

Guidance

G2148 A1

Effective management of probation periods in LU

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1 Purpose

This document provides support to managers of staff who have been recruited externally. It expands on the instructions published on [‘Probation’ page on Working at TfL](#).

2 Scope

This guidance is applicable to managers of externally recruited staff in LU. It should be used from when you prepare for the employee’s induction through to the completion of probation.

3 Principles of managing probation

Probation should be managed on the basis of an individual’s performance in the role and the behaviours they exhibit, together with their conduct, attendance and timekeeping. To ensure that probation is managed fairly and consistently, it is important that you measure their performance against the job description and the targets/expectations you have set, and their overall conduct, attendance and timekeeping, while you avoid basing your decisions on:

- One instance - if someone does something particularly good or bad, you may find yourself allowing the impression you gained at the time to influence you in the future, so make sure you have evidence to support your evaluation.
- Recent events - you need to avoid reviewing a person positively or not based solely on recent events, so ensure you are looking across the whole of the probationary period.
- Relationships - don’t let your relationship at a personal level, whether good or bad, influence you – instead ensure that you base this solely on their performance, conduct, attendance, timekeeping and the behaviours they exhibit.

4 Competence Management System (CMS)

To ensure that LU meets its regulatory requirements, the competence of employees in certain roles must be assessed via the CMS. Therefore, if you have a new employee in a qualifying role, then you must assign and record the planned CMS assessments for the employee. It is also important that you conduct all CMS activities at the time that they are due.

Where timescales are referenced in this guide, these refer to the time since the employee entered service and may therefore be different to any timescales relating to CMS activity. You are therefore strongly advised to check and plan for these timescales, so that you can effectively manage the probation of any direct entry employee while also meeting the requirements of CMS.

If you need any support in relation to CMS, then please contact your designated CMS co-ordinator.

5 Local induction

A well structured induction programme is an effective way to help new employees settle into the organisation and quickly become effective in their new role. By providing new employees with an induction, you will help ensure that they are

[Printed copies of this document are uncontrolled.](#)

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presented with all of the basic information about their role and location that they will need to help get them started, while also helping them understand how their role contributes to the overall success of the organisation.

If you do not already have an induction pack, then you could adapt an existing pack that is used elsewhere, or utilise any templates that have been created. If you are unable to utilise or adapt these, then you should seek advice and guidance from your HR Business Partner (HRBP).

6 Objective setting meeting and setting performance standards

Early in the probationary period you should arrange a meeting with the new employee so that you can clarify the expectations you have of them and set performance, conduct, attendance and timekeeping targets and standards while also taking time to explain the [TfL behaviours](#).

This provides you with the opportunity to ensure they fully understand what is expected of them and the standards they need to achieve.

This meeting should not just be orientated to how they should complete tasks or procedures, but it should also have a strong emphasis on how they should deliver service to their customers, manage any stakeholders and the behaviours they should consistently display. Notes of what was discussed and agreed should be taken so that you can refer to these at future meetings.

7 Maternity leave

There will be times when new entrants may be pregnant when they join LU and this may have an impact on the employee's ability to fully complete their probation in the initial six-months of their employment.

In such cases you should treat the expectant mother the same as any other employee who is pregnant and undertake the appropriate risk assessment. This may mean that they are unable to perform, or are restricted from performing, some aspects of their role or they commence their maternity leave before they have satisfactorily completed their probation period.

In any of these scenarios you should contact your People Management Advice (PMA) Specialist for advice and appropriate guidance in relation to the remainder of their probationary period.

8 Attendance and lateness

The process for managing employees with attendance and/or lateness issues during their probation period differs from that of established employees, as whilst on probation the attendance at work policy does not apply.

If an employee is absent from work, you still have the same duty of care towards them and should manage their non-attendance in the same way as any other employee. This means that contact arrangements will need to be agreed with them and when they return from the period of non-attendance you will need to hold a return to work interview with them as soon as is practicably possible.

Whilst in their probation period, the expectation is that all new employees will demonstrate that they can maintain a good standard of attendance and timekeeping. In cases where an employee fails to meet this standard, then you may decide to extend their probation or potentially terminate their employment.

It is important you seek the advice of your PMA Specialist after the return to work interview as they will then be able to advise you on the specific steps that you should take. You should also have all the relevant documentation from any other attendance or lateness related meetings.

9 Review/folder meetings

Having review meetings with new employees during the probationary period will give you dedicated time where you can highlight areas of strength or clarify and progress any areas for development. These should be scheduled when they join your team, taking in to account their roster pattern and your availability to help avoid cancellation, except in exceptional circumstances. By proactively setting up these meetings, it will send a strong message to new employees that you care about their development and are interested in them and want them to succeed.

