
Subject: Probationary Period for Salaried University Staff Employees

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and procedures for employees serving an introductory period of employment to determine if the employee will be granted university staff status. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) strives to maintain a strong, knowledgeable and competent staff. The probationary period serves as a time for both the employee and the supervisor to determine the employee’s suitability for the job. The following provides guidelines for management to evaluate the progress of the probationary employee.

2. Policy

Virginia Tech provides a 12-month probationary period to employees hired in salaried, university staff positions. It is the responsibility of the supervisor and reviewer to follow the probationary progress review practices throughout the probationary period, to provide training and coaching, and to ensure objectivity and fairness in the review process.

The university's probationary progress review procedures must be followed for all salaried university staff employees. Satisfactory completion of the probationary period satisfies eligibility requirements for the employee to have access to certain privileges as set forth in the policies; however, it does not guarantee the employee continued employment.

3. Procedures

3.1 Probationary Period Requirements

3.1.1 Standard Probationary Period

All persons who begin either original employment or re-employment in university staff positions must serve a 12-month probationary period effective from the date of employment unless an extension is granted.

Exception: A probationary period is not required when an employee has already completed a probationary period and is transferring without a break in service from another state agency or from another Virginia Tech department.

3.1.2 New Probationary Period Required

A person who is selected for a position that requires certification following completion of a prescribed training program must complete a new probationary period. The new probationary period must commence at the beginning of the new job, not later in the year. An example of a position having an approved certification program required under the probationary period would be a Virginia Tech police officer. Department heads must work with their human resources consultant if they have a certification program that they wish to propose to have qualified for employees to serve a new probationary period.

Position descriptions and recruitment announcements for positions that require new probationary periods must include this requirement. If the new probationary period is not completed for any reason other than misconduct, an employee who is promoted or voluntarily transfers within Virginia Tech to a position that requires serving another probationary period shall be offered to be returned to his/her previous vacant position or an equivalent vacancy in the department from which the employee transferred. Human Resources will coordinate the placement process. If a vacant position is not available, the employee will be separated under the provisions of the probationary policy.

3.2 Extended Probationary Period

Probationary periods may be extended for up to six (6) additional months for performance reasons and must be extended when the employee is on any leave with or without pay for more than fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days or when the employee is on a special appointment schedule.

3.2.1 Extensions for Performance Reasons

Probationary periods may be extended for up to six (6) additional months for performance reasons that are beyond the employee's control. Examples include essential training not provided by management, changes in supervision etc. The reasons for the extensions must be submitted to Human Resources using a Form P146: Request for Extension of Probationary Period (<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>). Documentation used by the department to support extending the probationary period must provide information to the employee about the performance deficiencies, expected level of performance and the period for which the probationary period is extended. The reviewer and the Employee Relations Director or designee in Human Resources must both approve extensions of the probationary period for performance reasons; the employee signs the request and is given a copy.

3.2.2 Extensions for Leave With or Without Pay

Probationary periods must be extended when probationary employees are on any leave with or without pay for more than fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days, including Virginia Sickness and Disability Program (VSDP) (<http://www.varetire.org/pdf/publications/vsdp-handbook.pdf>) placing employees on short-term disability leave. (Employees are informed of this requirement during new employee orientation as noted on the new employee orientation checklist.)

The employee and supervisor are notified in writing that the probationary period is extended by a length of time equivalent to the employee's absence.

3.2.3 Extension for Persons on Special Term/Academic Year Appointment

If the employee is in a university staff academic year appointment, probationary periods must be extended by the amount of time not worked during the academic year breaks. The probationary period is halted during the time off and commences again upon return.

3.2.4 Limit On Extension

Excluding periods of leave with or without pay as described above, the total probationary period may not exceed 18 months.

3.2.5 Notice of Extension

Human Resources will grant extensions; the supervisor, in turn is responsible for notifying the employee in writing of the extension. Providing the employee with a copy of the Form P146: Request for Extension of Probationary Period (<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>) satisfies this requirement.

3.2.6 Change of Position During Probation

A probationary employee must have received his/her six-month probationary review with a rating of *Developing Performance* or *Strong Performance* in order to be eligible to be considered for transfer or promotion to other salaried positions outside the original hiring department. Exceptions may be approved by Human Resources under certain circumstances, such as the anticipated termination of a grant-funded position during the employee's probationary period.

