

School of Oriental and African Studies

CODE OF PRACTICE ON PROBATION FOR NEW ACADEMIC STAFF

(1 September 2002 – Revised 14 May 2003)

1 Introduction

This procedure has been updated as part of a School wide review in 2001 on the School's use of fixed term contracts. The intention of the policy and procedure is to remove the use of initial fixed term contracts for lecturer and senior lecturer appointments and replace it with a more supportive and robust probation procedure. Probationary provisions in respect of external appointments to Readerships and Chairs are set out in section 11. It may be useful to refer also to the Guidelines on the Use of Fixed Term Contracts, available from the Human Resources Department.

The probationary period is a time for mutual assessment: by the School of the academic and by the academic of the School. It provides an opportunity for academics to demonstrate their capabilities to move on to confirmation of appointment by the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel.

Staff appointed to full or part-time lecturer/senior lecturer posts shall normally serve a probationary period of three years, after which time they may be confirmed in their appointment. Confirmation will be subject to the School's Academic Staff Probation Review Panel taking the view that the probationer has met the requirements. To assist the probationer, the School appoints a senior academic colleague to act as an Mentor during the probation. (Please refer to Section 8 for more information on the role of Mentor). In a case where a probationer is unhappy with the appointed mentor, she or he should draw the issue to the attention of his or her Dean of Faculty.

The probationers' progress will be assessed by the Panel during his or her final year of probation. If the Panel is not satisfied with the probationer's progress, the staff member's probation may be extended by a maximum of 6 months. If the Panel decides that the probationer has not met the requirements after the extension of probation, the staff member's appointment will be terminated at the end of the extended probationary period.

The initial period of probation will be decided on appointment, but will normally be three years. If the appointee has sufficient relevant academic experience, his or her period of probation may be reduced.

2 Support Systems

Probationers require information, support and guidance throughout their probation period and Chairs of Department and other Officers of the School have a responsibility to see that this is provided. On the probationer's appointment, the Chair of Department will be required by the Human Resource Department to nominate an appropriate Mentor following discussions with the Dean. All Mentors must be post-probationers and normally be of Senior Lecturer status or above. A Chair of Department will not be a Mentor to any staff within his/her department.

More detail on the role of Mentors is given in Section 8 below.

In consultation with the Deans, the Human Resource Department will maintain a list of accredited Mentors who will be briefed on the contents of these guidelines and who should normally have attended a mentor training programme.

All staff who have less than two years teaching experience at the start of their contract would normally be expected to successfully complete a course of teacher training in order to be considered for a permanent contract. The course will be selected and paid for by the School. The Pro-Director will be responsible for determining which members of staff will be required to attend such a course.

3 Monitoring

The success of the probation scheme requires the careful co-ordination of activities of all those concerned. These include the Chair of Department, the Mentor, the Dean of Faculty, the probationer themselves and the Human Resource Department. It is important that, where problems are identified, remedial action is taken as quickly as possible.

The probationer will progress to the School's Staff Development and Review Scheme, introduced during the 1999/2000 session, on successful completion of the probation period.

4 The Procedure

The Chair of Department will be responsible for assessing the progress of the probationer. Part of this assessment must involve formal review meetings with the probationer and the completion of progress reports, which must be discussed with the individual. This process should involve consultation with the Mentor, and in need, the Dean of Faculty. The Chair of Department will be requested by the Human Resources Department to conduct a review of new academic staff after 9, 21 and 27 months in post.

The purpose of the review is to assess progress achieved against an agreed probationary programme. To this end, at the time that a new appointment is taken up, the Chair of Department should agree with the new academic their probationary programme. At each review point, probationers should be requested to submit a brief report on their progress. This will provide the basis for discussion at a formal meeting with the Chair of Department.

In addition, a report on the member of staff will be written by the Chair of Department after each of the three progress meetings, for consideration by the Dean of Faculty, and copied to the Human Resource Manager, the probationer and the Mentor. Any necessary remedial action recommended by the Chair of Department will be initiated by the Dean of Faculty.

