

NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme

# Guidance and Manager's Toolkit- Probation

Updated October 2019



## Guidance and Manager’s Toolkit – Probation

<p><b>What is the Probationary Period?</b></p>	<p>It is a period of time during which a Trainee’s suitability and capability (including attendance) is objectively assessed to ensure that they can undertake the requirements of the Scheme. Clear expectations around performance and conduct are established at the beginning of the probationary period and are expected to be adhered to for the entirety of the probationary period and on the Scheme. Please see <b>Appendix 1 – Probation and Performance Review Timeline and Probation Review forms on GENI.</b></p> <p>The probationary period provides an opportunity to allow a two-way exchange with meaningful and constructive feedback between managers and Trainees. It also gives protection for the Scheme and for the Trainee as the probation period provides a way for the Trainee to leave the Scheme of their own accord without penalty or for the Scheme to terminate a Trainee’s contract early if there are severe issues with suitability or capability despite reasonable intervention and support.</p> <p>We refer to the Probation Policy in the offer letter that we send to Trainees prior to commencing on the Scheme.</p> <p>As Placement Manager, you are in the role of the line manager, therefore, you are responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising an introductory probationary review meeting within 4 weeks of the first placement (as sometimes orientation makes it difficult for Placement Managers to spend time with Trainees);</li> <li>• Schedule and conduct follow-up probation review meetings <u>every 2 months</u> with your Trainee in line with the <b>Probation and Performance Review Timeline</b> (see Appendix 1 of this document);</li> <li>• Ensuring all probation review meetings follow a formal, structured procedure and are recorded as such (as set out in the <b>Probation Review Form</b>) when reviewing and assessing the performance of your Trainee;</li> <li>• All parts of the form should be utilised and completed for each probation review meeting you have with your Trainee.</li> </ul>
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	<p><b>The Probation Review Form</b> is located in the <b>Reviews</b> section of <b>GENI</b>. A separate review form is also available for the Final Probation Review and for the Final Probation Review Following Extension (if applicable).</p> <p>The areas for each probation review that need to be reviewed with your Trainee are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance objectives</li> <li>• Competencies (per specialism)</li> <li>• Conduct</li> <li>• Attendance Expectations</li> <li>• Academic Attainment</li> <li>• Personal and Continuing Professional Development</li> </ul> <p>It is your responsibility to ensure the <b>Probation Review Forms</b> are followed and completed at all stages of the probationary period. Forms need to be completed on <b>GENI</b> and saved as a record for every probation review meeting.</p> <p><b>Competency achievement</b> must also be documented on GENI in the <b>Competencies</b>. Additional meetings to the probation reviews may be scheduled to sign off competency achievement. These meetings should be locally led by the Trainee.</p>
<p><b>Introductory Probation Review Meeting</b></p>	<p>Within 4 weeks into the Trainee’s first placement, you will need to meet with your Trainee for their introductory probation review meeting. This meeting will establish performance parameters and expectations for the Trainee during their first year and onwards.</p> <p>A robust performance monitoring process is crucial in the fast-track development of NHS Graduate Management Trainees as future leaders.</p> <p>This introductory probation review meeting should do the following for your Trainee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivate;</li> <li>• Give clear objectives and measurements;</li> <li>• Encourage;</li> <li>• Provide room for coaching and reflection.</li> </ul>

