

## **ITEM FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **HEAD 48 – GOVERNMENT LABORATORY Subhead 000 Operational expenses**

Members are invited to recommend to Finance Committee the creation of the following permanent post in the Government Laboratory with immediate effect –

1 Chief Chemist  
(D1) (\$106,600 - \$116,500)

### **PROBLEM**

The Government Laboratory (GL) needs to strengthen staffing support at the directorate level to cope with the increasing complexity of and workload arising from work relating to food safety.

### **PROPOSAL**

2. We propose to create a permanent directorate post of Chief Chemist (CC) (D1) in the Food Safety and Quality (FSQ) Group of GL upon the approval of the Finance Committee.

### **JUSTIFICATION**

3. GL provides a full range of analytical, investigatory and advisory services and support to enable government bureaux and departments to discharge their responsibilities in respect of law and order, public health and safety, environmental protection, government revenue, consumer protection and

/implementation .....

implementation of government policies. The emergence of a number of food incidents over the past few years has increased the quantity and complexity of the work of GL. The demand for support at the directorate level in GL has been particularly acute. With the proposed creation of the CC post, GL will be better able to respond promptly to urgent service needs (such as those arising from the Fukushima Nuclear Plant Incident in Japan in March 2011 and plasticiser contamination in Taiwan in May 2011), to render high level advisory services in addressing public concerns on food safety testing work and to further develop the testing capabilities of GL.

### **Restructuring of the Analytical and Advisory Services Division**

4. GL comprises two Divisions, the Analytical and Advisory Services (A&AS) Division and the Forensic Science Division, each headed by an Assistant Government Chemist (AGC) at D2 level. Both AGCs report directly to the Government Chemist (D3) who heads the Department. Before the restructuring in 2006, there were two CC (D1) posts in the A&AS Division of GL, namely, CC (Environmental Chemistry and Other Scientific Services Group) (CC/ECOSS) and CC (Health Science Services Group). In 2006, the CC/ECOSS post was deleted to enhance efficiency and economy, thus reducing the total number of directorate posts to six (one D3, two D2 and three D1 posts). The existing organisation chart of GL is at Enclosure 1.

Encl. 1

5. Upon redistribution of duties, the A&AS Division comprises two groups, namely the FSQ Group and the Other Scientific Services (OSS) Group. While the OSS Group is headed by a CC post, the FSQ Group is currently headed directly by the AGC of the A&AS Division and assisted by a Senior Chemist-in-charge (SC i/c), who is also one of the seven Senior Chemists (SCs) in the Group. Each of the seven SCs takes turn to take up the post of SC i/c. The existing organisation chart of the A&AS Division and the job description of the SC i/c are at Enclosures 2 and 3 respectively.

Encls.  
2 & 3

### **Increased workload arising from a spate of food incidents**

6. In recent years, the emergence of a number of food incidents like malachite green in fish in August 2005, Sudan dyes in eggs and egg products in November 2006, melamine in milk products in September 2008, dioxins in German eggs in January 2011, radiation leakage in Japan in March 2011 and plasticiser contamination in Taiwanese food and drinks in summer of 2011 had attracted wide public concerns. They also stretched the testing capacity of GL. In all cases, GL was required to provide urgent laboratory services for early release of testing results

/and .....

and prompt support to the local testing industry to meet increased testing demand arising from both the Government and the food industry. High level supervisory support is essential in setting priorities in order to manage the sudden upsurge in workload and immense time pressure arising from such food incidents. The variety of food incidents also highlights the increasing need for GL to enhance its testing capacity and capability to support the food safety regime and provide high level professional advice to the local testing industry. In addition, GL needs to maintain an effective dialogue with the international testing community on matters such as testing standards and proficiency testing programmes.

### **Dedicated leadership for the FSQ Group**

7. Dedicated leadership for the FSQ Group at CC level is required to ensure GL's efficient and effective provision of food safety testing services. It will improve staff management by replacing the current rotating arrangement for the post of SC i/c. It will also enable the FSQ Group to develop long term manpower plans, embrace technological developments and devise its work strategy to meet changing needs of the community.

