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23 September 2020

Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP  
Chairman, Legislative Council Panel on Public Service  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

*Dear Hon Kwok,*

**Grade Structure Review for  
Veterinary Laboratory Technician and  
Medical Laboratory Technician Grades**

The Government briefed the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) Panel on Public Service (“PS Panel”) on the findings and recommendations of the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service (“Standing Commission”) in relation to the Grade Structure Review (“GSR”) for the Veterinary Laboratory Technician (“VLT”) and the Medical Laboratory Technician (“MLT”) grades (LC Paper No. CB(4)29/19-20(01)) at its meeting on 4 November 2019. Members in attendance supported in principle the recommendations of the Standing Commission. The Civil Service Bureau has since gauged the views of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Department of Health (“DH”) and the staff side of the relevant grades, and sought the decision of the Chief Executive-in-Council (“CE-in-Council”) on the recommendations to implement the review findings on 22 September 2020.

The CE-in-Council decided that –

- (a) the recommendations in Report No. 61 of the Standing Commission should be accepted in full;
- (b) an exceptional “grandfathering” arrangement should be offered to serving VLT IIs/VLT Is and MLT IIs/MLT Is, such that as and when they are promoted to the Veterinary Technologist (“VT”)/Medical Technologist (“MT”) ranks respectively, they will be remunerated at Master Pay Scale (“MPS”) Point 29 instead of Point 25; and
- (c) subject to the approval of the LegCo Finance Committee (“FC”) –
  - (i) the pay-related recommendations from the Report should be implemented with effect from the first day of the month immediately following the month of approval by FC or 1 June 2021 for both the VLT and MLT grades, whichever is the later;
  - (ii) the normal conversion arrangement should be adopted for affected serving staff in the VLT and MLT grades;
  - (iii) a special conversion arrangement should be provided for VLT Is and MLT Is who are on the old minimum (i.e. MPS Point 22), such that their pay point will be converted to MPS Point 23; and
  - (iv) the exceptional “grandfathering” arrangement referred to in (b) above should be offered to serving VLT IIs/VLT Is and MLT IIs/MLT Is as and when they are promoted to the VT and MT ranks respectively.

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A copy of the LegCo brief which sets out the details of the decision of the CE-in-Council is enclosed for your reference.

After the Panel meeting on 4 November last year, DH management recommended an exceptional "grandfathering" arrangement as set out in item (b) above to address MLT grade staff side's concern on the expected loss in their "lifetime earnings". We have sounded out the staff side on the "grandfathering" arrangement and they are agreeable. This recommendation has been agreed by the CE-in-Council. As the decision of the CE-in-Council does not entail any changes to the recommendations in principle as considered by the Panel, in accordance with your decision at the work plan meeting of the Panel on 11 November last year, we will not put the item up for discussion at the Panel again. The relevant bureaux and departments will seek the approval of the Establishment Subcommittee and FC, with a view to implementing the recommendations as soon as possible in order to tackle the persistent and serious recruitment and retention difficulties faced by the grades concerned.

Should Members have any views on the matter, they are welcome to raise them with us directly.

*Yours sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Patrick T K Nip', written in a cursive style.

(Patrick T K Nip)  
Secretary for the Civil Service

Encl.



c.c. Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP  
Chairman, Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP  
Chairman, Panel on Health Services

Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH  
Deputy Chairman, Panel on Public Service

Professor Sophia CHAN, JP  
Secretary for Food and Health (w/o encl.)

Dr LEUNG Siu-fai, JP  
Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (w/o encl.)

Dr Constance CHAN, JP  
Director of Health (w/o encl.)

Mr Colin CHUI  
Clerk to Panel on Public Service

Miss Josephine SO  
Clerk to Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Ms Maisie LAM  
Clerk to Panel on Health Services



## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRIEF

### Grade Structure Review for Veterinary Laboratory Technician and Medical Laboratory Technician Grades

#### INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Executive Council on 22 September 2020, the Council **ADVISED** and the Chief Executive (CE) **ORDERED** that –

- (a) the recommendations in Report No. 61 (the Report) of the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service (Standing Commission) should be accepted in full;
- (b) an exceptional “grandfathering” arrangement should be offered to serving Veterinary Laboratory Technician (VLT) IIs/VLT Is and Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) IIs/MLT Is, such that as and when they are promoted to the Veterinary Technologist (VT)/Medical Technologist (MT) ranks respectively, they will be remunerated at Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 29 instead of Point 25<sup>1</sup>; and
- (c) subject to the approval of the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) –
  - (i) the pay-related recommendations from the Report should be implemented with effect from the first day of the month immediately following the month of approval by FC or 1 June 2021 for both the VLT and MLT grades, whichever is the later;

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<sup>1</sup> MPS Point 29 is the existing minimum pay point of the VT and MT ranks, whereas Point 25 is the new minimum pay point of the two ranks as recommended by the Standing Commission. The grade structures of the VLT and MLT grades are explained in paragraphs 5 and 6.