The Review Report must state whether:

- i) performance is satisfactory in the three areas of teaching, research and administration;
- ii) performance is unsatisfactory in one or more of these areas, in which case the report must give details of the areas causing concern and the remedial action proposed;
- iii) performance is unsatisfactory to the extent that a recommendation is to be made that the appointment be terminated. The report must then give specific details of the areas of dissatisfaction and the grounds for termination. In this case the Chair of Department shall consult with the Dean of Faculty in the first instance. If the recommendation for termination is confirmed, a full report shall be made to the Director who shall either confirm the termination or initiate a further review procedure. Normally a three month period of notice of termination shall be given in writing in these cases except where the basis for termination is gross misconduct.

During the final year of the probation period, or earlier if recommended by the Chair of Department and supported by the Dean of Faculty, the work of the probationer will be reviewed by the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel, with a view to confirming to permanent appointment.

The Academic Staff Probation Review Panel meets annually, normally during the second term. The Panel is chaired by the Pro-Director, who will nominate the other three members of the panel in consultation with the HR Department at the beginning of each session. Panel members will be drawn from the academic staff normally Senior Lecturers or above. The Human Resources Director (or nominee) shall be in attendance. The Review Panel shall make recommendations to the relevant Faculty Board.

The Academic Probation Review Panel, on completion of this review, can recommend to the Faculty Boards that the probationer:

- a) be confirmed to permanent appointment;
- b) undertake specified development in an extension to the probation of a maximum of six months or;
- c) not be confirmed to permanent employment i.e. his/her employment be terminated (N.B. this will constitute a dismissal and the probationer has the right of appeal)

Normal disciplinary procedures take precedence over these procedures.

Where a positive recommendation of the Review Panel is unanimous, it shall be reported to the Faculty Boards for record purposes only and the confirmation to permanent appointment shall be deemed to have effect from the date of the Review Panel's recommendation. The Human Resources Department will write to the probationer confirming appointment, copying the Chair of Department. This does not affect the probationer's date of continuous employment.

Where performance is unsatisfactory, but remedial action is recommended, the Panel may recommend to the Director of Human Resources that the period of probation be extended for up to a further six months. Where performance remains unsatisfactory at the end of this further probation period, the matter shall be dealt with as in (c) above.

The outcome of Faculty Boards will be noted to Academic Board and to the Governing Body.

Once the Faculty Boards endorses the recommendation of the Review Panel **not** to confirm a probationer in post, the probationer shall be informed of the decision, with a full statement of the reasons in writing and of the probationer's right to appeal.

Post-probation research leave (i.e. two-term sabbatical to be taken within two years of successful completion of probation) is available only to 'early career researchers', i.e. to those appointed to Lecturer positions with a full three-year probation period. This leave will be subject to the usual vetting procedure set out in appendix E of the Academic Staff Development and Review document.

Staff appointed to Senior Lecturer/Reader/Professor positions, and Lecturers with accelerated probation periods (i.e. less than three years) are not 'early career researchers' and therefore are entitled to the normal one term of sabbatical leave after twelve terms of service.

5 Criteria for Confirmation to Permanent Employment

In reaching a recommendation about an academic as set out in section 4 above, the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel will be guided by the following statement of criteria for employment at the School: *a permanent contract of employment at the School is based on the expectation that all academic members of staff will contribute actively to the School's mission as an institution of excellence in research and teaching in Asian and African studies and related fields.* This contribution will be assessed by:

Research: the capacity to have a productive research career as demonstrated by the publication of articles and books of a standard appropriate for submission in Research Assessment Exercises. The conclusion of a PhD is normally an expectation before appointment. Where this is not the case, it will be made clear at the outset to the member of staff whether completion of a PhD is a pre-requisite for consideration for a permanent contract. In any event, the completion of a PhD will be one important indicator but is not in itself sufficient. In cases where the PhD thesis is about to be submitted, the Panel may recommend confirmation of appointment subject to the successful completion by the beginning of the following academic session. Probationers who have completed their PhD or have an equivalent record of published research on appointment will be expected to provide evidence of

continuing research achievement during the period of their probation: the Panel will expect such probationers to have obtained, by the time the Panel meets, commitment to or evidence of material sufficient to satisfy Research Assessment Exercise requirements. Probationers failing to meet the requirement regarding successful completion and for whom a further six months of probation is recommended, will be expected, by the end of that six months extension, also to have met these conditions regarding publication, in addition to successfully completing their PhD, if they have not already done so.

