance issues.

Where an issue arises however it is important to deal with it at the time and not wait for the next review meeting. A note that such a discussion has taken place may be held on the employees file and can be reviewed at the next review meeting

Planning and conducting review meetings

Review meetings should be planned and scheduled at the outset of the employee's employment. It will be the line manager's responsibility to ensure that all probationary reviews are completed on time.

There is no requirement to invite employees in writing to the meetings nor are they given the right of a companion. The only exception to this is if the probation is unlikely to be successful and the employee may be dismissed at the meeting – see the Unsuccessful Completion of Probationary section in this circumstance.

At each meeting, the manager should aim to:

- Highlight areas where the employee is doing well
- Explain clearly and in precise terms any areas in which the employee is falling below the required levels
- Explore the possible reasons for any failure to meet the required standards;
- Discuss and agree whether or not any specific training or coaching is required
- Discuss any other relevant matters such as timekeeping, attendance, general conduct or attitude
- Invite the employee to comment on issues such as the extent to which he or she has integrated into the department and how well he or she is getting on with colleagues
- Give the employee an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns about any aspect of his or her employment
- Explain that as a manager you will support and lead the employee

It is important that the manager does not restrict the progress meetings to discussions of problem areas, but also identifies and comments on the positive outcomes that the new employee has achieved. The meetings should be a two-way process and provide both the manager and the employee with the opportunity to discuss progress on a one-to-one and confidential basis.

Managers should be prepared to provide all possible support to their new employees in order to give them a fair opportunity to become fully integrated and productive employees in the longer term.

Where any concerns have arisen about the employee's performance, the line manager should discuss these fully and openly with the employee and an Action Plan to remedy the problem should be agreed. The line manager should always adopt a supportive attitude.

Where necessary, the line manager should clearly explain the consequences of underperforming to the employee. The individual should be helped to understand that a continued failure to achieve the required standards could ultimately lead to his or her employment being terminated.

Keeping Records

The contents of the review meetings should be fully and clearly documented on the Probationary Review Form. Any agreed actions to remedy areas of concern

or where development is required should be recorded on the Probationary Action Plan.

Probationary Action Plan

When there are areas of concern or areas for development, the manager should agree a Probationary Action Plan with the employee so that his or her progress can be monitored during the next few weeks.

The action plan should be documented in detail, stating what should be done, by whom, how and by when. In this way, the employee will be aware of what is expected of him or her by the time of the next review.

Final Review

At the final review the employee's performance, conduct and suitability for the job should be considered to determine whether the employee's employment is to be continued.

It is important that the final review meeting is held **before** the probation end date. If the meeting does not take place before or by the probation end date, technically the employee's appointment will be confirmed by default, and any subsequent action can not be taken as part of the probation period.

The final review will allow both the manager to:

- Identify and discuss any areas in which the employee is doing well or failing to meet required standards
- Discuss other matters such as timekeeping, attendance, attitude and general conduct
- Check how the employee feels about his or her employment in general

If the employee's performance is satisfactory the manager should explain to the employee:

- How performance will be managed in the future, for example through the Company's formal appraisal system
- Continuation of further training and development

The successful completion of probation should be confirmed in writing using template Letter 1.

If the manager has missed the end of the probationary period and the employee is underperforming they will need to be managed under the separate Performance Improvement Process

Unsuccessful completion of probation

Where probation periods are considered not successfully completed, then the final review meeting should follow the same steps as other types of potential

dismissal meetings e.g. a note taker should be present at the final probation review meeting to ensure the meeting is fully documented and the employee should be invited in writing using template Letter 2 and be given a right to a companion. The review meeting should be adjourned to consider the following outcomes:

- Extending the probationary period
- Dismissing from employment

If dismissing, the manager should confirm the employee's dismissal in writing using template Letter 4. The employee has the right to appeal within 7 days of dismissal and the appeal stage will be final.

Extending the probation period

An extension should only be considered where special circumstances justify this.

Circumstances such as where the employee or the manager has been absent from the workplace for an extended period during probation. Or if an employee's performance has fallen short of some standards and it is reasonably believed that an extension of time will allow the employee to achieve the standards required.

Please consult with the HR team prior to any decision to extend an employee's probationary period.

A period of extension can be any length of time up to 1 month. An employee's probationary period should not be extended more than once.

Where a decision is taken to extend probation, this should be communicated as part of the outcome of the final review meeting. It is important that the following sets of terms are stated:

- The length of extension and the date the extended probationary period will end
- The reason for the extension
- The areas and the performance standards that are expected to be achieved by the end of the probation period.
- Any support and training
- Date of final review (final review taking place prior to their last working week).
- That if the employee does not meet the required standards by the end of their probationary period their employment may be terminated

Confirmation of this decision should be confirmed in writing using template Letter 3 and a Probationary Action Plan for improvement should be given to the employee at the meeting or enclosed with this letter

Dismissing an Employee during their probation / at the end of their probation / at the end of an extension to their probation

Termination of employment is the next step if an employee's performance or conduct is unsatisfactory and it is clear that further training or support is not likely to alter the situation. Please contact the HR team prior to making this decision.

Unsatisfactory performance or conduct in a job for which an employee has been employed to do is potentially a fair reason for dismissal.

Where the decision is taken to dismiss in probation, this should be communicated as part of the outcome of the (final) review meeting. It is important to explain to the employee why they have not met required standards.

The employee is entitled to be dismissed with notice and managers should check their contract of employment as this notice period will vary. Employees also have the right to appeal this decision to a more senior manager than the manager who made the decision to dismiss. Any holiday accrued and not taken during the probation period should be paid in their final pay.

