Academic Probation Procedure

Enabling Policy Statement; Executive Owner; Approval Route:	Our Colleagues – Chief Operating Officer – Operations Committee
Is the Procedure for internal use only (Non-disclosable)?	Disclosable
Associated Policy Statements:	N/A
Authorised Owner:	HR Director
Authorised Co-ordinator:	Associate Director (People Services)
Effective date:	08 July 2025
Due date for full review:	08 July 2028
Sub documentation:	Academic Probation Procedure Documentation, to include: Targets Agreed on Appointment Form Annual Academic Probation Review Form

Approval History

Version	Reason for review	Approval Route	Date
1.0	Migration to the POPP Structure	Operations Committee (Chair's Action)	08 July 2025

1. Purpose

1.1 Academic appointments at the University of Surrey normally include a period of probation. This is an important element of the orientation of all academic staff to the University and is intended to ensure that academic staff are given the support and opportunities they need to meet the standards required by the University in teaching, research and administration, and at the same time to allow the University to ensure that new staff are able to meet the standards required of their appointments.

2. Scope and Exceptions to the Procedure

2.1 For the purpose of these guidelines the term 'academic' refers to all academic staff (as defined by University Ordinances). It does not, in this context, include research staff.

2.2 This procedure refers specifically to new academics at Levels 4 and 5.

2.3 This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. It may be amended from time to time.

3. Definitions and Terminology

N/A

4. Procedural Principles

4.1 Principles

4.1.1 Academic probation is managed locally within each Faculty. Whilst the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty remains accountable for ensuring that the process is followed correctly, the probationer and their Head of School are expected to take joint responsibility for the implementation of the process. Support will also be provided by the Associate Dean (Education) and Associate Dean (Research & Innovation).

4.1.2 Administration of the process will be coordinated by HR Operations/School Administrators.

4.1.3 Within one month of joining the University a new member of staff will have a meeting with the Executive Dean of Faculty (or designate – normally the Head of School).

4.1.4 All academic probationers will be allocated a **Senior Colleague**, who will meet with the probationer within one month of them commencing employment. The Senior Colleague will be someone other than the probationer's direct line manager and will be the probationer's main point of contact in providing advice and guidance. The Senior Colleague will have sufficient experience to act in this role and, wherever possible, will have similar research interests to the probationer. The Senior Colleague should actively support the academic probationer throughout the period of probation, meeting with them regularly and accompanying them to meetings with the Head of School (or designate) to discuss performance and progress if required.

4.1.5 The academic probationer is responsible for taking appropriate action to achieve their targets. If an academic probationer discovers that it might be difficult for them to achieve one or more of their targets, it is their responsibility to raise this with their Senior Colleague, Head of Discipline, Head of School and/or Executive Dean of Faculty at the earliest opportunity to allow appropriate action to be taken.

4.1.6 At any point during probation, the Head of School, Faculty Executive Dean or designate may refer to the University Capability Procedure, if there are concerns that the probationer is not meeting targets set. These guidelines should therefore be read in conjunction with the University Capability Procedure.

4.2 Timings

4.2.1 In general, the probation period for each category of staff is as follows:

- Lecturers (Research and Teaching Track A & B) 3 years
- Academic Fellows* 3 years, beginning at the end of the 2nd year of the academic fellowship
- Lecturers (Teaching Track A & B) 2 years

* *where Academic Fellows are referred to, this includes any Fellows who are guaranteed a Lectureship on completion of their Academic Fellowship*

4.2.2 Probationers will be reviewed on an annual basis just prior to the anniversary of their appointment. A full outline of the academic probation process and related timings is provided in Appendix A.

4.2.3 Where there are concerns about a probationer's progress at any point during their probationary period the Executive Dean of Faculty may, following a discussion with the probationer, decide to extend the probation into an additional year or end the probation and employment due to poor performance or capability. Academic probation cannot be extended beyond 4 years for Lecturers (Research and Teaching Track) and Academic Fellows, and 3 years for Lecturers (Teaching Track).

4.2.4 The period of probation may also be reduced for specific reasons, on the approval of the Faculty Executive Dean. Examples of these include, but are not restricted to:

- promotion to a higher academic grade, completion of all targets earlier than anticipated;
- documented satisfactory completion of part or all of a probationary period served at a similar institution where the targets met reflect those normally required at the University of Surrey. Approval of this is the responsibility of the Faculty Executive Dean, who should determine this on appointment.

4.3 Process

Target Setting

4.3.1 Within one month of the probationer commencing employment, they will be allocated and meet with their Senior Colleague who, in conjunction with the Head of Discipline, will agree a set of targets for completion during probation.

4.3.2 These targets will include successful completion of the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. As part of the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, new probationers enrolled on this course of study will be required to complete 3 formative teaching observations and 1 observation assessed by their tutor.