8. Currently, the SC i/c has to assist the AGC/A&AS in managing the FSQ Group. However, it is difficult for the SC to devote full attention to this duty since he is also responsible for the daily operations of his own section. A dedicated FSQ Group Head could provide adequate support to the AGC/A&AS in the management of all the sections in the FSQ group, perform in-depth and timely evaluation of work trends and develop effective responses to meet operational needs. With enhanced support at the directorate level, GL will also be better able to manage major food incidents which require liaison with client departments and internal resources coordination.

9. The urgency for strengthening directorate support has been heightened by a surge in the demand for the testing services of the OSS Group in relation to the analysis of pharmaceutical products and Chinese medicines, toys and children's products as well as miscellaneous commodities. As a reference laboratory providing referee and impartial scientific services, GL has to provide more professional support in terms of proficiency testing programmes, technical seminars and reference materials to the local testing industry in relation to these areas. In turn, this has made it more difficult for the AGC/A&AS to continue managing both the OSS Group and the FSQ Group without the assistance of a dedicated FSQ Group Head.

**/Expansion .....**

### **Expansion of FSQ Group**

10. With the growing public expectation on protection of food safety, timely scientific support from GL is indispensable. The amount of food testing work has greatly increased by over 70% from 127 000 tests in 2006 to 226 000 tests in 2010. Apart from quantity, the complexity of the workload has also increased as more types of chemicals are being tested. Since 2005-06, there has been an increase of 83 non-directorate posts in the A&AS Division, 40 of which are working on food testing and analysis to cope with the increased workload. It is important to point out that all 83 non-directorate posts are under the charge of the AGC/A&AS. We therefore need to strengthen support at the directorate level in GL to enhance its leadership, staff supervision and professional input to cope with the increasing complexity and quantity of the work. The proposed CC will meet the need for enhanced directorate support in overseeing the increased staff management responsibilities with the expanded span of control.

### **The Proposed CC Post**

11. As the Head of the FSQ Group, the proposed CC post will take charge of the FSQ Group with a total number of 105 staff and seven SCs under his/her direct supervision. The post holder will be responsible for all matters pertaining to the provision of statutory testing services by GL in relation to food safety. In addition, he/she will be responsible for providing professional advice and assistance to its client departments on the development of new food regulations. In discharging these responsibilities, he/she has to closely monitor the latest international scientific development in testing methods by liaising with relevant international authorities and the national authorities of Hong Kong's major food importing countries. The CC would also represent GL in attending appropriate regional and international meetings and conferences. The proposed duty list of the new CC post is at Enclosure 4. Upon the creation of the CC post in the FSQ Group, the proposed organisation structure of the A&AS Division is at Enclosure 5.

Encl. 4  
Encl. 5

12. We propose to create one permanent post of CC, offset by the deletion of one permanent post of SC in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) Section of GL. The CWC Section currently consists of one SC and one Chemist and is responsible for providing technical support for the implementation of the CWC since the commencement of the Chemical Weapons (Convention) Ordinance (Cap. 578) in June 2004. Having considered the diminishing demand for GL's professional input, we see room in combining the CWC Section with the Radiochemistry Hazardous Substances and Emergency Response Section to form a new Chemical Safety Section under one SC. This would pool expertise together in providing more comprehensive analytical and advisory services relating to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, radiochemical measurements, hazardous substances identification and emergency responses.

