

Committee	Board		
Date paper prepared	18/02/2026	Date of committee meeting	18/03/2026
Subject	UHI North, West and Hebrides Probation Policy		
Author	Vicky Ferguson, Director of People and Culture		
Action requested	I. Endorsement sought		
Purpose of the paper	To seek Board endorsement of the UHI North, West and Hebrides Probation Policy		
Summary of the paper	UHI North, West and Hebrides (“the College”) is committed to the fair, equal and consistent treatment of all employees. All new employees will be required to undertake a probationary period unless expressly excluded by contract. The probationary period enables the College to assess an employee’s suitability for their role and provides a structured framework for support, induction, training and review. The purpose of this policy is to: • Provide a robust and consistent framework to support line managers in managing probation effectively. • Ensure that new employees are given clear expectations, appropriate support and regular feedback during their probationary period. • Support the College’s induction and professional review processes. • Ensure employees demonstrate the required standards within the probationary period.		
Consultation	This policy will be consulted with recognised Trade Unions, SMT and HR Committee		
Resource implications	None identified. This policy provides guidance to authors and has no direct cost or other resource implications. However, clear, and concise papers may provide benefits in terms of facilitating discussion leading to better informed, quicker, and more efficient decisions.		

Risk implications	There are potential legal, operational and reputational risks if probation is not managed effectively, including the risk of unfair dismissal claims, inconsistent application across departments, and reduced employee retention due to inadequate support.
Link with strategy	This policy supports the UHI North, West and Hebrides People & Culture Strategy by promoting effective onboarding, performance management, and employee development, contributing to workforce capability and retention.
<u>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion</u>	Ensuring our documents can be read and understood by everyone, including people with disabilities or impairments, is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010.
Island Community Impact	Not required in this instance.
Paper status	☒ Open – The paper may be circulated to non-members of the committee and published online without restriction. ☐ Restricted – The paper must not be circulated to non-members or published online until after the committee meeting. ☐ Confidential - The paper must not be circulated beyond the committee members and should not be published online. Some information is considered commercially sensitive. [Please note papers may still be subject to Freedom of Information requests – see below].
<u>Freedom of information</u>	Choose an item. FOISA exemptions Scottish Information Commissioner (itspublicknowledge.info) If closed/ withheld, select date this will become 'open': Enter a date.



Probation Policy

POL-NWH-00x

Lead Officer (Post):	Director of People and Culture
Responsible Office/ Department:	Human Resources Department
Responsible Committee:	HR Committee
Review Officer (Post):	Director of People and Culture /Senior HR Advisers
Date policy approved:	
Date policy last reviewed and updated:	New NWH Policy
Date policy due for review:	February 2029
UHI Single Policy / UHI NWH Policy:	UHI NWH Policy
Public face / College internal facing only	College internal facing only
Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	
Has a Data Privacy Impact Assessment been completed:	Will be completed by Compliance Team – Completed / Data Protection Officer has approved that no DPIA is required

Accessible versions of this policy are available upon request. Please contact UHI North, West and Hebrides for more information.

Policy Summary

Overview	UHI North, West and Hebrides (“the College”) is committed to the fair, equal and consistent treatment of all employees. All new employees will be required to undertake a probationary period unless expressly excluded by contract. The probationary period enables the College to assess an employee’s suitability for their role and provides a structured framework for support, induction, training and review.
Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to: • Provide a robust and consistent framework to support line managers in managing probation effectively. • Ensure that new employees are given clear expectations, appropriate support and regular feedback during their probationary period. • Support the College’s induction and professional review processes. • Ensure employees demonstrate the required standards within the probationary period.
Scope	This policy applies to all new employees of UHI North, West and Hebrides, unless specifically excluded by contract or agreement.
Consultation	This policy will be subject to consultation with recognised Trade Unions and SMT prior to full implementation.
Implementation and Monitoring	The implementation and monitoring of the policy is the responsibility of the Human Resource department.
Risk Implications	There are potential legal, operational and reputational risks if probation is not managed effectively, including the risk of unfair dismissal claims, inconsistent application across departments, and reduced employee retention due to inadequate support.

Link with Strategy	This policy supports the UHI North, West and Hebrides People & Culture Strategy by promoting effective onboarding, performance management, and employee development, contributing to workforce capability and retention.
Impact Assessment	Equality Impact Assessment:
	Privacy Impact Assessment:

1. Policy Statement

UHI North, West and Hebrides (“the College”) is committed to the fair, equal and consistent treatment of all employees. All new employees will be required to undertake a probationary period unless expressly excluded by contract.

The probationary period enables the College to assess an employee’s suitability for their role and provides a structured framework for support, induction, training and review.

