



GMAT POLICIES

Probationary Period Guidance For Managers

Greater Manchester Academies Trust

Revision Information

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	•	

With you...for you...about you...

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Introduction

Anyone who joins Greater Manchester Academies Trust (GMAT) must successfully complete a probationary period before the contract of employment is confirmed. This guidance advises managers of their role and responsibilities during this period. It covers:

- The purpose of probationary periods
- Who probationary periods apply to
- Actions of the manager
- How to confirm the appointment
- Options / actions for consideration if problems occur

What is the Purpose of the Probationary Period?

The probationary period is a critical stage in the overall recruitment process and will help to:

- Monitor the employees work output and quality
- Embed the practice of performance monitoring and reinforce the Trust's method of employee supervision
- Identify appropriate support and assistance
- Contribute towards the decision on whether to confirm the appointment at the end of the probationary period.

Who does the Probationary Period apply to?

It is Trust policy that all new employees serve a probationary period of six months. The only exception is trainee teachers whose probationary period is twelve months in line with their recruitment scheme. Much of this guidance can however be used with this group too.

In most cases, the six-month probationary period is sufficient to satisfy yourself that the appointment should be confirmed.

During the probationary period, the employee will not have access to the Trust's standard sickness and absence policy and pay. Neither will they be entitled to the Trust's provision of a flexible day for personal circumstances or leave of absence. The whole probation process is concerned with monitoring an employee's capability and attendance and supporting them during the first few months of their employment. You should ensure that the Trust's equality commitments are applied consistently during the probationary period; specific areas are employees with disabilities and pregnant employees.

Where an employee transfers job roles during their probationary period, the Trust may consider extending the probationary period in order to allow time to properly assess them in their new role.

The probationary period should only be done once; it does not apply where an employee transfers from one job to another within the Trust having already satisfactorily completed a probationary period.

What Should I Do?

Pre recruitment: as part of the pre interview process outline why GMAT has a probationary period

During the first week: induction session for new employees

- inform the employee what will happen during the probationary period, e.g. review meetings
- review the requirements of the role using the job description and person specification
- outline the nature of the Trust performance management process and the targets that need to be set
- provide detail about planned training and development activities which will support their performance
- schedule meetings to review their progress

Assess the employee

The detail of any performance assessment will vary dependent upon the level of skills and competencies required to perform the job effectively, and the number of targets that the employee has been set.

Listed below are some examples of potential sources from which you could make an assessment of performance:

- direct observation
- completed work / targets
- work / targets in progress
- colleague feedback
- team meetings
- supervision sessions
- student or parent feedback (where appropriate)
- third party observations (where appropriate)

Whilst assessing you should always:

- be objective
- recognise achievement
- recognise mistakes will happen and that no employee's performance is flawless
- constructively highlight areas that require improvement

Have discussions with the employee

You should meet regularly with the employee to discuss their performance and how they are doing. The Trust procedure is to meet at the end of the third month, and at the end of the fifth month in the job. You may wish to meet earlier or more frequently if your assessments are raising performance issues you need to address quickly.

Remember, the discussions should be a two-way process; encourage the employee to comment. At the review meetings you should cover the following:

- ask them how they think they are doing
- tell them how you think they are doing, giving specific examples
- recognise achievement, giving specific examples
- offer appropriate support, training, guidance

and where appropriate: -

- identify areas that require improvement
- ask them how they think they could improve their performance
- provide a description of any relevant standards of behaviour
- carefully and tactfully discuss the implications of a failure to meet the required standards within the time-scale

Record the outcomes

Record your assessments and the outcomes of discussions allowing the employee to have a copy also if they want one. Ensure your records are kept secure and confidential.

Standard forms for recording discussions and outcomes of review meetings are attached at Appendices 1 & 2.

Everything is satisfactory - confirm the appointment

Where the employee's performance, behaviour and attendance during their probationary period have proved satisfactory, their appointment should be confirmed. You should meet with the employee and tell them you are going to confirm their appointment. Contact the Principal/Head who will arrange the issue of the confirmation letter on your behalf and amend the employee's personnel records accordingly. A sample letter is attached at Appendix 3.

What if I Consider I Should Terminate the Appointment?

