



University of  
South Australia

## Procedure on Probation for Professional, Security, Grounds and Document Services staff

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### APPLICATION

These procedures apply to professional, security, grounds and document services staff employed in accordance with:

1. The University of South Australia Enterprise Agreement 2014;
2. Staff employed pursuant to an Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA), where a reference to this provision is specifically referred to in the AWA.

### OVERVIEW

These procedures reflect the preferred practice of the University and provide a guide to the application and management of probation for professional, security, grounds and document services staff.

For the purpose of this procedure, the term "staff" or "staff member" refers to professional, security, grounds or document services staff.

### PROCEDURES

#### 1. Basic Principles of Probation

- a) All professional, security, grounds and document services staff commencing employment with the University of South Australia will be subject to a period of probation.
- b) The probationary period is generally seen as a period of time where:
  - the University can assess the suitability, skills and performance of the staff member against the requirements of the position;
  - the new staff member can be inducted and provided with the appropriate development opportunities;
  - the new staff member can consider their suitability and compatibility with the position and the University; and

- the University will make a decision regarding the confirmation of employment, extension of probation or termination of employment.
- c) The staff member's contract of employment and/or letter of offer must state that a period of probation will be undertaken and the length of this period.

## **2. Length of the Probation Period**

### **2.1 On commencement of employment**

- a) On commencement of employment with the University, staff members employed on a continuing basis will be engaged on an initial probationary period of up to three (3) months.
- b) The staff member's immediate supervisor, with the approval of the Director of Unit/Director of Research Institute/Head of School, may negotiate an initial probationary period up to six (6) months where deemed necessary given the complexity of the duties to be assessed and/or if critical duties cannot be appropriately assessed in a shorter period.
- c) A fixed-term contract that is less than three (3) months for a new staff member will contain a probationary period for the duration of the contract.

### **2.2 Subsequent appointments**

- a) Subsequent appointments to positions that require substantially different functions for staff employed on a continuing or fixed-term basis may contain a probationary period where determined by the University. The probationary period on the subsequent appointment may be up to six (6) months.
- b) A fixed-term staff member who is re-engaged on a subsequent fixed-term contract will continue to be subject to a probationary period where the period of employment on the initial contract is less than three (3) months.
- c) Casual staff moving into a continuing or fixed-term position will be subject to a probationary period of up to three (3) months. A longer probationary period of up to six (6) months may be negotiated where approved by the Director of Unit/Director of Research Institute/Head of School where deemed necessary given the complexity of the duties to be assessed and/or if critical duties cannot be appropriately assessed in a shorter period.

## **3. Managing Probation**

The procedure below has been provided as a best practice method of managing the probation relationship.

### **3.1 Establishing Expectations**

- a) Within two (2) weeks following commencement with the University the immediate supervisor will establish a performance plan as outlined in the Performance Development and Management Framework with the new staff member. The staff member shall be made aware of the requirements of the position and the immediate supervisor's expectations.
- b) Throughout the probationary period, the staff member shall be provided with regular feedback from their supervisor in accordance with the University's Performance Development and Management Framework as it applies to staff on probation, with respect to their capacity to discharge the responsibilities of the position and any other issues that arise during the probationary period.

### 3.2 The Formal Review

- a) The immediate supervisor will conduct a formal review of the staff member in the beginning of the last month of probation. This review may be held earlier if appropriate.
- b) The immediate supervisor will recommend to the Director of Unit/Director of Research Institute/Head of School whether the appointment should be confirmed, terminated or the probationary period extended. See sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 in this document for more information.
- c) The immediate supervisor must take care to ensure that the probation period does not elapse prior to an appropriate assessment of the staff member's skills and suitability for the position. Once the end date of probation has passed, the staff member's employment is confirmed regardless of whether they have received written or verbal advice. Divisional HR officers will review existing probations on a monthly basis and alert supervisors of impending probation end dates.

### 3.3 Managing Unsatisfactory Performance

- a) If the immediate supervisor considers the staff member's performance as unsatisfactory at any time during probation they should discuss it with the staff member. It is not necessary to wait until the formal review in the last month of probation to make a determination about the suitability of the staff member. The immediate supervisor would normally provide any support necessary to help the staff member to improve performance.
- b) If after a period of reasonable assessment and support the immediate supervisor still regards the staff member's performance as being unsatisfactory, they may decide to recommend termination of the staff member's employment in line with this procedure.
- c) Immediate supervisors should ensure that the timing of the formal review or any determination to terminate employment allows sufficient time to follow the process outlined in section 3.6.

