INDUCTION, MENTORING AND PROBATION:
ACADEMIC STAFF

1. Introduction

1.1 The arrangements for induction, mentoring and probation aim to welcome academic staff to the University of York St John and ensure that they are aware of the expectations of them and given appropriate support and encouragement to realise these to the full.

1.2 The first year of service should enable a new member of staff to become integrated to the School, gain a sense of the academic, management and support structures, improve on their understanding of all aspects of University life and become part of the University’s academic community.

1.3 During the first year there is provision for all new staff to undertake various induction, mentoring and support activities. The purposes of these are to:

- Provide relevant information about the University and School
- Familiarise the member of staff with the teaching styles promoted by the School
- Provide practical advice and help with individual teaching practice, where appropriate
- Identify personal research and scholarship plans and objectives
- Identify and assist with any training needs
- Provide formal review points where the new member of staff and their line manager can reflect on the proceeding period and agree strategies as appropriate.

1.4 ‘Our University Our Contribution’ sets out the behaviours expected of staff across the University to nurture and retain our sense of community. Contained within the Framework is the expectation that staff will value people, contribute to achieving the vision and take an active role in creating our future.

1.5 These expectations and behaviours should be reinforced through appropriate induction and training and regular feedback (both positive and constructive) relating to work performance.

1.6 This scheme is an essential part of quality enhancement within the University and is intended to compliment the University PDR process and the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy. These should be read in conjunction with these documents, which together are aimed at helping to balance the aspirations and development

---

1 It is recognised that for Lecturers new to the Higher Education sector, the production of such plans may be limited
needs of individual academic staff with the requirements of the university and the academic community as a whole.

1.7 The scheme can be modified appropriately for fixed-term staff to ensure all new academic staff are supported.

2. **Induction**

2.1 There will be a central induction event provided for all new members of staff, organised by the Staff Development team who invite staff to the event prior to their arrival at York St John. All new staff are expected to attend this event in the first 3 to 6 months of their appointment.

2.2 There is also a mandatory induction video available on the Staff Development section of the University website, which covers:

- The University history and structure
- Introduction to the Induction process and Human Resources at the University
- Health and Safety

2.3 Academic staff will also be expected to attend a specific academic induction. These sessions are run twice a year and the staff development team invite all new academic staff.

2.4 Departments and Schools will provide a detailed local induction, a process which will span at least two months from the time of appointment. The aim is to support the new member of staff in integrating themselves into their new role, team and the School. The Staff Development publication ‘Local Guide to Induction’ provides full and detailed information on the local induction process.

3. **Mentoring**

3.1 During the course of their first year, all new academic staff will be mentored by an appropriate member of staff from within their School. The mentor will be identified by the Head of School who will select a colleague who will:

- share common interests with the new member of staff in terms of his/her own discipline/field of interest
- be an experienced member of staff within the School
- have a good working knowledge of University and School systems, policies and procedures
- have a professional knowledge and understanding of, or interest in, staff development issues

3.2 The mentor, as well as undertaking general introductions to staff and the School, will provide the new member of staff with a positive and supportive contact during their first year. The mentor and new member of staff will meet at least three times in each semester, on an informal basis, to discuss experience.
3.3 A mentor is also allocated to any new member of staff undertaking the PCAP\textsuperscript{2} programme. This mentor may be from within the same School as the staff member and therefore Schools should be careful to avoid any duplication of effort. It may be appropriate to use the same mentor for PCAP and School purposes.

3.4 For staff with no prior experience of teaching in Higher Education and who have delayed the start of PCAP (see 5.4 below), there will be a heightened need for mentoring support and more review meetings may be required.

4. **Teaching Observation**

4.1 Teaching observation is an integral part of the PCAP programme (see Section 7 below). If the new member of staff is registered on PCAP then the School can seek feedback from the tutors, where appropriate, regarding their performance.

4.2 Regardless of attendance on PCAP, a new member of staff will have their teaching observed by peers\textsuperscript{3} once a semester during their first year of employment at YSJ. This will be a supportive process. The new member of staff will also be offered the opportunity to observe a class delivered by a fellow academic within their School.

4.3 Where the new member of staff has significant experience as an academic elsewhere, the line manager can use their discretion to reduce the number of peer observed teaching sessions, however they must ensure that at least one of their teaching sessions is observed within the first six months of their employment.

4.4 Once the new member of staff has completed their first year of employment, arrangements should be made by the School to include them in the University Peer Observation of Learning and Teaching (POLT) Scheme.

5. **Staff Development Opportunities**

5.1 During the first year of appointment there will be a range of formal staff development opportunities which are essential to all new staff. The individual will be automatically booked onto these sessions.

5.2 Academic staff may also attend some of the portfolio of Learning, Teaching and Assessment workshops provided through the Academic Development Department.

