

Royal Northern College of Music

Probation (Professional Services)

Policy & Procedure

Department: Human Resources

**Document owner: Director of
Human Resources**

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Committee**

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1. Introduction

This policy and its associated procedures have been established to provide guidelines for managers and employees regarding the management of the probationary period.

A probation period is a trial period for a new employee. It allows both the manager and the employee to assess objectively whether the individual is suitable for the role, taking into account their overall capability, skills, performance and general conduct.

This policy sets out the College's approach to probation for new members of staff, aiming to ensure the College meets its commitment to the fair, equal and consistent treatment of staff with regard to the probation period.

2. Aims and Objectives

This policy and its procedures have been introduced to:

- provide a structured approach to assessing and reviewing a new employee's performance, capability and suitability for the role;
- ensure the College is provided with an opportunity to assess the skills, conduct, capability and attendance of new staff in a fair and consistent manner.
- enable the identification and discussion of any problem areas at the earliest possible time;
- ensure the provision of supervisory support and guidance including any necessary training and coaching;
- ensure that both managers and employees understand the purpose of probation and what is expected of them.

3. Scope

This policy relates to all newly appointed Professional Services staff, whose terms and conditions of employment state that their appointment is subject to a six month probationary period.

4. Procedure

4.1. The Probationary Programme

The manager should arrange a meeting with the new employee during their first week of employment to ensure they are aware of the standards required of them and that activities carried out during job induction may be used to document the employee's performance during the probationary period.

At the initial meeting the manager should clarify the duties and responsibilities of the new employee in line with their terms and conditions of employment and their job description. To include;

- clarifying objectives i.e. what the new employee is expected to achieve during or by the end of the probationary period;
- any deadlines that need to be met and the measurements against which performance will be assessed;

- relationships with other employees within the team / department / College;
- a full explanation of the probation procedures that will be followed;
- any other policies and procedures that must be followed;
- any agreed training/development activities e.g. formal training, on the job training etc;
- a description of any relevant standards of behaviour, for example in relation to liaison with students, customers and colleagues.

The manager should identify and assign a mentor to the new member of staff in roles where this is appropriate, in line with the [RNCM Mentor Scheme](#).

The content of the meeting should be recorded on a Probation Record form (Appendix 2) and a copy sent to the Human Resources Department. The manager should also provide a copy to the employee.

The Human Resources Department will provide support and guidance where required.

4.1.1 Support for staff who have disclosed a disability

Due regard will be given to the Equality Act 2010 where this is applicable, for example, reasonable adjustments will be considered such as special equipment or facilities to enable the employee to perform their job.

4.2 **Probationary Periods**

The length of the probation period for employees on a professional services contract is six months.

Any proposed extension to these probationary periods should be discussed by the Line Manager with a member of the Human Resources Department, and should be in line with the guidance provided in section 4.4.4, on 'Extending Probationary Periods.'

4.3 **Progress Meetings**

Managers should meet with the new employee at least once a month throughout the probation period to allow the employee's performance to be monitored. Less frequent meetings may result in important issues being overlooked, or delays in the resolution of performance issues.

Meetings should be a two-way process and provide both the manager and employee with the opportunity to discuss progress on a one-to-one and confidential basis. Brief notes should be taken and retained by the manager until satisfactory completion of probation.

Managers are required to engage HR at the earliest indication that performance may not reach required standards.

At each meeting the manager should aim to:

- praise good performance and achievements made so far;
- discuss the employee's performance against the requirements of the position identified in the job description;

- discuss the employee's performance against any objectives and targets set at the initial meeting;
- review time keeping and attendance, including sickness absence;
- identify any areas of performance, conduct, attendance that need improving – identifying the standards required and how this can be achieved;
- explore the possible reasons for any failure to meet the required standards;
- review training requirements and agree any further development needs.
- invite the employee to comment on issues such as the extent to which they have integrated into the department and how well they are getting on with colleagues;
- give the employee the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns about any aspect of their employment;
- where necessary, explain the consequences of underperforming to the employee, as a continued failure to achieve the required standards could ultimately lead to the employee's employment being terminated;
- set date for future review meetings;
- document the details of the review meeting on the probation record forms.