The normal length of the probationary period is six months. In exceptional circumstances, probation may be extended to a maximum of nine months with the approval of the Human Resources Department. Any extension will be confirmed in writing before the original probation end date and will set out the reasons for extension, required improvements and the review date.

Nothing in this policy forms part of an employee’s contract of employment. The College reserves the right to vary this policy as required.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Probationary Period:** A defined period at the start of employment during which an employee’s suitability for the role is assessed.
- **Probationer:** Any new employee undertaking a probationary period.
- **Line Manager:** The employee with direct managerial responsibility for the probationer.
- **Human Resources (HR):** The department responsible for providing advice, guidance and oversight in relation to employment policies and procedures.
- **Attendance, Performance and Conduct:** The three key indicators against which probationers are assessed during the probationary period.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a robust and consistent framework to support line managers in managing probation effectively.
- Ensure that new employees are given clear expectations, appropriate support and regular feedback during their probationary period.
- Support the College’s induction and professional review processes.
- Ensure employees demonstrate the required standards within the probationary period.

4 Scope

This policy applies to all new employees of UHI North, West and Hebrides, unless specifically excluded by contract or agreement.

5 Exceptions

Any exception to this policy, including exclusions from probation or extensions beyond six months, must be approved by the Human Resources Department. Probation may only be extended up to a maximum of nine months and only in exceptional circumstances, with clear justification documented.

6 Notification

All new employees will be informed of their probationary period within their contract of employment and during induction.

Line managers must ensure that probationers understand:

- The length and purpose of probation
- The standards expected
- The review timetable
- The possible outcomes
- Their right to be accompanied where applicable

All formal review meetings and outcomes will be documented and shared with the employee.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Line Managers

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Holding an initial probation meeting within the first week of employment.
- Setting clear, measurable objectives aligned to the job description.
- Identifying training and development needs.
- Holding formal review meetings at approximately weeks 4, 12 and 22.
- Providing ongoing feedback and support.
- Keeping written records of meetings and sharing copies.
- Assessing performance, conduct and attendance fairly and consistently.
- Consulting HR before recommending extension or dismissal.

Probationers

Probationers are responsible for:

- Engaging fully with the probation and review process.
- Meeting the standards of attendance, performance and conduct required by the College.
- Raising any concerns or support needs with their line manager at the earliest opportunity.
- Familiarising themselves with relevant College policies, including disciplinary procedures and standards of behaviour.

Human Resources

Human Resources is responsible for:

- Providing guidance and support to line managers throughout the probation process.
- Approving any extensions to probation.
- Advising on attendance, performance or conduct issues during probation.
- Issuing formal documentation relating to warnings and probation outcomes.

8 Probation Review Process

8.1 Support and Monitoring

Where concerns arise regarding performance, conduct or attendance, the line manager will:

- Inform the employee of the concerns promptly.
- Clarify required improvements.
- Provide reasonable support and timescales for improvement.
- Keep written records.

Where concerns relate to misconduct, the College reserves the right to apply the Disciplinary Policy instead of or in addition to this policy.

8.2 Right to Be Accompanied

Where a probation meeting may result in a formal warning, extension of probation or dismissal, the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or recognised trade union representative, in accordance with the Employment Relations Act 1999.

9 Probation Outcomes

At the end of the probationary period, one of the following outcomes will apply:

9.1 Confirmation of Appointment

Where standards have been met, employment will be confirmed in writing.

9.2 Extension of Probation

Probation may be extended (up to a maximum of nine months total) where further time is required to assess performance or where improvement is needed. The extension letter will specify:

- The reasons for extension
- Required improvements
- Support to be provided
- Review date

9.3 Termination of Employment

Where the required standards have not been met, employment may be terminated.

Termination during or at the end of probation will be with contractual notice (or payment in lieu where applicable).

10 Appeal

An employee has the right to appeal against a decision to:

- Extend probation, or
- Terminate employment during or at the end of probation.

Appeals must be submitted in writing within five working days of receiving written confirmation of the decision.

Appeals will be heard by a manager not previously involved in the decision, where reasonably practicable. The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing and will be final.

11 Legislative Framework

This policy operates in accordance with relevant employment legislation, including but not limited to:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

The College will apply this policy fairly and without discrimination.

In particular:

- Pregnancy-related absence will not be taken into account when assessing attendance.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required under the Equality Act 2010.
- Disability-related absences will be assessed in line with statutory obligations.
- Decisions will not be made for reasons that could constitute automatic unfair dismissal.

12 Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Other Resources

- Induction Policy
- Professional Review and Development Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Attendance Management Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Probation Procedure

13 Version Control and Change History

Version	Date	Approved by	Amendment(s)	Author
1	February 2026	HR Committee	New UHI North, West and Hebrides policy	Director of People and Culture
