



etbi
Education and Training
Boards Ireland
*Boird Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Éireann*

PROBATION

POLICY

*For all staff in
Education and
Training Boards
Ireland*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the policy is to enable staff to realise their full potential in the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). The probationary period of employment is viewed as an extension of the selection process.

The probation policy will ensure consistent and equitable treatment of all staff employed by ETBI. All staff have a clause in their contract stating that they must satisfactorily serve a probationary period before the appointment is confirmed. The length of the probationary period is specified in the contract and is usually dependent on the duration of the contract. The probationary period may be extended at the discretion of ETBI but will not exceed 11 months.

ETBI recognises the important role staff contribute to the organisation, this policy aims to provide access to the support, resources and facilities necessary to enable them to develop and expand their knowledge, skills and qualifications and assist in their career development.

The aim of the policy is to support new staff members and their line manager to ensure new staff members are given the opportunity to learn what is required and to identify areas in need of training and development. Line managers should have regular communication and periodic meetings with new staff members to ensure:

- Staff are settling into their role and are receiving the right amount of support and training necessary to succeed.
- That any issues can be resolved at an early stage and promptly.
- Where necessary, to take appropriate steps if staff members have not met the requirements/expected standards of the job.

The legal entitlements of the employee will not be affected by the application of this policy.

2. STAFF MEMBERS COVERED BY THIS POLICY

The policy is applicable to all staff employed directly by ETBI, through an agency to ETBI and seconded to ETBI. The policy applies to all contracts of employment i.e. new appointments, permanent, fixed term, specific purpose and contracts of indefinite duration.

3. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROBATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The primary objective of the probation policy and its procedures is to decide on the suitability or otherwise of an employee for the post to which a staff member has been appointed. The probation policy and its procedure should also help the line manager and the staff member to progressively identify the strengths and weaknesses of the employee in the post; to identify areas of competence, performance or behaviour which would benefit from training and development, and to help the staff member to complete probation successfully.

The probation policy and its procedure also provide an opportunity for discussion of the employee's future potential and future training/development needs. ETBI will make every effort to facilitate the satisfactory completion of the probationary period. Where training and development are required for the employee to match the job requirements, the staff member should be informed in writing of what has to do and the timescale for achievement of satisfactory performance.

If, however, work performance is not up to required standards, ETBI may either take remedial action or terminate employment.

1. If the employee has not reached the required standard, ETBI may either extend the probationary period in order that remedial action can be taken or ETBI may terminate the employment.
2. At any stage during the probationary period ETBI reserves the right to address disciplinary misconduct matters through the probationary review assessments¹. ETBI reserves the right to bypass, at its discretion, any step in the disciplinary process in view of the employee's probationary status or to terminate the contract with notice, if it thinks that the severity of the action warrants it. ETBI will be fair in the application of such discretion.

Any continuous period of absence of four weeks or more will suspend the probationary period until the employee returns to work. Notice periods to be given by either party during the probationary period will be one week.

An employee has the right to be accompanied by a friend or a work colleague at any formal meeting relating to this policy.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Line Manager Responsibilities

- a) Ensure that the individual is properly inducted into the department and has the necessary resources and support to fulfil the role.

- b) Set and agree the objectives for the duration of the probation period
- c) Identify training needs
- d) Line managers are responsible for monitoring the probation process and procedures for new employees reporting to them
- e) Line managers are responsible for ensuring that the probation assessments are carried out within the relevant timelines
- f) Line managers are responsible for ensuring that they work collaboratively with HR throughout the process
- g) The line manager should seek advice from HR whenever an employee's performance/conduct gives cause for concern
- h) The line manager is responsible for helping the new employee establish his/her suitability for the job
- i) Conduct regular probationary review meetings and have relevant information to hand
- j) Provide honest and constructive feedback to the employee
- k) Be specific and clear about performance
- l) Listen to the employee's point of view and take account of any concerns s/he may have

See ETBI Disciplinary Procedure

- m) Re-establish expectations on an ongoing basis
- n) Line managers, in consultation with HR are expected to provide the recommendations for either successful completion of the probationary period/unsuccessful completion of the probationary period or if the extension of the probation is required
- o) Adhere to the probationary policy and its subsequent policies and procedures

