

Probationary Scheme for Academic Staff



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Cambridge strives to maintain the highest international standards as a research university and a centre for teaching excellence. The Department of Engineering selects academic staff on this basis and the probationary scheme is the Department's primary mechanism for ensuring that its academic staff continue to meet such standards.
- 1.2 This document is an elaboration of University policy and sets out the implementation of this policy within the Department of Engineering. It has been developed within the department in consultation with the Central University HR Division. The document sets out the criteria and standards for performance in research, teaching and general contribution and the procedures for reviewing that performance within the department.
- 1.3 Distinction in research is of primary importance. Teaching ability is also very important. In addition, the Department expects its academic staff to contribute to external professional activity and to internal administration.
- 1.4 During the probation period, established academic staff will be proactive in providing guidance and support to probationers. Probationers are also supported by PHEP (Pathways in Higher Education Practice), the University of Cambridge's professional development for newly appointed University Lecturers.
- 1.5 At the end of the probation period the Faculty Appointments Committee will confirm appointment to the retiring age (tenure) only for probationers whose research and teaching meet the highest international standards and who show promise of continuing to excel. If this is not the case, the Appointments Committee has the authority to terminate the appointment. The probation process is such that there should be 'no surprises' at the end of the probation period. It should become increasingly clear during the probationary period whether confirmation in appointment is likely. If this is not the case problems should be discussed as they arise and opportunity be given for the probationer to address them.
- 1.6 All academic staff and comparable unestablished post-holders on a permanent or fixed-term contract below Readership level are subject to the probationary scheme. It does not apply to contract research staff for whom there is a separate scheme.

Queries about the scheme should be directed to the Secretary of Department (Administration & HR).

2. Criteria

- 2.1 There must be, at the end of the probationary period, clear evidence of a strong record of research contributions, of teaching competence, of service (general contribution) to the professional community and to the work of the Department and the University and of promise of continued contributions at the highest levels.

Research

- 2.2 Academic staff are expected to be highly capable scholars who achieve widely recognised distinction in at least one area of research. They must demonstrate originality at the highest intellectual standards.
- 2.3 A successful academic staff member will run a research activity usually involving graduate students, post-doctoral associates and visitors (junior and/or senior). He/she will obtain external research contracts to support this activity. Appropriate metrics for successful research output might include:
- publication in leading peer-reviewed journals;
 - publication of books;
 - publication of articles in conference proceedings;
 - the delivery of papers at national/international conferences;
 - external recognition of work such as invitations to give seminars and invited lectures and recognition by professional organizations;
 - funding of research proposals, especially those submitted to sources that use peer review and when the candidate is the principal investigator;
 - the level of research activity as measured by the quality and number of graduate students and their progress; and
 - research leading to patents and/or industrial technology transfer.
- 2.4 The probationer's published work and completed manuscripts are of primary importance in the evaluation of performance and potential in research. Evaluation is in terms of the originality of the work, the significance of the results to the research area(s) under investigation, the analytical and/or experimental skill exhibited by the investigator, the creativity shown in overcoming the difficulties encountered, and overall productivity. The principal means of making this assessment is thorough evaluations of the probationer's research contributions provided by external experts who are leading figures in the relevant areas of research.

Teaching

- 2.5 The Department is committed to excellence in teaching since this is essential for attracting outstanding students.
- 2.6 Teaching includes undergraduate and graduate teaching, directing laboratory and independent study projects, setting up laboratory experiments for courses, supervising undergraduate and graduate thesis research and, if appropriate, College Teaching. Excellence in teaching is measured by the combination of participation in a wide range of these teaching activities at both undergraduate and graduate levels and high-level performance in such activity.

2.7 The evaluation of teaching will include:

- an assessment of the range of teaching activities including course development and innovation;
- an examination of the record of courses taught, projects directed and theses supervised;
- an assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching delivered, including student feedback; and
- college teaching, if appropriate.