Teaching: The capacity to teach at all levels as evidenced by the results of course assessments and other indicators of teaching quality, including classroom observation. All staff who have less than two years teaching experience at the start of their contract would normally be expected to have successfully completed a course of teacher training accredited by the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education or equivalent in order to be considered for a permanent contract. It is essential that any remedial action required for teaching is undertaken by the end of the second year in order to enable a full report to go forward to the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel.

Administration: the probationer has performed such administrative tasks as have been given to him/her in a competent manner. It is important that a probationer should be allocated a no greater than average teaching and administrative load so that s/he can meet the requirements of the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel in respect of teaching and research.

Staff should reach an acceptable standard in teaching and administration, but it is their contribution to research that will be given the greatest weight. Staff can only be considered for a permanent contract if they can show that they have reached the necessary standard of research as established through publication in peer-reviewed outlets, or acceptable alternatives in disciplines where this is not appropriate.

6 Promotion

Staff undergoing probation are not eligible for promotion

7 Academic Staff Probation Review Panel : Notes for Guidance

To assess the probationer's progress in these areas, the Review Panel will consider the following documentation:

- (i) this Code of Practice and a copy of the School's Guidance notes on Equal Opportunities
- (ii) documentary evidence from a course accredited by the ILT or equivalent;
- (iii) recommendation of the probationer's Chair of Department, in the form of copies of the probation review reports and any other such documentation as s/he feels appropriate;
- (iv) probationer's curriculum vitae;
This should include, under separate headings:
 - a) book(s)/monographs published (full reference, including the number of pages)
 - b) articles in refereed journals (full reference, including no. of pages)
 - c) articles in other journals (full reference, including no. of pages)
 - d) chapters in books (full reference, including no. of pages)

(In subjects where criteria other than publications are recognised by the RAE, equivalent evidence should be provided and will be given equivalent weight by the Review Panel)
- (v) a confidential statement by at least one academic referee from another institution nominated by the probationer

- (vi) any other information appropriate to the individual case

The Chair of the Review Panel will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the School's Equal Opportunities policy and practices.

In assessing a probationers' suitability for appointment to a permanent contract, the Panel shall take account of the criteria outlined in Section 5 above, but may also wish to review the scholarly record of certain members of staff prior to their joining the School. The Dean of Faculty, Chair of Department and the academic referee nominated by the probationer shall be informed of these School procedures and the criteria by which the judgment is to be made. In all cases probationers will be interviewed by the Panel.

8 Appeal Procedure

A probationer, given notice (as prescribed by para 4 (c) above) that confirmation of appointment has not been recommended, may appeal on procedural grounds. These may include:

- (i) irregularities in the conduct of Panel business;
- (ii) failure of the Panel to take account of all relevant information

The probationer must appeal in writing within fourteen days of the notice of termination to the Director of Human Resources, stating the main reasons for the appeal. The Director of Human Resources shall put the matter before an Appeals Panel.

The Appeals Panel shall normally comprise of a Dean (not from the same faculty as the probationer), who will act as Chair an academic member of Staffing Committee and two members of the Academic Board Panel elected annually under the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures for academic staff.

All review reports will be made available to the Appeals Panel, along with any other such other documentation as they see fit. The Appeal Panel will interview the probationer, the Dean of Faculty, the Chair of Department and other such persons as they consider appropriate. The probationer has the right to be accompanied by a colleague. It is for the Appeal Panel to determine the procedures by which this process is conducted. The decision of the Appeal Panel shall be final.