4.2 *HR Responsibilities*

- m) The role of HR is to ensure fair and consistent application of the probation policy and its procedures
- n) HR will notify the line manager of the requirement for a probation review in advance of the due date for the completion of the probation
- o) HR will provide advice and guidance, as necessary, at all stages of the probation process
- p) HR are responsible for all probationary documentation and reviews
- q) All probationary documentation will be placed on the employee's personal file

4.3 *Staff Responsibilities*

- a) Ensure that the expectations and duties of the role are understood and seek clarification from their line manager when necessary.
- b) Understand the overall work objectives/duties.
- c) Identify and discuss any training needs they may have and agree how these may best be addressed.
- d) Adhere to the probation policy and procedures and any new relevant policies.

5. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

- Appendix 1: Probation Procedure
- Appendix 2: Meeting 1 & 2 First Probation Review Form
- Appendix 3: Performance Improvement Plan
- Appendix 4: Meeting 3 Final Probation Review Form

6. VARIATION

The policy may be amended at any time following consultation between management and staff.

7. REVIEW OF POLICY

There will be a review of this policy two full years after its introduction or earlier if deemed necessary by ETBI management.

APPENDIX 1

PROBATION PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

The effectiveness of the probation period and reviews can be significantly improved by open dialogue between the line manager and the new staff member. Therefore, it is essential that both the line manager and the new staff member prepare adequately for probation reviews and regular dialogue.

During the course of the probationary period, the line manager is required meet with the new staff member to set objectives within the first 2 weeks, followed by two review meetings which take place at the end of eight weeks and the end of the fifth month from the date of appointment.

1st Meeting: Induction Meeting & Goal/Objectives/duties setting (within first 2 weeks of commencement of employment)

2nd Meeting: The First Probationary Review Meeting (The first probationary meeting must be completed at eight weeks from the employee's start date)

3rd Meeting: The Final Probationary Review (The second probationary meeting will take place by the end of the 5th month)

1.1 Informal Review

Informal review meetings may take place during the probationary period at periodic intervals as necessary.

The informal review may consist of a conversation on how the staff member is settling in, on any difficulties that they are experiencing and on any issues that may have come to the attention of the Manager. Actions that would alleviate any of the issues raised should be agreed and taken prior to the Formal 3 Month Review/Final Review, as appropriate.

1.2 Formal Reviews

To ensure that the final recommendation in relation to the appointment is made on a sound and fair basis, a process of assessment of the staff member's performance/capabilities should be carried out.

2. The Probation Review Steps

2.1 1st Meeting - Induction Meeting & Goal/Objective/duties setting

The line manager and the staff member will meet within the first two weeks of the staff member starting and explain the purpose of the probation period and the process. The line manager will welcome the new staff member to ETBI and go through the role and expectations. They will provide background on the work of the ETBI including the contribution the staff member will provide to ETBI.

2.2 Setting Objectives

At this meeting the line manager will:

- Clarify the duties, responsibilities and objectives of the employee in line with the job description.
- Explain how objectives and performance will be monitored and measures and how frequently this will be done.
- Identify and provide relevant training (this may include attendance at internal/external courses or on the job training), where applicable.
- Agree and set dates for a first review and final review to be completed within the probationary period.
- Complete Section 2 - Work Performance /Achievements part of Meeting 1 & 2 Probation Review Form (Appendix 1) with the staff member setting out the objectives to be achieved for the next probation meeting.

The meeting should provide the employee with an opportunity to further understand:

- The aims of the directorate and the sub-section within the directorate.
- The skills and competencies that are expected.
- The breadth of working relationships that will be necessary to fulfil the role.
- Any identifiable training needs.
- Any additional on the job training.
- The employee should understand and know their progress to date.
- Discussion and resolution of any performance problems.
- Clarification of expectations.
- Identification of any necessary support.
- Agreement of action plan and next meeting, where applicable.

2.3 2nd Meeting - *First Probation Review*

The first formal assessment will take place at eight weeks. Human Resources (HR) will notify the line manager of the requirement for a probation review four weeks in advance of the due date for the completion of the first probation review.

It is important that the line manager reviews and completes the Meeting 1 & 2 *Probation Review Form* (Appendix 2) insofar as it can be completed in advance of the meeting and the staff member is provided with a copy of the form one week in advance of the meeting.