General Contribution

2.8 This includes such as activities as administrative contributions in the Department/University, external professional service to the academic and industrial communities, student recruitment and admission, reviewing papers for leading journals and proposals for funding organisations, and participating in and providing leadership to professional organisations. Performance is measured largely by the candidate's willingness to fulfil such responsibilities. Input from tenured academic members, who serve on the same committees, is viewed as adequate for assessing performance in committee assignments. No formal mechanism is identified for evaluating the quality of participation.

Standards of Assessment

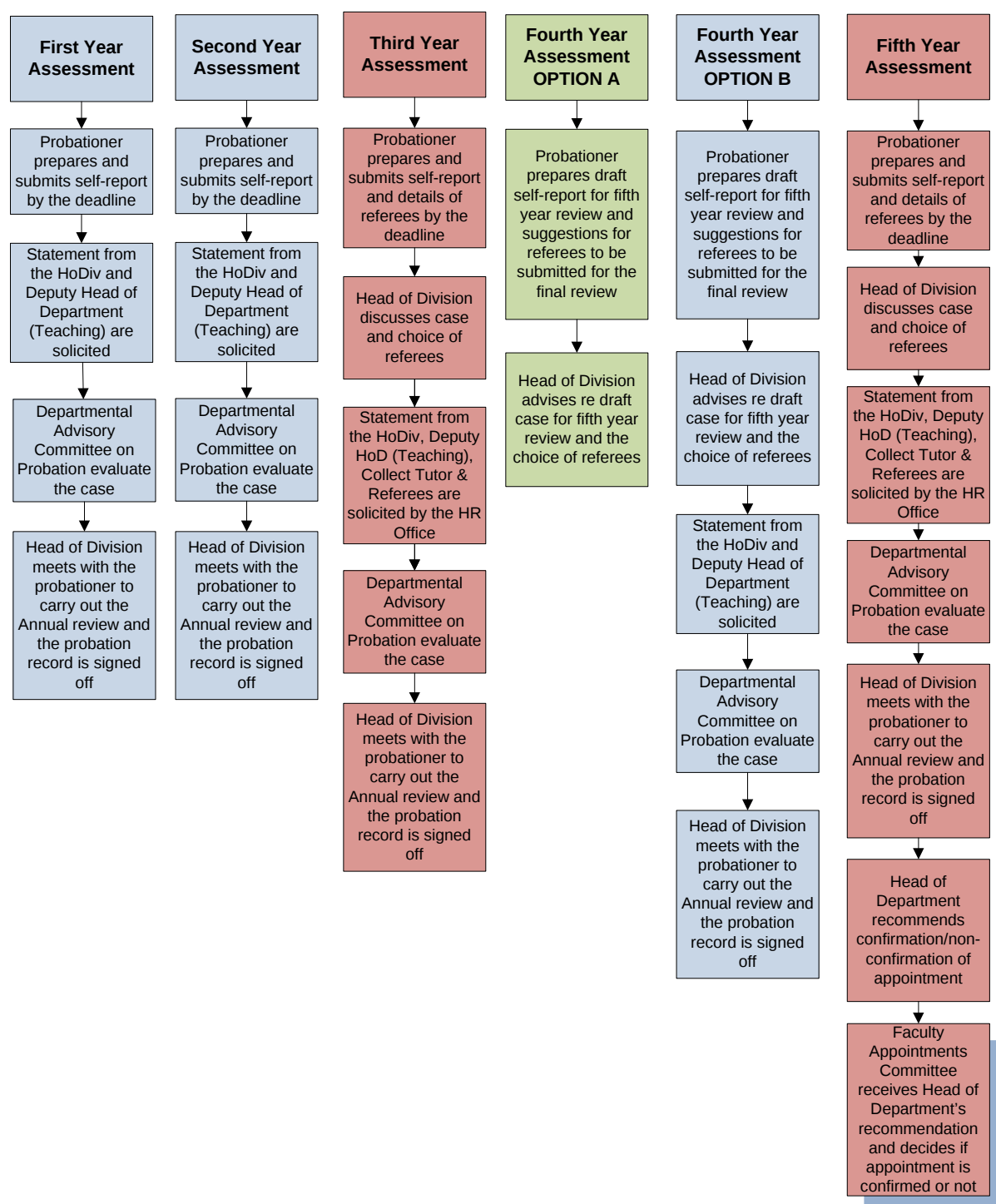
2.9 Standards for appointment to the retiring age are set at a level that promises to advance the quality of the Department's research and teaching relative to those at other internationally leading engineering schools.

