

SUPPORT STAFF PROBATION POLICY

Learning Academies Trust

Version: 1.0

Approved by: Finance & Personnel Committee

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LEARNING
ACADEMIES TRUST

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CHANGES

Policy date	Summary of change	Author	Version	Review date
08/02/2023	Policy has been reviewed and updated.	Amy Bosworth	1.0	07/01/2024

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy informs employees and line managers of what is required during the probationary period and applies to all support staff joining the Trust. Employees appointed for temporary contracts of six months or longer will still be required to complete the full probation period.

Where an employee is on a temporary contract of less than six months, the probation period will span the whole of the employment. If the temporary contract were to be extended, the probation period would continue until six month's service was complete.

The probation period provides line managers with the opportunity to clarify what is expected of a new employee, set objectives, standards, and assess performance. This will involve a thorough induction. It also gives new employees the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their new role and to assess their suitability to the Trust.

Existing employees moving to a *different* role within the same school or, the same role in a *different* school within the Trust will be subject to a probation period.

2. REVIEWS

During the probation period, there will be reviews at 2, 4 months with the final review at 6 months. SMART objectives (see appendix 1) should be set during the probation period and reviewed to track progress. These should be documented in the Review form in appendix 2.

Should a review not meet the required expectations, please follow the next steps:

- The employee must have been made aware of any performance shortcomings at the earliest opportunity, in consultation with central HR team

- The employee must be offered suitable instruction, training or guidance in order to overcome these difficulties
- The employee must be allowed reasonable time for improvement before further action is taken. For example, to complete any training that has been identified
- The employee must be given this information in writing as well as having it discussed with them personally
- If under exceptional circumstances, the 2, 4 or 6 month review has not been completed, the HR Team will liaise with the Headteacher to confirm *if* the new employee can automatically pass their probation. In instances where they can, a probation pass letter would be issued by the HR team, and the employee would be entitled to the contracted notice period. If there were concerns, a meeting would be arranged to discuss extending the probation period.

3. SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

Following successful completion of the probationary period, your employment will be confirmed.

If an increment upon successful completion has been offered at appointment and performance dictates, there is the flexibility to award an increment at 6 months. Please contact HR before this is offered.

Please note, there shouldn't be more than one increment within a 6 month period.

4. PERFORMANCE ISSUES

The line manager must deal with any unsatisfactory performance as it arises, rather than waiting until the review meeting. Arrange a meeting as soon as possible, discuss the areas of concern and outline how it will be addressed. Is there a training need? Can appropriate support be provided in-house? Agree timescales for improvement and again, use SMART objectives in order to be able to track performance.

Line managers will confirm the outcome of the meeting in writing, clearly setting out the concerns discussed, the action to be taken and possibility of termination of employment should there be no improvements.

5. EXTENDING THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD

The probation period is for six months. During this time, line managers must ensure that feedback is given to employees on a regular basis and that any performance or conduct issues are resolved within this period. In exceptional circumstances, the probationary period may be extended for a further specified period of not more than three months.

The justifiable reasons for extending a probationary period are:

- Where there is a good reason why it has not been possible to assess an employee's performance during the initial probation period of six months, for example the employee has been absent for a significant proportion of this period, or
- Where the required improvement has not been made, but where further time, for example to attend appropriate training courses, will allow such improvement to happen.

If the probationary period is to be extended, the employee should ideally be informed no later than the fifth month. During this meeting the employee must be informed of the reasons for the extension and how long

it will be extended for. This must then be confirmed in writing and a copy placed on the employee's personal file.

Line managers must ensure that any extension to the probationary period is for reasonable and justified reasons. Where a probation period is extended the line manager will hold regular, for example weekly or fortnightly review meetings with the employee to continue to assess their performance. Notes must be made of discussions had at these meetings and retained on the employee's personal file.

6. CONTINUED POOR PERFORMANCE AND/OR MISCONDUCT

Where an employee's performance continues to be poor despite additional training, coaching and an extended probation period, or in cases of misconduct, it may be necessary for employment to end.

