Probation and Confirmation of Continuing Appointment (Academic Staff) Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) The University of Queensland (UQ or the University) is committed to ensuring that a robust career and performance development approach exists for academic staff which provides a foundation for the achievement of academic excellence.

(2) This Procedure provides a practical context to the process, key controls and responsibilities with regard to academic probation reviews (Mid-Term and Final), consistent with the principles outlined in the Confirmation and Promotions (Academic Staff) Policy.

Scope

(3) This Procedure applies to all academic staff employed on a continuing basis who are subject to a probation period as outlined in the Enterprise Agreement.

(4) This Procedure does not apply to academic staff members on a fixed-term appointment. Fixed-term academic staff will be subject to the probation period and conditions outlined in their letter of offer, in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

(5) For avoidance of doubt, where a fixed-term academic staff member is successful in securing a continuing academic appointment, the staff member will then be subject to the probation and confirmation of appointment process, as outlined in this Procedure.

Section 2 - Key Controls

Review Periods

(6) Continuing academic staff are required to undergo two major reviews during a three-year probation period:

a. Mid-Term Review: Mid-Term Review feedback is typically provided to the applicant between 12 and 15 months after commencement of the probation period.
b. Final Review: The outcome of Final Review is typically communicated between 6 and 9 months prior to the probation end date.

   Each process will be initiated via direct communication to the applicant and their Head/Director well in advance of the above timelines to provide adequate time for preparation of the submission.

Link Between Probationary Reviews and Annual Performance and Development (APD) Process

(7) Irrespective of Mid-Term Review or Final Review submission dates, probationary academic staff will participate in the normal Annual Performance and Development (APD) process, consistent with the timeframes for non-probationary academic staff.

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(8) Whilst it is expected that the APD process will align to the performance expectations required for confirmation, these processes will operate independently. Accordingly, APD documentation will not form part of the Mid-Term or Final Review submission provided to the relevant Confirmation Committee.

Assessment

(9) Assessment will be against the Criteria for Academic Performance for the staff member's academic level and category at the time their application is considered. The Committee may however, in an effort to ensure that an applicant is not disadvantaged by a change in academic category, give consideration to the overall contribution of an applicant since their appointment.

(10) The duties assigned to the staff member by the Supervisor and Head/Director should reflect the balance appropriate to the academic category and level of appointment and should ensure that probationary staff have the opportunity to meet the criteria for confirmation of continuing appointment. For example, in circumstances where a probationary staff member appointed to a continuing teaching and research position subsequently accepts a temporary research focused role during their probationary period, it is strongly recommended that the staff member continues to undertake some teaching activity to demonstrate competency in this domain.

(11) It is the joint responsibility of the Head/Director and the staff member to consider the implications of changing a staff member's academic category while on probation and the requirements for Final Review.

Final Review

(12) Applicants are to be aware that:

a. it is critical that feedback provided as a result of the Mid-Term Review is considered and responded to as part of the Final Review process; and
b. all mandatory training must be completed prior to the submission of the Final Review documentation.

Particular Circumstances

On Commencement

(13) All probationary staff are expected to discuss the expectations for their academic category and level with their Supervisor on commencement. Following this discussion, appropriate goals and objectives should be recorded in Workday for discussion at the first annual performance and development review.

(14) The staff member and academic Supervisor should meet regularly during the first year of employment to review progress against these goals and ensure that appropriate support is in place.

Shortening or Waiving Probation

(15) Probation may only be shortened or waived in exceptional circumstances with approval by the Provost.

Probation Extension

(16) A one- or two-year extension to the period of probation may be requested by staff members at Level A-D only.

(17) The staff member must apply in writing to the relevant Head/Director prior to the Final Review. A request for extension of probation must clearly articulate both the circumstances relevant to the request and the duration of the probation extension sought.

(18) The Head/Director will consider the submission and provide a written recommendation for consideration by the relevant Committee Chair.