The line manager and the staff member will meet to discuss the issues raised and documented on the forms the discussion should be centered on:

- Objectives, progress and planned developments in relation to each element of the job;
- Actions agreed to be taken by either party.

At the end of the meeting, the Meeting 1 & 2 Probation Review Form must be completed by the line manager and submitted through Zoho. Once the form has been submitted it will appear in the staff members profile under the probation module.

2.4 Review of unsatisfactory performance following the first Probation Review

While an staff member endeavours during the probationary period to demonstrate their suitability for the job, there is a corresponding obligation on ETBI to draw any work performance issues to the employee's attention to help the staff member to improve and to give the staff member a set time during which improvements will be monitored. Appropriate training will be provided if required.

It is the line manager's responsibility to deal with underperformance specifying where performance is unacceptable and outlining the consequences for the employee of failing to reach the required standard.

If at the probationary review meeting, unsatisfactory performance is identified, the line manager will liaise with HR to consider and recommend an appropriate course of action.

Such action/s could include but may not be limited to:

- Monthly assessment of the employee for the duration of his/her probation.
- Extension of the probationary period for a limited time and with defined objectives.
- The above will be done by setting and agreeing a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) (Appendix 3). The line manager will consult with the appropriate Director or HR on the Performance Improvement Plan prior to meeting with the employee.
- Explain to the employee the consequences if the required level of performance is not achieved.
- Set and agree on a timeline to follow up and meet to discuss progress.
- The Performance Improvement Plan should be completed and signed by the line manager and the employee.
- The original Performance Improvement Plan should be sent to HR for record purposes. Both the line manager and the employee should retain a copy for their own records.
- Termination of the contract.

An employee can raise an issue under ETBI's Grievance Policy at any stage during the probationary period.

2.5 **3rd Meeting** - *Final Probation Review*

The final review should take place within five/six months (depending on the duration of the probationary period) of the probationary period start date. The final probation review will be conducted in using Final Probation Review Form (Appendix 4) and the line manager must complete the form insofar as it can be completed in advance of the meeting. The staff member should be provided with a copy of the form one week in advance of the meeting.

The final review meeting will be telling the staff member whether their performance to be of a reasonable standard or not. The final meeting will include a record of any actions and one of three possible recommendations:

a) Confirmation of appointment

If the employee's performance during probation is satisfactory, HR will confirm the appointment at the end of the probationary period and issue a letter to the employee to this effect.

b) Termination of appointment

The line manager should first contact HR to seek further advice at this stage. HR, in consultation with the line manager, will write to the employee formally noting the outcome of the probation and provide formal notice of termination of employment.

c) The Probationary Period Extended

Where an extension is recommended and approved, ETBI will write to the staff member notifying them of the reasons for the extension and offering appropriate help and support, if necessary. The staff member will also be advised of the possible outcomes at the end of the extended probation. To encourage discussion and feedback during the extension period a further mid-extension review will be required, as well as a final end-of-extension probation report. The procedures as outlined above apply. Extensions of probation will only be recommended for a period not exceeding three months and must be approved by ETBI.

It is essential that all line managers ensure that all probations are completed for their teams. Please note that any incomplete probations will be addressed through the Directorate structure of ETBI.

It is essential to note that any of the aforementioned steps, does not preclude regular informal meetings being held between the employee and the line manager to review progress.

APPENDIX 2

MEETING 1 & 2 PROBATION REVIEW FORM - CONFIDENTIAL

This form is for use in staff assessment during probation for Week 1 and the First Probation Review. Line managers are required to conduct two assessments.

- 1. 1st Meeting** - Week 1 Line manager and employee meet (setting objectives)
- 2. 2nd Meeting** - First probation review: This is done at eight weeks from the employee's start date
- 3. 3rd Meeting** - Final probation review: This is done at five/six months from the employee's start date

(dependent on the duration of probation)

The line manager conducts the initial meeting with the employee in their first week of employment and completes the objectives (please refer to job description/duties and any other agreed objectives) with the staff member. The first probation review meeting will take place at eight weeks, with the final probation review meeting at five/six months.