Where you believe the employee's performance and/or attendance is unsatisfactory to the Trust and that there would be no prospect of improvement, you may consider recommending termination of the employment contract.

This may be one of the most difficult actions you have to take and so it is important to:

- consider each individual case on its merits
- ensure you act reasonably and fairly always basing your decisions on sufficient and up to date facts and information
- take action as timely as possible

The following guidance will assist and support you.

Tell the employee the news

If appropriate at the end of the second review meeting you should inform the employee that regretfully you have taken the decision that the probationary period has not been satisfactory and that you are going to request a Final Formal Review Meeting with the Principal/Head (or designate) being clear as to your reasons why. During the conversation you may find it useful to support your decision by recapping on: -

- the role expected of the employee at work and its importance to the Trust
- the effects and difficulties both the service and the employee has experienced during the probationary period
- the factors you have taken into consideration and decisions you have reached whilst managing their performance during the probationary period, including providing specific examples and the timescales involved
- the support that you and others in the organisation have given to the employee

Please remember that at a second review meeting, if there is a possibility of their employment not being confirmed and of you referring them to a Final Formal Review Meeting, the employee is entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

Final Formal Review Meeting

Any Final Formal Review meeting should be chaired by the Principal/Head or their designate (supported by a HR Adviser if necessary).

The employee should be invited to attend the Final Formal Review Meeting to hear their probationary period discussed in its entirety with the Chair of the meeting and to hear specifically the reasons why the manager is not supporting the confirmation of the contract.

The employee must be given a copy of all documents, in advance, which are to be produced at the review meeting by the manager and given at least 5 working days' notice to prepare for the meeting. These should be sent with the letter inviting them to the meeting attached at Appendix 4.

The employee may wish to be accompanied at the meeting by a workplace colleague or trade union representative and is entitled to do so.

At the meeting you, as the manager, will explain why the employee has not met the standards of performance or attendance expected during the probationary period.

The employee and/or their trade union representative will have the opportunity to speak and respond to the issues raised in the management case and to put forward any mitigation they feel is appropriate for the Chair to consider.

The Chair can offer redeployment to the employee, if it is felt appropriate.

Employees who do not have their contract confirmed will not be required to work their one week notice period and will be paid in lieu of notice. A sample letter is attached at Appendix 5.

The Right of Appeal

During the probationary period, the employee has a right to appeal against the details of any assessment, your decision to extend their probationary period, or the Trust's decision not to confirm their appointment and to terminate their employment.

To make an appeal the employee must write detailing the basis of their appeal, to the manager named in the letter/document received, within 10 working days of them receiving a copy of the disputed assessment document or extension letter.

The appointed manager should make a decision after considering the basis of the appeal, reviewing the supporting facts and speaking to all relevant parties at a meeting. Their decision will be final and will be communicated to the employee in writing as soon as possible after the appeal meeting.

Where the employee is dismissed following the unsatisfactory completion of their probationary period their right of appeal will be to the Governing Body, usually a panel of three Governors. The format of that meeting will be the same as for any dismissal appeal.

General Advice

Probationary periods are a management initiative for managing performance, behaviour and attendance in the first six months of employment at the Trust and therefore employees are not entitled to have trades unions at meeting to discuss such issues. However, employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative at the Second Review Meeting, Final Formal Review Meeting and at any Appeals.

In the event of the employment contract not being confirmed you must be clear on the appropriate reason for dismissal. Not meeting the required performance standards would be an Incapability Dismissal and insufficient attendance would be dismissal for Some Other Substantial Reason.

Probation decisions are not a disciplinary matter, as the issue is not misconduct or gross misconduct. If misconduct or gross misconduct occurs the disciplinary procedure in its entirety will be used.

Whatever course of action you decide to take following a probationary period i.e. confirmation or termination, it is important that your decision is communicated in a timely manner to the employee.

Monitor

This policy and guidance will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is fit for purpose.