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(19) Alternatively, the Committee may extend the probation period for one or two years as an outcome of the Final Review process.

(20) Only one extension to the probation period is permitted.

Probation in Abeyance

(21) The probation period applicable to continuing academic staff is intended to provide appropriate opportunity to demonstrate the expected level of performance across all domains, equivalent to their Academic level and category.

(22) In circumstances where a probationary staff member is unable to demonstrate the key requirements of their substantive position due to extended leave, secondment to a different role, or other relevant circumstances, the relevant Committee Chair on recommendation from the Supervisor may place the probation period in abeyance for an equivalent period. Alternatively, a request to place the probation period in abeyance can also be initiated by the staff member with appropriate justification.

(23) Probation in Abeyance will not be used in circumstances where the absence is less than 12 weeks.

(24) Upon return to the workplace, a revised probation end date will be confirmed.

Probation/Promotion Relationships

(25) Where a Level A academic is on probation and is successful in gaining promotion to Level B, confirmation of continuing appointment will be considered against the academic criteria for Level B. Confirmation of continuing appointment will be determined by the relevant LCC in accordance with the standard Final Review process.

(26) Level B-D staff on probation who make a successful application for promotion, will also be considered to have been successful in achieving early confirmation of continuing appointment.

Section 3 - Key Process Requirements

Academic Documentation Submission

(27) The Applicant must ensure that that the following items are completed and submitted as part of their application by the due date as advised in writing by the relevant secretariat:

a. Mid-Term Review/Final Review Application Form, which includes:
    i. Reflection on progress to date (MTR)/Case for Confirmation (FR) (600 words maximum).
    ii. Performance Relative to Opportunity considerations (300 words maximum).
    iii. Reflection on performance against the relevant level of the Criteria for Academic Performance.
    iv. Additional Documentation (optional).
b. Individual Activity Profile (IAP) – Applicants must ensure their Individual Activity Profile is updated prior to the submission of their Mid-Term/Final Review application. Committee members will be provided with access to the IAP for the applicant during the period they are on probation.

(28) Once the Mid-Term/Final Review Application Form is submitted by the applicant, it will progress to the relevant Head/Director to provide their review and recommendation.

Head of School/Faculty-level Director

(29) Upon receipt of the Mid-Term/Final Review Application Form, the Head of School/Faculty-level Director is required to provide their assessment and recommendations.

(30) This involves providing an assessment and commentary against each academic domain as well as an overall recommendation.

(31) Where the Head of School/Faculty-level Director has consulted with relevant staff to inform the assessment, including the applicant's supervisor, the names of these staff members must be included.

Executive Dean Report (Level E only)

(32) For staff who have an appointment within a Faculty and who are undergoing Mid-Term/Final review at Professor Level (Level E) the application will also be reviewed by the Executive Dean.

a. For Mid-Term Review applicants, the Executive Dean will review the documentation and provide formal written feedback to the probationary staff member.
b. For Final Review applicants, the Executive Dean will be required to provide their assessment and recommendation as part of the Final Review submission.

Acknowledgement and Response

(33) Once submitted by the Head/Director and/or Executive Dean, the completed Mid-Term/Final Review Application Form will be provided to the applicant for formal acknowledgement within Workday.

(34) Should the applicant wish to provide a written response to the ratings, comments or reflections provided by the Head/Director or Executive Dean, this can be done as part of the Acknowledgement process. Any comments provided through the Acknowledgement process will be provided to the Committee.

(35) Submitted applications are considered final and are not to be amended following submission.

Head of School Probation Requirements

(36) It is recognised that Heads of School have a significant leadership responsibility beyond that of most academic staff. Heads of School who are on probation should also address the requirements outlined in the Faculty, School and Institute Governance and Management Procedure (as appropriate) when submitting documentation for Mid-Term and Final Review.

