

New Employee Onboarding

UW-Madison Campus-wide Administrative Policy
Policy #
New Employee Onboarding

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Policy Summary

The University of Wisconsin–Madison is committed to supporting new employees in their successful transition to our workplace, as well as supporting the university’s need to quickly enable new employees to achieve high levels of proficiency. In part, successfully transitioning requires an onboarding program that engages each new employee beginning with the acceptance of the university job offer, and continuing through the entire first year of employment.

The Office of Human Resources (OHR) supports campus onboarding efforts through a variety of means, including through this policy and associated training and tools. This policy and associated training and tools are intended to provide new employees with a comprehensive onboarding experience that reinforces their choice to work at UW-Madison and supports them in performing the functions of their job at a high level.

This policy calls for divisions to develop an onboarding program that meets the needs of each type of employee. Required training will provide best practices and ensure division programs meet the required elements outlined in this policy. The collection and analysis of feedback from new employees about their onboarding experience will inform and encourage program enhancements and additional training and support resources.

Documented onboarding programs that reflect common definitions, timing, activities, and roles – along with consistent execution and evaluation – will enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction and shorten the time from hire to full productivity.

Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to full- or part-time Academic and University Staff employees with a defined or anticipated appointment greater than one year; and Limited Appointees

Rationale

Research has clearly shown that a well-designed and -executed onboarding program will reinforce a new employee’s job choice. Onboarding enhances job satisfaction/engagement and shortens the time from hire to full productivity by ensuring that new employees receive the support, tools and resources they need, including a welcoming environment and clear expectations from their supervisors. When a new employee experiences a positive onboarding experience, his or her commitment to both the new role and the university is strengthened.

Ultimately, the university, employees, and students benefit from an engaged and productive workforce. A strong onboarding program is an important element of achieving this goal.

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Policy Detail

I. Onboarding Program Development and Training Requirements

- a. Each college/school/division is required to develop, implement, monitor and maintain a documented onboarding program for all new employees in its division. Colleges/schools/divisions are allowed the flexibility to develop customized onboarding programs, as well as delegate program creation to departments/units, to best meet the needs of their particular environments within the parameters of this policy.
- b. Each college/school/division is required to have appropriate personnel complete the OHR onboarding program training.

II. Onboarding Program Requirements

- a. At a minimum, each program must:
 - i. Reflect a time period that begins with the accepted job offer and spans the first year of employment (any exceptions to this should be outlined in the program).
 - ii. List and describe each onboarding activity, which type(s) of employees it applies to, when the activity should occur and who the responsible party is for that activity.
 - iii. Designate an onboarding coordinator who has accountability for initiating activities for each new hire in the division. If the college/school/division has multiple programs that are delegated to departments/units, an onboarding coordinator must be designated for each program. The onboarding coordinator has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the new hire has what he/she needs to be productive.

III. Required Program Activities

- a. All of the activities listed below are onboarding best practices and are therefore encouraged for every new hire, regardless of employee category. However, activities i-iv listed below are **required** for full- or part-time Academic and University Staff employees with a defined or anticipated appointment greater than one year; and Limited Appointees.
- b. In addition, orientation (activity i below) is **required** for Faculty, student assistants, and Employees-in-Training. The other activities are not required for these employee categories.
- c. At a minimum, each program must include the following activities:
 - i. Each new hire shall receive an orientation to her/his work unit. An orientation is a short-term event or series of activities that serve to introduce and welcome a new hire to the work unit. Orientation is an activity within onboarding and, although highly important, represents only one piece of the onboarding experience.
 - ii. The onboarding coordinator should act as, or designate, an onboarding contact for each new hire. The coordinator is responsible for communicating the contact's information to the new hire after he/she accepts the job offer but before the start date. This single contact is a resource for the new hire to ask questions about any onboarding activity.
 - iii. The onboarding program must include a scheduled meeting (preferably face-to-face) between the new hire and her/his direct supervisor (or appropriate designee) on the new hire's first day of employment.
 - iv. Each new hire will be assigned a peer partner. The role of the peer partner includes welcoming the new hire, making introductions to colleagues, helping to understand and navigate the culture of the organization, serving as a resource to answer or refer specific questions, and checking in frequently with the new hire. (Any modifications to this requirement will be made in consultation with the OHR Talent Management and Learning unit.)

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IV. Program Evaluation Requirements

- a. To ensure programs remain up-to-date, active, and effective, divisions should collect onboarding feedback. All new employees should have the opportunity to provide feedback about their onboarding experience.
 - i. The college/school/division (or delegated unit) must collect feedback from new employees about their onboarding experience at least once in the first year of employment. Best practice is to seek feedback more frequently (recommended at 30 days, 90 days, six months, and one year after start date.)
- b. OHR will also collect feedback on a regular basis from new employees about their onboarding experiences.

V. Onboarding Document Control and Retention

- a. Each college/school/division has the authority to develop workflows for onboarding documents. At a minimum, divisions must follow these document control and retention procedures:
 - i. Each college/school/division human resources contact shall maintain a copy of the onboarding program and/or any onboarding program that has been delegated to departments/units in the college/school/division.
 - ii. Each college/school/division shall maintain a list of its designated onboarding coordinator(s).

Supporting Tools

OHR maintains online resources to support the campus community in developing, implementing and sustaining effective onboarding programs. The toolkit includes sample communication templates, onboarding checklists, conversation guides, and other information.

OHR will provide the onboarding program training required by this policy as well as training for specific onboarding topics.

Definitions

Onboarding: integrating and acculturating new employees into the university and providing them with the tools, resources, and knowledge to become successful and productive. Onboarding engages employees beginning with the acceptance of the job offer, and continues through the entire first year of employment.

Orientation: a component of onboarding that introduces a new hire to her/his new employment and environment. Orientation is a short-term activity or series of activities that typically takes place in the first week of employment.

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Responsibilities

Office of Human Resources (OHR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Serves as the campus expert on onboarding program design and consults with colleges/schools/divisions as needed▪ Provides training on program development▪ Provides support and education for best-practice onboarding activities and evaluation▪ Provides sample onboarding communication templates, checklists, conversation guides, and other pertinent information▪ Periodically surveys new employees to gather feedback regarding their onboarding experiences
College/School/Division HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develops, implements, monitors, and maintains an onboarding program that complies with this policy and supports employee and organizational needs▪ Designates an onboarding coordinator(s) for each program in the organization▪ Oversees onboarding document control and retention programs in the division▪ Consults with OHR as needed▪ Ensures that onboarding coordinators and others with onboarding responsibilities in their college/school/division are appropriately trained in their onboarding programs
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Understands the onboarding program▪ Fully participates in onboarding new hires as outlined in the division's program
New Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Participates in the onboarding process in a timely and constructive manner.

[Link to Policy](#)

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