At these meetings you should provide them with constructive feedback on their performance, conduct, attendance, timekeeping and any areas where they are falling below the targets and/or expected standards that you have set them while also taking in to account the behaviours they exhibit. Being clear with them at the earliest opportunity is very important, as by the time they reach the end of their probationary period there should be no surprises, particularly if the expectations and standards that were set are not being met and their employment is to be terminated.

It is also essential that you take notes of the meeting as you will want to refer to these before you meet with them again.

10 Probationary review form (operational and CMS roles)

The [probationary review form](#) has been created to support managers of operational staff throughout their probationary period and must be completed in all cases. This form provides you with a structure for the duration of their probationary period and up until the completion of their first full year.

11 Probationary review meetings

The aim of the review meetings is to support the new employee and to help them reach the standards you have set at the initial objective and standard setting meeting. They should be a constructive experience in which you recognise their progress so far and highlight any areas for improvement. It is recommended that key points of discussion and actions are made by you and shared with them.

There will normally be two formal review meetings during the probationary period, however an additional meeting will be required towards the end of any extension to their probationary period. You will need to consider the timing of these meetings and may need to bring these meetings forward if there are any particular concerns with their progress, unless these concerns can be addressed through review or folder meeting.

Employees do not have the right to be accompanied at any review meetings during their probationary period. It is also essential that notes are taken at these meetings.

In cases of serious misconduct or poor performance you should seek the advice of your PMA Specialist where it is not possible or appropriate to give guidance.

12 Planning and preparing for a probationary review meeting

Review meetings should be planned and scheduled well in advance of the actual meeting itself and it is the manager's responsibility for ensuring that these take place. It is important that the employee is aware of the date, time and location of the meeting and what will be discussed so they can prepare.

It is important that the manager does not restrict the review meeting to discussions of problem areas, but also identifies and comments on the positive outcomes that the employee has achieved. The manager must be prepared to provide support to them in order to give them a fair opportunity to become fully integrated and a productive employee in the longer term.

At each review meeting, the manager should aim to:

- Highlight areas where the employee is performing well.
- Explore any areas where the employee is failing to meet the required standard of performance, conduct and attendance or timekeeping.
- Discuss with them whether any specific training or coaching is required and remind them of the standard that they are required to achieve.
- Allow the employee time to explain how they believe that they are progressing in the role and the extent to which they have settled in to their new team and getting on with their new colleagues.
- Give them time to ask questions or raise any concerns about any aspect of their employment.

Remember, the review meetings should be a two-way conversation and provide both the manager and the employee with the opportunity to discuss progress and any concerns.

To achieve a positive outcome at the review meeting, it is important that the manager is open, honest and constructive in the way that they communicate with the employee. Some key points to consider here to facilitate a good two-way discussion are:

- Keep the conversation factual and do not be tempted to bring in your personal opinions.
- Be very specific when discussing any shortfalls to the required standard.
- Avoid generalising. Be specific and refer to actual occurrences. You will have their objectives, notes from previous meetings, their development plan or records from periods of non-attendance and/or lateness so use these and focus directly on the issue and what needs to be improved.
- Ask open questions and follow up with probing questions if you need more information.

- Listen actively to the employee.
- Keep the discussion positive, so if you are discussing areas where they have weakness, then frame the conversation about the areas where they need to improve instead of referring to their weaknesses.
- Check that they understand what has been discussed and agreed by asking them to summarise what has been discussed.

13 The first probationary review meeting

Having already met with the employee to set performance standards/expectations and held one or more review/folder meeting, you will need to conduct a probationary review meeting which should take place after approximately 12 weeks from the date they entered service.

During this first review meeting, the employee should be given the opportunity to discuss their performance and any other issues which they believe may have impacted on their employment so far. If any areas of performance, conduct, attendance and/or timekeeping are causing concern, this should be discussed with them along with any appropriate support or training that may need to be provided to form the basis of a development plan which you should monitor and provide them with regular feedback over the remainder of the probationary period.

Clearly explain that the consequences of them failing to meet the required standards at the end of their probationary period may result in the termination of their employment. It is important that you contact your PMA Specialist if there are any concerns in relation to the employees performance, conduct, attendance and/or timekeeping.

It is essential that notes of the discussion are kept. These should include any agreed targets for the next review period, any support and/or training offered and/or accepted and the agreed timeframe for any improvements. Review/folder meetings should then continue throughout the remainder of their probation.

The probationary review form should then be updated and a copy given to the employee.