Please be advised that subject to contract lengths, the probation period may be shorter or longer. HR will advise the line manager of the same.

The final assessment will confirm that the employee has:

- Fulfilled their contractual obligations and is performing satisfactorily **OR**
- They have not fulfilled their contractual obligations and are performing unsatisfactorily **OR**
- They are not currently meeting their contractual obligations and/or performing unsatisfactorily and an extension to the probation period is required

SECTION 1	
Employee's Name	
Employee's Title/Grade	
Start Date	
Line manager's Name/Title	
Please indicate below as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1st Meeting – Week 1 Induction Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd Meeting – First Review Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Meeting – Final Probation Review 	Date of Probation Meeting:

SECTION 2 - Work Performance/Achievements	
Please answer all questions as fully as possible giving relevant details where appropriate. Please also indicate any difficulties or other contributing factors which may have impeded performance (e.g. family illness, lack of adequate resources etc.)	
Objectives (please refer to job description/duties and any other agreed objectives)	Achievements
1.	•
2.	
3.	•
4.	•
5.	•

To what degree has the employee:	
1. Shown initiative and adaptability in discharging his/her assigned duties?	
2. Shown a willingness and ability to relate to others?	
3. Shown promise by his/her work and enterprise of continuing development in the position?	
4. Performed in accordance with contract?	
5. Performed in accordance with directions/instructions?	
6. Engaged in continuing professional development within the position?	
SECTION 3 - Personal Suitability	
1. Number of days absent to date – Certified sick leave	
2. Number of days absent to date – Self Certified sick leave	
3. Has the employee demonstrated good timekeeping	
Please expand your responses here, giving as much detail as possible and indicating, where appropriate, any steps taken to correct/improve the employee's performance (i.e. performance relating to attendance/absenteeism/timekeeping).	
Not applicable	
SECTION 4 - Personal Development (opportunities)	
7. What opportunities have been given to the employee to attend training (if applicable, i.e. in-house training) and what advantage has s/he taken of them	

8. What continued advice and help towards improvement were offered to the employee?	
9. What warning/s of inadequacies, if any, has it been necessary to give? (such communications should normally be in writing – attach copies to this document)	
10. What are the employee’s personal development needs now?	
11. What action do you propose to meet these needs and what timescale is involved	
SECTION 5 - Summary of Assessment	
Please provide a summary of the assessment interview. Please confirm whether or not the employee has fulfilled his/her contractual obligations and is performing satisfactorily.	
X is fulfilling their contractual obligations and is performing satisfactorily.	
The employee has fulfilled their contractual obligations and is performing satisfactorily*	Please indicate below as appropriate: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Extension required.
	Extension period <input type="checkbox"/> 1 month <input type="checkbox"/> 2 months <input type="checkbox"/> 3 months

SECTION 6 – Training/Support Required		
Development needs/supports identified during probation. Action/s agreed before next meeting:		
Action	Who is responsible?	Date (by when)
e.g. attend induction/attend a training course/mentoring/access to systems that will aid the employee	Manager Employee	Insert completion date here

APPENDIX 3

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP)

The purpose of this Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is to notify you that:

1. The work performance has been and is currently at an unsatisfactory level
2. Identify serious areas of concern in the work performance
3. Re-iterate ETBI's expectations
4. Allow you the opportunity to demonstrate improvement and commitment in your work performance

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN CONFIDENTIAL	
Employee's Name	
Employee's Job Title	
Line Manager's Name	
Date	

Areas of Concern
1.
2.

3.
Observations or Previous Discussions
1.
2.
3.

Improvement Goals/Behaviours and Tasks
*These are the goals related to areas of concern to be improved and addressed:
1.
2.
3.

Resources

Listed below are resources available to you to complete your improvement activities (may include other people's time or expertise, funds for training materials and activities, or time away from usual responsibilities).

1.

2.

3.

Management Support

Listed below are ways in which your line manager will support your improvement activities.

1.

2.

3.

Expectations

The following performance standards must be accomplished to demonstrate progress towards achievement of each improvement goal.

1.