Employee absence during probation

As with all our employees, absences may occur at any time during employment including during the probationary period.

If absences are short term and the employee hits the triggers for Stage 1 of the Sickness Absence Procedure within the probationary period, the manager may consider this as a reason to not continue someone's employment. However the manager should still carefully consider the reasons for these short term absences and be reasonable in their decision.

If the employee is off long term sick (an absence of 3 weeks or more), please consult the Sickness Absence Procedure Policy and accompanying Managers' Guide and contact the HR Team for advice before considering dismissal. Managers should be particularly aware if the employee may have a condition that constitutes a disability or other protected characteristic.

Unauthorised absence (AWOL)

In the event of an employee not reporting for work and failing to follow the absence reporting procedures, please follow the standard Unauthorised Absence (AWOL) process which is in the AWOL Procedure.

Serious incidents in probationary periods

There may be occasions where employees commit acts of serious or gross misconduct under the Company's Disciplinary Procedure.



In these circumstances it may not be correct for the employee to be taken through the Probationary Review Process and instead they should be investigated and potentially disciplined under the Disciplinary Procedure. Please speak to the HR team for advice in these circumstances.

Continuing to set standards of performance

Employees have a contractual responsibility to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and should be given help and encouragement to reach it. Managers are responsible for setting realistic and achievable standards and making sure employees understand what is required.

Standards should be capable of being measured in terms of quality, time and cost. Any shortfall in performance should be pointed out to the employee concerned and consideration given as to whether this is due to conduct or capability e.g. is it inadequate instruction, training, supervision or some other failing.

Please refer to the Disciplinary Procedure for further information on conduct issues and to the Performance Improvement Procedure for further information on capability issues.

Current employees moving roles

A probationary period is not applicable to current employees that have moved into a new role within the Company (unless the employee has moved roles within their original new starter probation period).

The line manager will still train, monitor and measure but if the employee is not performing in the new role the manager will need to consider the Performance Improvement Procedure route rather than any dismissal for failing probationary period.

Employee Name		Employment Number	
Probationary Start date		Manager Name	
End date		Today's Date	
1 PROBATIONARY ACTION PLAN			

Development Area identified	What action is needed (both from the employee and the Company e.g. training)?	By When (date)	Targets / Measures

Signed:	Date:	Date of next Employee Probation Review:	

2 PROBATIONARY REVIEW FORM			
Employee Name		Employment Number	
Probationary Start date		Manager Name	
End date		Review Date	

What was discussed?	Areas where performing well	Areas of Concern
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Signed Employee:	Signed Manager:	
Date:	Date:	



Letter 1- Successful (remove title before sending!)

[Name]
[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name]

Confirmation of Successful Probationary Period

Further to our recent discussion, I would like to confirm that you have successfully completed your probationary period.

Congratulations! I look forward to working with you in the future. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]
[Job title]



Letter 2 - Final review – unsuccessful & early review meeting (remove title before sending!)

Private & Confidential

[Name]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name]

Invitation to Probationary Review Meeting

As you know, our job offer is subject to the satisfactory completion of a probationary period. We have been reviewing your progress since you joined us and I would like to hold a final review meeting with you on:

Date:

Time:

Location:

At the meeting we will discuss and review your performance and conduct during your probationary period and I will take a decision as to whether or not to confirm your employment. Please note that my decision could result in the termination of your employment.

I must advise should you not attend without good reason, the meeting may be held and a decision made in your absence.

If you wish, you may have a colleague or, if you are a trade union member, a qualified trade union representative, with you as a companion. If it is a union official unknown to the Company, this person will be required to provide proof of their credentials. It is your responsibility to make the necessary arrangements and confirm to me who, if anyone, will be with you.

If you have any questions about the meeting please speak to me as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



[Name]

[Job Title]

Letter 3 (remove title before sending!)

Private & Confidential

[Name]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name]

Extension to Probationary Period

I am writing to you in relation to the review meeting held on [Date].

At the review meeting you were made aware that there are elements of your [performance/conduct] which are felt to be unsatisfactory and you have not yet met the standards that the Company requires for employees of your position.

I have therefore decided that your probationary period will be extended by [number] month(s) until [Date].

The Company will continue to monitor your performance in line with the enclosed Probationary Action Plan and your progress will be formally reviewed at a final review meeting towards the end of the extended probationary period.

You agreed at the meeting that you would strive to improve, I as your manager will continue to support you and be committed to providing you with the tools to succeed.

However, if you fail to make sufficient progress either during or by the end of your extended probationary period, this meeting is likely to result in your dismissal.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[Job title]



Enclosed:
Probationary Action Plan

Letter 4 (remove title before sending!)
(If posting – send 2 copies – 1 1st class, 1 recorded delivery)

Private & Confidential

[Name]
[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name]

Termination of Employment Within Probationary Period

I am writing to confirm the outcome of the Probationary Review Meeting on [Date].

The meeting was held to discuss and review your performance and conduct during your probationary period.

Following our discussion, I decided to terminate your employment with one week's pay [*check contract of employment for notice period] in lieu of notice because you have failed to reach the standard we require, particularly in the following areas:

(Bullet point list of areas where performance and/or conduct have not reached the required standard)

Your pay in lieu of notice will be paid into your bank account on the next payroll run and we will send your P45 to your home address as soon as possible after that date.

You have the right to appeal against this decision, you should do so in writing within 7 working days of receipt of this letter, stating the reasons for your appeal to [FULL NAME, JOB TITLE AND ADDRESS].

Yours sincerely



[Name]
[Job Title]