References

(37) In circumstances where clarification is needed on a specific aspect of an applicant's case, referees may be sought at the discretion of the Committee Chair. Referees must be able to attest to the applicant's contribution and impact and it is expected that referees will be at or above, the academic level of the applicant.

Conflict of Interest Considerations

(38) If a perceived or potential conflict of interest exists, the referee must declare this to the person seeking the reference.

(39) This may include:

a. being a mentor, relative or friend;
b. having held a grant or published with the person in the preceding five years;
c. having participated in the same research group in the preceding five years;
d. having ongoing and close collaboration links; or
e. being a current member of the relevant Confirmation and Promotions Committee.

(40) A referee must not have an actual conflict of interest with the applicant.

Adverse Comments

(41) Applicants will have the opportunity to respond to adverse referee comments.

Committee Interview

(42) As part of the Final Review process, all applicants (except for Teaching Associates) will be interviewed by the relevant Committee.

(43) Final Review submissions for Teaching Associates will be assessed by the Local Confirmation Committee Chair (consistent with the process for Level A to B promotions).

a. Where the Chair determines the written submission clearly demonstrates the expectations for confirmation have been met, the applicant's appointment will be confirmed without interview.
b. Where the Chair determines further information or clarification is needed, a Final Review interview with the Local Confirmation Committee will be scheduled to provide the applicant with an opportunity to address any queries prior to a decision being reached.

(44) The interview process provides an opportunity for applicants to present their case for confirmation and enables the Committee to seek clarification on any aspects of the application.

(45) The interview will also provide an opportunity for applicants to further discuss the Heads of Schools/Director's recommendation and any other relevant matters as required.

Appeals

(46) In circumstances where the relevant committee determines that a Final Review applicant's probation period is to be extended or not confirmed, a staff member may only appeal the decision on procedural grounds.

(47) Prior to appealing, it is expected that the unsuccessful applicant will seek feedback on their application and reasons for the decision to extend or not to confirm.

(48) An appeal must be lodged in writing to the Chief Human Resources Officer at cap@uq.edu.au within 10 working days following the feedback meeting with the Committee Chair. In order for an appeal to be upheld, the Provost or Vice-Chancellor as Authorised Officer must be satisfied that the procedural error had a substantial and significant impact on the decision. The decision of the Authorised Officer is final.

Notice

(49) For applicants for whom the decision is not to confirm, the University may elect to provide payment in lieu of notice (in whole or in part) in accordance with the provisions of the Enterprise Agreement.

Section 4 - Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities

Local Confirmation Committee (LCC)

(50) The relevant LCC is responsible for considering applications for Mid-Term Review and confirmation at Academic Level A-D and providing recommendations to the Chair. Membership of each LCC will be approved by the Provost on an annual basis.

(51) Following Final Review, relevant LCCs are strongly encouraged to support the continued development of newly confirmed staff by providing feedback that addresses their performance against all relevant academic domains, including strengths, areas of development and suggested future areas of focus.

Professorial Confirmation and Promotions Committee (PCPC)

(52) The PCPC is responsible for considering applications for confirmation at Academic Level E and providing recommendations to the Chair.

(53) Following Final Review, the PCPC is strongly encouraged to support the continued development of newly confirmed staff by providing feedback that addresses each candidate's performance against all relevant academic domains, including strengths, areas of development and suggested future areas of focus.

Provost

(54) The Provost is required to:

a. Chair the Professorial Confirmation and Promotions Committee and hold decision making responsibility.
b. Provide Final Review applicants with feedback (Level E).
c. Consider requests to shorten or waive the probation period (Level A-E).
d. Consider and determine appeals (Level A-E).

Executive Dean

(55) The Executive Dean (or approved delegate) is required to:

a. Chair the relevant Local Confirmation Committee (LCC) and hold decision making responsibility.
b. Consider requests for probation extension (Level A-D).
c. Provide constructive and developmental feedback to staff undertaking Mid-Term Review (Level A-D).
d. Provide Final Review applicants with feedback (Level A-D).
e. Determine the outcome of Final Review applications for Teaching Associate (TA) appointments, on recommendation from the Head of School, and advise the applicant (Level A-B).
f. Undertake document review and provide formal written feedback for Mid-Term Review (Level E).
g. Complete Executive Dean Report for staff applying for Final Review (Level E).