4.3.1 Progress Records

At the end of each progress meeting, the manager should agree action points with the employee so that progress can be monitored over the next few weeks. Records should show, what should be done, by whom, how and by when.

Managers must ensure that all concerns, actions and discussions are documented fully and shared with Human Resources. Managers must not wait until the mid-point review to raise concerns with HR where early warning signs are present.

4.4 **Formal Review Meetings**

4.4.1 Early Checkpoint meeting

Managers must hold an Early Checkpoint Meeting four weeks after the start of employment. The purpose of this meeting is to identify and document any early performance concerns to ensure timely corrective action.

Progress should be reviewed against the objectives set at the first probationary meeting, with recognition given for progress and details of any additional support that may be needed at the early period of employment. The Probation Record form (Appendix 2) should be updated with notes of this meeting.

4.4.2 Mid-Point Review Meeting

The mid-point review meeting must take place three months into the probation period. The meeting will allow both the manager and employee to:

- identify and discuss any areas in which the employee requires further training or development; and
- check how the employee feels about their employment in general.

The content of the meeting should be recorded on a Probation Record form (Appendix 2) and sent to the Human Resources Department. The manager should provide a copy to

the employee. If there are any areas of disagreement, the manager should try to resolve these with the employee prior to the document being signed by both parties.

Where necessary, the employee will be told of the consequences of underperforming, as a continued failure to achieve the required standards could ultimately lead to the employee's employment being terminated.

4.4.3 Final Review Meeting

This meeting must take place one month before the probationary period expires. The meeting has the same purpose as the mid-point review with the additional opportunity to explain how performance will be managed in the future through the Performance and Development Review Scheme.

If at the end of the probation period an employee's work performance, conduct and attendance have been satisfactory and have met with the requirements of the post for which they are employed, their manager should complete the final section of the Probation Record Form (Appendix 2) to indicate that the employee's appointment should be confirmed.

This should be sent electronically to the Human Resources Department who will write to the employee confirming their appointment. The manager will provide a copy of the Probation Record form to the employee.

Where the employee's performance is unsatisfactory the case will be reviewed by the Human Resources Department before the final review meeting and before any decision is made not to confirm the employee's appointment.

4.4.4 Difficulties during probation

Managers must take proactive and timely action where an employee is not meeting expectations. Managers should discuss with their staff, any difficulties which arise during the probation period at the time when they occur, rather than leaving them until the formal review meetings. Support in managing any difficulties can be sought from the HR.

Where difficulties arise the manager should meet with the employee, informally in the first instance to:

- clarify what the difficulties are in detail – specifying where and how their performance, conduct and/or attendance are falling below what is acceptable;
- where possible provide evidence/examples of the problem/issues to be discussed;
- allow the member of staff an opportunity to raise and respond to any concerns;
- discuss the action required by the member of staff to address the problem - set targets specifying in detail what standards of performance, conduct and/or attendance are required to reach an acceptable level;
- identify any training needs which may need to be met in order for him/her to achieve the targets;
- set dates when the objectives should be met;
- monitor the employee's performance/conduct/attendance and review them at the time of the objective dates;

- explain what the consequences may be if the standards/objectives are not met – that it may be necessary to discuss the matter at a formal meeting and that ultimately it could result in the employee not being confirmed in their post;
- discuss any actions required by the manager and agree timescales for completing these, where there is an issue of concern to the employee.

The manager should use the Probation Record form to keep a record of the details referred to in the meeting and ensure that this is signed by both parties (i.e. the line manager and the employee).

4.4.4 Extending Probationary Periods

The College reserves the right to extend the probation period in circumstances where due to sickness absence or other authorised absence it has not been possible to assess an employee's performance.