If an employee moves to a new position during the last six months of the probationary period, the employee's probationary period may remain as the original twelve months or may be extended so that the new supervisor has the benefit of an extended probationary period. In such cases, the receiving department may request an extension of the probationary period. However, the total time served in probationary status may not exceed 18 months (excluding any periods of leave that exceed 14 consecutive calendar days as described above). Probationary employees who have completed the first six months of probation and are interviewing for other positions should be informed by the interviewing supervisor that the probationary period may be extended. The letter of offer to a probationary employee should also include the statement that the probationary period may be extended at any time before the end of the 12 months, and that the employee will be notified in writing if the extension is granted.

3.3 Performance Expectations

3.3.1 Establishing Expectations

The supervisor must establish performance expectations for each new employee within the first 30 days of employment. (See Department of Human Resource Management Policy 1.40, Performance Planning and Evaluation (http://web1.dhrm.virginia.gov/itech/hrpolicy/pol1_40.html)).

3.3.2 Performance Feedback and Documentation

It is strongly recommended that supervisors provide feedback to new employees on their performance frequently during the probationary period in order to evaluate their progress. A review at approximately three months is strongly encouraged; a six-month progress review and the 12-month or final review are required using a Form P125: Probationary Progress Review (<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>). Supervisors may provide interim feedback to the employee and document the employee's progress. Employees should be provided copies of interim evaluations and permitted access to any other documentation of their work performance.

3.3.3 Probationary Progress Reviews

3.3.3.1 Six (6)-Month Review

The supervisor **must** meet with the employee to advise of the progress toward meeting the established performance plan and complete a Form P125: Probationary Progress Review (<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>). This form must be sent to Human Resources before the six-month probationary review date with a copy given to the employee.

3.3.3.2 12-Month or Final Review

The supervisor **must** meet with the probationary employee approximately three (3) weeks prior to the completion of the probationary period to provide a progress review with an overall rating. The Form P125: Probationary Progress Review (<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>) is to be used for this formal progress review and must be completed and submitted to Human Resources before the end of the probationary period. **Employees should be given a copy of their review.**

The employee will be regarded as having successfully completed the probationary requirement if a probationary employee works beyond a 12-month period or the end of the probationary period without being notified (1) of satisfactory completion or (2) that the probationary period was extended. Giving the employee a copy of the completed, signed evaluation form fulfills the supervisor's responsibility to notify the employee in writing when the 12 months or the extended probationary period has been satisfactorily completed.

3.3.3.3 Record Retention

The Form P125: Probationary Progress Review (<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>) completed at six months, 12 months, or the end of an extended probationary period, are official forms that must be sent to Human Resources to be filed in the employee's personnel file. The signatures of the employee, supervisor and reviewer are required.

3.4 Termination or Disciplinary Action

If the supervisor determines at any time during the probationary period that an employee is not suited for the job, the employee should be terminated or allowed to resign. Records related to termination must reflect *Unsatisfactory performance during the probationary period* or *Resignation*.

If the employee chooses to resign she or he should submit a letter of resignation. Despite the resignation, supervisors are strongly encouraged to submit the completed Form P125: Probationary Progress Review (<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>) to Human Resources in order to document the employee's performance.

Prior to or in lieu of termination, probationary employees may be disciplined using the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management Policy 1.60, Standards of Conduct (http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/docs/default-source/hrpolicy/pol1_60.pdf?sfvrsn=2), as a guide with the exception that Written Notice forms *may not be issued* when disciplining probationary employees.

Notice of termination should be in writing by memorandum or letter, *not* by a *Written Notice* form. If notification must be made by mail, it should be sent by certified or registered mail.

Probationary employees do not have access to the state's grievance procedure. A probationary employee who claims that termination or other disciplinary action was based on race, color, religion, national origin, political affiliation, sex, age, or disability may file a discrimination complaint with the Virginia Tech Office for Equity and Accessibility or with the Office of Equal Employment Services in the Department of Human Resource Management in Richmond.

3.5 Performance Increases During the Probationary Period

The effective date and eligibility for any increase will be determined and communicated by the university. The specific amount of a performance increase for university employees will be determined based on the employee's performance evaluation rating and the university's performance increase plan.