- (ii) the normal conversion arrangement<sup>2</sup> should be adopted for affected serving staff in the VLT and MLT grades;
- (iii) a special conversion arrangement<sup>3</sup> should be provided for VLT Is and MLT Is who are on the old minimum (i.e. MPS Point 22), such that their pay point will be converted to MPS Point 23; and
- (iv) the exceptional “grandfathering” arrangement referred to in (b) above should be offered to serving VLT IIs/VLT Is and MLT IIs/MLT Is as and when they are promoted to the VT and MT ranks respectively.

## JUSTIFICATIONS

2. For civilian grades, it is the government policy that Grade Structure Reviews (GSRs) will only be considered in view of –

- (a) proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties of a grade; or
- (b) significant changes in the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of a grade.

3. In view of the serious recruitment and retention difficulties faced by the VLT grade of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Government invited the Standing Commission in June 2018 to conduct a GSR for the grade as well as the MLT grade of the Department of Health (DH) which has similar job nature and qualification requirements as those of the VLT grade. The Standing Commission accepted the invitation and began the GSR in August 2018. In the course of the GSR, the Standing Commission has provided adequate opportunities for the relevant staff associations<sup>4</sup>, as well as

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<sup>2</sup> The mechanism of the normal conversion arrangement was explained in detail in paragraph 2.21 and Appendix G of Report No. 25 of the Standing Commission issued in March 1990. It refers to the arrangement to convert the salary point of each serving officer when the pay scale of the rank or grade to which such officer belongs is revised as a result of the recommendations of the Standing Commission. The overriding consideration is that no one should receive less pay on conversion. This is discussed in paragraph 21 below.

<sup>3</sup> The special conversion arrangement is further explained in footnote 11 and paragraph 22 below.

<sup>4</sup> The staff bodies concerned were the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association, one of the constituent associations of the Senior Civil Service Council (SCSC), and its Medical Technicians & Technologists Branch.



individual staff members of the two grades, to express their views so that the Standing Commission could have a better understanding of the operations of the grades under review and a first-hand grasp of staff views and sentiments. The Working Group dedicated to conducting the GSR (the Working Group) has organised visits to AFCD and DH, and met with the staff members of the two grades and the staff associations concerned to listen to their views. When the Standing Commission came to a preliminary view on the submissions after considering the advice of the Working Group, it also invited the two departmental managements and the aforementioned staff associations to give their views before finalising the Report. Having considered the proposals and views received, the Standing Commission submitted its findings and recommendations vide the Report on 26 July 2019. The Report can be downloaded at: <https://www.jsscs.gov.hk/reports/en/61/61.pdf>.

### ***Considerations of the Standing Commission***

4. In drawing up its recommendations, the Standing Commission has considered the following principles and key considerations –

- (a) the Government's civil service pay policy, which is to offer sufficient remuneration to attract, retain and motivate staff of a suitable calibre to provide the public with an effective and efficient service; and to ensure that civil service remuneration is regarded as fair by both civil servants and by the public they serve through broad comparability with the private sector;
- (b) the established pay principles, such as the qualification benchmark system for determining entry pay as well as the outcome of detailed deliberation in previous reviews;
- (c) how the work nature, job duties, responsibilities and workload of the two grades have evolved since the 1989 Salary Structure Review;
- (d) public expectation on the two grades under the prevailing social, economic and political climate;
- (e) morale, retention and career progression situation of the two grades;
- (f) how changes to the grade structures, pay scales, etc. recommended under the GSR may affect the existing staff of both grades;



- (g) wider implications that the recommendations of the GSR may have on related grades and beyond; and
- (h) relevant wider community interests, including financial and economic and public health considerations.

## ***Overview of the VLT and MLT Grades***

### *Grade structure*

5. The VLT and MLT grades are Supplementary Medical Professions (SMP) grades under the management of AFCD and DH respectively<sup>5</sup>. Their major responsibilities include conducting routine and specialised laboratory tests and examinations; evaluating, validating and updating new testing protocols and methodologies; carrying out maintenance and calibration of laboratory apparatus; and maintaining the day-to-day operation of laboratories. The specific duties of the two grades are set out in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Report respectively.