In addition, the number of unsuccessful probationary periods will be monitored to assist the Trust with improvements in its recruitment processes, if necessary.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Probation Review 1: Three Months

Teaching Staff

Employee Name		Job Title	
Start Date		Probation End Date	
Line Manager		Area	

Part A

Recap the main duties and responsibilities of the role and the skills and capabilities required for competence in the role. Refer to the job description and person specification

Part B

Outline the areas of performance, behaviour and attendance that have been assessed to date during the probation period.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Personal and professional conduct			
Set high expectations that inspire, motivate and challenge students			
Demonstrate good			

curriculum and subject knowledge			
Plan and teach well-structured lessons			
Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all students			
Make accurate and productive use of assessment			
Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment			
Fulfil wider professional responsibilities			
Building good relationships			
Attendance			

If there are any 'not satisfactory' in any one or more of the areas, then the probation period will be classed as progressing unsatisfactorily.

In this situation further action must be taken by the line manager to assist the employee to improve in the identified areas and this should be noted in Part C

Part C

Discuss and agree any specific tasks/objectives that will be undertaken by the employee following the first review. In addition, detail any training and development or support that is planned.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Personal and professional conduct			
Set high expectations that inspire, motivate and challenge students			
Demonstrate good curriculum and subject knowledge			
Plan and teach well-structured lessons			
Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all students			

Make accurate and productive use of assessment			
Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment			
Fulfil wider professional responsibilities			
Building good relationships			
Attendance			

Employee Signature		Date	
Line Manager Signature		Date	

Teaching Assistant Staff

Employee Name		Job Title	
Start Date		Probation End Date	
Line Manager		Area	

Part A

Recap the main duties and responsibilities of the role and the skills and capabilities required for competence in the role. Refer to the job description and person specification

Part B

Outline the areas of performance, behaviour and attendance that have been assessed to date during the probation period.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Personal and professional conduct			
Achievement of Targets			
Knowledge and understanding			

Teaching and learning			
Working with others			
Attendance			

If there are any 'not satisfactory' in any one or more of the areas, then the probation period will be classed as progressing unsatisfactorily.

In this situation further action must be taken by the line manager to assist the employee to improve in the identified areas and this should be noted in Part C

Part C

Discuss and agree any specific tasks/objectives that will be undertaken by the employee following the first review. In addition, detail any training and development or support that is planned.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Personal and professional conduct			
Achievement of Targets			
Knowledge and understanding			
Teaching and learning			
Working with others			
Attendance			

Employee Signature		Date	
Line Manager Signature		Date	

Associated Staff

Employee Name		Job Title	
Start Date		Probation End Date	
Line Manager		Area	

Part A

Recap the main duties and responsibilities of the role and the skills and capabilities required for competence in the role. Refer to the job description and person specification

Part B

Outline the areas of performance, behaviour and attendance that have been assessed to date during the probation period.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Achievement of Targets			
Professionalism			
Observed Practice			
Innovation			
Attendance			
Leadership and Teamwork			

If there are any 'not satisfactory' in any one or more of the areas, then the probation period will be classed as progressing unsatisfactorily.

In this situation further action must be taken by the line manager to assist the employee to improve in the identified areas and this should be noted in Part C

Part C

Discuss and agree any specific tasks/objectives that will be undertaken by the employee following the first review. In addition, detail any training and development or support that is planned.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Achievement of Targets			
Professionalism			
Observed Practice			
Innovation			
Attendance			
Leadership and Teamwork			

Employee Signature		Date	
Line Manager Signature		Date	

Appendix 2 – Probation Review 2: Five Months

Teaching Staff

Part A

Recap the main duties and responsibilities of the role and the skills and capabilities required for competence in the role. Refer to the job description and person specification.

Part B

Outline the areas of performance, behaviour and attendance that have been assessed to date during the probation period.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Personal and professional conduct			
Set high expectations that inspire, motivate and challenge students			
Demonstrate good curriculum and subject knowledge			
Plan and teach well-structured lessons			
Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all students			
Make accurate and productive use of assessment			
Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment			
Fulfil wider professional responsibilities			
Building good relationships			
Attendance			

If there are any 'not satisfactory' in any one or more of the areas, then the probation period will be classed as unsatisfactory - refer to part C.

Part C

Please indicate what action you wish to take:

- Confirm satisfactory completion of the probation period

- Request a Formal Final Review Meeting is held to consider the employee's future with the Academy

Employee Signature		Date	
Line Manager Signature		Date	

Teaching Assistant Staff

Part A

Recap the main duties and responsibilities of the role and the skills and capabilities required for competence in the role. Refer to the job description and person specification.