Employees rated *Unacceptable Performance* will not be granted performance increases. Employees serving new probationary periods due to position requirements will receive performance increases in accordance with the university's performance increase plan for non-probationary employees.

4. Definitions

Appointing Authority: The department head (or designee) of the employee's department.

Probationary Period: Introductory period of employment that allows the employee and agency to determine if the employee is suited for the job. During the probationary period, an employee may be terminated at the pleasure of the appointing authority, without access to the State Grievance Procedure (<http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/employmentdisputeresolution/grievanceprocedure>).

5. References

Virginia Department of Human Resource Management
Grievance Procedure

<http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/employmentdisputeresolution/grievanceprocedure>

Office of Equal Employment Services

<http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/equal-employment-opportunity>

Policy 1.40, Performance Planning and Evaluation

http://web1.dhrm.virginia.gov/itech/hrpolicy/pol1_40.html

Policy 1.45, Probationary Period

http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/docs/default-source/hrpolicy/pol1_45probation.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Policy 1.60, Standards of Conduct

http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/docs/default-source/hrpolicy/pol1_60.pdf?sfvrsn=2

University Policy 4010, Policies Governing University Staff

<http://www.policies.vt.edu/4010.pdf>

Virginia Tech Human Resources Forms Library

<http://www.hr.vt.edu/forms/index.html>

Form P125, Probationary Progress Review

Form P141, Acknowledgement of Extraordinary Contribution

Form P146, *Request for Extension of Probationary Period*

Virginia Tech Office for Equity and Accessibility

<http://oea.vt.edu/index.html>

Virginia Retirement System (VRS), Virginia Sickness and Disability Program (VSDP)

<http://www.varetire.org/pdf/publications/vsdp-handbook.pdf>

6. Approval and Revisions

Approved July 12, 2001, by the Vice President for Budget and Financial Management, M. Dwight Shelton, Jr.

October 10, 2001: Technical corrections to update policy links.

Annual review October 23, 2001 by Vice President for Budget and Financial Management, M. Dwight Shelton, Jr.
No revisions.

- Revision 1

Section 3.1.3.1: Title corrected to “Six (6) Month Review”.

Section 3.1.3.1, 2nd sentence: Word “end” corrected to “review” to correct statement “This form must be sent to Personnel Services before the six-month probationary review date...”

Approved October 30, 2003 by the Vice President for Budget and Financial Management, M. Dwight Shelton, Jr.

- Revision 2

Changed “Personnel Services” to “Human Resources” throughout document; changed “classified” to “university staff” throughout document; changed “Extraordinary Contributor” to “Model Performance”, “Contributor” to either “Developing Performance” or “Strong Performance” as appropriate, and “Below Contributor” to “Unacceptable Performance” throughout document; changed Section 3.3.1, Extensions for Performance Reasons, in third sentence — “Human Resources Manager” to “Employee Relations Manager;” changed Section 3.2.2, New Probationary Period Required — removed last sentence in first paragraph, “Probationary employees do not have access to the state’s Grievance Procedure” due to redundancy with Section 3.4, Termination or Disciplinary Action, last paragraph; changed Section 3.5, Performance Increases During the Probationary Period, to reflect the differential pay increases approved by the Board of Visitors pursuant to University Restructuring; updated all hyperlinks; and made edits throughout document to correct grammar and clarify intentions.

Approved December 3, 2009 by Vice President for Administrative Services, Sherwood G. Wilson.

- Revision 3

Added a sentence in Section 2 to reinforce the exception that employees transferring from other state agencies without a break in service do not have to serve a subsequent probationary period.

Clarified section 3.5 to reflect that employee salary increases will be based on both the employee’s performance evaluation rating and the university’s performance increase plan.

Updated references and links.

Approved August 22, 2013 by Vice President for Administration, Sherwood G. Wilson.

- Revision 4

- Added wording to section 3.2.1 to clarify reasons for extending probationary periods.
- Simplified wording under section 3.5 regarding approvals for performance increases during the probationary period.
- Removed outdated reference to Code of Virginia.

Approved January 3, 2017 by Vice President for Administration, Sherwood G. Wilson.