6. In terms of grade structure, the VLT grade has three ranks, namely the VLT II, VLT I and VT, while the MLT grade has five ranks, namely the MLT II, MLT I, MT, Senior Medical Technologist (SMT) and Chief Medical Technologist (CMT). The establishment, strength and pay scales of the various ranks of the two grades are at **Annex A**.

### *Entry requirements*

7. Both the VLT and MLT grades are classified under Qualification Group (QG) <sup>6</sup> 3 Group II: Diploma Grades. At present, the entry requirement for both grades is the possession of a Diploma in Medical Laboratory Science (or equivalent). Candidates should also be registered under Part II of the Register of the Medical Laboratory Technologists Board of Hong Kong under the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance (Cap. 359). The existing entry requirements for the VLT II and MLT II ranks are set out at **Annex B**.

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<sup>5</sup> Other than the VLT and MLT grades, the SMP grades also include the Occupational Therapist, Optometrist, Physiotherapist and Radiographer grades.

<sup>6</sup> Basic ranks in the civil service are categorised into 11 QGs, with respective benchmark pay generally set having regard to factors including the entry pay for jobs in the private sector requiring similar educational qualifications and experience (if applicable) as determined with reference to the results shown in the previous Starting Salaries Survey.

## ***Findings and Recommendations of the Standing Commission***

### *Review findings*

8. The Standing Commission agrees that the VLT grade is facing persistent and serious recruitment and retention difficulties. In the five recruitment exercises for VLT II conducted between 2014 and 2019, AFCD could only identify candidates to fill around 8% to 14% of the vacancies each time. The average vacancy rate of the VLT grade in 2017, 2018 and 2019<sup>7</sup> stood high at 26%. As at 31 March 2019, the vacancy rate of the VLT II rank was as high as 36%. Given the small establishment of the grade and the high vacancy rate, extra workload inevitably has to be shared out by the existing staff which may further aggravate the staff turnover problem. The Standing Commission is also of the view that AFCD has not been able to recruit the younger generation to join the grade. If not properly addressed, this succession problem would be detrimental to the efficient operation of AFCD and adversely affect its role in the protection of public health.

9. As for the MLT grade, the Standing Commission noted that DH did encounter some difficulties in the recruitment for the entry rank of MLT II a few years ago, but the situation has improved in recent years. Given the low vacancy rate of the grade at the time of the GSR<sup>8</sup>, the Standing Commission is of the view that there are no proven persistent recruitment difficulties. Yet the MLT grade has been experiencing slight turnover problems, as evidenced by a higher-than-average resignation rate<sup>9</sup>. If not properly addressed, the turnover problem would deplete the department's training and recruitment resources thus adversely affecting the provision of testing and validation services necessary for the maintenance of public health in Hong Kong. Moreover, the Standing Commission considers the career progression of the MLT II rank not favourable due to the small establishment of the MLT I rank. On average, it takes an MLT II some 21.2 years to get promoted to MLT I. The Standing Commission acknowledges the need to improve the career development opportunity for the entry rank of MLT II in DH to boost staff morale and keep them in the grade.

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<sup>7</sup> As at 31 March in these three years.

<sup>8</sup> As provided in the Report, the average vacancy rate of the MLT grade in the past three years (i.e. as at 31 March of 2017, 2018 and 2019) was 1.16% only. Sufficient candidates were identified to fill all vacancies in the recruitment exercise conducted in December 2017.

<sup>9</sup> The average resignation rate of the MLT grade from 2014-15 to 2018-19 was 1.81%, which was higher than the figure for the entire civil service during the same period at 0.69%.



10. In so far as job nature is concerned, the Standing Commission considers that, with technological advancement and social changes, the responsibilities and job complexity of both the VLT and MLT grades have increased over the past decades. Nevertheless, there are no fundamental changes in the job nature of the two grades.

### *Recommendations*

11. After reviewing the manpower positions of the VLT and MLT grades, the views and proposals put forward by the two departmental managements and the staff side, as well as the principles and key considerations guiding the GSR in paragraph 4 above, the Standing Commission has made a series of recommendations as highlighted below –

- (a) re-classifying the qualification grouping of the VLT and MLT grades from QG 3 Group II: Diploma Grades to QG 3 Group I: Higher Diploma or Associate Degree Grades, and raising their entry requirement to Higher Diploma level to be in line with the QG of the other SMP grades mentioned in paragraph 5 above. Both departmental managements consider that setting the minimum entry qualification at the Higher Diploma level is sufficient for the competent performance of the jobs of the grades concerned;
- (b) merging the VLT II and VLT I ranks to form a new entry rank of Associate Veterinary Technologist (AVT) and merging the MLT II and MLT I ranks to form a new entry rank of Associate Medical Technologist (AMT). The two new ranks will have the same pay scale at MPS Points 14 – 24 and with an omitted point at MPS Point 17. The Standing Commission is of the view that this revision will make the pay scale of the entry rank of both the VLT and MLT grades more comparable to that of the Medical Laboratory Technologist grade of the Hospital Authority (HA), with a view to addressing the manpower problems of AFCD and DH;
- (c) revising the pay scales of the VT and MT ranks from MPS Points 29 – 33 to MPS Points 25 – 33A<sup>10</sup>;
- (d) creating a new promotion rank of Senior Veterinary