**/ALTERNATIVES .....**

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

13. There are no better alternatives other than creating the proposed CC post. Currently, there are three CCs in GL heading the OSS Group in the A&AS Division, and the other two Groups in the Forensic Science Division respectively. The two CCs in the Forensic Science Division are fully occupied and could not be redeployed to work in the A&AS Division. The skills and expertise of the two Divisions are also different. The OSS Group of the A&AS Division is also experiencing an increase in workload in the testing of pharmaceutical products, Chinese medicine and commodities and hence the CC concerned has no capacity to absorb the extra duties related to food testing.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The proposed creation of the CC post, to be off-set by the deletion of an SC post in the CWC Section, will bring about a net additional notional annual salary cost at mid-point of \$288,300 as follows –

	Notional annual salary cost at mid-point \$	No. of post
Permanent post Chief Chemist	1,357,200	1
Less : Senior Chemist	(1,068,900)	(1)
Total:	<u>288,300</u>	<u>0</u>

The net additional full annual average staff cost, including salaries and staff on-cost, is \$272,000. GL will include the necessary provision in the Estimates of the subsequent years to meet the cost of this proposal.

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

15. We consulted the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of the Legislative Council at its meeting on 8 November 2011. The Panel supported the proposed creation of the CC post. Panel Members sought clarification in particular on the duties of the proposed CC post and whether the increase of 83 non-directorate posts in the A&AS Division was all related to food testing. We have addressed these issues in paragraphs 10 and 11 above.

/ESTABLISHMENT .....

**ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES**

16. The establishment changes in GL for the past two years are as follows –

Establishment (Note)	Number of posts			
	Existing (as at 1 December 2011)	As at 1 April 2011	As at 1 April 2010	As at 1 April 2009
A <sup>^</sup>	6 <sup>#</sup>	6	6	6
B	137	136	131	131
C	303	300	286	285
Total	446	442	423	422

Note:

- A – ranks in the directorate pay scale or equivalent
- B – non-directorate ranks the maximum pay point of which is above MPS Point 33 or equivalent
- C – non-directorate ranks the maximum pay point of which is at or below MPS Point 33 or equivalent
- <sup>^</sup> – excluding supernumerary post created under delegated authority
- <sup>#</sup> – As at 1 December 2011, there were no unfilled directorate posts in GL.

**CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU COMMENTS**

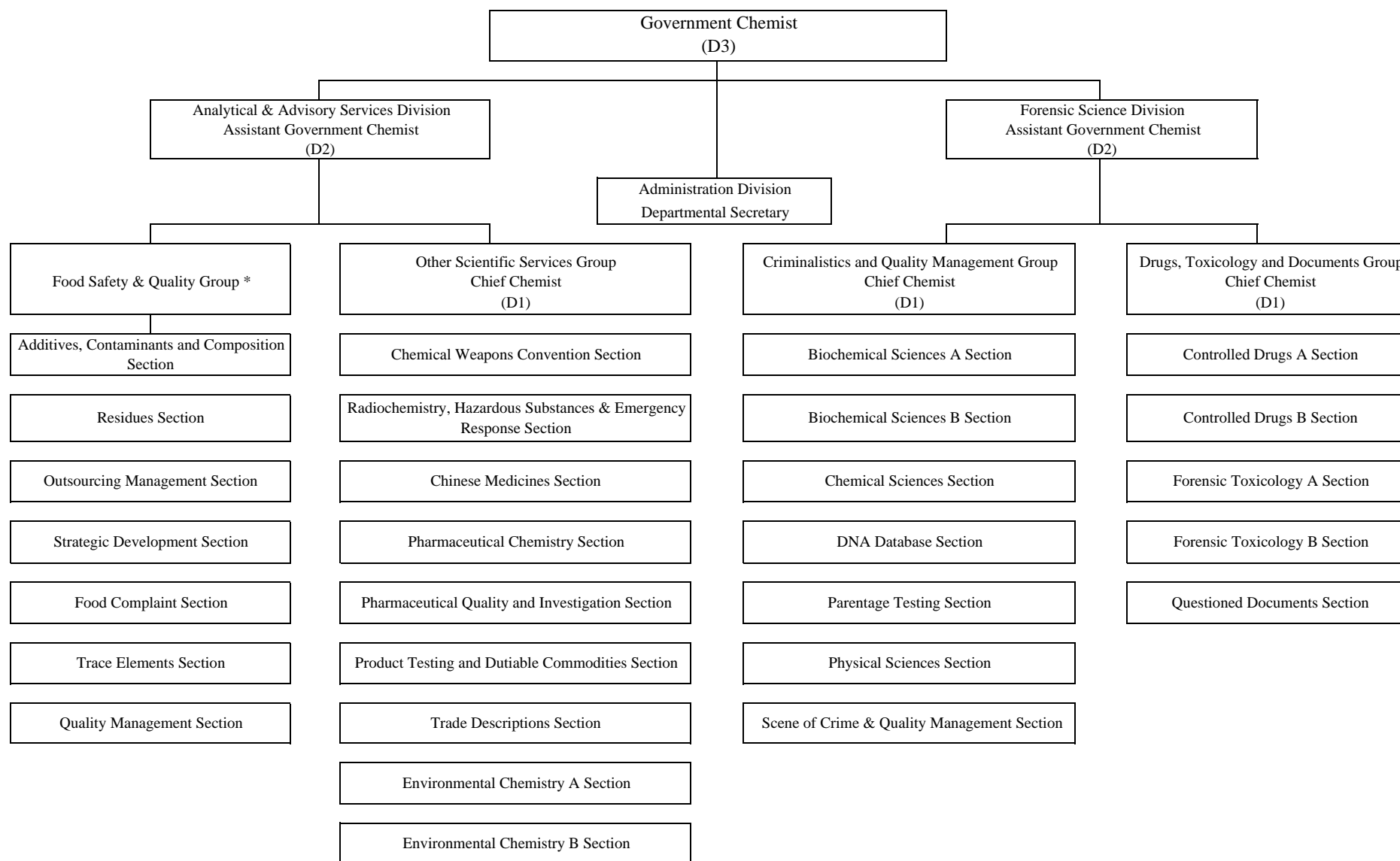
17. The Civil Service Bureau supports the proposed creation of the permanent CC post. The grading and ranking of the proposed post are considered appropriate having regard to the level and scope of the responsibilities and the professional input required.

**ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DIRECTORATE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

18. The Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service has advised that the grading proposed for the post would be appropriate if the proposal were to be implemented.

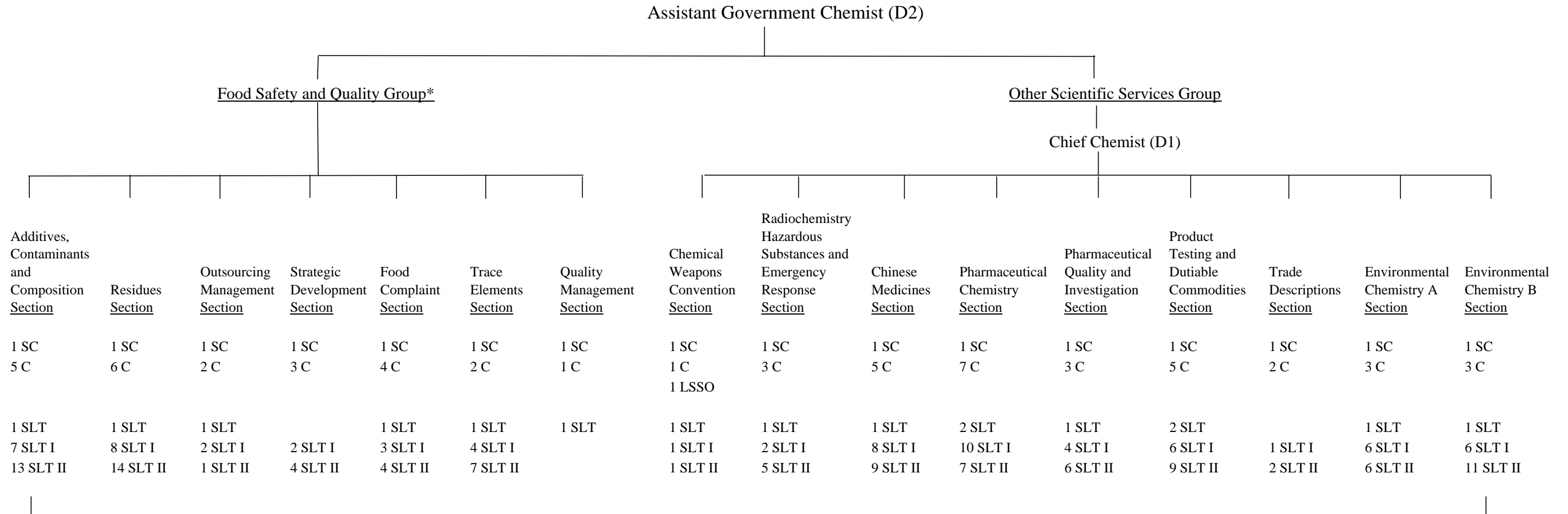
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**Existing Organisation Chart of Government Laboratory**