<p><b>What is GENI?</b></p>	<p><b>GENI</b> is an online management information system that has been tailored to help facilitate ongoing probation reviews and subsequent performance monitoring processes. It will be accessible by the Trainee, Placement, Programme Managers and the Trainee Support Manager.</p> <p>GENI can be used for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and storage of live, relevant performance related documentation and development records;</li> <li>• As an accessible information source for all parties to monitor ongoing performance and success of placements;</li> <li>• Recording education results.</li> </ul> <p>During the probation period, Placement Managers are responsible for updating and maintaining Probation Review Forms for the length of the Trainee’s probation period. Once the Trainee has progressed onto Year 2 this will transition to Performance Review Meetings.</p> <p>The <b>Probation Review Forms</b> are located on <b>GENI</b> in the <b>Reviews</b> section.</p> <p>There are 3 different types of Probation Review Forms that will be in the <b>Reviews section</b> of a <b>Trainee’s GENI profile</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Probationary Review Form-</b> This is to be used for the introductory Probationary Review up to the Final Probationary Review. The title of these are numbered in order of occurrence (i.e. Probationary Review 1, Probationary Review 2).</li> <li>• <b>Probationary Review Final Form-</b> This is to be used for the Final Probationary Review whether it occurs in Month 11 (per the <b>Timeline in Appendix 1</b>) or earlier if needed.</li> <li>• <b>Probationary Review Final Following Extension-</b> This is to be used if during a Final Probationary Review if it is determined that the probationary period needs to be extended.</li> </ul> <p>Some sections of the above forms will have an <b>“Achieved”</b> section with 3 buttons:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>None or N/A</b>-Please do not select this button.</li> <li>• <b>No</b>- Not achieved.</li> <li>• <b>Yes</b>- Achieved satisfactorily.</li> </ul> <p>Please note that you need to click on <b>Save</b> every time that you leave any of the Probation Review forms otherwise any changes or work that you have done on these will not be saved.</p>
<p><b>Conducting Formal Probation Review Meetings</b></p>	<p>Probation review meetings are a two-way process to provide both you and the Trainee the opportunity to regularly discuss progress on a one-to-one and confidential basis.</p> <p>If concerns are raised at the review meeting you should discuss these fully, openly and supportively with the Trainee and agree an action plan (the <b>Probation Review Forms</b> have a section in which to include this). You should also get in touch with the Trainee Support Manager to discuss the situation and how best the Trainee can be supported.</p> <p>You should clearly explain to the Trainee what will happen if they continue to underperform or if their behaviour or attendance are unacceptable.</p> <p>The Trainee should fully understand that continuing to underperform in any or all of these areas could lead to their contract of employment ending.</p> <p>At each meeting the manager should thoroughly discuss all <b>Sections</b> in the <b>Probation Review Forms</b> and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight what has gone well;</li> <li>• Explain clearly what has not gone well;</li> <li>• Explore any reasons or mitigating circumstances that may explain what has not gone well;</li> <li>• Agree whether any additional training or coaching is needed;</li> <li>• If the Trainee has an underlying health problem - consider whether any further support or reasonable adjustments need to be considered. This may include signposting to Employee Assistance Programme (<b>EAP – information available on GENI</b>) or advice from Occupational Health (referral through Trainee Support Manager);</li> <li>• Encourage the Trainee to complete the <b>Trainee comments section</b> on the form;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important that you give the Trainee every opportunity to succeed in the role; review meetings should therefore be two-way, open, honest and encouraging;</li> <li>• Review attendance levels during the period.</li> </ul> <p>At the end of each review meeting, you should agree what further action is required, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any changes to the Trainee's objectives;</li> <li>• Any additional training or coaching needed;</li> <li>• When the next review meeting will be;</li> <li>• A referral to Occupational Health (OH) if necessary.</li> </ul> <p>The Trainee will be given the opportunity to discuss openly any difficulties they are experiencing, either on a work or personal level. Managers will offer advice, support and can signpost to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) where appropriate. The EAP operates a 24-hour confidential counselling service available to all employees, details of which can be found on GENI.</p> <p>You can also refer your Trainee to meet with their Trainee Support Manager if needed, their role includes providing guidance and support to the Trainee.</p> <p>Referrals to Occupational Health should be made through the Trainee Support Manager who will arrange an assessment appointment through the GMTS National Office. The Trainee Support Manager will contact the Trainee directly regarding these arrangements.</p> <p><u>If the Trainee has performed well - celebrate that success!</u> It is important that positive Trainee performance and accomplishments are acknowledged and celebrated at every opportunity. The probationary period is also a time to encourage and support the Trainee if they are continuing to perform well during the Scheme.</p>
<p><b>Final Probation Review Meeting</b></p>	<p>At the end of the probationary period you should conduct a final probation review of the Trainee's performance.</p> <p>If, at <u>any time in the probationary period</u>, there are serious concerns about a Trainee's performance that have been previously discussed but not improved upon, you should bring forward and conduct the final probation review.</p>

Please refer to the “**Steps for Preparing for Final Probation Review**” for more detailed instructions.

\* You should ensure the final review meeting is held at or before the end of the agreed probationary period. If the meeting does not take place by this date, technically the Trainee may be confirmed as progressing to Year 2 on the Scheme by default.

If for whatever reason you cannot hold the final meeting on or before the end of the probation, you must agree with the Trainee to reschedule the meeting and confirm the date prior to the end of the probationary period.

This meeting will again discuss job performance, attendance and behaviours. If the Trainee’s performance is satisfactory in all respects, the manager should communicate this fact. Any shortfalls in performance will have been highlighted before now. There should be no surprises at this final probation review meeting.

The final probation review meeting is attended by the following:

- The Trainee
- The Placement Manager
- Trade union representative or work colleague not acting in a legal capacity (if the Trainee wishes)
- Another Manager or the Trainee Support Manager (if the Trainee or Placement Manager wishes)
- A notetaker -the Trainee Support Manager (if there is a chance that the Trainee’s contract could be terminated, or the probationary period extended).

This meeting will have one of **three outcomes**:

- The Trainee will be confirmed as having successfully passed probation and therefore confirmed on Scheme and for pay uplift to be applied in month 13;
- The probationary period is extended considering exceptional mitigating circumstances (this can be extended for a maximum of three months);
- Termination of the contract; (this must be authorised and discussed with the GMTS National Office prior to any action being taken)

<p><b>Education Results and Probation</b></p>	<p>Education results are used for measuring the academic performance which forms a part of the picture of a Trainees' overall Scheme performance.</p> <p>All Trainees must show evidence of their latest education results to you (the Placement Manager) in each probation review meeting. Trainees are responsible for ensuring that the <b>Academic Results section</b> on their <b>GENI profile</b> is updated with their latest education results in preparation for each probation review meeting. If you (Placement Manager) have any questions about the evidence shared, support can be sought from the Trainee Support Manager or GMTS national office.</p> <p>If a Trainee's education result is not available at the time of the probation review meeting it should be discussed and documented within the review form, including the reasons for this and when the information will be available. The education result then needs to be reviewed at the next available probation review meeting. <u>By the end of the 12-month probationary period all Year 1 education results should be available for review.</u> If all of the Year 1 education results are not available, please contact GMTS National Office to discuss.</p> <p>If any education exam or assignment results in a failure during the probation period, managers must make note of this in the relevant probation review meeting and follow up the progress in the next probation review meeting. Placement managers should contact the Trainee Support Manager in the first instance to discuss the situation and what support can put in place for the Trainee.</p> <p>The Trainee Support Manager will also advise you (the Placement Manager) if there have been issues with a Trainee's attendance or conduct in relation to the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Programme, Action Learning Sets/ Experiential Learning modules which also form part of the Trainee's education. These may need to be addressed in a probation review meeting. In these cases, the National Office will flag with the Trainee Support Manager, who will then contact you (the Placement Manager) to discuss. If these are not flagged to you assume progression is in line with Scheme requirements.</p>
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	<p>In exceptional cases deferrals of any education module or exam must be discussed with the Trainee Support Manager and approved by the GMTS National Office. In the event a deferral is supported the probation period may be extended. As the pay uplift is directly linked to successfully completing probation, the pay uplift will be applied from the month after the point at which probation is successfully passed.</p> <p>In the event of failures of education exams/assignments, advice should be sought from the GMTS National Office. The Trainee may be put on an improvement plan (aka a “PIP”) and re-sits/resubmissions may be supported. These instances will be considered on an individualised case-by-case basis with advice from the GMTS National Office.</p> <p>The expectation is that Trainees will be on track with education requirements at the end of the probation period (including extension as appropriate). If this is not the case and/or there is no improvement in academic results despite appropriate support being provided, then the Trainee’s contract may be terminated (in a final probation review meeting).</p>
<p><b>Steps for Preparing for Final Probation Review</b></p>	<p>To prepare for the final probation review meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A date for the final probation review meeting should be agreed by the Placement Manager and Trainee;</li> <li>2. The Trainee must be given 2 working days’ notice of the final probation review meeting in writing via an invite letter from you. <i>(5 working days’ notice should ideally be given for this meeting if possible)</i>;</li> <li>3. Please use the template provided in GENI for the invite letter;</li> <li>4. Trainees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague not acting in a legal capacity if they wish;</li> <li>5. The meeting should be held in a private and quiet room, it’s expected that you as the Placement Manager would arrange this;</li> <li>6. The Trainee Support Manager may be present at this meeting or after the meeting for support if the Trainee wishes;</li> <li>7. The Trainee Support Manager will communicate the outcome to the Trainee and the Trainee Support Manager (who will update the information for the GMTS National Office).</li> </ol>