2.	
3.	
Follow up date	
You will receive feedback on your progress at your weekly supervisory meetings.	
Week 1	
Week 2	
Week 3	
Timeline for Improvement, Consequences & Expectations	
<p>Effective immediately, you are placed on a XX-day PIP (this timeline may be amended at the Director's discretion in consultation with your line manager). During this time, you will be expected to make regular progress on the plan outlined above. Failure to meet or exceed these expectations, will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Furthermore, failure to maintain performance expectations after the completion of the PIP may result in additional disciplinary action, up to and including termination.</p> <p>Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the content, you will be expected to follow up directly with your line manager.</p> <p>Line manager and employee will meet again as noted above to discuss the Performance Work Improvement Plan.</p>	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
Employee's Name	Line Manager's Name
Employee's Signature	Line Manager's Signature
Date	Date

Appendix 4

FINAL PROBATION REVIEW FORM - CONFIDENTIAL

This form is for use in staff assessment during probation for **Final Probation Review**. Line managers are required to conduct **two** assessments.

1. 1st Meeting - Week 1: Line manager and employee meet (setting objectives)
2. 2nd Meeting - First probation review: This is done at eight weeks from the employee's start date
3. **3rd Meeting - Final probation review: This is done at five/six months from the employee's start date**

(dependent on duration of probation)

The line manager conducts the initial meeting with the employee in their first week of employment. The first probation review meeting will take place at eight weeks, with the final probation review meeting at five/six months. Please be advised that subject to contract lengths, the probation period may be shorter or longer. HR will advise the line manager of same.

The final assessment will confirm that the employee has:

- Fulfilled their contractual obligations and is performing satisfactorily **OR**
- They have not fulfilled their contractual obligations and are performing unsatisfactorily **OR**
- They are not currently meeting their contractual obligations and/or performing unsatisfactorily and an extension to the probation period is required

Employee's Name	
Employee's Title/Grade	
Start Date	
Line manager's Name/Title	
Please indicate below as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1st Meeting – Week 1 Induction Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd Meeting – First Review Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Meeting – Final Probation Review 	Date of Probation Meeting:

SECTION 2 - Work Performance/Achievements
Please answer all questions as fully as possible giving relevant details where appropriate. Please also indicate any difficulties or other contributing factors which may have impeded performance (e.g. family illness, lack of adequate resources etc.)

Objectives (please refer to job description/duties and any other agreed objectives)	Achievements
6. Overall review and training and development policy and procedures, including PMDS system (suitability of TMS functionality)	
7. Complete core ETBI HR policy consultation and approval	

8. HR Internal communications – internal interactive site for staff	
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To what degree has the employee:

1. Shown initiative and adaptability in discharging his/her assigned duties?
2. Shown a willingness and ability to relate to others?
7. Shown promise by his/her work and enterprise of continuing development in the position?
8. Performed in accordance with contract?
9. Performed in accordance with directions/instructions?
10. Engaged in continuing professional development within the position?

SECTION 3 - Personal Suitability

1. Number of days absent to date – Certified sick leave	
2. Number of days absent to date – Self Certified sick leave	
3. Has the employee demonstrated good timekeeping	

Please expand your responses here, giving as much detail as possible and indicating, where appropriate, any steps taken to correct/improve the employee's performance (i.e. performance relating to attendance/absenteeism/timekeeping).

SECTION 4 - Personal Development (opportunities)

7. What opportunities have been given to the employee to attend training (if applicable, i.e. in-house training) and what advantage has s/he taken of them?
8. What continued advice and help towards improvement were offered to the employee?
9. What warning/s of inadequacies, if any, has it been necessary to give? (such communications should normally be in writing – attach copies to this document)
10. What are the employee’s personal development needs now?
11. What action do you propose to meet these needs and what timescale is involved?

SECTION 5 - Summary of Assessment

Please provide a summary of the assessment interview. Please confirm whether or not the employee has fulfilled his/her contractual obligations and is performing satisfactorily.

<p>The employee has fulfilled their contractual obligations and is performing satisfactorily*</p>	<p>Please indicate below as appropriate:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Extension required.</p>
	<p>Extension period</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 month</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 months</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 months</p>

SECTION 6 – Training/Support Required

Development needs/supports identified during probation. Action/s agreed before next meeting:

Action:	Who is responsible?	Date (by when)
e.g. attend induction/attend a training course/mentoring/access to systems that will aid the employee	Manager Employee	Insert completion date here