4.3.3 Targets will reflect the University's Values and will be set in three separate areas where applicable; research, teaching, and administration and collegiality. The specific targets will vary depending on the academic probationer's discipline but should cover the main elements of the role to which the probationer has been appointed, so that achievement of the targets by the end of the probation period would indicate that the probationer has fully met the requirements of the job.

4.3.4 Targets will be clearly defined and measurable. They will be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-related).

4.3.5 Targets for probationers on part-time contracts will take into consideration their hours of work and will be realistic in view of this.

4.3.6 Targets for probationers who are absent from work for a significant period of time (in excess of one month) e.g. for reasons of sickness, maternity, paternity, parental, or adoption leave, may be adjusted to account for this. Alternatively, the period of probation may be extended from the point at which the absence starts to the date of return to work.

4.3.7 All probationers who are new to the organisation are required to complete compliance led mandatory training within the first 3 months. All required compliance led elearning modules can be accessed via this link : Mandatory eLearning | Surreynet

4.3.8 All targets will be signed off by the Head of School, who acts as moderator.

Probation Monitoring

4.3.9 Throughout the probation process the academic probationer should receive informal updates on performance via their Senior Colleague and/or Head of Discipline. Where there are concerns about performance these should be raised promptly and clear guidance given as to how the probationer might address this and work towards achieving their objectives.

4.3.10 The Head of School is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the academic probationer has the support and opportunity to meet all their objectives.

4.3.11 The academic probationer is jointly responsible, with their Senior Colleague, Discipline Head, and Head of School, for ensuring that all review meetings are set up in a timely manner.

Paperwork

4.3.12 The academic probationer is responsible for ensuring that any paperwork required by HR Operations/Faculty Executive Assistant is provided in a timely manner (no less than 10 working days prior to the scheduled meeting) to avoid any delay in

submitting it to the Head of School. The Targets Agreed on Appointment Form and the Annual Academic Probation Review Form can be found in the HR pages alongside this procedure.

4.3.13 Should an academic probationer or their Head of School wish to apply for early completion of their probation, an application must be made in writing to the Executive Dean of Faculty stating the reasons and providing relevant supporting documentation.

Exemptions (PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education)

4.3.14 Exemptions from the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education will be determined by the Executive Dean of Faculty on the advice of the Director of the PG Certificate, and applications for this should be made at the start of the probationary period by the probationer directly to the Executive Dean of Faculty or designate. The Pro Vice Chanceller Education should be kept informed periodically of exemptions and should oversee the exemption process.

4.3.15 Exemption from the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education will normally be granted where the probationer is able to demonstrate they have completed 3 years, full time teaching experience in the expected range of curriculum activities (incl. marking, setting assessments etc.) at an equivalent HE institution.

4.3.16 An exemption from the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education does not entitle the probationer to an exemption from probation.

4.3.17 Staff on probation who are granted exemption from the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education may still be required to complete 2 teaching observations by a colleague as part of their probationary targets. These observations are coordinated by the Surrey Institute of Education.

Completion of Probation

4.3.18 On successful completion of probation, the academic probationer will revert to annual Performance Development Reviews (PDR) in line with the standard academic year. As such, it is important on completion of probation that the probationer agrees a set of objectives with their line manager that they will be assessed against during the next PDR round, scheduled for the end of the academic year.

Concerns & Appeals

4.3.19 Should the probationer have concerns at any stage in the process, these should be brought to the attention of the Executive Dean of Faculty/Head of School/ Head of Discipline/Senior Colleague as appropriate.

4.3.20 Should the probationer wish to appeal against a decision to extend or not to confirm probation, they should appeal to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) in writing within 10 working days of having received notice of either situation. The appeal should outline their complaint and what outcome they are

seeking. Where necessary the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) will establish an Appeals Panel to hear the appeal, which will normally consist of:

- Provost and Senior Vice President (Chair)
- Senior member of academic staff from the Faculty concerned
- Senior member of academic staff from a different Faculty
- An HR Representative will provide support to the Appeal Panel

4.3.21 The probationer will be entitled to be accompanied at this meeting by a workplace colleague or trade union official.

4.3.22 The decision of the Appeals Panel will be final, subject to procedures under Ordinance 11.

5. Governance Requirements

5.1 Implementation: Communication Plan

The procedure was embedded when first published and is available on SurreyNet (HR Procedures Page) for all staff to access.

5.2 Implementation: Training Plan

The procedure was embedded when first published. Further support will be provided to colleagues implementing the procedure when required.

5.3 Review

This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if required by a change in legislation or practice.

5.4 Legislative Context and Higher Education Sector Guidance or Requirements

5.4.1 Applicable Legislation

This procedure complies with the following legislation.

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Employment Act 2002

5.5 Sustainability

This procedure supports the SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth.

