

Manager Guidelines: Induction and Probation

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Introduction

This guide to Induction and Probation is designed to help managers ensure that new staff settles into the Company quickly and effectively. It is important that the first few months in a new role can be critical in determining whether a new employee will make a significant difference to the Company or not.

The guide is divided into two main sections. This guide provides background information on each of them. Together they provide a solid foundation for you to get the best from your new team member.

What is the purpose of induction?

Induction training is absolutely vital for new starters. Good induction training ensures new starters are retained and settled quickly into a productive role. Induction training is more than skills training. Induction covers the basics that seasoned employees all take for granted. New employees need to know their working hours, what is the culture of the Company and sickness, what is the dress policy, etc. New employees also need to understand the Company's goals and philosophy of the Company. Finally, new employees need to know what they are required to do, with clear methods and scales of expectation.

Professionally organised and delivered induction training will leave a positive impression of your Company and help new employees to reinforce their decision to join the Company.

As a manager, you have a responsibility to ensure that induction training is properly planned. The Induction Checklist can help to ensure Induction is properly planned and carried out. There are a few examples on this website to help you Tailor the checklist and go through it with your new employee on their first morning. You should explain that the checklist ensures that the employee knows what is happening and that everything is included to make their first few days informative. You

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should also explain to your new employee that they should ask about anything they are unsure of, or ask to have something covered if they cannot see it in the Induction Checklist.

What to do before the person starts

Once you know a new employee will be starting work, you should ensure that they are prepared for their first day. This includes:

- They are included in all company communications, newsletters, workshops, seminars, etc.
- You have a plan for how to support the new employee as outlined on the Induction Checklist.

When a new employee joins, check that they will have access to:-

- If applicable, a computer with a log-on and an e-mail address
- If applicable, a working telephone
- If applicable, a desk, storage cupboards, etc
- If applicable, swipe cards, keys, etc

In addition consider:-

- Informing other people that someone new is starting work. This includes colleagues and those in other rooms/departments. It is important to have a contact list for the new employee.
- Would it be helpful to point out to the new employee any similar level to the new employee? This could be a buddy or someone who can help with any questions (e.g. at lunch time, etc). A buddy is someone who has worked for the Company for a long time and can help with any questions.

Please ensure that all relevant distribution/telephone lists have been added onto all relevant distribution/telephone lists.

What is the purpose of a probationary period?

A probationary period provides a new employee with the opportunity to demonstrate that they are able to do the job to which they have been appointed, and that they have the skills and experience as demonstrated in their CV. It is also an opportunity for the new employee to be supported and supervised. The purpose of a probationary period will be explained and supported by the manager.

Managers have a responsibility to provide new employees with the means and opportunity to demonstrate that they are able to do the job to which they have been appointed, and that they have the skills and experience as demonstrated in their CV. The provision of appropriate development opportunities, and the manager will also need to make an informed decision on the individual's continued employment.

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Who should have a probationary period?

Anyone joining the Company from another organisation will normally go through a probationary period. Probationary periods need to be long enough for the new employee to settle into the job and to allow you to assess their suitability. However, a probationary period that is too long which may create a sense of uncertainty. The probationary period should be 3 to 6 months.

When an employee is promoted to a higher grade, either within their current department or to a different part of the company, it may be appropriate to have a probationary period on a trial basis rather than use a probationary period.

It will usually be appropriate to have a probationary period for people who have satisfactorily completed their probation in one area, and then move to a similar job at the same grade somewhere else in the Company.

Probationary meetings

The purpose of probationary meetings is to monitor the individual's performance displayed by the new employee in accordance with the objectives and any agreed targets. It should also be used to monitor the individual's development in relation to the objectives and any agreed targets.

It is important that the location of the meeting should be agreed and both parties should be given the opportunity to discuss. The review should be a two-way conversation. The individual should provide specific performance examples to illustrate discussions. For example, where the individual showed particular initiative, or a specific task was completed in line with a request.

You will need to meet regularly with your new employee throughout their probationary period and give them feedback on their progress. The frequency of the meetings will depend on the seniority of the employee and how they are progressing in their new role. As a minimum it is recommended that you meet with them at the end of their first month and each month thereafter until their probationary period is completed. As a minimum, you will need to have at least one meeting at least one month before the probationary period is due to end to discuss their progress.

So these meetings should be held on a regular basis, and it is recommended that these are held in a formal setting during the first week of employment.

Each of these meetings should have notes taken at each of these informal discussion meetings. The notes should be typed, not filed onto the employee's Personnel file but should be used for the next follow up meeting. The notes you make can be used as a guide after you have confirmed their probationary period.

Should their probationary period be satisfactory

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If the probationary period is satisfactory and you feel comfortable to recommend that the employee becomes a permanent member of staff you need to do the following:

- Draw up a letter (see template PL1 to help you) to inform the employee that they have successfully completed their probation and are now a permanent member of staff.
- If possible, give the letter to the employee in person. Explain the contents and why it is important to give positive feedback. This is recommended to give the letter in person, if possible.

Should their probationary period not be satisfactory

You will have let the new employee know through your regular meetings where their performance is not meeting the standards required by the Company. Where the new employee is showing signs that they may not successfully complete their probationary period, you should hold an interim meeting 1 month before their probationary period is due to end. At this interim meeting you should discuss their progress and review any agreed targets and any remedial action. You will need to review the objectives agreed at the start of the probationary period and agree with them the standards they are required to meet.

You may also wish to meet with an employee manager to discuss the employee's progress and agree the way forward. You should discuss this with HR for guidance and support, ensuring that the employee is given the opportunity to extend their probationary period or end it.

You may also wish to extend the probationary period to allow the employee to meet your standards. It is recommended that the probationary period be extended once and for up to a maximum of 3 months. You will need to discuss the reasons for the extension to the employee. The contents of this letter will need to be confirmed to the employee in writing and you should draw up the letter (template letter PL2 may help you). Ensure you give the letter to the employee in person and check that they understand of the contents.

Set up meetings to meet the new employee every 2 weeks to review progress against the objectives set. The aim will be to work with the employee to improve their performance so that the Company can confirm that the employee has completed their probationary period as outlined in the section above.

Should the remaining or extended probationary period be satisfactory, you should advise the employee that a formal meeting is to be held to discuss their progress. This should be held in a formal setting. Following the meeting, the employee will be given the opportunity to extend their probationary period or end it.

If the employee is not satisfactory, you should discuss the reasons for the extension to the employee. The contents of this letter will need to be confirmed to the employee in writing and you should draw up the letter (template letter PL3 may help you). Ensure you give the letter to the employee in person and check that they understand of the contents.

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Top tips for handling induction and probationary periods

- Structure induction programmes to be performed over a period of three to six months for new employees
- Ensure the induction programme is tailored to the needs of the individual employee
- Assign different managers to different parts of the induction programme
- Provide a written copy of the induction programme to the new employee for information
- Provide a probation period for a period of three to six months with a view to assessing the employee throughout the probationary period by means of a review
- Discuss any problems that the new employee has experienced during the probationary period with a view to identifying the cause and finding a workable solution
- Be willing to vary the way in which induction is carried out if this is necessary to accommodate the special needs of a particular employee
- Make sure that any new employee who has difficulty understanding spoken or written English is given special coaching and additional information provided with the information in another form
- Examine each part of the induction programme to ensure that it is not a barrier to any, might be a barrier to a new employee with a disability or his or her disability
- Consider the most convenient times for the induction programme