5.3 Academics who are not Higher Education Academy Fellows on appointment will be encouraged to apply for Fellowship via the University’s CPD Framework. Support and information will be available from the Academic Development Department.

5.4 **Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice**

5.4.1 All new members of staff with less than 3 years teaching experience in Higher Education are also required to participate in, and complete successfully, the PCAP programme. The requirement to undertake the Certificate will be discussed and agreed with the new member of staff immediately after the selection process and confirmed in appointment documentation. The requirement to successfully complete

\textsuperscript{2} Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice

\textsuperscript{3} Any member of staff observing teaching must be trained to do so.
PCAP will apply to all permanent full-time and fractional posts and to those fixed-term and temporary posts where the contractual term exceeds the length of the PCAP programme.

5.4.2 Heads of School may make exceptions to this requirement where a member of staff already has a similar qualification from another institution or is a HEA Fellow.

5.4.3 Experienced members of staff may choose to undertake the PCAP programme, however this will not be a requirement of their appointment.

5.4.4 The period agreed for the completion of the programme may be extended from the outset where conflicting demands are anticipated, e.g. the completion of a PhD. This may include deferring commencement of the Programme for up to 12 months.

5.4.5 In terms of the application of this Policy to part-time staff, Heads of School may use their discretion in determining the following:

- An extension of the normal period of time allowed for completion of the programme.
- The time allowed for PCAP within the overall allocation and agreement of workload.

5.4.6 This discretion will be reviewed after a two year period to assess its operation and impact on the student experience.

5.4.7 Schools have a responsibility to support a new member of staff through the PCAP programme and will be able to obtain feedback on progress where required. Situations may arise however where a member of staff fails to complete PCAP either to the required standard or within the normal length of the programme. If this occurs then a longer period for completion will be agreed with the member of staff as part of their overall development plan. This could include the situation where, due to the new member of staff’s start date, it has not been possible to complete the Programme within their first year of employment. This may require further support to be provided to the member of staff to assist them through the programme.

5.4.8 Unsuccessful completion of PCAP will not in itself be considered reason to terminate the employment contract during the probationary period. Concerns raised by tutors during the PCAP programme can be considered together with evidenced concerns within the School regarding performance and together these may be used to terminate the probationary period, provided the process as laid down in Section 8 below is followed.

5.4.9 Where non completion of the PCAP occurs after the probationary period has been completed and is indicative of poor performance, supported by other evidence within the School, then consideration should be given to implementing the Capability procedure.

5.4.10 Appropriate recognition needs to be given to the time requirements of the PCAP programme when Schools are assessing the teaching workload to be allocated.

---

4 Modules One and Two follow sequentially in Semesters one and two.
6. Research

6.1 During the first 12 months of their appointment, every new member of academic staff will meet with the School Research Lead.

6.2 The member of staff will be required to identify personal research and scholarship plans and objectives by the end of their first year in employment which directly link to the School and University Research Strategy.

6.3 Where the new member of staff is a new Lecturer to Higher Education and is undertaking PCAP then the timescales for producing a research plan can be extended by up to one year.

6.4 Fee remission may be available to academics wishing to study for PhDs. More information can be found on the staff development webpages.

7. Probationary period

7.1 York St John University operates a procedure whereby all new academic staff must satisfactorily complete a 12-month probationary period before their employment is confirmed. The probationary period is an essential performance management tool and will be used to full effect.

7.2 The purpose of the probationary review period is to:

- ensure that the new member of staff is fully aware of the expectations of them and that they are receiving appropriate support to realise these objectives.
- ensure that satisfactory performance is being achieved in relation to the quality of:
  - teaching, supervision and tutorial work;
  - research contributing to the advancement of their subject
  - examining and administrative duties
  - their contribution to the development of the School.

7.3 Reviewing and monitoring performance should be regarded as a continual process in order that any concerns can be raised and time given for performance to improve.

7.4 All staff will have quarterly reviews with their line manager in the first year of their appointment.

7.5 Where, as is frequently the case, the new member of staff is an experienced professional, the review meetings (set out below) may be relatively informal and will confirm progress to date. A brief record of these meetings will be made.

7.6 It is recognised that a new job contains an element of uncertainty for the new member of staff. Review should be a process whereby any concerns can be stated openly and without fear, and where the new member of staff may express their feelings if the position is not matching their expectations. Equally, the line manager may come to the view that the standard of performance is consistently below that
which would have been expected (see section 9). Any capability concerns during the probationary period will be addressed through this procedure.

7.7 Instances of misconduct will be normally referred through the University’s Disciplinary Procedure. Any allegations upheld through this process and sanctions imposed will be taken into account when deciding whether a member of staff has successfully completed their probationary period. Instances of misconduct may contribute to a decision to extend a probationary period or dismiss an employee.

