

Name of Policy	Interim - Probation for Fixed-Term Academic Staff Policy
Description of Policy	<i>This policy aims to inform Faculty Executive Deans, Heads of School, alternate supervisors and academic staff employed on a fixed-term appointment of the process and procedures relating to fixed-term probationary appointments.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> New Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revision	
Description of Revision	<i>The amendments to this Policy require teaching and research academic staff members appointed on probation to establish and maintain a teaching portfolio consistent with the level of appointment.</i>

Human Resources Directorate

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1. Background Information

The period of probation is the final stage of the recruitment and selection process. A probationary period is designed to establish whether there is an appropriate match between the person, the position and the work environment. Successful probation requires both the staff member and the supervisor to be satisfied with the match of the staff member's qualifications, skills, abilities and potential development and the needs of the position.

The probation process is also the first step in the introduction to the Performance Review and Planning Program for Academic Staff. Following confirmation of the appointment, staff who are appointed on fixed term contracts of 12 months or more will participate in the Performance Review and Planning Program for Academic Staff."

2. Policy Statement

An academic staff member, other than a casual appointee, may be employed on the basis of a requirement to complete satisfactorily a specified reasonable period of probationary employment that is directly related to the nature of the work performed.

The requirement to complete a probationary period may be attached to offers of continuing and fixed-term employment.

The terms of an academic staff member's probationary period shall be advised in writing to the staff member in advance of the commencement of employment. For staff appointed on a fixed-term basis, the maximum term of the probationary period may not exceed 18 months and the normal terms of probation for staff appointed on a fixed-term basis are:

- three months for contracts of 6-12 months duration,
- six months for contracts of 1-2 years duration, and
- twelve months for contracts of 2 or more years duration.

Probation requirements will not be set for contracts of less than six months.

If during the term of the probationary period, the staff member is granted leave without pay for a period in excess of six months, the probationary period will be suspended for the duration of the approved leave without pay.

Prior to making a decision about the confirmation of a staff member's appointment, the University will take into consideration all relevant information available to it on teaching, research and scholarship, other contributions to the University and professional activity relating to the probationary criteria for the staff member.

An academic staff member who has successfully completed the probationary requirements of her/his fixed-term appointment and who becomes eligible for and is subsequently offered a continuing academic appointment, may be required to serve a further period of up to 2 years probation. The additional probationary requirements for this continuing appointment to be confirmed will be detailed in the University's letter of offer, in accordance with the University's Interim Probation for Continuing Academic Staff Policy.

Other than the circumstances listed above, an academic staff member cannot be required to serve more than one period of probation.

This Interim Probation for Fixed-Term Academic Staff Policy operates in addition to the University's Interim Minimum Employment Period Policy, which refers to the operation of Section 383 of *the Fair Work Act, 2009* (the **Act**).

3. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform Executive Deans, Heads of School, alternative supervisors and academic staff who have been appointed on a fixed-term basis of the process and procedures relating to probationary fixed-term appointments.

4. Application of Policy

This policy applies to all academic staff employed on a fixed term basis who are required to serve a probationary period.

5. Approvals

All approvals of decisions made must be in accordance with the University's Staffing Delegations Register.

6. Procedures

6.1. Selection Committee Report

6.1.1 It is the responsibility of the Selection Committee to recommend to the relevant approving officer the terms of any probation to be attached to an appointment, having taken into consideration the nature of the work to be undertaken, the length of the contract, and the recommended candidate's background and experience. A Selection Committee may recommend the waiver of probation, having regard to the recommended candidate's prior service, qualifications and experience.

6.1.2 The reasons for such recommendations must be clearly documented in the Selection Committee Report. Where a probationary period is to be established upon employment, the letter of offer must provide an explicit paragraph that details precisely the conditions and expectations of the probationary period.

6.1.3 It is not sufficient to state that the candidate must fulfil the duties listed in the relevant Minimum Standard for Academic Levels (MSALs) for the level of appointment (refer to the University's Interim Policy – Classification Standards for Academic and General Staff). The candidate must be given a clear indication of the performance expectations to be met during the period of probation and the period of time allocated to meet each of these expectations.

6.1.4 These performance expectations may include:

- achievement of satisfactory ratings on evaluations of teaching;
- achievement/maintenance of professional registration relevant to the appointment;
- completion of professional development activities;
- establishment/maintenance of a teaching portfolio, and/or,
- establishment/maintenance of a program of research, etc.