9 Roles in the Probation Period

The Role of the Chair of Department

The Chair of Department is required:

- to agree a probationary programme with each newly appointed academic subject to this procedure, either at selection stage or on taking up post
- to ensure that the probationer is completely familiar with the procedures governing the probationary period and understands the criteria for successfully completing probation;
- to advise the probationer, in consultation with the Dean of Faculty with regard to his or her accredited course;
- to monitor the probationer's teaching load and research activities and to ensure that the duties and consequent workload allocated are appropriate. It is important that a probationer should be allocated a no higher than average teaching and administrative load;

- to assess student evaluation forms and comments from students on the probationer's teaching.
- to observe at least three classes taught by the probationer. To provide advice and guidance to the probationer in these areas. To arrange for the probationer to observe an experienced teacher's classes;
- to ensure that the necessary records are kept and meetings held in strict accordance with the procedure.
- to assist and guide when difficulties are encountered and to take forward any recommendations arising from the Probation Review Panel;
- to allocate duties and monitor the workload of the probationer in such a way as to facilitate his or her meeting the criteria for successfully completing probation;

The Role of the Mentor

The Mentor is required:

- to make contact with the probationer as soon as possible after s/he has taken up post and maintain regular contact during the probation period
- to assist in the process of induction of the probationer into the Department, the Faculty and the School
- to help the probationer define and develop the skills needed to become an effective member of the Department, the Faculty and of the School
- to discuss with the Chair of Department the allocation of teaching and administrative loads
- to assist the probationer to manage their research programme
- to encourage the probationer's participation in training courses organised by the School
- to give support and guidance to the probationer in teaching activities
- to provide constructive feedback to the probationer on their performance, with the Chair of Department.

The Role of the Dean

- to advise the HR Department on appropriate mentors
- to support the Chair of Department and the Mentor in fulfilling their duties under this procedure
- to ensure that proposed remedial action is undertaken

The Role of Faculty Colleagues

- to be familiar with the probationary procedures;
- to provide informal advice, help and support to probationary members of their Faculty;

The Role of Probationers

- to ensure that they are familiar with the probationary procedure;
- to ensure that they are fully aware of the criteria for successfully completing their probation;
- to ensure that they comply with the probationary scheme's requirements of them;
- to participate, if required, in a recognised course leading to accreditation in teaching, for which the School will grant the necessary time off with pay and for which the School will meet the fees.

The Role of the Human Resources Department

- to ensure that Mentors are appointed before the beginning of the academic year or term, whichever is appropriate;
- to draw their respective responsibilities to the attention of all staff involved, to ensure the fair application of the probation procedure;
- to liaise with the Chairs of Department and other relevant individuals to ensure that the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel receives the appropriate information in the format required;
- to advise on the practical operation of the academic probation procedure as a whole.
- to advise and support all those involved in the probationary process, particularly Chairs of Department, Mentors and the probationers themselves.

10. The Timetable of Activities

Early September

The Human Resources Department will write and confirm the names of Mentors for all newly appointed probationary academics, where this has not been arranged during the interview and appointment stage. Letters will be sent to the probationer, the Mentor, the Chair of Department and the Dean, advising them of arrangements.

End of October

The Human Resources Department will write to the following members of staff requesting information required by the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel, for all probationers in their final year of probation:

To probationers: requesting an up-to-date CV, details of the nominated referee and any additional information s/he wishes to submit to the Panel;

To Chairs of Department: requesting that they discuss with the Mentor the progress made by the probationer during the probation period and write a recommendation which will be made available to the Panel;

January

Mid November is the deadline for replies to the request letters outlined above.

The Academic Staff Probation Review Panel meetings are normally held during the second term. Following the meeting, the Chair of the Review Panel will write to the appropriate Faculty Board informing them of the outcome of the Panel's decisions.

In the event of an appointment beginning on a date other than at the start of the first term, the review of the probationer will be included in the next most appropriate panel meeting.