\* Headed by the Assistant Government Chemist/ Analytical & Advisory Services Division who is assisted by a Senior Chemist from one of the seven specialist sections

Existing Organisation Chart of the Analytical and Advisory Services Division of the Government Laboratory



Legend :

- C - Chemist
- LSSO - Laboratory Specialist Services Officer
- SC - Senior Chemist
- SLT - Science Laboratory Technologist
- SLT I - Science Laboratory Technician I
- SLT II - Science Laboratory Technician II

\* Headed by the Assistant Government Chemist/ Analytical & Advisory Services Division who is assisted by a Senior Chemist from one of the seven specialist sections



**Job Description for the post of  
Senior Chemist-in-charge  
(Food Safety and Quality Group)**

**Rank** : Senior Chemist (MPS 45 - 49)

**Responsible to** : Assistant Government Chemist  
(Analytical and Advisory Services) (AGC/A&AS)

**Main Duties and Responsibilities –**

In addition to his duties as Section Head of one of the seven specialist sections of the Food Safety and Quality Group of the Analytical and Advisory Services Division, the Senior Chemist-in-charge of the Group is responsible to AGC/A&AS for the following duties –

- (i) to assist AGC/A&AS in the formulation of work objectives and strategic development plan for the Group and assisting in the evaluation of progress towards approved objectives;
- (ii) to assist AGC/A&AS in the administration of the Group such as planning, training and development of staff, financial control and monitoring of supplies activities;
- (iii) to advise, in collaboration with the section head(s) involved, AGC/A&AS on complex questions and complaints arising in connection with their cases in the Group, and on the best tactics to employ;
- (iv) to assist AGC/A&AS in the liaison with the respective client departments on the efficient use of the laboratory services provided by the Group; and
- (v) to assist AGC/A&AS in overseeing the implementation of the Division's quality assurance and other related programmes.

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**Proposed Job Description for the post of  
Chief Chemist  
(Food Safety and Quality Group)**