3. Management of the Scheme

- 3.1 The Head of Department has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are conducted properly and fairly. He/she will have oversight of the process and, in order to ensure that similar standards apply across the Department, will be advised by the Advisory Committee on Probation before assessments take place and before making his/her recommendation to the Faculty Appointments Committee.
- 3.2 The Advisory Committee on Probation will consist of four senior academics (who are not Heads of Division), together with the Head of Department, the Deputy Head of Department (Teaching) and the Deputy Head of Department (Graduate Studies). The Head of the probationer's Division will attend relevant meetings of the Advisory Committee.
- 3.3 The Secretary of Department (Administration & HR) will be responsible for the operation of the scheme and will also act as Secretary to the Advisory Committee on Probation.
- 3.4 The Head of the probationer's Division will take an active role in supporting and guiding the probationer throughout the probationary period.
- 3.5 The Head of Department will assign a mentor to each probationer. The mentor will give advice and provide valuable links to the probationer, and will provide support over the whole range of duties the probationer is expected to undertake. The probationer will, when appropriate, discuss problems and concerns in confidence with the mentor. If requested by the probationer, an alternative mentor may be agreed in discussion with the Head of Department.
- 3.6 The Faculty Appointments Committee has the responsibility, in light of the recommendation of the Head of Department, the performance of the probationer, and any representations from the probationer, to: i) confirm tenure, ii) extend probation in exceptional circumstances or (iii) confirm the end of appointment and the termination of the contract.
- 3.7 The normal expectation is that the probationary period will be for five years. The tenure decision by the Faculty Appointments Committee must occur, if possible, not less than nine months before the end of the five-year period. Exceptionally in cases where the Head of Department determines that there is sufficient evidence, s/he may recommend to the Faculty Appointments Committee confirmation of an appointment before the end of the five-year period but not less than three years into the probationary period.
- 3.8 Exceptionally, the probationary period may be extended where a probationer has not had sufficient time to demonstrate her/his suitability due to such factors as extended leave of absence taken on account of illness or family commitments. Normally such extension will be for no longer than one year.
- 3.9 Consideration will be given to any special circumstances that may have resulted in a lack of opportunity for a probationer to perform to her/his full potential on account of disability.

4. Operation of the Scheme

- 4.1 Academic staff are assigned to one of the six academic Divisions on appointment and the Head of the Division has a key role in the probation process. At the beginning of the appointment and before the beginning of the first teaching term, the Head of Division will meet with the probationer to discuss the duties of the office, mutual expectations, developmental needs and the probationary scheme.
- 4.2 Newly appointed academics are also required to attend PHEP (Pathways in Higher Education Practice), the University of Cambridge's professional development for newly appointed University Lecturers.
- 4.3 The probationer will be informed of the name of their mentor and the timings of their probation assessments by the Secretary of Department. The structure of the five year probation period is as follows:



5.0 Assessments

- 5.1 The probationer's case builds up progressively throughout the probationary period so that, when the Faculty Appointments Committee meets at the end of the probation period, there is clear evidence of the probationer's progress in the documentation and referee reports. The Advisory Committee on Probation will evaluate the case each year and record their decisions in respect of the three criteria (Teaching, Research and General Contribution) on either PD.PROB.R1 or PD.PROB.A1. The Head of the Division will meet with the probationer on receipt of the assessment form to discuss the outcome of the assessment and to sign off the forms which will be signed by both parties.
- 5.2 All Assessments will be prompted by the Secretary of Department (Administration & HR). It will be his/her responsibility to ensure that all documented evidence is available to those involved in the assessment process.
- 5.3 The Advisory Committee will receive the following documentation when making their assessments:

Years 1 and 2

These assessments only involve internal assessment to help guide the probationer towards his/her more formal assessment in year 3 and the final assessment in year 5.