### 3.4. Confirming Employment

- a) Employment may be confirmed if the staff member is deemed suitable for the position after a period of probation is undertaken. The immediate supervisor will recommend to the Director of Unit/Director of Research Institute/Head of School that the staff member's employment be confirmed.
- b) If supported, the staff member will receive written notification that their employment is confirmed and their probationary period has ended. This should happen prior to the completion of the probationary period.

### 3.5. Extending Probation

- a) Extension of the probationary period will only be considered in special circumstances and is subject to the approval of the Executive Director: People Talent and Culture.
- b) Any request to extend probation should be submitted to the Executive Director: People Talent and Culture early in the last month of probation to ensure that a decision is reached prior to the probation end date.

### 3.6. Terminating Employment During Probation

- a) A fixed probationary period does not require the University to keep a staff member in employment for the whole of the period if it is clear, on reasonable grounds, that the staff member is unsuitable for the position.
- b) Termination of employment prior to the end of probation can only take place in accordance with the process outlined below. If termination of employment is necessary after the end of probation has passed then the disciplinary procedures in the applicable industrial instrument must be followed.
- c) If the employee is deemed unsuitable, the following process must commence prior to the end of the probationary period:
  - i. The staff member shall be advised of, and given an opportunity to respond to, any adverse material which the University may consider in a decision to terminate employment.
  - ii. The immediate supervisor recommends to the Director of Unit/Director of Research Institute/Head of School that the employment of the staff member be terminated. The supervisor will be required to provide a written report to support their recommendation for termination.
  - iii. The Director of Unit/Director of Research Institute/Head of School should contact the Divisional Human Resources officer to discuss the recommended termination of employment prior to any further action.
  - iv. If the case is supported by the Director of Unit/Director of Research Institute/Head of School they will make a written recommendation to the Pro Vice Chancellor/Chief Operating Officer/Provost and Chief Academic Officer/Deputy Vice Chancellor that the employment of the staff member be terminated.
  - v. If the case is endorsed by the Pro Vice Chancellor/Chief Operating Officer/Provost and Chief Academic Officer/Deputy Vice Chancellor, they will make a written recommendation to the Executive Director: People Talent and Culture for approval to terminate employment.
  - vi. If termination of employment is approved, the staff member will be provided with written communication confirming the termination of their employment allowing for a notice period of:
    - Two (2) weeks – for staff classified up to and including HEO 6 (including security staff); or
    - Four (4) weeks – for staff classified at HEO7 and above.

Payment may be made in lieu of notice.

## 4. **Appeals and Grievances**

- a) Staff members are referred to the Staff Appeals Policy (HR-6.4) and procedures contained in the applicable industrial instrument (Enterprise Agreement, Australian Workplace Agreement, contract of employment or legislation) with respect to grievances arising out of the probation process.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND/OR AUTHORITIES**

### **Immediate Supervisor**

The immediate supervisor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the provisions of the Policy: Probation for Professional, Security, Grounds and Document Services Staff are applied to all staff who are on probation in their area.
- Ensuring that unsatisfactory performance is promptly identified and communicated to the staff member.
- Recommending the confirmation or termination of employment to the appropriate delegated authority prior to the end of probation.

### **Staff Member**

All staff are expected to actively participate in probation review discussions.

### **Divisional Human Resources Managers**

The Divisional Human Resources officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring local procedures and administrative practices are consistent with the probation policy and procedure.
- Ensuring that the staff personnel files and HR Information records are updated to reflect either confirmation or termination of employment.
- Providing immediate supervisors with a monthly report of impending probation end dates.

### **People Talent and Culture Unit**

People Talent and Culture is responsible for the development and continuous improvement of these guidelines.

## **REFERENCES**

- Probation for Professional, Security, Grounds and Document Services Staff Policy
- Performance Management Policy
- Performance Development and Management Framework
- Staff Appeals Policy

## **FURTHER ASSISTANCE**

Management and staff may seek further advice from:

- Their immediate supervisor
- Their Divisional HR Manager
- People, Talent and Culture Unit
- People, Talent and Culture website

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