7. ENDING EMPLOYMENT

The employee must be asked to attend a meeting to discuss their performance. This should be followed up in writing and should set out the grounds for this action. The letter should detail that one outcome of the meeting could be termination of their employment. HR and Union representation at such a meeting should be encouraged.

The line manager should have a full report prepared for the meeting detailing the performance shortfall. This should include review documentation, support and training offered. The employee should then be given the opportunity to respond. If the employee is not able to give a reasonable explanation for their continued poor performance, the line manager, in consultation with HR, may decide to end the employment.

The employee should be informed of any decision at the meeting, and this should be followed up in writing. Employees should be informed in writing of their right to appeal. Where the employee is dismissed standard notice periods apply. Therefore, an employee dismissed during their probationary period would be entitled to one week's notice.

Employees have the right of appeal against dismissal and appeals should be submitted within five working days of receipt of written confirmation of the outcome of the meeting and addressed to the Trust HR team, stating the grounds of appeal.

8. NOTICE PERIODS FOR EMPLOYEES

Employees who wish to end their employment within their six-month probationary period must give a minimum of one weeks' notice. Thereafter employees should give the period of notice contained in their contract of employment.

9. SICKNESS ABSENCE

Sickness absence during the probationary period will be dealt with in line with the absence policy. Where an employee has a substantial amount of absence due to sickness during the probationary period, the manager may extend the duration of the probation period or terminate employment as appropriate.

APPENDIX 1: ACAS - SMART PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

APPENDIX 2: PROBATION REVIEW FORM

		Tips for setting SMART performance objectives	
<p>Before you begin... Ensure the organisation has clear and accurate job descriptions Consider if SMART objectives will help the essential tasks of the role</p>			
<p>Making the objectives SMART...</p>			
Specific		What exactly does your employee need to achieve?	
Measurable		How will you know that an objective has been achieved?	
Achievable		Is this something the employee is capable of achieving?	
Relevant		Is it relevant to the overall purpose of the role, team and organisation?	
Timebound		When does your employee need to achieve the objective?	
<p>Agree objectives with your employee... Involve your employee in setting their objectives so that they understand them Agree that the objectives make sense for the work your employee does If other employees carry out similar tasks, it may be better to agree common objectives for the group but they should still be developed in discussion with the employees and their representatives</p>			
<p>Make sure the objectives stay relevant... If an employee's role changes, their objectives might need to change too Special projects or new tasks may require new or temporary objectives</p>			
<p>Some helpful examples...</p>			
Improve customer satisfaction as far as possible	becomes...	Increase overall customer satisfaction by 5% this year based on the results of the after sales customer questionnaire.	
Keep delivery bays as tidy as possible	becomes...	Clear delivery bays of all waste and other material within 30 minutes of delivery vans leaving.	
Investigate absence levels	becomes...	Prepare a board paper by the end of the year which recommends how staff absence might be reduced.	
Answer customer queries as quickly as possible	becomes...	Answer all customer queries within two working days.	
Want to learn more? www.acfas.org.uk/performance			

2 & 4 MONTH REVIEW FORM

Name		Job title	
Start date		Review date	
Line manager		Next review date	
SELF REVIEW			
Achievements			

Areas for development
Understanding of my roles & responsibilities
Additional comments
Summary
LINE MANAGER REVIEW
Review of performance in relation to the role and responsibilities of the post
Review overall approach to their work, including motivation, commitment, time management and their behaviour within work

Details of the learning and development the employee has already received		
Focus areas before next review/areas for development		
Summary		
Reviewee		
Print name:	Signed:	Date:
Line Manager		
Print name:	Signed:	Date:

6 MONTH REVIEW FORM

Name		Job title	
Start date		Review date	
Line manager		Next review date	
SELF REVIEW			
Achievements			

Areas for development
Understanding of my roles & responsibilities
Additional comments
Summary
LINE MANAGER REVIEW
Review of performance in relation to the role and responsibilities of the post
Review overall approach to their work, including motivation, commitment, time management and their behaviour within work

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Details of the learning and development the employee has already received
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Focus areas before next review/areas for development

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Summary

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Probation: Pass / Fail / Extend Please circle
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Reviewee

Print name:

Signed:

Date:

Line Manager

Print name:

Signed:

Date:
