

The aim of monthly reviews is to ensure new employees are meeting expectations during the six-month probationary period. This ensures that teething problems, training requirements and any other concerns are addressed early.

How to use this document

This document is intended to provide guidance to news publishers on the key principles and concepts of a one month probationary period for new employees. This document can be used as a template for adaptation and then adoption.

You will need to consider your publication’s particular employee needs. The requirements and expectations of a new employee may vary between publishers, depending on these factors. For example, a cadet journalist may not initially be able to perform all of their duties, without guidance in the beginning stages of employment.

Acknowledgements

This template has been adapted from a document published by Business Victoria.

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**Before going into the meeting:**

Have a clear idea of the feedback you want to give the person. Think about this in terms of where improvements need to be made, as well as praise that can be given. Consider the stage of development within the workplace and the realistic expectations for their performance.

(Your expectations of a worker in their first month, should be different than they will be in their third month)

**Here are some questions to ask yourself to identify those areas for improvement and praise:**

* Does their work need extensive editing/fact checking before being published?
* Are they meeting deadlines?
* Are they struggling to find content and interview subjects relevant to your area?
* Do they have the necessary attention to detail in regards to style guides and reporting of issues?
* Are they using the existing systems for team collaboration and tracking of duties?
* Where are their knowledge gaps/strengths? (This could be in terms of securing interviews, understanding writing styles, or issues around certain software/CMS functions)

## Setting up the meeting:

Schedule a time, letting your team member know about the purpose of the meeting in advance. Allow for at least 30-45 minutes for the meeting to take place.

The meeting details don’t need to be extensive.

**Employee Name:**

**Meeting:** [Insert meeting date & time here]

**Objective:** A general statement as to the reason for the meeting.

Example: *The purpose of this meeting is to discuss current challenges and expected milestones at this stage of employment. It is an opportunity to talk through what’s going well, what might need attention and any professional development opportunities that could be explored together.*

## Order of the meeting:

**1. Invite the team members to talk about their role and any issues they may be having.**

What you can ask to get the ball rolling:

*“How do you think you’re going in this role? Is it what you thought it would be?”*

*“How are you finding the current workload and deadline requirements?”*

*“Is there anything that’s getting in the way of your work?*

*“What do you think you’re doing well?”*

*“Where do you see areas for improvement?”*

Document issues or concerns raised and come back to them at the close.

**2. Give feedback on their performance.**

Highlight any relevant issues or areas of their work you want to draw attention to. This feedback should be constructive and should include what they’re doing well and what needs to be improved upon.

Use specific examples as much as possible.

**For example:**

* You seem to be struggling with the current amount of work being given to you.
* I loved the piece you did about the council meeting, however you didn’t follow our style guide when you posted on the website.
* When conducting that interview, your tone was too casual/you didn’t press for an answer from them.
* Getting the scoop on that local issue was great! Keep it up.

**3. Discuss issues raised**

Look for solutions to the issues raised. This is a good opportunity to share your experiences and processes with them.

Example:

**Workload/Time Management issues:** You might need to put aside some time to look over their current time management process.

**Style Guide/Story presentation issues:** Ask them to re-acquaint themselves with the style guide (which you should have documentation for)

**Knowledge gaps:** Look at training and guidance that can be done within the workplace, or whether there are opportunities (webinars/courses) they can participate in outside the workplace.

**4. Timelines**

Set realistic timelines for improvement in these areas. Not every issue can be fixed directly after the meeting. This is an opportunity to reiterate your expectations of the individuals outputs.

Example:

**Workload/Time Management issues:** Over the next month.

**Style Guide/Story presentation issues:** Within the next week.

**Knowledge gaps:** Over the next 3 months (depending on the knowledge gap).

**5. Set your next meeting for your second month.**

Let them know when their next probation meeting will be. Try to end on a positive, future-focused note!

**6. Send the Action Plan**

The action plan outlines areas that need improvement, along with the expected milestones appropriate to their time working for you.

**Ensure your employee receives a copy of the action plan within two working days of the meeting**

**LINA SERVICE REMINDER:** As a LINA member, you have access to [on-demand HR Support](https://lina.org.au/members-area/members-area-operations/). You can use this service to help you formulate a plan for any personnel issues you may be facing.  
  
For knowledge/skill gaps that arise, there are a number of training resources for various aspects of the newsroom, such as [The Introduction to Media Law course,](https://lina.org.au/news/introduction-to-media-law-for-publishers/) and [Impact Tracking](https://lina.org.au/members-area/members-area-engagement/). There are also [How To guides for journalists using Canva](https://lina.org.au/member-resources/canva-videos/) and various [Shop-Talk topics](https://lina.org.au/members-area/recordings/) covering emergency reporting, mental health reporting and solutions journalism.