14 The second probationary review meeting

Although you may have held regular review meetings with the employee, a second probationary review meeting should take place at approximately week 20 from the date they entered service, or sooner if overall performance, conduct, attendance and/or timekeeping are not satisfactory. This is particularly important if the first review meeting identified issues that might have an impact on the outcome of the probationary period.

If there is a performance shortfall related to a skill or knowledge gap which you believe may still be addressed before the end of the probationary period, then you must ensure that the employee has access to any support and/or training necessary to address this gap, providing that this is reasonable.

Include details of any support and/or training alongside any targets you agree with them and, if appropriate, use these to form the basis of a development plan which

you should monitor and provide them with regular feedback over the remainder of the probationary period.

Clearly explain that the consequences of them failing to meet the required standards may result in the termination of their employment at the end of the probationary period. You must contact your PMA Specialist if there are any concerns over the employees performance, conduct, attendance or timekeeping, so that they can provide you with any advice and guidance

It is essential that you take notes of the meeting that accurately capture the conversation. These notes should include any issues that have been identified and discussed, together with any plans that have been agreed to resolve these including timescales and standards. If the probationary period is to be extended, then these notes should also make clear reference to this. The probationary review form should then be updated and a copy given to the employee.

15 Successful completion of the probation period

If you are satisfied that the employee has reached the required standard of performance, conduct, attendance and timekeeping and demonstrates this on a consistent basis and with the right behaviours, then you should contact HR Services (HRS) on auto 1729 who will update the employees record to indicate that a successful probation period has been completed and that they are to be confirmed in post. HRS will then e-mail you a letter for you to present to the employee confirming them in post.

There may be instances where a salary increase or change in grade takes place on the completion of their probationary period. This will depend on what was approved when the recruitment campaign commenced. If prior approval was granted, then you will need to inform HRS of this and they will then update SAP and confirm the new salary and/or grade in the employee's successful completion of probation letter. If no prior approval was granted, then you need to follow any formal process that is in place at that time, having first sought the advice of your HRBP.

To ensure that this is managed correctly, please check the employees offer letter and terms and conditions of employment.

16 Extending the probationary period

The probationary period can be extended for a period of up to three months i.e. to nine months in total. This option should only be used if the employee has not quite met the required standards and expectations that were set, there is a valid reason why they haven't been met and there is an expectation that the employee will be able to achieve this within the extension.

If the probationary period is to be extended, then you will need to ensure that the employee is aware of the standards that need to be met during the extension and inform them that if they do not meet these standards then their employment may be terminated. An extension to the probation period must also be confirmed in writing. Within your letter you should confirm the reason for the extension, outlining the areas where improvements need to be made.

An extension should not be used in cases where there is evidence of a significant shortfall in performance, conduct, attendance and/or timekeeping, as in these circumstances this extension is unlikely to be sufficient time to make up the shortfall. In such a case you must contact your PMA Specialist for advice and guidance before you meet with the employee.

17 Unsatisfactory completion of probation

Although this list is not exhaustive, there are five main reasons why an employee may fail their probationary period:

- Failed training
- Poor attendance
- Poor timekeeping
- Poor performance
- A number of minor misconduct offences which are not serious in isolation but in total warrant dismissal.

Should any of the above occur you should contact your PMA Specialist for advice and guidance.

18 Person accountable for the document

Name	Job title
Claire O'Neill	Senior People Management Advisor Manager

19 Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
CMS	Competence Management System
HRBP	HR Business Partner
PMA Specialist	People Management Advice Specialist
HRS	HR Services

20 References

Document no.	Title or URL
F0357	Probationary review form
Working at TfL	Probation
	TfL behaviours