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<sup>10</sup> The dollar value of MPS Point 33A is identical to MPS Point 34, but officers remunerated at MPS Point 33A are not entitled to the relevant housing benefits enjoyed by officers remunerated at MPS Point 34.



Technologist with a pay scale of MPS Points 34 – 39;

- (e) the pay scale of the SMT rank should remain unchanged and the CMT rank should be retained; and
- (f) the normal conversion arrangements should be adopted for the merging of the ranks and pay scale conversion in accordance with the established practice. It also sees merit in DH's proposal of making a special conversion arrangement <sup>11</sup> under particular circumstances.

12. The Standing Commission trusts that the above proposed measures will help arrest the manpower problems of the two grades and help bring about a more attractive career for them. Other recommendations put forward by the Standing Commission include encouraging the departments concerned to promulgate clear promotion requirements for the various ranks of the two grades, improve the physical working conditions at those remotely located laboratories (for AFCD), consider the need for introducing specific job-related allowances for the officers concerned, monitor issues relating to overtime work and consider if there is any room for flexible deployment of staff to share out the heavy testing duties during seasonal disease outbreaks. The Standing Commission supports the Government's continued efforts in monitoring the manpower supply situation for the medical laboratory technologist profession.

### ***Views of Departmental Managements and Staff Side***

13. Upon receipt of the Report, we invited views and comments from the departmental managements of AFCD and DH, the staff side of the grades concerned, as well as the staff side of SCSC and the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council. Their responses are set out in paragraphs 14 to 18 below.

14. The majority of the VLT grade members considered that the Standing Commission's recommendations would have a significant and positive impact on the recruitment and retention of the VLT grade and generally supported the recommendations. They also hoped that the

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<sup>11</sup> Under the special conversion arrangement, an additional pay point will be provided to those MLT Is who are already on the old minimum (i.e. MPS Point 22) as at the date when the GSR recommendations are implemented. This is to ensure that a newly-promoted MLT I (remunerated at MPS Point 22) will not be worse off than a senior MLT II who gets an incremental jump from MPS Point 21 to Point 23 under the relevant principle of normal conversion whereby a civil servant who has served for one or more years on the old maximum (MPS Point 21) should convert to two points above his/her existing pay point (MPS Point 23).

recommendations could be implemented as soon as possible.

15. AFCD management, in view of the positive feedback from the VLT grade members, also strongly supported the early implementation of the Standing Commission's recommendations.

16. The staff side of the MLT grade expressed their objection against the proposed merger of the MLT II and MLT I ranks to form a new AMT rank. Having made projections using manpower statistics quoted in the Report<sup>12</sup>, the staff side argued that (i) many experienced serving MLT IIs and acting MLT Is would eventually suffer significant loss in their "lifetime earnings" due to the "compressed" pay scale of the new AMT rank and the lowering of the minimum pay point of the MT rank from the current MPS Point 29 to Point 25; and (ii) 44 MLT I posts under the existing establishment will be subsumed into the new AMT rank under the proposed rank merger thereby seriously jeopardising the promotion prospect of serving MLT IIs. They have counter-proposed retaining the existing rank structure without the proposed merger, and revising the pay scales of the various ranks concerned as follows –

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Existing Pay Scale</b>	<b>Proposed Pay Scale in the Report</b>	<b>Proposed Pay Scale by the Staff Side</b>
VLT II/ MLT II	MPS Points 8 – 21	MPS Points 14 – 24 (i.e. the new AVT/AMT rank)	MPS Points 14 – 24
VLT I/ MLT I	MPS Points 22 – 28		MPS Points 25 – 28
VT/ MT	MPS Points 29 – 33	MPS Points 25 – 33A	MPS Points 29 – 33A

17. The staff side of the MLT grade also requested that, if the MLT II and MLT I ranks were to be merged, the existing 44 MLT I posts should be upgraded to MT posts (and the existing 13 VLT I posts should likewise be upgraded to VT posts)<sup>13</sup> such that the promotion prospect and career development of the grade members would not be compromised. Separately, the staff side reiterated that the entry requirement for the MLT grade should be upgraded to degree level, and the qualification grouping of the grade should be re-classified to QG 8: Degree and Related Grades accordingly.