In exceptional circumstances where it is felt that an employee has not yet demonstrated their suitability, but is likely to do so, given more time, the probation period may be extended. The manager will discuss the case with the Human Resources Department.

Extensions could be for a period from 1 month up to a maximum of 2 months (in exceptional circumstances) depending on the issues being addressed and affording an appropriate level of time and opportunity for the individual to achieve the required standards.

Where it is agreed that an employee's period of probation will be extended, a meeting will be held to discuss this with the employee and the terms of the extension will be confirmed in writing by the Human Resources Department. The notification will state:

- the reason for the extension;
- the length of the extension and the date on which the extended period of probation will end;
- the performance standards or objectives that the employee is required to achieve by the end of the extended period and how these will be monitored;
- any support e.g. further training that will be provided during the extension;
- that if the employee does not meet fully the required standards by the end of the extended period of probation, they may not be confirmed in post, and could therefore have their employment with the College terminated.

Written details of how and why performance has fallen short of the required standards should be attached to the terms of the extension.

Monitoring will continue through the extension of the probation period, and the employee and their manager will meet to formally review progress.

If performance is deemed to be satisfactory then a final copy of the Probation Record form should be completed, signed by both parties, and sent to HR who will write to the employee to confirm that they have successfully completed their probation period.

4.4 **Non-confirmation of appointment (Dismissal)**

Where the employee's performance is unsatisfactory and it is clear that further training or support is unlikely to result in improvement, the employee's employment may be terminated.

To give an employee a full opportunity to reach the required standards, a decision to dismiss will not normally be taken until the final review meeting, including any agreed extension. However, where there is clear documented evidence that the employee is wholly unsuitable for the role, the manager should consult with the Human Resources Department to discuss early termination.

Where an employee transferred internally, consideration will be given to any available alternative employment that might be offered to the employee to avoid the need to terminate their employment. Any proposal to transfer must be agreed with the employee.

4.5.1 Procedure

- a) Employees will be given a minimum of 5 working days' notice, in writing, of a meeting to discuss their continued employment. The letter should state the reasons why they have fallen short of the required standards and should advise them that a possible outcome of the meeting could be the decision not to confirm them in post. The employee will also be advised of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague.
- b) A meeting will be held between the manager and employee. The meeting will be conducted in accordance with the College Disciplinary Policy, Appendix C.

The manager will explain clearly and precisely:

- the reasons for considering non confirmation in post - these should be explained clearly;
 - provide evidence/examples of the problem/issues to be discussed – where appropriate in advance of the meeting;
 - allow the employee and/or their representative to respond to the concerns and to ask any questions;
 - ensure that due consideration has been given to issues of equality and diversity and any other issues pertinent to the individual case;
 - once all the information has been gathered the meeting should be adjourned for consideration to be given to all the evidence and for a decision to be taken;
 - at the reconvened meeting the manager should state clearly the decision that has been taken and reasons for the decision.
- c) Employees will normally be informed of the outcome at the meeting, or where this is not possible normally within one working day. Where the employee is dismissed they will be informed in writing stating the reasons for the dismissal, their final date of employment and notice/pay in lieu arrangements. They will also be advised of their right to appeal. The outcome will usually be confirmed in writing normally within 5 working days of the meeting.
 - d) If an employee wishes to appeal against a decision to dismiss, the appeal must be made to the nominated College Representative detailed in the outcome letter. The appeal must be made in writing stating the grounds for appeal, within 5 working days of receiving written confirmation of dismissal.

Grounds for appeal must be based on one or more of the following:

- A failure to follow procedure had a material effect on the outcome.
- Insufficient opportunity was given to improve.
- The decision was based on incorrect or incomplete information.
- There is new information that was not available during the dismissal process.

If relevant grounds are not provided, the appeal will not be taken further.

e) Appeal

Where possible, the appeal meeting will be convened as soon as possible, normally within 5 working days of receipt of the appeal.