Part B

Outline the areas of performance, behaviour and attendance that have been assessed to date during the probation period.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Personal and professional conduct			
Achievement of Targets			
Knowledge and understanding			
Teaching and learning			
Working with others			
Attendance			

If there are any 'not satisfactory' in any one or more of the areas, then the probation period will be classed as unsatisfactory - refer to part C.

Part C

Please indicate what action you wish to take:

- Confirm satisfactory completion of the probation period
- Request a Formal Final Review Meeting is held to consider the employee's future with the Academy

Employee Signature		Date	
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Line Manager Signature		Date	
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Support Staff

Part A

Recap the main duties and responsibilities of the role and the skills and capabilities required for competence in the role. Refer to the job description and person specification.

Part B

Outline the areas of performance, behaviour and attendance that have been assessed to date during the probation period.

Focus	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Evidence
Achievement of Targets			
Professionalism			
Observed Practice			
Innovation			
Attendance			
Leadership and Teamwork			

If there are any 'not satisfactory' in any one or more of the areas, then the probation period will be classed as unsatisfactory - refer to part C.

Part C

Please indicate what action you wish to take:

- Confirm satisfactory completion of the probation period
- Request a Formal Final Review Meeting is held to consider the employee's future with the Academy

Employee Signature		Date	
Line Manager Signature		Date	

Appendix 3

Private & Confidential

Date

Name
Address
Postcode

Dear <Insert name>

COMPLETION OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Further to your appointment of <Insert job title>. I am pleased to confirm that you have satisfactorily completed your probationary period with the Greater Manchester Academies Trust (GMAT). Your line manager < name > will continue to monitor your progress in the future through the Performance Management Framework

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well in your future career here at GMAT.

Yours sincerely
Principal/Head

Appendix 4

Private & Confidential

Date

Name
Address
Postcode

Dear <insert name>

INVITATION TO FINAL FORMAL REVIEW MEETING

I am writing to inform you that you are required to attend a Final Formal Review Meeting in accordance with the Trust's Probationary Period procedures. The review meeting will take place on <date> at <time> in <venue>.

The Principal/Head will chair the meeting and (may be supported by a Human Resources Advisor). You have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague.

The purpose of the meeting is for the Principal/Head to:

1. Hear evidence about your entire probationary period including the outcome of the review meetings, targets set, support given, training and development activities
2. Decide whether your employment with the Trust will continue

I would like to emphasise that the outcome of the meeting could be the termination of your employment on one weeks' notice should it be concluded that you have failed to successfully complete your probationary period.

At the meeting I will be presenting a number of pieces of evidence, all (or most) of which you already have. For completeness I am enclosing a copy of them all with this letter.

I would be grateful if you would confirm to me by <insert date> that you will be attending the meeting.

Yours sincerely
Line Manager

Appendix 5

Private & Confidential

Date

Name
Address
Postcode

Dear <Insert name>

OUTCOME OF FINAL FORMAL REVIEW MEETING

I refer to your appointment of <insert job title>, which commenced on <insert date>. The position was subject to you successfully completing a probationary period during which time you were expected to demonstrate your suitability for the job.

As a result of our meeting on <date> I am now writing to confirm the outcome. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss your probationary period at Greater Manchester Academies Trust. Present at the meeting in addition to you and I was your line manager <name> and <name> who was your trade union representative (or workplace colleague).

After I have listened to all the evidence provided by <name of line manager> and you and your representative I have concluded that there has been insufficient progress in the areas of:

<list the specific areas where the probationary period standards have not been met> and it is with regret that I am going to terminate your employment with the Trust on the grounds of <usually incapability>.

I must therefore inform you that your employment with Greater Manchester Academies Trust will cease on <insert contract termination date>.

Under the terms of your contract, you are entitled to one weeks' notice. We do not require you to work this period of notice and you will therefore receive appropriate pay 'in lieu' of notice.

The Finance and Admin team will deal with any other outstanding monies that may be due to you, including leave entitlement and they will be forwarded to you as soon as possible.

You have the right to appeal against this decision. Should you choose to exercise this right, you should submit your appeal, in writing, to me within 10 working days of receiving this letter.

It is with regret that I am unable to confirm your appointment with the Trust but wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely
Principal/Head