

For discussion on
19 April 2010

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

The '3+3' Civil Service Entry System

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the proposed revision to the entry system for recruitment to the basic ranks in the Civil Service.

Background

2. Prior to June 2000, new recruits to the Civil Service, irrespective of rank, were normally employed on probationary terms for two years before they were considered for appointment on permanent terms upon satisfactory performance and conduct. For a small number of selected basic ranks (e.g. Administrative Officer), the probation period was longer having regard to special management or operational considerations.

3. In the context of the 2000 Civil Service Reform and after extensive consultation with the Staff Sides, departmental/grade management and advisory bodies, the Chief Executive-in-Council approved in March of the same year a new entry system and fringe benefits package for new recruits. The objective of the then new entry system was to provide greater flexibility in the civil service appointment system and better quality control of manpower. The new system, implemented from 1 June 2000, has the following core components –

- (a) Basic ranks: new recruits to basic ranks are normally appointed on three-year probation and three-year agreement terms before they are considered for appointment on permanent terms (i.e. the '3+3' system);
- (b) Supervisory ranks: direct entrants to supervisory ranks are normally appointed on agreement terms for three years before

they are considered for appointment on permanent terms; and

- (c) Variations to the entry system: individual grades or individual cases may, with the approval of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), and on the advice of the Public Service Commission (PSC)¹ where applicable, be subject to modified entry system justified on management or operational needs.

Review

4. The Administration has been keeping the '3+3' system under regular review. From June 2000 to March 2009, a total of 20 612 civil servants have been appointed under the '3+3' entry system. Only five (or 0.02%) left the Service during or upon completion of the three-year agreement period (i.e. the second limb of the '3+3' system) due to unsatisfactory performance or conduct; and another 35 left during the initial three-year probation period. This shows that there is little practical need, from the perspective of weeding out poor performers, for a three-year agreement period on top of a three-year probation period. Where flexibility is warranted for appointments to a particular grade, the variation component provided for in the existing entry system (see paragraph 3(c) above) adequately meets the demand already.

Proposed changes

5. Subject to consultation with concerned parties on implementation details, the Administration proposes to remove the three-year agreement period normally required of a new recruit to a basic rank (i.e. the second limb of the '3+3' system) before he can be considered for appointment to the Civil Service on permanent terms. From a specified date² (hereafter referred to as 'the specified date'), a new recruit would normally be considered for appointment on permanent terms upon satisfactory completion of the three-year probation period. To ensure that only

¹ The Public Service Commission is a statutory body. In accordance with the Public Service Commission Ordinance (Cap. 93), the advice of the Commission has to be sought for appointment of officers to senior ranking civil service posts attracting maximum monthly pay at Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 26 and above or equivalent, excluding the basic ranks of non-degree entry and non-professional grades with a maximum monthly salary at MPS Point 26 or above, the judicial service, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the disciplined ranks of the Hong Kong Police Force.

² The actual date of implementation will be decided by the Secretary for the Civil Service after completion of the necessary consultation with concerned parties.

candidates with qualities suited for civil service jobs are retained, Heads of Department and Heads of Grade would be reminded to be vigilant in monitoring the performance of new recruits and assessing their abilities and potential during the probation period.

6. Variations from the proposed entry system, with prior approval from CSB and advice from PSC where applicable, would continue to be allowed for individual grades where justified under the proposed entry system. For example, we envisage the duration of the probation period of the Air Traffic Control Officer grade of the Civil Aviation Department would continue to be tied to the attainment of professional qualifications.

7. As and when the proposed change to the entry system is implemented, a transitional arrangement would be instituted for civil servants who have successfully completed the three-year probation and are serving the three-year agreement period on the specified date. Unless otherwise specified, these officers would, subject to satisfactory performance and conduct, be allowed to opt for transfer to permanent terms either from the specified date or upon completion of their current agreements.

Financial implications

8. Under existing arrangements, the Government will not need to make monthly Civil Service Provident Fund (CSPF) contributions for civil servants until they have been appointed on permanent terms, normally at commencement of their 7th year of service. With the introduction of the proposed change to the entry system, such contributions would need to be made from the 4th year of service for future recruits and for probationary officers in the Civil Service upon their satisfactory completion of the three-year probationary period. Under the transitional arrangement referred to in paragraph 7 above, the Government would also need to make monthly CSPF contributions from the specified date onwards for those civil servants serving their three-year agreement period and have chosen to transfer to permanent terms.

9. Under existing arrangements, gratuity will only be paid at the end of the three-year agreement period. With the proposed change in the entry system, pro-rata contract gratuity payments would have to be

made to civil servants who are serving their three-year agreement period and have opted to be transferred to permanent terms on the specified date.

10. The proposed entry system would entail additional cash flow implications, in the form of advanced payment for contract gratuity and CSPF contributions. The actual amounts will depend on the response rate of eligible civil servants who opt to be transferred to permanent terms on the specified date. The Administration will assess the financial implications and seek the approval of the Legislative Council Finance Committee for supplementary provisions if required for 2010-11.

Next step

11. The Administration is consulting the Staff Sides, departmental/grade management and advisory bodies on the proposed entry system and implementation arrangements. The specified date will be decided after completion of the necessary consultation.

Advice sought

12. Members are invited to offer views on the proposed change to the entry system for recruitment to the basic ranks in the Civil Service.

Civil Service Bureau
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