

## **6.10 Probation**

This policy is about the responsibilities of new entrants and their line managers while undertaking their probationary period of employment. The policy's purpose is to ensure that you have the ability to meet fully the normal requirements of your post or grade and that you can achieve a satisfactory attendance and conduct record.

Main points of policy:

- The length of probationary period by grade – Section 2 Length of Probation
- The impact of absences from work on your probationary period – Section 4.2 Calculation of the probation period
- The circumstances in which you may be exempt from fulfilling your probationary period – Section 3.2 Exemptions from Probation
- How your manager will go about managing the probation process – Section 6 Management of probationers
- What happens on successful completion of probation – Section 7 Satisfactory completion of probation
- What happens if your probation is not successful – Section 8 Unsatisfactory probation period

**The following terms within this policy are defined in the glossary:**

There are currently no terms within this policy defined in the glossary.

**You may also be interested in the following policies:**

7.02 Staff Welfare, 3.01 Sickness Absence, 10.01 Performance Management, 8.29 Starting pay on appointment, 6.06 Inefficiency Sickness Absence, 6.07 Inefficiency Performance and 10.02 Performance Management in the SCS.

This policy is version 2.

For a printable version please click the icon. Please make sure that your printed version is current with the one on this portal.

This homepage is only a guide to the policy, not the policy itself. In the event of any discrepancy between the content of this homepage and the associated policy, the wording of the policy shall apply.

## 6.10 Probation

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## **6.10 Probation**

### **1 Purpose**

1.1 The probation period provides management with the opportunity to ensure that if you are new you can demonstrate that you:

1.1.1 have the ability to meet fully the normal requirements of the post or grade; and

1.1.2 can achieve a satisfactory attendance and conduct record.

It also provides management with the opportunity to ensure that as new staff you are encouraged, developed and provided with the training necessary to carry out your duties.

### **2 Length of probation**

2.1 The NICS probationary period is one year for all grades, except if you are appointed on a temporary or casual basis, which is not expected to extend beyond 51 weeks and where different arrangements may apply.

### **3 Application**

#### **3.1 General**

3.1.1 With the exception of certain exemptions, everyone appointed to a permanent position or fixed term appointment of more than one year within the Northern Ireland Civil Service must serve a period of probation.

#### **3.2 Exemptions**

3.2.1 Where as a serving Civil Servant you have been successful in an open competition for the next higher grade in the same discipline, or as a fixed-term appointee of one year or more you have been successful in an open competition for the same grade, no further period of probation is required provided:

- a. there is no break in service: in other words continuity of employment is determined week by week;
- b. you have successfully completed your probationary period; and
- c. your latest annual report indicates a general assessment of satisfactory or above.

## 4 Calculation of the probation period

4.1 The probation period starts on the date that you take up the appointment, including service under the terms of a conditional appointment. The following should also count towards the probation period:

4.1.1 complete months of previous service in the grade immediately below where, prior to completion of your probationary period, you had been successful in an open competition for the next higher grade in the same discipline, provided:

- a. there is no break in service: in other words continuity of employment is determined week by week; and
- b. your Line Manager has confirmed that all aspects of service, in other words your performance, attendance and conduct, have been satisfactory.
- c. casual service or service under a fixed-term contract of less than one year in the same grade provided the conditions at 4.1 a. are met. This applies to you if you are recruited to a permanent position with effect from 12 June 2006.

4.2 The following table details the effect of absences on the probation period:

| <b>Nature of Absence</b>  | <b>Length of Absence</b>  | <b>Effect on Probation Period</b>  |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Annual Leave  | All periods               | Included within the probation period   |
| Special Leave with pay.<br>Maternity leave with pay.<br>Adoption Leave With pay.          | 20 working days or less   | Included within the probation period   |
|   | More than 20 working days | Absence in excess of 20 working days is excluded from reckoning towards the probation period                       |
| Special Leave without pay.<br>Maternity Leave without pay.<br>Adoption Leave without pay. | All periods               | Excluded from reckoning towards probation period   |
| Sickness absence  | Less than 20 working days | Included within the probation period   |
|   | More than 20 working days | Absence in excess of 20 working days is excluded from reckoning towards probation period. However, this is subject |

| <b>Nature of Absence</b> | <b>Length of Absence</b> | <b>Effect on Probation Period</b>   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
|                          |                          | to consideration of reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act. |
| Unauthorised absence     | 1 day or more            | Excluded from reckoning towards probation period                                    |

4.3 Where an absence is excluded from reckoning towards the probation period you will still be required to successfully complete the full period of probation. For example, if you are absent on unpaid special leave for 3 months within the 12-month probation period none of this period would count towards the probation period. Therefore the probation period would not end until 15 months after your date of appointment.

## 5 Staff awareness

5.1 It is the responsibility of Establishment/Personnel Branch to ensure that Line Managers understand their responsibilities for:

5.1.1 the development, guidance, encouragement and monitoring of you as newly appointed staff;

5.1.2 ensuring that you receive timely, relevant training for your job; and

5.1.3 pay particular attention to any special facilities/reasonable adjustment needed by you if you have a disability.

5.2 It is the responsibility of Line Managers to ensure that if you are on probation you understand fully from the outset:

5.2.1 the purpose of probation;

5.2.2 the standards of performance, attendance and conduct expected of you;

5.2.3 any specific requirements, for example, the attainment of a particular qualification;

5.2.4 how your probation period will be calculated and what absences will count towards this;

5.2.5 the consequences of failing to meet the required standards; and

5.2.6 how and when to seek help.