11. Probationary provisions for Readers and Professors appointed from outside the School

The provisions in respect of external appointees to for Readerships and Professorships are in line with that applied to senior administrative staff in the School. Appointees to such positions will be subject to the following process:-

1. The period of probation shall be one year.
2. Mid- way through the first year there should be a review meeting with the designated line manager to discuss progress as measured against the job description.
3. Two months prior to the end of the probationary year there will be a second more formal meeting with a panel consisting of both the designated line manager and their line manager (i.e. Dean and Pro-Director, or Pro-Director and Director & Principal). A written self-assessment report on the first year's achievements and difficulties, as measured against the job description, will be produced in advance of this meeting. The panel members reserve the right to obtain any other information they deem relevant to inform their decision.

INFORMATION ON APPLICATION FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHER STATUS

Appendix 1

University of London Teacher status is required by the School in order to undertake a number of duties for example to act as Chair or Deputy Chair of an Exam Board. Application for University Teacher status may be made at any time by the Chair of Department, providing that the candidate:

- i) is regularly engaged in giving courses of instruction leading to examinations for degrees, diplomas or certificates of the University of London
- ii) is a full time member of staff, or, if part-time meets the additional criteria set out below

The person concerned must:

- iii) be undertaking for the School as a regular commitment a substantial amount of teaching for degrees, diplomas or certificates of the University of London
- iv) have equivalent status and rights and privileges within the School as full-time members of the academic staff; and
- v) have academic standing that is at least equivalent to that of persons appointed in the School as full-time members of the academic staff in the grade of lecturer.

It has been agreed within the School that:

- a) no lecturer who is in the first two years of his/her first academic appointment should normally be accorded the status of Teacher of the University

- b) no lecturer or senior lecturer should normally be accorded the status of Teacher of the university of London in the first year of his/her appointment, irrespective of previous experience.

The Faculty Office will ask Chairs of Department for nominations in the autumn term of each session, and Faculty Boards and Academic Board will be asked to approve the nominations. The University of London will be informed.

Appendix 2

Arrangements for the Transfer of Existing Academic Fixed Term Staff to the New Probation Scheme - 2002/2003.

With the introduction of a revised and shortened period of initial appointment for academic staff, the School needs to consider how it will transfer those staff currently on some form of fixed term contract, normally the initial five-year contract which has traditionally been offered, to the new probation scheme or to permanent appointment.

An approach is proposed below relating to the length of contract the individual has already served with the School.

This proposal is based on the revised Procedure being presented to Heads of Department Committee with explicit indication of which staff within which departments are affected; and on the provision by the HR Department of training sessions for Mentors and Chairs of Department to administer the new scheme and support probationers.

Those within 12 months of start of contract at 1 September 2002

It is proposed that these staff transfer to the procedure outlined for the first year of the revised Probation Scheme. They will already have an appointed Mentor, and their Chair of Department and the HR Department will have initiated a procedure similar to the new one. The advantages to these staff are that they will potentially transfer earlier than expected to a permanent contract, and will receive enhanced support under the shorter scheme to achieve this.

Those with more than 12 and less than 24 months service at 1 September 2002

It is proposed that these staff transfer to the second year of the revised Probation Scheme. During the next six months it will be essential that the Chair of Department, Mentor and probationer ensure both that all reports required under the new Scheme are completed and that any remedial action required for the probationer to meet the criteria for permanent appointment is identified and an action plan put in place to help them to achieve the required standard as soon as possible. The advantages to these staff are that they will potentially transfer earlier than expected to a permanent contract, and will receive enhanced support under the shorter scheme to achieve this.

Those with in excess of 24 months of service at 1 September 2002

Chairs of Department of these staff must ensure that all appropriate documentation is completed by January 2003 in order for the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel at its meeting in February to make a judgement on the extent to which these staff have met the criteria for appointment to a permanent contract. This initial meeting of the Academic Staff Probation Review Panel will be required to consider all of those staff currently on initial fixed-term contracts with more than 24 months of service at September 2001, but in future years will only consider those in their third year of service and those whose probation period has been extended.

This policy has now been agreed by Staffing Committee and all staff newly appointed will automatically fall under the revised Probation Scheme.