

Probation

1. The Purpose

This policy sets out the Forestry Commission's (FC's) approach to probation and applies to all FC employees who are recruited or re-employed on a permanent or fixed term contract.

This policy does not apply to those who are: employed on a short term temporary contract; serving an apprenticeship; or re-instated; as well as existing FC employees and civil servants with at least one year of continuous service.

2. The Principles

The principles of the policy are to:

- set clear performance expectations and provide appropriate guidance and support;
- pro-actively manage performance and attendance, ensuring required standards are achieved and maintained;
- address any performance or attendance issues promptly, providing training, support and reasonable adjustments, where appropriate.
- ensure probation is managed in a fair and consistent way, in line with [FC values](#) and the [Civil Service Code](#); and
- comply with relevant legislation and best practice, ensuring that management actions are objective, non-discriminatory and can be justified.

3. The Policy

Probation is typically an eight month process, during which there is continuous assessment and feedback. Formal probation review meetings, and [Probation Reports](#), are completed at regular intervals, normally after two, five and eight months.

During probation, your reporting officer will: make sure you receive appropriate guidance, support and development; assess whether you meet required standards of performance and attendance; and address any performance or attendance issues, as appropriate. Conduct is not managed under probation and if your conduct is below an acceptable standard, this will be managed under [HR Policy and HR Procedure – Discipline](#).

At any stage, if you fail to meet the required standards of performance or attendance, this may result in non-confirmation of your appointment.

At the end of your probation, your reporting officer will make a recommendation on whether your appointment should be confirmed. For this, you must receive an overall performance rating of 'Good Performer' ('GP') or 'Top Performer' ('TP'), and have satisfactory attendance. Probation will only be extended in exceptional circumstances.

3.1 Your responsibilities as an employee

You are expected to:

- make yourself aware of and understand this policy and the associated procedure;
- understand what is expected of you and make every effort to maintain the required standards of performance and attendance;
- be open to constructive feedback, promptly raise any issues or concerns you have and inform your reporting officer of any circumstances that might affect your performance or attendance;
- participate fully in all probation review meetings, providing examples that demonstrate you meet the requirements of your job and discussing your development needs; and
- understand that performance and attendance issues will be addressed and the potential consequences of failing to maintain the required standards.

3.2 Your responsibilities as a manager

You are expected to:

- make sure that you and your probationer are aware of and understand this policy and the associated procedure;
- clearly explain the required standards of performance and attendance and make sure these are reflected in the [Probation Forward Job Plan](#);
- monitor your probationer's performance and attendance, meeting with them regularly to discuss their progress and any concerns;
- hold probation review meetings at regular intervals, providing constructive feedback, guidance and support, and addressing development needs;
- ensure all supporting documentation is completed, providing a full and accurate record of the probationer's progress;
- make a recommendation to the confirming officer on whether to confirm the probationer's appointment; and
- address any performance or attendance issues promptly, with the advice and support of your local [HR Business Partner Team](#) / [HR Case Manager](#), as appropriate.

3.3 Human Resources responsibilities

Human Resources have responsibility for:

- sending relevant documentation to managers and probationers, gathering probation reports for personnel records and writing to confirm appointments, where appropriate;
- providing guidance and support to managers dealing with probationers who are not meeting performance and/or attendance requirements;
- helping managers obtain medical advice and implement reasonable adjustments where a probationer's health is impacting on their performance or attendance; and
- monitoring and reviewing this policy, and the associated procedure, keeping the FCTU informed.