<sup>12</sup> For example, paragraph 4.23 of the Report provides that "[o]n average, it takes an MLT II some 21.2 years to be promoted to be an MLT I. On the other hand, the promotion prospect improves significantly from the rank of MLT I to the rank of MT. It takes an average of 5.8 years to be promoted to MT due to the larger establishment of the MT rank when compared to that of the MLT I rank."

<sup>13</sup> Based on the establishment of MLT I posts in DH and VLT I posts in AFCD as of 30 June 2020.



18. DH management welcomed the recommendations proposed by the Standing Commission. To ensure no serving staff would be worse off, DH management reiterated the proposal of making a special conversion arrangement for those MLT Is on the old minimum (i.e. MPS Point 22) as mentioned in footnote 11 above. Furthermore, to address the staff side's concern on the expected loss in their "lifetime earnings", DH management has proposed an exceptional "grandfathering" arrangement such that serving MLT IIs and MLT Is will be remunerated at MPS Point 29 (i.e. the existing instead of the new minimum pay point of the MT rank at MPS Point 25) as and when they are promoted to MT.

### ***The Government's Views***

#### *Report to be accepted in full*

19. We consider the Report's recommendations reasonable and justified for tackling the persistent and serious recruitment and retention difficulties in the VLT grade and providing an immediate relief to the slight turnover problems in the MLT grade. The revised grade structure will also bring the structures and pay scales of the VLT and MLT grades more consistent with those of most of the other SMP grades (except for the single-rank Optometrist grade), and more similar to that of HA's Medical Laboratory Technologist grade. This will go a long way in helping the two grades in attracting and retaining talent. The outbreak of the COVID-19 since early this year has clearly demonstrated the need to have a stable team of laboratory technicians in the Government. As such, we recommended and the CE-in-Council has approved that the Standing Commission's recommendations in the Report should be accepted in full, subject to the following pay-related arrangements in paragraphs 20 to 23 to tackle the transitional issues including the claim of the loss in "lifetime earnings" of serving MLT IIs. Our response to other staff side's concerns is given in paragraphs 24 to 26.

#### *Conversion and "grandfathering" arrangements*

20. The primary objective of conducting a GSR for a civil service grade with recruitment and/or retention difficulties is to identify possible improvements to make its grade and/or salary structure more attractive to prospective candidates and serving officers. Whenever a GSR recommends any change to the grade and/or salary structure necessitating pay conversion for serving officers, the overriding principle is that no serving officer should become "worse-off", as explained in footnote 2 above.



21. We agree that the normal conversion arrangement recommended in the Report, which is a common feature of GSR when pay conversion of serving staff is involved, is justified and necessary. Specifically, for substantive VLT Is/MLT Is when the recommendations of the GSR are implemented, they will be given a continuing option to retain his/her old scale on a personal basis until such time as it is to his/her advantage to transfer irrevocably to the revised scale.

22. We also agree with DH's proposal of making a special conversion arrangement for MLT Is who are on the old minimum (i.e. MPS Point 22) as no staff should be worse off upon conversion. The same arrangement should be applied to the VLT grade as well. An illustration of the conversion arrangements including the special conversion arrangement for the ranks concerned in both grades are at **Annex C**.

23. In addition, we recommended and the CE-in-Council has approved accepting the suggestion of DH management to offer an exceptional "grandfathering" arrangement to serving VLT IIs/VLT Is and MLT IIs/MLT Is such that as and when they are promoted to VT and MT ranks respectively, they will be remunerated at MPS Point 29. We have sounded out the staff side of the MLT grade on the "grandfathering" arrangement and they are agreeable.

#### *Re-classification of qualification grouping*

24. As regards the staff side's request that the qualification grouping of the MLT grade should be upgraded to degree level (i.e. QG 8: Degree and Related Grades) instead of Higher Diploma level (i.e. QG 3 Group I: Higher Diploma or Associate Degree Grades), we agree with the Standing Commission that this cannot be acceded to. Under our existing appointment policy, the Government sets the minimum entry requirement for a civil service grade according to its duties and responsibilities. In this respect, the management of both AFCD and DH have already confirmed that a minimum entry qualification at the Higher Diploma level is sufficient for the competent performance of the relevant jobs. Upgrading the entry requirement to degree level may restrict the pool of candidates available for consideration for appointment (especially in case of a surge of demand for manpower), which runs contrary to the objective of this exercise to alleviate the recruitment problem in particular in the VLT grade.