6.2. Regular Appraisals

During the period of probation, the Head of the School or the alternate supervisor will conduct regular appraisals of the staff member's performance. Meetings will occur at

least monthly for periods of probation of up to three months and at least bimonthly for periods of probation of up to six months, and at least quarterly for periods of probation up to 12 months.

6.3. Performance Review for Incremental Progression

In order to achieve progression to the next point on an incremental scale, a staff member is expected to be able to demonstrate that she/he has met the necessary performance requirements for incremental progression, as assessed by the staff member's nominated supervisor, following a performance review carried out in accordance with the review procedures outlined in this Policy. At least three months before a staff member's incremental anniversary date, the Human Resources Directorate will forward an Incremental Progression Report for Academic Staff to the nominated supervisor for completion. Nominated supervisors should also refer to the University's Incremental Progression for Academic Staff Policy.

6.4. Review Criteria

The key criteria for confirming an academic staff member's fixed-term employment will be successfully meeting of all probationary requirements. The following provides some detail in relation to normal expectations.

6.5 General Requirements

It is expected that the probationer will be able to demonstrate satisfactory performance in relation to the Minimum Standard for the Academic Levels (MSALs) for the level of appointment (refer to the University's Interim Policy – Classification Standards for Academic and General Staff) as well as meet the following general requirements:

- demonstrated capacity and willingness to undertake all the duties and responsibilities of the position;
- demonstrated willingness to respond to changes in workplace requirements within the scope of the position description and length of the contract; and,
- demonstrated capacity to achieve work outcomes as required within the scope of the position description.

In addition to the general requirements above, the following specific requirements, as appropriate, must be met.

6.5.1 Teaching and Learning

Where teaching is a requirement of the position, the expectation is that the staff member will achieve a consistent record of satisfactory accomplishment as evidenced by teaching evaluations, documentation of unit outlines and assessment processes, possibly curriculum development, and other material presented in a teaching portfolio.

The University expects academic staff, who have teaching responsibilities, to:

- carry out their teaching tasks and associated activities conscientiously and effectively;
- develop a systematic approach to the subject matter and relate it to the objectives of the course;
- identify and communicate to students the expected achievements and graduate attributes of the course and, where appropriate, the relevance of these achievements to professional activities;
- demonstrate an awareness of the expectations and capabilities of the students;

- select teaching methods that are appropriate to the subject and the students;
- demonstrate an ability to establish an effective environment for learning; and,
- demonstrate an awareness of the nexus between research and scholarship, and teaching and learning.

In addition, it is a probationary requirement that all academic staff with teaching responsibilities familiarise themselves with the contents of the Training Unit - Staff eLearning Tutorial and the Online Teaching and Learning Module which are accessible via: <http://blackboard.acu.edu.au/webct/cobaltMainFrame.dowebct>.

6.5.2 Research

In relation to research, a probationer on a fixed-term contract may be expected to demonstrate a record of productivity in a research field as evidenced by publications, successful grant applications, participation in research, research student supervision and/or general research leadership in the discipline.

The University expects most of its academic staff to initiate, develop or participate creatively and with a degree of autonomy in research or other scholarly activity. They should demonstrate a willingness and ability to acquire the necessary skills for undertaking such work and apply them methodically. They may be expected to:

- set specific research objectives, which, if achieved, represent an addition to knowledge;
- relate that additional knowledge to the cumulative knowledge of the discipline;
- identify and justify the methods of achieving these objectives; and,
- demonstrate progress towards achieving these objectives, or identify the specific reasons for lack of progress.

The University recognises that, in some disciplines, considerable time may pass before substantial products of research or scholarship are achieved. Formally published material, as well as indications of partial outcomes and progress reports, will be considered.

For academic research-only staff the expected level of performance in research will be higher than that for academic staff with other significant responsibilities in teaching and administration.

In circumstances where enrolment in and demonstration of satisfactory progress towards a PhD or Master's degree is a probationary requirement; the staff member may be expected to provide evidence of her/his enrolment in the relevant award program. The staff member may also be required to obtain a recent report from her/his Master's or PhD supervisor, concerning her/his progress with the degree for the consideration of the Probationary Review Committee.

