Probation Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 The Institute is committed to providing all staff with appropriate guidance and support to fulfil their duties effectively and realise their potential. By completing a successful probationary period, a member of staff will have a formal record of progress which will help to enhance her/his opportunities for career development.

1.2 The Institute has an integrated approach to career development, linking probation to staff review and development. On successful completion of her/his period of probation, a member of staff will be eligible to continue to discuss her/his professional and staff development needs under the Institute’s Staff Review and Development Scheme. A member of staff will therefore only be considered under one scheme at a time; that is, she/he will complete her/his probation, where relevant, before commencing staff review and development.

1.3 The purpose of Probation is to:
(a) support the member of staff in the development of her/his career in order to meet both the goals of the Institute and the individual;
(b) provide the Institute with an opportunity to assess the performance and future potential of the member of staff before deciding whether the appointment should be confirmed;
(c) provide the member of staff with regular feedback on her/his progress in the role; and
(d) help to identify the member of staff’s development needs and provide appropriate development activities to assist the member of staff to achieve her/his full potential.

1.4 The Institute’s disciplinary procedures (capability and conduct) will not apply during the probationary period.

2. Period of Probation

2.1 The length of probation will be:
(a) Six months for Professional Staff on Grades 1 to 10 and Research Staff on Grades 6 to 10; and
(b) 12 months for Lecturing Staff and Senior Staff.

2.2 In the case of fixed term staff with a contract shorter than the length of the relevant probation period, the probation process will be followed until the process is completed or the contract ends, whichever is the sooner.
3. Responsibilities

3.1 The line manager or other designated member of staff (hereinafter referred to as “the line manager”) is responsible for:
(a) making sure that the member of staff is aware of the standards expected;
(b) ensuring that the member of staff has adequate support/assistance/training; and
(c) addressing problems as soon as they arise.

3.2 The member of staff is responsible for:
(a) meeting the standards required of the role;
(b) ensuring that she/he attends any relevant training; and
(c) addressing problems as soon as they are drawn to her/his attention.

4. Maternity Leave, Sickness and other Long Term Absence

The probationary period will be suspended during periods of maternity leave and long term ill health cases or other long term absence. Further advice may be obtained from Human Resources.

5. Notice Period

During the probationary period, notice will be one month on either side.

6. Outcomes

6.1 Confirmation

Where a member of staff has been deemed to have satisfactorily passed their probation period, this will be confirmed to Human Resources, who will write to the member of staff to confirm the decision.

6.2 Extension

Where the probationary period is extended, the reason for the extension and its duration will be explained to the member of staff by the line manager and will be confirmed in writing. Appropriate support tailored to the particular circumstances will be provided. At the end of the period of extension a decision will be made as to whether to confirm or terminate the appointment or, in exceptional circumstances, to extend the probation for a further period.

6.3 Termination

6.3.1 Where the performance of a member of staff is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the decision to terminate the appointment may be made. This will be confirmed in writing to the individual and the reasons given.
6.3.2 The member of staff will have the right to appeal against a decision to terminate her/his appointment (see section 6 below).

7. **Appeals**

7.1 A member of staff has a right to appeal against a decision to terminate her/his employment by writing to the Head of Human Resources within 10 working days of receiving the letter confirming the decision, setting out the grounds for the appeal.

7.2 Appeals may be raised on one or more of the following grounds:
   a) the procedure - a failure to follow the procedure had a material effect on the decision;
   b) the decision – the evidence did not support the conclusion reached; or
   c) new evidence – which has genuinely come to light since the original decision was made.

7.4 An Appeals Panel comprising three senior members of staff who have not previously been involved in the case shall be convened.

7.5 The Appeals Panel will have the following documentation before them:
   (a) the probation report(s);
   (b) the letter setting out the reasons for the termination; and
   (c) the member of staff’s written statement setting out the grounds on which the member of staff wishes to appeal.
   The Appeals Panel may request additional information.

7.6 Arrangements will be made for the appeal to be heard as soon as is reasonably practicable.

7.7 The member of staff will be notified as soon as possible, giving at least five working days’ notice, of the time, date and place of the appeal hearing. The member of staff will be advised that she/he may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

7.8 Where an individual’s companion is unable to attend the meeting at a notified time the member of staff can suggest an alternative date so long as this is reasonable and it is not more than five working days after the original date.

7.9 Where the member of staff is unable to attend a meeting and provides a good reason for failing to attend, the meeting will be adjourned to another date. If the member of staff is unable to attend the rearranged meeting without good reason, the rearranged meeting will take place in the member of staff’s absence. In such circumstances the member of staff’s companion will be allowed to present the member of staff’s case.

7.10 Where a member of staff subject to this policy is also a Trade Union Branch official the Human Resources Department will advise the Regional Officer of
any meetings in advance of such meetings. The Regional Officer will be given a copy of any communication following such meetings.

7.11 The Chair of the Appeals Panel will write to the member of staff within five working days of the meeting of the Appeals Panel to confirm the panel’s decision. Where an appeal against termination is upheld the member of staff will be paid in full from the date of dismissal and continuity of service will be maintained.

7.12 The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

8. Review

This procedure will be periodically reviewed by the Head of Human Resources. Any amendment to it will be notified to members of staff by means of the intranet or by global e-mail.

Approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 9 November 2010

15 December 2010