#### *Rank merger*

25. The staff side has counter-proposed not to have the rank merger. We believe this concern will have been addressed by the "grandfathering" arrangement mentioned above. The rank merger will

enhance staff retention <sup>14</sup> and has the clear support of both departmental managements and the staff members the VLT grade. Moreover, given the creation of the new entry ranks of the two grades known as AVT and AMT respectively, we will rename the two grades to "Veterinary Laboratory Technologist" and "Medical Laboratory Technologist" accordingly at the same time upon the implementation of the GSR recommendations.

26. The staff side of the MLT grade also suggested that all existing 44 MLT I posts should be upgraded to MT posts (likewise for the 13 VLT I to VT posts) upon the rank merger so that the promotion prospect and career development of the grade will not be jeopardised. However, as applicable to all civil service posts, any creation or upgrading of post should be justified on functional/operational grounds and not for other reasons such as improving the career prospect of the grades alone. Nevertheless, the management of both DH and AFCD acknowledged staff side's concern on the promotion prospect and career development of the grade upon the rank merger, and will monitor and review the situation of the two grades.

#### *Promotion requirements*

27. The Standing Commission, in the Report, encouraged the two departmental managements to promulgate clear promotion requirements for the various ranks in the grades after the GSR. Both AFCD and DH confirm that they have all along adhered to the stipulated guideline by informing the respective grade members in writing before the conduct of a promotion exercise on the promotion requirements of the rank concerned. They will continue this practice after the implementation of the GSR recommendations.

#### *Working environment, job-related allowances and compensation for overtime work*

28. The responses of the two departments to the Standing Commission's recommendations concerning the working environment of the two grades, specific job-related allowances, and overtime work are set out at **Annex D**.

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<sup>14</sup> This is because VLT IIs and MLT IIs who become AVTs and AMTs respectively after the merger can then earn increments up to MPS Point 24 (i.e. three pay points higher than the original maximum pay point of the VLT II/MLT II rank at MPS Point 21) in the rank.



## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

29. The decision is in conformity with the Basic Law, including the provisions concerning human rights. It has no economic, environmental, family, gender, productivity or sustainability implications. The adoption of the conversion arrangements for the adjustment to the pay scales of the VLT and MLT grades<sup>15</sup> will have financial implications, the additional payroll cost to the civil service per year would be around \$2.78 million and \$6.84 million respectively<sup>16</sup>.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

30. We consulted the LegCo Panel on Public Service on 4 November 2019<sup>17</sup>. Members present supported in principle the Standing Commission's recommendations.

## **PUBLICITY**

31. A press release will be issued and a spokesperson will be available to answer media enquiries. We have informed the departmental managements, staff side, Chairman of the Standing Commission and Chairmen of the relevant LegCo Panels of the decision made by the Executive Council. The approval of the Establishment Subcommittee and FC of LegCo will then be sought.

32. Enquiries on this brief should be addressed to Mr Leo LI, Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil Service (Tel: 2810 3112).

**Civil Service Bureau**  
**23 September 2020**

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<sup>15</sup> Including the 15 civil service MLT grade members in HA (as of 1 July 2020).

<sup>16</sup> This estimate has not included the increase in pension payments and allowances pegged with monthly salary. The annual additional cost for the VLT grade includes the provision for two new permanent Senior Veterinary Technologist posts.

<sup>17</sup> Members of the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene, Panel on Health Services and all other LegCo Members were also invited to join the meeting.



**Annex A****Establishment, Strength and Pay Scales  
of the VLT and MLT Grades****VLT Grade**

Rank	MPS	Establishment (as at 30.6.2020)	Strength (as at 30.6.2020)
VT	Points 29-33	9 <sup>(1)</sup>	9 <sup>(1)</sup>
VLT I	Points 22-28	13	10
VLT II	Points 8-21	25	18
<b>Total:</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>37</b>

**MLT Grade**

Rank	MPS	Establishment (as at 30.6.2020)	Strength (as at 30.6.2020)
CMT	Points 40-44	1	1
SMT	Points 34-39	18	12
MT	Points 29-33	95	91
MLT I	Points 22-28	44	44
MLT II	Points 8-21 (omitted point at Point 12)	103	114 <sup>(2)</sup>
<b>Total:</b>		<b>261</b>	<b>262<sup>(3)</sup></b>

- (1) Including one VT who was posted to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.
- (2) For the determination of the "Strength" of a rank, only substantive officers of that rank are taken into account while officers from a lower rank acting in that rank are excluded. The same principle has been adopted in the presentation of the two tables above.
- (3) Including one SMT who is on pre-retirement leave until 30.11.2020.