The Academic Probation procedure supports SDG 8 by fostering an environment where students receive the necessary guidance and support to improve their academic performance, thereby enhancing their skills and increasing their potential for future employment and economic growth.

6 Stakeholder Engagement and Equality Impact Assessment

6.3 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed on 17 March 2025 and is held by the Authorised Co-ordinator.

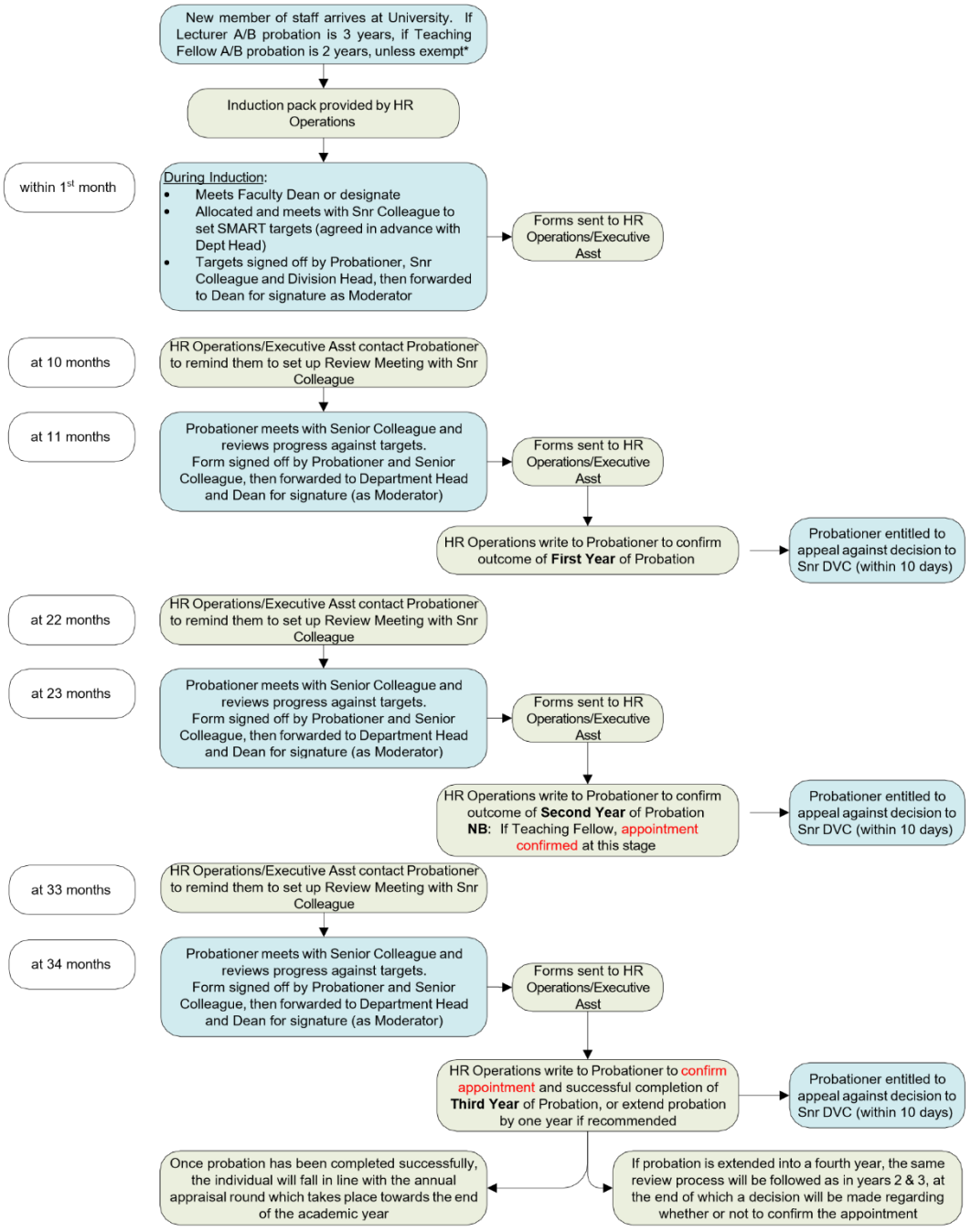
6.4 Stakeholder Consultation was completed, as follows:

Stakeholder	Nature of Engagement	Request EB Approval (Y/N)	Date	Name of Contact
Governance	Review of V1.0	N	14/04/2025	Kelley Padley, Governance Officer
Sustainability	Review of V1.0	N	21/03/25	Martin Wiles, Head of Sustainability
Health & Safety	Review of V1.0	N	08/04/2025	Matt Purcell, Director of

				Health and Safety
Academic Freedom of Speech	Review of V1.0	N	16/04/25	Abi Bradbeer

Appendix A

Academic Probation



*** Please refer to Section 5 of 'Guidelines for Academic Staff on Probation' for Exemption Criteria**