	<p>The final probation review meeting is attended by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Trainee</li> <li>• The Placement Manager</li> <li>• Trade union representative or work colleague not acting in a legal capacity (if the Trainee wishes)</li> <li>• Another Manager or the Trainee Support Manager (if the Trainee or Placement Manager wishes)</li> </ul> <p><u>Final probation review meetings can be re-arranged once, if the Trainee or their representative is unable to attend.</u></p> <p>Any additional information or issues not raised in any previous probationary review meetings by the Trainee that they wish to present at the final probation review meeting, must be made available to management at least 2 working days prior to the final probation review meeting.</p> <p>***It is important for managers to avoid an instance whereby probation is passed by default it is essential that a final probation review meeting is scheduled well in advance of the date the probationary period ends.</p>
<p><b>Steps for Preparing for Final Probation Review (If extension of Probation or early termination)</b></p>	<p>If there have been areas of continual concern addressed within probation review meetings in regards to Trainee attendance, performance (work placement or academic) or conduct with no visible progress, despite repeated interventions and continual support, a final probation review meeting can be brought forward (rather than occurring at the 11<sup>th</sup> month of Year 1) .</p> <p>Prior to this being done, you (the Placement Manager) will need to consult with the Trainee Support Manager first to discuss this plan of action. The GMTS National Office must be informed (usually via the Trainee Support Manager) if there is a chance that the Trainee may be dismissed or that the probation period may be extended.</p> <p>To prepare for the final probation review meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A date for the final probation review meeting should be agreed by the Placement Manager and Trainee with the Trainee Support Manager. The Trainee must be given 2 working days' notice of the final probation</li> </ol>

review meeting in writing via a letter. (*5 working days' notice should ideally be given for this meeting if possible*);

2. This letter will be sent out by the GMTS National Office (informed by the Trainee Support Manager) on behalf of the Placement Manager. The Placement Manager will be copied into this letter;
3. If termination of employment is a possibility, then this will be clearly referenced in the letter;
4. Trainees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague not acting in a legal capacity;
5. The meeting should be held in a private and quiet room, it's expected the Placement Manager would arrange this and communicate to the Trainee Support Manager;
6. A notetaker – the Trainee Support Manager will need to be present to take the notes during the meeting in cases of potential dismissal or extension of probation;
7. Any notes taken at the meeting should be sent to the GMTS National Office prior to distribution
8. The Trainee Support Manager may be present at this meeting or after the meeting for support if the Trainee wishes.
9. Outcomes and any further actions are decided in the meeting. The Trainee Support Manager will then communicate the outcome to the GMTS National Office;
10. The GMTS National Office will note the outcome and advise the NHSBSA on this for their files;
11. The GMTS National Office will send an outcome letter to the Trainee.