6.5.3 Administration, Institution Building and Community Engagement

An academic staff member is also expected to demonstrate the capacity to fulfil competently duties and responsibilities in administration, service and other areas as required in the position description, including contributions to professional bodies (for example, membership of editorial boards in the discipline) and relevant community activities. The involvement in such activities will depend on the length and nature of the fixed-term appointment.

The above criteria should be treated as a guide. There is scope to modify the criteria in the light of opportunities made available to the academic during the probationary period, the individual's experience before appointment, and any particular requirements of the position or requirements set by the Selection Committee.

6.6 Staff Development

Probationary academic staff will be provided with opportunities to participate in a range of staff development activities. Heads of School will provide constructive supervision to confirm progress or identify difficulties and develop strategies for their resolution.

6.7 Performance Review

6.7.1 It is a normal expectation that an academic staff member on probation will be regularly monitored and be reviewed by and receive guidance from her/his supervisor throughout the period of probation.

6.7.2 The review will normally involve the Head of School meeting with the probationer to discuss the activities undertaken by the staff member, identification of any perceived deficiencies in performance and (if relevant) suggestions for overcoming these deficiencies. These meetings will occur at least monthly for periods of probation of up to three months, at least bimonthly for periods of probation of up to six months, and at least quarterly for periods of probation of up to twelve months. They should focus on information gathered from peers, students and the probationer and should function as checks for the purpose of providing direct and constructive feedback to the staff member on progress toward meeting her/his probationary targets.

Staff development activities undertaken will be taken into account along with the primary responsibilities of teaching, research, administration and/or community engagement. A report of each review meeting will be kept by the Head of School and a copy provided to the probationer, and will contain clear feedback and recommendations. Reviews undertaken as part of this process will substitute for the reviews required under the Performance Review and Planning Program for Academic Staff. Nominated supervisors should complete the Interim and Final Academic Staff Probation Review Report (Fixed-Term Appointments) pro formas which are attached to this Policy document.

6.7.3 Where the Head of School is of the view that the performance of an academic is unsatisfactory, the Head of School should first advise the academic of the nature of the improvement required and the time within which reasonable improvement can be expected. The Head of School should also consider the use of other strategies, including appropriate academic staff development, counselling and/or appropriate work allocation.

6.7.4 Where action to address the unsatisfactory performance proves unsuccessful, the Head of School will consult with the Executive Dean, Director, Human Resources and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

6.7.5 The staff member will be advised of, and given an opportunity to respond to, any adverse material that the University intends to take into account in relation to the non-confirmation of appointment.

6.7.6 No later than one month prior to the end of a three-month period of probation, two months prior to the end of a six-month period of probation and three months prior to the end of a 12 month or more period of probation, respectively, following either the interim or final review of the probationer by the Head of School, the Head of School may recommend to the Executive Dean:

6.7.6.1 that the candidate be confirmed in the fixed-term appointment.

OR

6.7.6.2 that where there are unsatisfactory aspects of performance but there is evidence that these could be addressed with a continuation of the probation period and where the length of the fixed-term contract allows, that the probationary period should continue

up until the maximum date of probation with a further or final review no later than 6 months prior to the maximum probation date.

OR

6.7.6.3 that in the case of candidates employed on a fixed-term contract of 12 months or more, the Executive Dean recommend to the Vice-Chancellor that the candidate separate from employment with up to six months notice (or with payment in lieu by mutual agreement) or as specified in the staff member's contract of employment.

6.8 Where significant problems with a probationer's performance are not resolved, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will recommend to Vice-Chancellor that non-confirmation of the appointment is appropriate before the completion of the period of probation.

6.9 When a probationary appointment is confirmed or continuation of the probationary period is required, the Executive Dean will advise a candidate, in writing, of this outcome. All such recommendations will be reported to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). In cases where the Vice-Chancellor approves separation from employment, written advice will be provided to the candidate by the Human Resources Directorate.

6.10 Appeals

An appeal concerning a review of a fixed-term staff member's probation may only be lodged on procedural grounds. An appeal must be made in writing and lodged with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Resources) within ten (10) working days of receipt of the letter of notification from the Executive Dean, in accordance with the University's Interim Policy – Staff Appeals.

7. Policy Review

The University may make changes to this policy and procedures from time to time. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this policy may forward her/his suggestions to the Director, Human Resources.

8. Further Assistance

Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this policy should consult her/his nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of probationary requirements in her/his work area. Should further advice be needed, she/he should contact the Human Resources Consultant responsible for her/his campus.