**Rank** : Chief Chemist (D1)

**Responsible to** : Assistant Government Chemist  
(Analytical and Advisory Services) (AGC/A&AS)

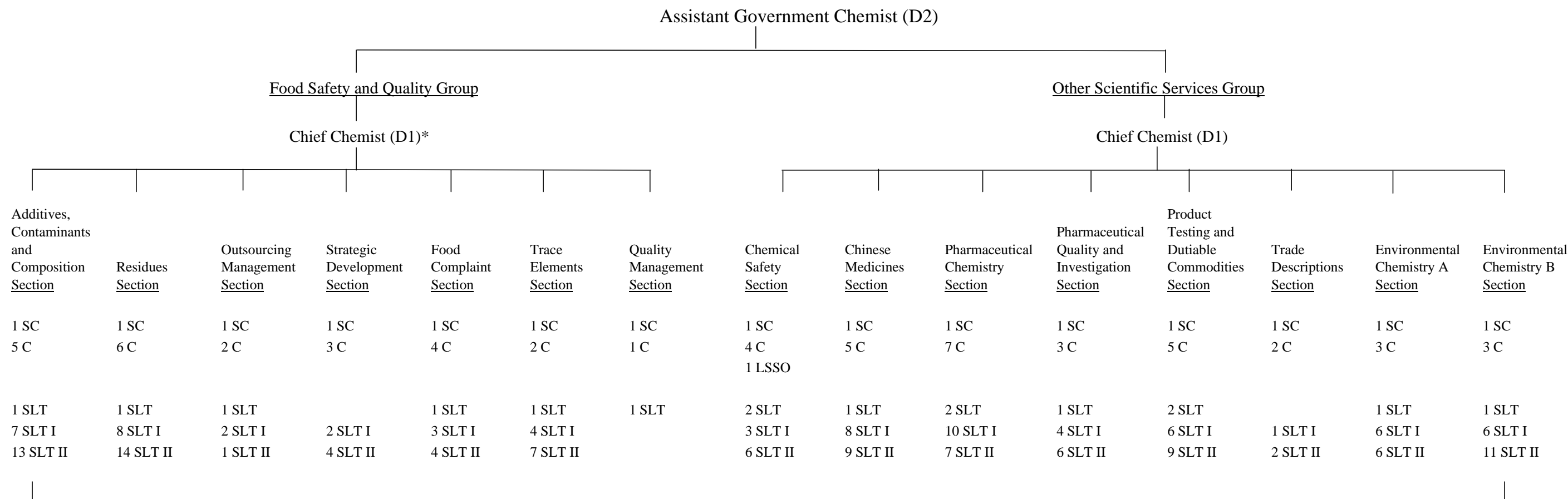
**Main Duties and Responsibilities –**

- (i) to be responsible for the direct supervision of the specialist work of seven Senior Chemists in the Food Safety and Quality Group and to ensure the provision and maintenance of efficient and effective laboratory services to the clients by training, periodic inspections, introduction of improvement measures where necessary and continuous review of performance and adequacy in all activities of the Group;
- (ii) to make recommendations to the Division Head on, and to advise and assist in, the development and formulation of objectives and policies in relation to those scientific disciplines that come within the ambit of the Group;
- (iii) to be responsible for administrative planning, financial control and monitoring and control of supplies activities within the Group;
- (iv) to advise professional staff of the Group on complex questions and complaints arising in connection with their cases, and on the best tactics to employ;
- (v) to organise and lead the scientific research and development work of the Group and to plan and develop projects to meet the clients' special needs;
- (vi) to carry out staffing audits, material control and evaluate progress towards approved objectives that come within the ambit of the Group;
- (vii) to approve the implementation of new test methods in Analytical Methods Manuals (AMMs), amendments of AMMs and Sectional Work Manuals as proposed by the Section Heads under his Group as he deems fit;
- (viii) to oversee the implementation of committed quality assurance programmes within the Group as required by the concerned accreditation bodies;

- (ix) to liaise with client departments on the efficient use of laboratory services;
- (x) to be responsible for the management of staff seconded to other government departments that come within the ambit of the Group, including posting and transfer, career development, and provision of technical guidance;
- (xi) to represent AGC/A&AS as spokesman for activities undertaken by the Group, and at meetings, etc.; and
- (xii) to assume the role of Technical Manager of the Analytical and Advisory Services Division.

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**Proposed Organisation Chart of the Analytical and Advisory Services Division of the Government Laboratory**



- Legend :
- \* - Post proposed to be created
  - C - Chemist
  - LSSO - Laboratory Specialist Services Officer
  - SC - Senior Chemist
  - SLT - Science Laboratory Technologist
  - SLT I - Science Laboratory Technician I
  - SLT II - Science Laboratory Technician II