The final probation review meeting is attended by the following:

- The Trainee
- The Placement Manager
- Trade union representative or work colleague not acting in a legal capacity (if the Trainee wishes)
- Another Manager or the Trainee Support Manager (if the Trainee or Placement Manager wishes)
- The Trainee Support Manager will take notes (in cases of potential dismissal or extension of probation)
- Notes of the meeting and the outcome letter (in cases of dismissal or extension of probation) will be issued by

the GMTS National Office

Final probation review meetings can be re-arranged once, if the Trainee or their representative is unable to attend.

At the **third attempt**, a decision will be made in their absence unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Any additional information or issues not raised in any previous probation review meetings by the Trainee that they wish to present at the final probation review meeting, must be made available to management at least 2 working days prior to the final probation review meeting.

\*\*\*It is important for managers to avoid an instance whereby probation is passed by default it is essential that a final probation review meeting is scheduled well in advance of the date the probationary period ends.

### **Extension of probation**

If there are exceptional mitigating circumstances, in some cases the probationary period may be extended from one month to up to three months at maximum.

Examples of such circumstances would be if it had not been possible to make a fair assessment of a Trainee's performance due to an extended period of absence or to allow sufficient time to assess any reasonable adjustments to be implemented for a condition.

We would expect Placement Managers to have frequent check ins and meetings with the Trainee in order to assess performance and/or improvement within the extension period.

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) may be appropriate or useful to use during the probation extension.

A final probation review meeting must be scheduled for the end of the extension period. A separate form is available on Geni for recording this meeting. Please see the section "**Final Probation Review Meeting**" in this document for how to do this.

	<p><b>Termination or Early Termination of Contract</b></p> <p>If the Trainee has not met the requirements of the Scheme outlined within the Probation Policy and all reasonable and practical remedial action including consideration of any protected characteristics or disability related conditions have been exhausted (including but not limited to the extension of the probation period) the Trainee may be dismissed from the Scheme with 1 months' notice.</p> <p>If the reason for termination is gross misconduct, the Trainee will be summarily dismissed and will not be entitled to notice or pay in lieu of notice.</p> <p>The Trainee Support Manager and the GMTS National Office must be consulted in these instances. Only the GMTS National Office can give authority for dismissal.</p>
<p><b>Hints and Tips</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on successes. Where a Trainee has performed well, credit this within the Probation Review Forms.</li> <li>• Be clear and precise when discussing areas in which the Trainee is failing to meet the required standard, providing specific examples and situations (is this in the placement, education, general conduct etc.) where possible.</li> <li>• Keep accurate, factual records of conversations held on the Probation Review forms.</li> <li>• Give the Trainee prompt feedback if problems arise. Feedback relayed from you can originate from Trainee Support Managers, placement co-workers or other Scheme stakeholders as well as from yourself. Please note that you must obtain permission from the person giving feedback first. Feedback should be factual and relevant.</li> <li>• Try to establish any underlying reason for performance problems and anything relevant which needs to be addressed.</li> <li>• Be tolerant and realistic, don't expect perfection as the Trainee will be new to their placement role (as opposed to a regular member of your staff where you would expect a certain level of experience).</li> <li>• Criticism is encouraged to be delivered in a constructive way with positive language used and action-oriented changes encouraged.</li> <li>• Promote two-way dialogue and ask open questions.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw upon your management experience to guide your review conversations with your Trainee.</li> <li>• Listen to and consider the Trainee's point of view and how you can provide support.</li> <li>• Check Trainees' understanding so that they are clear on the expectations of them whilst they are on the Scheme as future NHS leaders.</li> <li>• It will be important for the Trainee that review dates are set in advance and that these are kept so that you and your Trainee can plan your conversation accordingly.</li> <li>• Remain professional at all times, keeping emotions out of the meetings.</li> <li>• Your local probation policy may also be a useful reference for additional guidance and to suggest ways to approach the probation review meetings with your Trainee.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keeping Records</b></p>	<p>It is important that <b>Probation Review Forms on GENI</b> are fully completed at each meeting by the Placement Manager. The forms are a record of the evidence as to whether the probationary period has been successful. The form should highlight the expected performance, the actual performance and what support has been offered throughout the period.</p> <p>Forms can be completed on GENI and are available for Placement Managers and Trainees as a record on GENI.</p>
<p><b>Pay Uplift</b></p>	<p>At the successful passing of probation at the end of Year 1 (or at the end of the probation extension where the Trainee has successfully passed probation) the Trainee will be eligible for a Pay Uplift which will be applied in month 13.</p> <p>In the event of probation extension for performance or exam failure, once successful achievement of probation has been reached, the pay uplift will be applied from the following month.</p>
<p><b>Grievance &amp; Appeal Procedures for Trainees</b></p>	<p>If a Trainee raises a grievance in relation to the probationary process, it will generally be appropriate to deal with the grievance concurrently with the probationary process i.e. you (the Placement Manager) can deal with the Trainee's concerns in the course of the probationary process.</p> <p>Where a grievance relates to the Placement Manager conducting the probationary process, any feedback or review meetings should be attended by a neutral manager to ensure they are carried out appropriately. In extreme cases where the Trainee has made a particularly serious allegation, it may</p>