The documentation required is as follows (see paragraphs 5.4-5.7):

- by the deadline set by the Secretary of Department, the **Probationer's Self-Report** (including the coversheets and the teaching form) and three best publications/draft papers. These papers should show a forward trajectory, since appointment and so should be recent. Probationers who provide pre-appointment publications should justify their choice;
- the **Head of Division Statement** and the **Teaching Statement** prepared by the Deputy Head of Department (Teaching);
- in Year 2, the **PD.PROB.R1 Form** from Year 1.

Year 3

This is a formal assessment and external referees will be consulted which will inform the Head of Department's recommendation to the Faculty Appointments Committee.

The documentation required is as follows:

- by the deadline set by the Secretary of Department, the **Probationer's Self-Report** (including the coversheets, the teaching and referee forms) and three best publications/draft papers. These papers should show a forward trajectory, since appointment and so should be recent. Probationers who provide pre-appointment publications should justify their choice;
- the **Senior Tutor Statement** (if applicable);
- **Five references** of which two are nominated by the probationer and three by the Head of Division so that there is a total of at least three external references from international researchers;
- The **Head of Division Statements** and the **Teaching Statement** prepared by the deputy Head of Department (Teaching) for Years 3, 2 and 1;
- **PD.PROB.R1 Forms** for Years 2 and 1.

Year 4 OPTION A (Head of Division Review)

The Advisory Committee will have determined at the third year assessment that as the case is straightforward at present the documentation required is as follows:

- a preparatory self-report for the final submission with suggestions for referees.

Year 4 OPTION B (Committee Review)

The Advisory Committee will have determined at the third year assessment that your year four review will be completed by them.

The documentation required is as follows:

- by the deadline set by the Secretary of Department, the **Probationer's Self-Report** (including the completed coversheets, the teaching and referee forms) and three best publications/draft papers. These papers should show a forward trajectory, since appointment and so should be recent. Probationers who provide pre-appointment publications should justify their choice;
- the **Senior Tutor Statement** (if applicable) from Year 3;
- **Five references** solicited for Year 3;
- the **Head of Division Statements** and the **Teaching Statement** prepared by the deputy Head of Department (Teaching) for years 4, 3, 2 and 1;
- **PD.PROB.R1 Forms** for years 3, 2 and 1.

Year 5

This is a formal assessment and external referees will be consulted which will inform the Head of Department's recommendation to the Faculty Appointments Committee.

The documentation required is as follows:

- by the deadline set by the Secretary of Department, the **Probationer's Self-Report** and three best publications/draft papers. These papers should show a forward trajectory, since appointment and so should be recent. Probationers who provide pre-appointment publications should justify their choice;
- **five references** of which two are nominated by the probationer and three by the Head of Division so that there is at least a total of three external references from international researchers ; plus the **five references** solicited for the third year assessment;
- the Senior Tutor Statement (if applicable) for Years 5 and 3;
- The **Head of Division Statements** and the **Teaching Statements** prepared by the deputy Head of Department (Teaching) for Year 5, 4b ,3, 2 and 1;
- **PD.PROB.R1 Forms** for years 4b, 3, 2 and 1.

5.4 Probationer's Self-Report

The probationer's case will develop over the probationary period. It is therefore expected that, for the probationer, it will be a matter of up-dating his or her documentation throughout the probationary period. The following documentation is required and the coversheets and forms should be submitted with the self-report:

(i) Research

- (a) An **up-to-date curriculum vitae (CV) and publications list** (covering, where appropriate, the metrics for successful research output as set out in Para. 2.3). It should only include entries for items that are in the public domain or accepted by refereed journals or for presentation at conferences.

- (b) Probationers must provide **three journal/draft publications** which together with the self-report demonstrate both progress and achievement since appointment and so should be recent. Probationers who provide pre-appointment publications should justify their choice.

(ii) **Teaching Form**

The Teaching Form should be completed. Copies of all available student feedback information relating to the teaching listed should be attached to the form.

(iii) **Referee Form**

The referee form part (a) should be completed after discussion with the Head of Division.

Part (b) is completed and submitted by the Head of Division.

