

Probation

Recruitment and Career Development

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Probation

Overview

This section explains the policy and procedures for managing the probationary period for new staff.

Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS and/or Teaching and Exams/OAS staff contracts, subject to local law and conditions.

Responsibilities

These procedures are carried out by line managers.

Policy

- The British Council has a probation period of 12 months for newly recruited staff as part of the performance management process. It allows the British Council to monitor performance and attendance and to terminate the appointment with one month's notice, if these do not meet the required standards, or summarily for serious misconduct.
- All new staff employed in the UK or on UK-appointed indefinite contracts but working outside the UK must complete a 12-month contractual probationary period, which is covered by a clause in their contract of employment. The first 12 months of employment are the subject of formal reviews under the British Council probationary procedures. For staff on fixed term contracts this period of probation may vary.

Length of fixed term contract	Probationary period
1 year fixed term contract	3 months
Over 1 year fixed term contract	12 months

- Staff transferring between British Council contracts of any kind, including country-based contract to UK-appointed contract, are not expected to serve a probationary period. This must be reflected in their new contract.
- New staff will not be considered for transfer to another post until they have successfully completed their probationary period.

Procedures

Line managers of all UK staff or UK-appointed staff working outside the UK, must follow these probationary procedures during a member of staff's first 12 months of employment. They are responsible for:

- monitoring performance and attendance through the British Council's performance management system
- reviewing and making recommendations about whether employment should be confirmed or terminated under the British Council probationary procedures.

During the probationary period, and as part of the performance management process, you must deal fairly and effectively with any member of staff who is under-performing, or who has a poor attendance record. See Managing issues outside a probationary review below. Contact Human Resources (HR) Services for advice on using these procedures.

1. Newly appointed staff are given information on the probationary period with their contract (see Probation Information for New Staff).
2. Ensure that all newly appointed staff:
 - Have an agreed Job Description and a Job Plan
 - are given a thorough induction, using the Corporate Induction Online Programme or the Induction Training Course (see the intranet for details)
3. Conduct three formal probationary reviews: after three, six and nine months of employment:
 - Interview the member of staff, discuss and give feedback on his or her performance and attendance, and decide whether to continue with the appointment.
 - Complete a Probationary Report Form following each interview.
 - Give a copy of the report to the member of staff and HR Services, and keep a copy for yourself.
4. If the report indicates that improvement is required in the member of staff's performance, agree an Improvement Plan, stating:
 5. the problem area
 6. the improvement required
 7. the management action to support it
 8. a review date (which may be before the next formal review).
9. Give the member of staff verbal warning that, if there is insufficient improvement, their contract will be terminated. The improvement plan allows a reasonable opportunity for the member of staff to make the required improvement. For advice, contact HR Services.
10. At the end of the improvement plan period, make a recommendation about whether the member of staff's contract should be terminated or subject to a further review period. No further improvement plan/review is permitted after nine months and a final decision must be taken at this point and notice given, if necessary.

Managing issues outside a probationary review

Managing serious under-performance or poor attendance

Do not wait for the next probationary interview to take action.

1. Hold an interview, outlining the improvement required in performance or attendance.
2. Agree an improvement plan, stating:
 - a) the problem area
 - b) the improvement required
 - c) a review date (which may be before the next formal review).
3. Indicate in the plan, and tell the member of staff that:
 - they will be given support and a reasonable opportunity to make the required improvement
 - if there is insufficient improvement, their contract will be terminated.

Note: For advice, contact HR Services.

Confirming or terminating employment after probation

1. Following the final probationary interview after nine months of employment, complete a final Probationary Report on the member of staff. Include a recommendation to confirm the appointment at 12 months, or terminate the contract.
2. If the appointment is confirmed:
 - a) Inform the member of staff in writing.
 - b) Send a copy of the letter to HR Services.
3. If the appointment is to be terminated, you must obtain approval from:
 - a senior manager, in consultation with HR Services
 - for staff at senior management level, Director HR.

Probation Information for New Staff**Overview**

This section contains information about probationary procedures, and is provided to all newly appointed staff.

Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS and/or Teaching and Exams'/OAS staff contracts, subject to local law and conditions.

Probationary Procedure

The first 12 months of your employment with the British Council are a probationary period. During this period, the British Council decides whether or not your appointment should be confirmed. If you are on a fixed term contract of less than one year, this probationary period may vary. The duration of your probationary period is stated in your contract.

So that this decision is reached in a fair and well-informed way, we use the following procedure:

1. Your appointment will be formally reviewed after three, six and finally nine months. At these reviews, your manager will discuss your progress with you and:
 - give you feedback on your progress to date, giving encouragement or criticism where appropriate
 - get feedback from you on how you feel about your progress.
2. If there are shortcomings in your performance you will be told, and have the opportunity to improve on the basis of a written improvement plan.
3. In addition to discussing your work, your manager will comment on your attendance and sick leave records. The British Council attaches considerable importance to good attendance and sick leave records. Poor attendance and time-keeping or high levels of sickness absence will be taken into account in considering your employment position. All sickness absence is monitored.
4. After each review, your manager will complete a report and give you a copy. After the final review at nine months, your manager will also decide whether or not your appointment should be confirmed. You will be told what decision has been made.

5. The reports and a record of the final decision are passed to Human Resources (HR):

- If you have successfully completed your probationary period, you will receive a letter from HR Services confirming this.
- If you have unsuccessfully completed your probationary period, you will be dismissed with one month's notice.

Note: If at any time during your probationary period you do not demonstrate sufficient progress and/or any agreed improvement plans are not fulfilled, your manager may decide to end your employment before the nine-month review. In such circumstances, you are entitled to receive one verbal warning prior to a final review, followed by dismissal with one month's notice or pay in lieu.