8. **Conduct of Reviews**

8.1 Reviews will be held quarterly. The on-going process of review will ensure that it does not become an end of year report but rather builds on good management practice. In this way the review meetings will be a positive opportunity to make formal what should be occurring on a day-to-day basis.

8.2 Reviews should record the progress the new member of staff is making against the objectives agreed with them. The line manager and new staff member should refer to the job description and duties and responsibilities contained therein. Where a clear need for further development or support is identified, this should be recorded and the appropriate action taken to support the member of staff.

8.3 Objective setting during the probationary period should be clear and precise and timescales for achievement should be realistic and measures to address success should be identifiable.

8.4 The review should provide the employee with the opportunity to bring to the attention of their line manager any issues and concerns they may have and to detail any obstacles to performing their job role.

8.5 If the new member of staff is undertaking the PCAP programme then the review should include discussion about the progress being made and their performance on the course.

8.6 Feedback from teaching observation should also be discussed.

8.7 In all cases, if problems, performance or otherwise, are identified they will be discussed with the employee, documented and shared in writing. If performance improvements are expected these will be made explicit and targets agreed.

8.8 Where performance is identified as suffering due to ill-health then the relevant University Policies should be referred to. If necessary, the probationary review period may be extended.

8.9.1 **Timescales for review meetings**

8.9.2 Timescales for meetings can be altered to take account of any periods of absence of more than four weeks that the employee may have had. This is not essential and may only be necessary if problems have been identified. If long periods of absence occur within the first year then the probationary review period can be extended.
8.9.3 Timescales for review meetings can also be altered if there are serious performance concerns which require more regular review.

8.9.4 The final review meeting should take place before the end of the 12 month probationary period. The decision shall be taken as to whether the probationary period has been satisfactorily completed, whether it should be extended, or whether the employee's employment should be terminated (please refer to section 9). If the probationary period has been completed satisfactorily, the line manager will send the instruction to the HR Department accordingly.

9. **Performance Concerns**

9.1 **Extension of probation**

9.1.1 The line manager may consider that an extension to probation is necessary to give the employee more time to attain the required performance standards. The manager should arrange to meet formally with the employee and discuss the performance concerns. The employee should be given an opportunity to give their interpretation before deciding whether to extend and the timescale for this.

9.1.2 The terms of the extension will be confirmed, along with any training and support needs which have been identified, in writing to the employee.

9.2 **Incremental progression**

9.2.1 The incremental steps in the salary scale are intended to recognise increased proficiency and maturity in the role. If the probation period is extended, any increment that would be due during that extension will be withheld.

9.2.2 Once an employee’s performance is satisfactory, then the increment will be awarded at the normal point in the year but not backdated.

9.3 **Termination of employment**

9.3.1 If during the review period the agreed objectives and any associated targets have failed to produce a level of quality satisfactory to the University, the individual’s employment may be terminated by the University giving one month’s notice in writing.

9.3.2 In an instance of possible dismissal a probationary report along with relevant supporting documents will be prepared by the line manager and forwarded to the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The Deputy Vice Chancellor will normally chair the probationary review hearing.

9.3.3 The employee will be given 5 working days’ notice of the hearing in writing and the employee advised of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague. They will also be sent a copy of the line manager’s report and supporting documents.

9.3.4 A member of the Human Resources team will be present at the hearing to provide procedural advice. The line manager will also attend to provide evidence of the performance issues, and any support measures put in place.
9.3.5 After hearing the evidence and any explanations, the meeting will be adjourned and a decision will be taken as to whether to dismiss. Consideration should be given to:

(a) the level of under-performance
(b) the consequences of the under-performance on the quality of service and effect on colleagues
(c) whether the probationary procedure has been followed
(d) whether any support identified has been provided in full

9.3.6 The meeting should be reconvened, and the individual informed of the decision. This will be either:

(a) to dismiss
(b) to further extend the probationary period which should include a further action plan with specified outcomes and developmental support, as appropriate.

9.3.7 The decision should be confirmed in writing within 5 working days. The written confirmation will detail the cause of the concern, the reason for the decision and the date of the dismissal (where applicable). Where the employee has been dismissed, the letter will include the notice period which may be paid in lieu. The employee should also be informed of their right to appeal against the decision.

10. Appeals

10.1 Where an individual’s employment has been terminated, they will have the right to appeal this decision.

10.2 The employee should put their appeal in writing detailing the reason for appeal. The appeal should be submitted to the Head of HR within 10 working days.

10.5 The appeal will normally be heard by the Vice Chancellor. The employee shall be given 5 working days’ notice of the meeting. The employee should be reminded of their right to be accompanied by a trade union or work colleague at the meeting.

10.6 The meeting will be supported by a member of the Human Resources team who will be in attendance to provide procedural advice. The manager responsible for the decision will also be in attendance to provide evidence to the Appeal Manager.

10.7 The outcome of the appeal meeting will be final and confirmed in writing within 5 working days.