Introduction

A period of probation is the initial period of an employee’s employment during which both the employee and the employer can assess whether or not they wish to continue their working relationship. Either party can, therefore, terminate the relationship during the probationary period should the relationship prove to be unsatisfactory. Regular feedback to the new employee should be provided by the Manager/Supervisor during the probationary period.

This procedure is designed to provide a standard process for employment probation in Bega Valley Shire Council.

Purpose of the probation period

An employee on probation has been appointed although they are not yet confirmed in a permanent role. The purpose of a probationary period is to provide:

- A period of orientation and training
- An opportunity to assess the employee’s aptitude and capacity to perform in the role.

The probationary period needs to be flexible allowing different categories or classifications of employees to have a probationary period that reflects a reasonable period for both parties to determine whether or not the work relationship is satisfactory. The duties or type of work undertaken by some positions may not make it possible to assess the aptitude and/or competencies of the occupant within a short period of time, whilst other positions may not operate under close direction or guidance and, accordingly, the assessment period may need to be extended to give each party the opportunity to form an objective judgement on the work relationship.

Guidelines for probationary periods have been established to assist the organisation in adopting fair and reasonable time-frames for the mutual assessment of the work relationship that exists between a new employee and Council.
Glossary of terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation of appointment</td>
<td>The process used to end a probation period and appoint an employee permanently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Performance Review</td>
<td>The formal process for performance management and enhancement.</td>
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<td>Manager/Supervisor</td>
<td>A person responsible for a work unit or function within a work unit.</td>
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<td>New employee</td>
<td>A person permanently appointed to Bega Valley Shire Council under section 349 of the Local Government Act.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probation period</td>
<td>The initial period of a person’s employment during which both the employee and the employer can assess whether or not they wish to continue their working relationship.</td>
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<td>Contract staff</td>
<td>Senior management/executive staff employed under contract for a period of 3 to 5 years.</td>
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<td>Temporary employees</td>
<td>Staff employed on a temporary basis with no defined finishing date. Under the terms of the Local Government Act. (Sec.351 (2)) temporary appointments are not to exceed a 12 month period.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual employees</td>
<td>Staff employed on an hourly basis and paid the casual pay loading in lieu of leave. (25% as of November 2010).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>An employee who is being taught the basic skills of the position and who is on provisional status until the end of the training.</td>
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<td>Award</td>
<td>Local Government (State) Award 2014 or the Local Government (Electricians) State Award.</td>
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Scope

This procedure applies to all new permanent employees appointed to Bega Valley Shire Council. This procedure does not apply to:
- temporary employees
- casual employees
- contract staff
- existing permanent employees transferred at their current level of the appropriate Award or promoted to a new level of the appropriate Award

Probationary Periods

The Award skill descriptors have been used as the basis for determining reasonable probationary periods as these outline the complexity of the work, the level of knowledge and skills required and the degree of autonomy to be exercised. The following probationary periods are therefore recommended for occupants of positions as per below:
- Band 1, Level 2 - 12 weeks
- Band 1, Level 3 - 12 weeks
- Band 1, Level 4 - 12 weeks
- Band 2, Level 1 - 12 weeks
• Band 2, Level 2 - 12 weeks
• Band 2, Level 3 - 12 weeks
• Band 3, Level 1 - 12 weeks
• Band 3, Level 2 - 12 weeks
• Band 3, Level 3 - 12 weeks
• Band 3, Level 4 - 18 weeks
• Band 4, all levels 26 weeks

Guidelines/Procedures

It is important to identify a new employee’s strengths and weaknesses at an early stage so that appropriate development action can be taken during the probationary period. Such action aims to minimise the likelihood of poor work performance occurring after an employee has been confirmed in their position with Council.

The manager/supervisor of the new employee has the following responsibilities in relation to the probationary process.

At the commencement of the probation period

• Explain the probation process and what it entails
• Explain the nature of their duties and the standard expected of the employee (inc. attendance, general conduct and behaviour towards colleagues and customers etc.) and
• Inform the employee in writing of the criteria and objectives to be met for the appointment to be confirmed.

During the probation period

• Regularly monitor the performance of the employee and give regular feedback in addition to the required probation report. (Regular feedback provides the opportunity for the employee to rectify any performance problems during their probation)
• Provide specific on-the-job training or development opportunities to help the employee perform in their job
• Complete the Probationary Employee Performance Evaluation Report prior to the probation period concluding. Provide the employee with a copy and discuss the report with the employee. The employee must be provided with an opportunity to respond within seven working days
• The completed probation report must be forwarded to the Recruitment Officer in Workforce and Administration.

Responsibilities

Strategic and Business Services (SBS)

The SBS section has the following responsibilities in relation to the probationary process:

Prior to commencement of employment

• Send letter of offer to new employee which includes an explanation of how long they will be on probation.

On completion of the probation period

• The Recruitment Officer will inform the supervisor/manager of the new employee that probationary period review is due.
Upon successful completion of the probation period the Employment Support Services (ESS) Coordinator will draft a letter confirming appointment following the completion of probation period. This letter will be signed by the General Manager.

**Written notification of probation**

The period of probation is to be stated in the letter of offer of appointment to the employee prior to the employee’s commencement. The letter is to also state the probationary period may be extended (and the possible time frame of any extension) if the outcomes are not achieved. A verbal statement that a period of probation is to be applied or extended is not sufficient.

**Performance appraisal**

Expectations of the role are to be outlined to all employees no later than one (1) month from date of commencement. A performance appraisal and development process is to be used to initiate effective communication between the manager/supervisor and appointee so that any work performance issues are addressed. The New Employee Probation Period Review must be completed and discussed with the employee by their supervisor. If a manager/supervisor has concerns about the employee’s performance during the probationary period, they should consult with the Employment Support Services (ESS) Coordinator.

**Extension of probation**

The General Manager may extend the period of probation if the employee has not met the expected performance outcomes of their role within the probation period. Where the General Manager has determined an extension period is warranted, the employee will be notified in writing before the end of the current probationary period. The period of the extension will be for a reasonable period based on the nature of the role and the circumstances warranting extension. Ongoing evaluation is to occur during the extended probationary period and the Manager and employee are to identify solutions if the expected outcomes are not being achieved. The probation period will be extended only once.

**Termination of Employment**

An employee’s appointment may be terminated during the probationary period, under the following circumstances:

- The employee’s performance during the probation period has been determined as unsatisfactory; or
- The employee’s workplace behaviour is in breach of Council’s Employee Code of Conduct.