An appeal meeting will follow the same format as the dismissal meeting. A more senior manager not involved in the case will Chair the meeting, or where this is not possible, by another manager. Records and notes of the original meeting will be made available to the person hearing the appeal.

The employee will be informed of the arrangements for the meeting as soon as possible and of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague of their choice.

Employees will be informed of the outcome at the meeting, or where this is not possible normally within one working day. The appeal decision and the reasons for it will normally be confirmed in writing to the employee within 5 working days. Where the appeal is against dismissal, the letter will identify that the decision is the final stage of the College's appeal procedure.

5. **Probation records**

Full records should always be taken of meetings with employees about job performance, whether they are formal or informal, as well as meeting outcomes.

Records taken and produced during the probation management process will be held confidentially and in accordance with the U GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

6. **Related policies**

- [Induction](#)
- [Mentoring Scheme](#)
- [Staff Development Funding Application Procedure](#)
- [Disciplinary](#)
- [Capability](#)

ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE OF MUSIC

POLICY APPROVAL/REVIEW PROCESS

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AMENDMENTS SINCE DRAFT

ISSUE No	PAGE	DETAILS	DATE	ISSUED BY
1		First draft	14 May 2026	Paul Hynes
2		Final – ready for publication	26 May 2026	Paul Hynes

Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name/Committee	Date	Version
Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee	14 May 2026	1
Human Resources Committee	26 May 2026	2

Stages of Probationary Process



**Stage 1 - Probation record –
Objective Setting Meeting and Early Checkpoint Meeting**

Employee's Name	Employee name	Start Date	Select start date.	
Post Title	Post title	Probation end date	Select end date.	
Department	Department	Line Manager's Name	Line manager name	
Date of meeting	Meeting date	Scheduled early checkpoint meeting	Date 4 weeks into employment	
<p>To be completed by the Line Manager within 1 week of the employee commencing employment with reference to the job description. Please email a completed copy to human.resources@nrcm.ac.uk and copy to the employee</p>				
Objective <i>e.g. to produce accurate and timely minutes of meetings.</i>	How performance will be assessed. <i>e.g. accurate minutes produced within 5 working days of meeting being held.</i>	Training required (where appropriate) <i>e.g. instruction regarding standard College format for minutes.</i>	Completion or review date	Notes of early checkpoint meeting

Stage 2a - Probation record - Mid-Point Review

Date of meeting	Meeting date	Please email a completed copy to human.resources@rncc.ac.uk and copy to the employee
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With reference to the objectives set in Stage 1, please comment on the employee's performance and progress.

	Improvement required	Average	Good	Excellent
Quality and accuracy of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timekeeping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work relationships (teamwork / interpersonal / communication skills)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Performance Improvement Plan (where required)

If there are any concerns noted in relation to performance and progress against the objectives set at stage 1, or if any areas have been rated as 'Improvement required' or 'Average', please **give examples and detail how improvement should be made using the performance improvement template below.**

Area of concern	Improvement required	Measure of success	Assistance to be given	Timescale

Stage 2b – Probation extension – Performance Improvement Plan
Only to be completed where an extension to the probationary period is required

Planned probation end	Select end date.	New Probation end date	New Probation end date
Date of meeting	Meeting date	Please send a copy of the completed form to human.resources@rncm.ac.uk and copy to the employee	

Area of concern	Improvement required	Measure of success	Assistance to be given	Date(s) progress reviewed

Stage 3 – Probation record
To be completed to sign off the probationary period

Date of meeting	Meeting date	Date first PDR due	Month / Year
Probation completion date	Probation completion date	Please send a copy of the completed form to human.resources@rncm.ac.uk and copy to the employee	

Have all of the objectives previously set, and any action plans been met to a satisfactory standard?	Select
Work objectives for the next 12 months, or first PDR, whichever would fall first within your team's PDR cycle.	
Probation sign-off comments from line manager	