## **6 Management of probationers**

6.1 A Personal Performance Agreement and Personal Development Plan will be completed within one month of your appointment.

6.2 A report should be completed at five and nine months (see paragraph 8.2). The report at Annex A should be used as a model for the five month report. The report will be discussed with you and signed off by your reporting officer, countersigning officer and yourself. A full Performance Review Report and performance appraisal interview will be completed at nine months. You will receive copies of the completed five and nine month reports. If you are industrial staff you should continue to use your existing reporting arrangements.

6.3 If you are in the Senior Civil Service (SCS), a report should be completed at five and nine months. The form at Annex B should be completed at five months. The report will be discussed with you and signed off by the reporting officer, countersigning officer and yourself. A full Performance Review Report and performance appraisal interview will be completed at nine months. You will receive copies of the completed five and nine month reports.

6.4 Sick absence records should be reviewed following each absence and where any absences included within the probationary period give cause for concern, prompt action will be taken by the Line Manager to advise you of the implications of your continued poor attendance.

6.5 You will be bound by the general principles and rules of conduct as detailed in the Staff Handbook Section on Conduct. Any breach of conduct could be treated as a disciplinary offence and could result in a range of penalties up to, and including, dismissal from the service. Conduct issues will be dealt with promptly and reported to/advice sought from Personnel, where appropriate.

6.6 In conjunction with the nine month Performance Review Report, the Line Manager will confirm whether all aspects of your service, in other words your performance, attendance and conduct have been fully satisfactory and recommend whether the appointment should be confirmed. If confirmation of satisfactory services and appointment cannot be given the reasons for this should be stated.

## **7 Satisfactory completion of probation**

7.1 Immediately the period has ended, you will be informed in writing that you have successfully completed your period of probation. In grades involving the subsequent achievement of a qualification, Establishment/Personnel Branch will make it clear that confirmation of your appointment is subject to your gaining the qualification in question.

## **8 Unsatisfactory probation period**

8.1 If at any time during the your probationary period your performance, attendance or conduct is not satisfactory it is the responsibility of your Line Manager to ensure that, without delay, you are made fully aware of the improvement required and the

consequences of this not being achieved. Every effort will be made to give you time, opportunity and assistance to reach the required standard.

8.2 Where problems with performance continue and a report is not due for issue, the Line Manager can request early issue of the report for completion and submission to Establishment/Personnel Branch.

8.3 Where health appears to be a factor in unsatisfactory performance or attendance you will be advised to consult your doctor. If it is apparent that you may have personal or domestic difficulties, you will be reminded of the services of the Departmental Welfare Officer and/or the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

8.4 Further details of the procedures to be followed and right of appeal can be found at the "Leaving the Service" section of the Staff Handbook.

## **9 Extension of probationary periods**

9.1 Extension to the probationary period should be exceptional. However, where a problem does not arise until the latter stages of your probationary period a written warning followed by an extension of the probationary period, may be appropriate if it is felt there is a reasonable prospect that you will achieve the required standard. The probationary period should not be extended for more than six months.

# ANNEX A PROBATION REPORT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Payroll No: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Report From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_

Issued: \_\_\_\_\_ Return by: \_\_\_\_\_

## PART 1 - To be completed by the Jobholder

### Brief Outline of Duties:

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## PART 2 - To be completed by the Reporting Officer

### ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

*Please state to what extent the agreed objectives have been achieved during the period covered by this report, giving examples where appropriate.*

### ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCES AND BEHAVIOURS

Please state which competences and behaviours were demonstrated and how these enhanced performance.

*(Please refer to the Personal Performance Agreement and the relevant Competence Framework)*



**ASSESSMENT OF OVERALL PERFORMANCE**

Please state whether you are satisfied that all aspects of the officer's service, in other words performance, attendance and conduct, have been fully satisfactory during the period of this report.

YES/NO

If No, please provide appropriate comments. Any shortcomings must be brought to the officer's attention and remedial action agreed. Details should be given.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (CAPITAL letters) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Reporting Officer)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (CAPITAL letters) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Countersigning Officer)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (CAPITAL letters) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Jobholder)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

**Personnel Action**

Report monitored: Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

HRMS actioned: Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEX B**

### **SCS Performance Management System - Probation Form**

**DEPARTMENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

This form is to be completed for members of the SCS who are on probation and should be used at five months.

The line manager is asked to comment on demonstration of each competence and provide a comment as to whether the officer's performance overall is satisfactory.

#### **SCS Leadership Competences**

##### **GIVING DIRECTION AND PURPOSE**

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##### **DELIVERING OUTCOMES**

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##### **GETTING THE BEST FROM PEOPLE**

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## **SCS Performance Management System - Probation Form**

### **BUILDING CO-OPERATION**

### **MAKING A PERSONAL IMPACT**

Please complete the box below where the post holder is required to demonstrate professional/technical competences.

### **PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL (if required)**

I confirm that \_\_\_\_\_ (officer's name) performance is \*satisfactory/not yet satisfactory. In the case of performance that is not yet satisfactory, please provide details below indicating steps being taken to remedy or improve the situation.

(\* delete as appropriate).

## **SCS Performance Management System - Probation Form**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** / /  
(Reporting Officer)

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** / /  
(Countersigning Officer)

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** / /  
(Jobholder)

**A copy of the completed form should be provided to the jobholder.**