## Annex B

### Existing Entry Requirements for the VLT II and MLT II Ranks



*(Extracted from Report No. 61 of the Standing Commission on  
“GSR for VLT and MLT Grades”)*

<b>VLT II rank</b>
Entry requirements:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) have a Diploma in Medical Laboratory Science (MLS) of the Hong Kong Polytechnic/Polytechnic University or equivalent;</li><li>(b) be registered under Part II of the Register of the Medical Laboratory Technologists Board (MLTB) of Hong Kong; and</li><li>(c) have met the language proficiency requirements of Level 2 or above in Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE) or Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) or equivalent.</li></ul>
<b>MLT II rank</b>
Entry requirements:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) have a Diploma in MLS from an institute recognised by the MLTB of Hong Kong, or equivalent;</li><li>(b) have registered in Hong Kong as a Medical Laboratory Technologist in Part II of the Register of Medical Laboratory Technologists under the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance (Cap. 359);</li><li>(c) have a valid Practising Certificate issued by the MLTB of Hong Kong; and</li><li>(d) have met the language proficiency requirements of Level 2 or above in Chinese Language and English Language in the HKDSEE or the HKCEE, or equivalent.</li></ul>



**Conversion Arrangements for  
the Ranks Concerned of the VLT Grade**

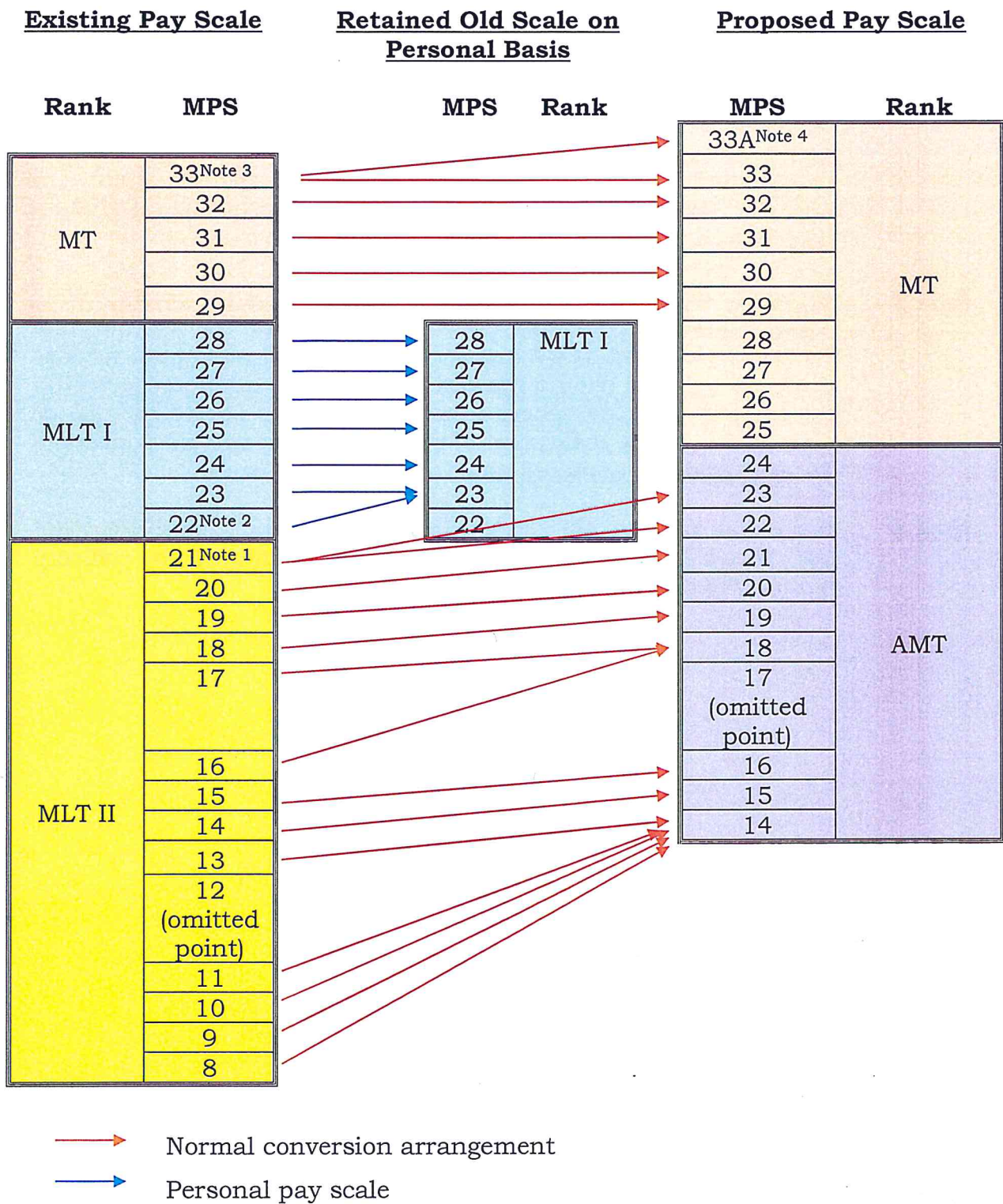
<u>Existing Pay Scale</u>		<u>Retained Old Scale on Personal Basis</u>		<u>Proposed Pay Scale</u>	
Rank	MPS	MPS	Rank	MPS	Rank
VT	33 <sup>Note 3</sup>			33 <sup>Note 4</sup>	VT
	32			32	
	31			31	
	30			30	
	29			29	
VLT I	28	28	VLT I	28	VLT I
	27	27		27	
	26	26		26	
	25	25		25	
	24	24		24	
	23	23		23	
	22 <sup>Note 2</sup>	22		22	AVT
VLT II	21 <sup>Note 1</sup>			21	
	20			20	
	19			19	
	18			18	
	17			17 (omitted point)	
	16			16	
	15			15	
	14			14	
	13				
	12				
	11				
	10				
	9				
	8				

