



## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of a probationary period is to ensure that a postholder taking up a new appointment is, within a reasonable period of time, able to gain a full understanding of the requirements of the post and to achieve a satisfactory level of performance.

By providing for a formal probationary period in a new member of staff's terms and conditions of employment, St Catherine's College is recognizing an obligation to supervise properly a member of staff's progress during the probationary period. The detail of the probationary process as outlined in this document does not form part of the contract of employment between a member of staff and the College, but instead represents a suggested approach that the College hopes will maximise the benefits of the process for all concerned.

The College reserves the right not to apply the College's full capability or disciplinary procedures during your probationary period.

The Home Bursar and/ or Personnel Advisor are happy to provide advice and guidance to probationers and supervisors at any stage of the probationary period.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **Definition and Purpose of Probation Period**

Probation is defined as "the action or process of testing or putting to the proof." For probationers, it provides an opportunity to demonstrate that they are able to do the job to which they have been appointed.

The College has the responsibility to provide the means whereby the probationer can demonstrate satisfactorily the skills and competencies which have been discussed at interview.

The probation period is a time of adjustment. New employees need to accustom themselves to the working practices of a new organisation and possibly to adjust to new and more demanding work patterns.

Mistakes will probably be made during the probation period; this is to be expected and supervisors should be prepared for this. However, probationers should be instructed clearly and at regular intervals about the importance of correct procedures.

### **Before Appointment**

Interviewees should be provided with a full job description indicating duties and responsibilities of the post and the management structure of their department or section.

The interview panel will have analysed the post and determined upon the skills, level of competence and degree of expertise required for the successful execution of the post.

### **Length of Probation Period**

To avoid the risk of discrimination, all employees will be given the same period of probation, except in cases where explicit, objective reasons for a variation can be provided.

The probationary period will normally be for six months in the first instance and this will be specified in the Written Statement. There will be formal review/feedback meetings involving the supervisor and Personnel Advisor at one, three and five months. This period may be extended if the required standards of performance are not met (see below).

## **Conduct of Probation Period**

At the time of appointment, the College should ensure that a named person is identified to the probationer as being the probationer's supervisor. The supervisor will be responsible for helping, guiding and directing the probationer.

The supervisor, in conjunction with the Personnel Advisor, shall be responsible for introducing the probationer to colleagues and making arrangements for induction.

The supervisor should explain, fully and in detail, the procedures which are to be followed in the post. In particular, the probationer should be made aware of the procedures he or she is responsible for, and the priorities attached to them by the College. The probationer should also be made aware of standards set and objectives to be achieved.

Supervisors should make themselves available at designated times to discuss any points concerning the post which may need clarification. In the first month of any appointment, supervisors should meet probationers informally on a weekly basis to review progress, and to discuss any difficulties that might have arisen in the intervening period between meetings.

Where a supervisor has a concern about the standard of performance or progress being made in coming to terms with the duties of the post at the end of the first or third month this should be raised with the Personnel Advisor. A letter will be sent to the postholder indicating the nature of the concern, recommendations on action to be taken to improve performance and/or progress and a warning that should performance and/or progress not improve within a period of three weeks, a recommendation to dismiss will be made. The relevant notice and details of appeals procedure shall be given to the postholder where dismissal takes place.

It is not always possible or appropriate to provide detailed procedures for more senior members of staff. However, such probationers should be made aware of the standard to which they are expected to perform and be given guidance to help them reach such standards.

## **Progress of Probation Period**

When monitoring the probationer's progress, the following points should be borne in mind:

- a) Work output - Is the probationer making steady progress in the amount of work which is being done?
- b) Work quality - Is the probationer beginning to produce work which is relatively error-free?
- c) Standard of work - Are more senior probationers demonstrating that they are capable of performing at the level which is expected of them?
- d) Attendance - What is the probationer's record for punctuality, attendance and sickness absence?

If there are difficulties in any of the above areas, supervisors should investigate why this is so and indicate how an improvement is to be made.

## **Completion of the Probation Period**

### **(a) Successful**

If at the end of five months a probationer is judged to have successfully completed the probation period, they will be formally confirmed in post. This decision will be made by the supervisor, in conjunction with the Home Bursar and/ or Personnel Advisor, and will be conveyed in writing. A probationary period will not be deemed to have been completed successfully until confirmed in writing.

(b) Partially Successful

If at the end of five months a probationer is judged to have only partially completed the requirements for successful completion of his or her probation period, the probation period may be extended to nine months, with a review taking place at the end of the eighth month. The Home Bursar/ Personnel Advisor will write to the probationer outlining the requirements and timescale for this extended period.

(c) Unsuccessful

If, after careful monitoring, support and guidance, a probationer, either after six months or following an extension to nine months, with a review taking place at the end of the fifth or eighth month, is judged not to have passed the probationary period, they may be given written notice of the termination of their employment. Such notice may only be given by the Home Bursar, or their nominated representative.

**General**

The College reserves the right to bring forward the timings of meetings referred to in these procedures should there be performance standards issues which it feels need to be addressed earlier or as a matter of urgency.

Where a meeting might involve the consideration of dismissal the post holder will be informed of a right to be accompanied.

The completion of probation procedures for certain posts, identified in the Written Statement, are subject to the approval of a committee of the Governing Body. In these cases, the term 'supervisor' in the above procedures will mean the designated supervisor for the post working with that committee.

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