

# The Probationary Period

## Manager Overview

### WHAT IS PROBATION?

The **probationary period** offers the manager an opportunity to monitor and evaluate an employee's suitability for the job. Also, it is an important time for the employee to decide if the position meets his or her needs.

### WHO SERVES PROBATION?

All newly hired (or rehired) classified employees *must* serve 12-month probationary periods.

#### Exceptions:

Classified employees who transfer from other positions in the state system and who already have completed an initial 12 months of classified employment *do not* serve new probationary periods.

Classified employees (for example, campus police officers or campus police dispatchers) who apply for positions that require satisfactory completion of mandated training programs with certifications *must* serve new probationary periods. These employees are notified of this requirement during the hiring process.

### SETTING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Within **30 days of hire or rehire**, the supervisor should develop and present a Performance Plan to the new employee.

#### The Performance Plan:

Identifies job elements based on a description of the employee's position.

Establishes performance expectations that reflect the requirements of the position.

Establishes a developmental plan, if needed.

#### Performance Management . . .

- Improves communication
- Identifies performance problems
- Motivates by providing constructive feedback
- Develops employees
- Improves productivity

### EVALUATING THE PROGRESS OF THE PROBATIONARY EMPLOYEE

Supervisors should **periodically review, discuss, and document** the employee's progress toward meeting performance expectations. The Probationary Progress Review form is available at <http://www.hr.vcu.edu/perfmgt/>. Human Resources strongly encourages reviewing and completing the form at the end of the employee's first six months of employment and before the end of the probationary period. However, if performance issues need to be addressed, the form may be completed at any interval of the 12-month probationary period.

If the employee receives a rating of "**Unsatisfactory Performer**" on any progress review, the following options are available to the supervisor:

- *Counsel* the employee on his/her performance and develop a plan for improvement.
- *Consult with VCU Employee Relations* to discuss an extension of the probationary period.
- *Determine* if the employee's resignation or termination of employment is warranted.

#### Probationary Employee Appeal Options . . .

- Talk with your supervisor
- Discuss your concerns with the dean or department head
- Contact the EEO/AA Services office (828-2347) if you have concerns about discriminatory actions

***If the supervisor chooses to . . .      The supervisor should . . .***

<p><b><i>Counsel</i></b> the employee.</p>	<p>Continue to monitor the employee's performance for improvement.</p> <p><b>Probationary employees do not have access to the Grievance Procedure</b>; therefore, they do not receive Written Notices. Supervisors should document performance counseling by memorandum. This action should take place during the probationary period; the supervisor may use this documentation as a record(s) of progressive counseling.</p> <p>A second Probationary Progress Review is not required after an initial unsatisfactory one. However, it is suggested that improvement in performance be documented on a second form.</p>
<p><b><i>Consult</i></b> with VCU HR Employee Relations to request an extension</p>	<p><b>The probationary period can be extended only:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• after consultation with and approval of the reviewer and HR Employee Relations; or</li> <li>• when the employee has been on leave of absence for a minimum of 14 calendar days;</li> <li>• if an employee is moving to a new position within the probationary period or if an employee has a new supervisor.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Determine</i></b> if the employee's resignation or termination is warranted.</p>	<p>Implement this action <b>before the end of the probationary period</b>.</p> <p>Generally, the supervisor should offer the employee the option to resign in lieu of termination and negotiate a resignation date with the employee within the probationary period.</p> <p>If the employee chooses not to resign, the supervisor should inform the employee in writing of the reason for and the effective date of the termination.</p> <p>If the reason for resignation/termination is poor job performance or absenteeism, the employee may qualify for unemployment benefits and may contact VCU Human Resources' Unemployment Compensation coordinator at 828-1533 for clarification of eligibility.</p>

**COMPLETING THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

**The supervisor should notify the employee in writing** when he/she successfully completes the probationary period. The supervisor may communicate this information by letter or on a Probationary Progress Review form that indicates satisfactory completion of the probationary period.

Failure to notify the employee about his/her probationary status will not delay ending the employee's probationary period.

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