	<p>be necessary to extend the probationary period to allow a full investigation.</p> <p>The appeal process is in <b>Section 7</b> of the <b>Disciplinary Policy</b> which can be viewed on <b>GENI</b>.</p>
<p><b>Voluntary Resignation During the Probation Period</b></p>	<p>The probationary period is two way as it is a time for the Trainee to assess whether the Scheme is right for them.</p> <p>If at any time during the Scheme, a Trainee feels that the Scheme is not right for them, encourage an open dialogue with the Trainee to discuss why this may be and what may help improve their experience.</p> <p>The Trainee Support Manager is a good resource for the Trainee to draw on if they need help, support or coaching and you (the Placement Manager) should encourage Trainees to reach out for support and advice.</p> <p>Trainees have the right to leave the Scheme at any time including during the probation period if they feel that they do not want to continue the Scheme for any reason. We request in these cases, that Trainees give one month's notice of resignation, however pay in lieu of notice can be considered depending on the individual situation.</p>
<p><b>Performance Reviews Post-Probation</b></p>	<p>Following successfully passing probation and progress to Year 2 of the Scheme attention turns to Performance Review rather than Probation Review this is reflected as such in <b>Performance Review forms on GENI</b>.</p> <p>These milestones are recorded as formal <b>Performance Reviews</b> by the Placement Managers on GENI. Separate guidance is available for this.</p> <p><b>Competency achievement</b> is to be documented in the <b>Competencies section of GENI and this continues throughout probation and for the remainder of the Scheme</b>. Additional meetings to the regular probation reviews may be scheduled to sign off competency achievement. These meeting should be locally led by the Trainee.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the Trainee to arrange these reviews and ensure that they take place within the required timeframe.</p>

The required timeframe for Performance Reviews is set out in the **Probation and Performance Review Timeline** in the **Appendix** of this document.

The maintenance of the **Performance Review Form** should be trainee-led and approved by a manager. This differs from the process during the probationary period where the manager leads the maintenance of the Probation Review Forms as during the remainder of the Scheme the Trainee is expected to manage their own records and reviews.

Trainees can also use the support, guidance and input from Placement and Programme Managers as necessary and appropriate.



**List of Appendices:**

**Appendix 1 – Probation and Performance Review Timeline**

**Appendix 2 – Probation Administration Workflow (Page 1 and 2)**

### GMTS Probation & Performance Review Timeline