5.5 Teaching Statement

The statement is prepared by the Deputy Head of Department (Teaching), after receipt of the probationer's Teaching Form and in the light of student feedback. The statement will address:

- A review of the candidate's teaching record, with courses taught, independent study supervised, undergraduate and graduate theses supervised;
- An evaluation of the candidate's teaching effectiveness with respect to various formats and levels of instruction.

5.6 Head of Division Statement

The statement on research and general contribution is prepared by the Head of Division, after taking advice from Senior staff in the Division including the Head of the Research Group and, if appropriate, the relevant Senior Tutor (Years 3 + 5 only). This statement should contain:

- a description of the distinctive nature, reputation, and influence of his or her published work;
- a description of the potential development and influence of the person's scholarship on the discipline, the academic unit and the University at large.
- an assessment of the candidate's personal and intellectual service to both Department and the University; and
- an assessment of the candidate's potential for further professional growth.

The report must refer explicitly to the Department's definitions of research achievement and competence in teaching (see section 2).

5.7 Referees (Year 3 and Year 5 only):

It is expected that, at the final assessment stage, probationers will have a dossier of ten references to support their case, although it is recognised that it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to up-date the comments of referees consulted in year 3 and therefore the total number of references would be less than ten. References will be selected as follows:

- (i) the names and contact details of two referees will be provided by the probationer.

The choice of referees will be discussed with the Head of Division.

- (ii) the names and contact details of 3 additional referees provided by the Head of Division, who should ensure that at least 3 of the 5 references solicited are from external international researchers.

The Secretary of Department (Administration & HR) will solicit references by means of a standard letter in advance of the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Probation. The referees will receive the probationer's Self-Report, the best three publications as selected by the probationer and a description of the criteria for probation.

- 5.8 The Advisory Committee will consider all the documentation and agree on issues to be raised in the end of year assessment by the Head of Division/Department. The Advisory Committee will also ensure uniformity of practice across the Department.
- 5.9 An assessment meeting shall take place between the Head of Division and the probationer as soon as possible after the Advisory Committee meets. These assessment meetings should provide the opportunity to discuss research progress, teaching progress and administrative progress, to discuss strategy and workload, and any difficulties that may be encountered and that could have an effect on the ability of the probationer to meet the requirement for reappointment to the retiring age.
- 5.10 At the assessment meeting the Head of Division must draw the probationer's attention to any shortcomings and make it clear what s/he needs to do in order to meet the required standard of performance. The Head of Division should put in place any arrangements judged helpful to the probationer (for example, more regular meetings or specific training).

6. Faculty Appointments Committee

- 6.1 At the beginning of the fifth year or the final year of an extended probationary period (See para. 3.8 above), the Faculty Appointments Committee will be convened and receive the Head of Department's recommendation which will be made in the light of the Advisory Committee's discussion. The Faculty Appointments Committee will also receive all the documentation as set out in Para. 5.3 above.
- 6.2 Where performance during probation has met the required standard, the Head of Department will recommend confirmation of appointment to the Faculty Appointments Committee.
- 6.3 On confirmation of appointment by the Faculty Appointments Committee, a University Officer shall hold office, subject to the provisions of Statute U, until the retiring age or until the end of her or his tenure in the case of officers on fixed-term appointments, so long as s/he satisfactorily performs the duties of the office. It will be for the Head of Department to inform the member of staff concerned that probation has been satisfactorily completed. Written confirmation will be issued by the Central HR Division.
- 6.4 In the event that performance is judged not to be satisfactory according to the standards defined in this document, the Head of Department will inform the probationer that the recommendation to the Appointments Committee will be termination of appointment. The probationer will be given an opportunity to make written representations to the Appointments Committee and may attend the meeting of the Appointments Committee if s/he wishes to do so in order to present her/his case. If a decision to terminate the probationer's appointment is made by the Faculty Appointments Committee, the probationer will be given written reasons for non-confirmation and will be given notice of not less than three months.
- 6.5 If the appointment is terminated, the officer will have the right to appeal, either under the provisions of Statute V or in accordance with the disciplinary and grievances procedures for unestablished appointments as appropriate.

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