21 Document history

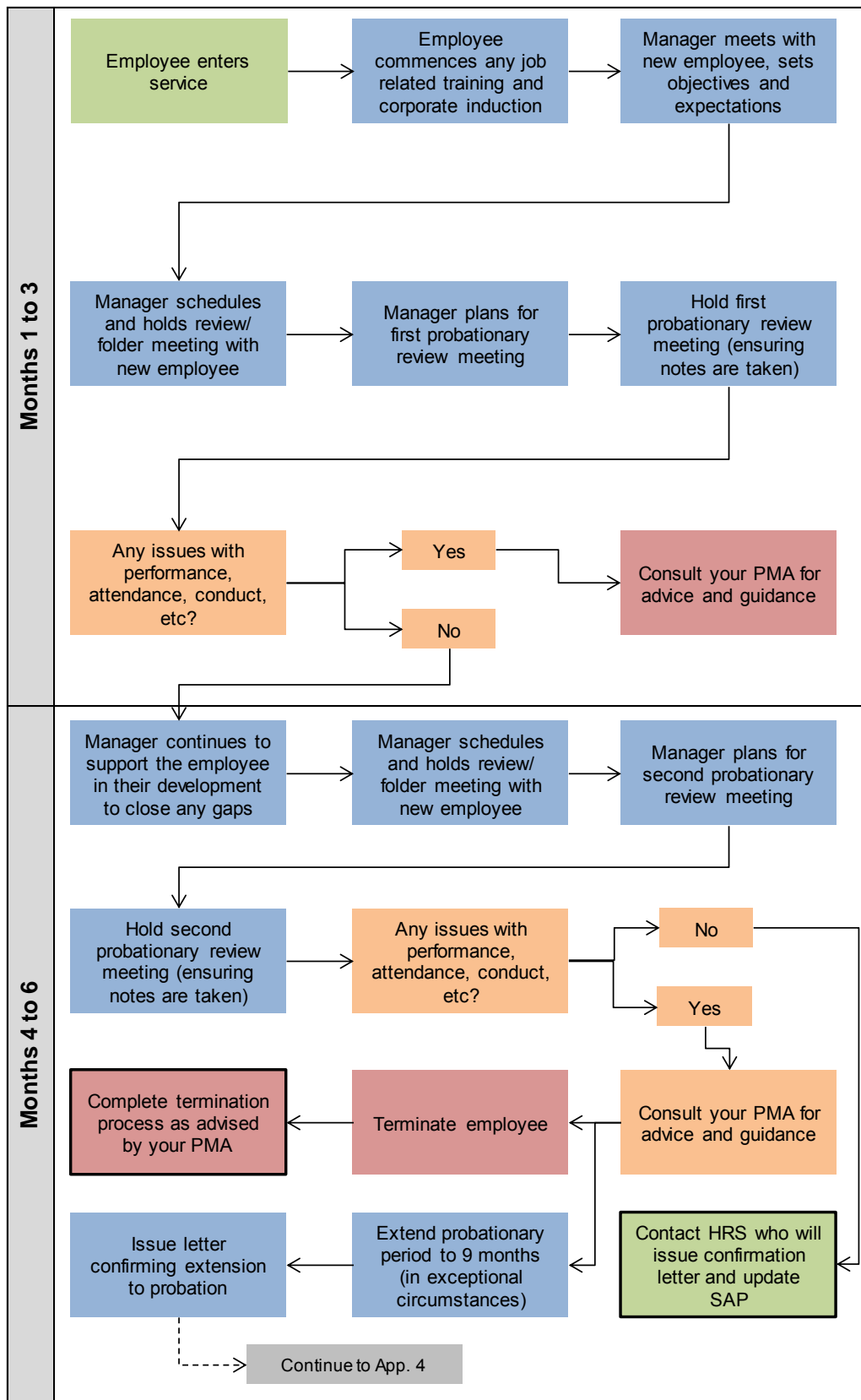
Issue no.	Date	Changes	Author
A1	November 2017	New guidance document produced as per change No. CR-10042.	Mark Read

22 Appendix 1 – managers checklist - direct entry (months 1 - 6)

Activity - Months 1 to 6	When
Create induction pack for new starter	Week before they start at your location
Hold meeting to set objectives and expectations	Week they start at your location
Create CMS profile	Week they start at your location
Hold review/folder meeting	Between objective setting meeting and 3 month probationary review
Hold 3 month probationary review meeting	12 weeks from the day they entered service
Hold review/folder meeting	Between 3 month and 6 month probationary review meetings
Hold 6 month probationary review meeting. Identify any gaps and provide support to help the employee close these ahead of their end of probation meeting	20 weeks from the day they entered service
Contact your PMA Specialist if there is a shortfall in the performance, conduct, attendance and/or timekeeping of the employee to determine next steps.	20 weeks from the day they entered service
Hold end of probation meeting	26 weeks from the day they entered service
Contact HR Services to issue probation completion letter if confirming in role, otherwise follow the advice and guidance from your PMA.	After the end of probation meeting

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Appendix 2 - probation management flow chart – direct entry (months 1- 6)



24 Appendix 3 – managers checklist - direct entry (extension to probation)

Activity - Months 6 to 9	When
Hold review/folder meeting	Between 6 month and 9 month probationary review meetings
Hold 9 month probationary review meeting	35 weeks from the day they entered service
Schedule in end of probation meeting	39 weeks from the day they entered service
Contact HR Services to issue probation completion letter	After the end of probation meeting
Contact your PMA Specialist if the extended probation period has not been satisfactorily completed	After the end of probation meeting

25 Appendix 4 - probation management flow chart – direct entry (extension to probation)