Head of School/Faculty-level Director/University-level Institute Director/Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure)

(56) The Head of School/Director/PVCRI is required to:

a. Provide all necessary documentation to the applicant within reasonable timeframes.
b. Seek feedback from the academic Supervisor and other relevant staff as appropriate.
c. Complete the Head/Director assessment and recommendation sections of the Mid-Term Review/Final Review Application Form within Workday at least two weeks from documentation due date (Level A-E).
d. Meet with Final Review applicants to discuss their application and explain their responses to the assessment and recommendation sections of the Final Review Application Form.
e. Provide constructive and developmental feedback to Final Review applicants following the interview with the committee (at the request of the Faculty Executive Dean).

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Supervisor

(57) The academic supervisor is required to:

a. Discuss performance expectations with the academic staff member upon their commencement in their position.
b. Provide feedback to the Head/Director as requested regarding the performance of the probationary staff member.

Academic Staff

(58) Academic staff have a responsibility to:

a. Provide full and complete information relating to their performance based on the academic criteria, and any specific expectations or requirements that the University may have stipulated in the Offer of Employment.
b. Ensure all required documentation is correct and submitted via the online system by the due date.
c. Ensure their Individual Activity Profile (IAP) is updated prior to the submission of the Mid-Term Review and Final Review Application Form.
d. Submit a written response (optional) to comments, ratings and recommendations made by the Head/Director and Executive Dean (Level E) within the Mid-Term/Final Review Application Forms via the formal Acknowledgement step by the due date.
e. Submit a brief update (optional) to the Committee Secretariat up to one week prior to committee interview on any substantial new achievements since submission of the application.
f. Seek assistance if support is required throughout the probation process.

Committee Secretariat

(59) The Committee secretariat is responsible for supporting the Committee to undertake its obligations and responsibilities effectively in line with University policy, procedure, and associated standards. This includes:

a. Assisting the Committee and applicants where required.
b. Notifying staff members of Mid-Term and Final Review requirements.
c. Recording outcomes of Mid-Term and Final Review processes.
d. Ensuring that confirmation outcomes and changes to probation dates, via extension or abeyance, are accurately recorded in the appropriate systems.
e. In conjunction with the Committee Chair, ensuring that applicants are advised of outcomes in writing as soon as reasonably practicable.

Section 5 - Monitoring, Review and Assurance

(60) The Chief Human Resources Officer (or delegated authority) has responsibility for ensuring compliance with this Procedure and ensuring it is monitored and reviewed appropriately.

Section 6 - Definitions, Terms and Acronyms

Term	Definition
Academic Category	Teaching and Research (T&R) Teaching Focused (TF) Research Focused (RF) Clinical Academic (CA) Teaching Associate (TA)

Term	Definition
Academic Performance and Development (APD) process	The APD process refers to the annual appraisal and development conversation.
Authorised Officer	The officer authorised to exercise certain powers and functions as outlined in the Human Resources Sub-delegations Schedules.
Committee Chair	Faculty Executive Dean (for LCC). Provost (for PCPC).
Committee	The relevant Local Confirmation Committee (LCC); or the Professorial Confirmation and Promotions Committee (PCPC) for Level E.
Continuing Appointment	All employment other than Fixed-term, Research (Contingent Funded), or Casuals.
Enterprise Agreement	The University of Queensland Enterprise Agreement 2021-2026, or as amended or replaced.
Probation Period	Level A-D: Three years. Level E: By Agreement (up to three years).

Status and Details

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Policy Owner	Phil Vaughan Chief Human Resources Officer
Enquiries Contact	Human Resources Division

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