-  Normal conversion arrangement  
 Personal pay scale

- Note 1      Where the revised scale has a maximum which is two or more points higher than the old maximum, a civil servant who has served for one or more years on the old maximum should convert to two points above his existing pay point.
- Note 2      DH proposed providing an additional point to MLT Is who are on the old minimum (MPS Point 22) irrespective of whether they opt to the new scale to ensure that the newly promoted MLT Is will not be worse off when compared with the senior MLT IIs who, after having served for one or more years on the old maximum, get an incremental jump from MPS Point 21 to Point 23 in accordance with the normal conversion as described in Note 1 above after the rank merger. The same arrangement should be applied to VLT Is as well.
- Note 3      When the minimum of the scale is lowered and the maximum is raised, (a) where a civil servant's pay is less than the maximum of the old scale or where he has served on the old maximum for less than one year, he should convert to the same numbered point on the revised scale; (b) where a civil servant has served for one or more years on the maximum of the old scale he should convert to the next higher numbered point on the revised scale.
- Note 4      The dollar value of MPS Point 33A is equivalent to MPS Point 34 but without housing benefit entitlement enjoyed by officers remunerated at MPS Point 34.



**Conversion Arrangements for  
the Ranks Concerned of the MLT Grade**



- Note 1      Where the revised scale has a maximum which is two or more points higher than the old maximum, a civil servant who has served for one or more years on the old maximum should convert to two points above his existing pay point.
- Note 2      DH proposed providing an additional point to MLT Is who are on the old minimum (MPS Point 22) irrespective of whether they opt to the new scale to ensure that the newly promoted MLT Is will not be worse off when compared with the senior MLT IIs who, after having served for one or more years on the old maximum, get an incremental jump from MPS Point 21 to Point 23 in accordance with the normal conversion as described in Note 1 above after the rank merger.
- Note 3      When the minimum of the scale is lowered and the maximum is raised, (a) where a civil servant's pay is less than the maximum of the old scale or where he has served on the old maximum for less than one year he should convert to the same numbered point on the revised scale; (b) where a civil servant has served for one or more years on the maximum of the old scale he should convert to the next higher numbered point on the revised scale.
- Note 4      The dollar value of MPS Point 33A is equivalent to MPS Point 34 but without housing benefit entitlement enjoyed by officers remunerated at MPS Point 34.



**Responses from AFCD and DH to the Standing Commission's  
Recommendations on Working Environment, Job-related  
Allowances and Compensation for Overtime Work for the Grades  
Concerned**

AFCD has addressed staff concerns about working conditions by arranging a more flexible arrangement for staff rostering during typhoons and transport from branch laboratory for the later shifts. The department has contacted the operator of the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSS) on measures to improve the environment around the branch laboratory located in the SSS. For example, barriers have been set up as suggested by the staff to keep the footpath clear from parked vehicles, such that adequate space is made available to pedestrians who will no longer have to walk on the road used by livestock trucks. Shift Duty and On-call Duty allowances are also payable to VLTs who have to undertake shift duties, or are required to be on call for more than 96 hours per month. AFCD has also been monitoring the amount of overtime of its staff. Staff in general support the improvements made.

2. As for DH, the department will examine the Standing Commission's recommendations and follow up with relevant authorities/parties where appropriate. For instance, DH has recently obtained CSB's exceptional approval for, among others, MLT grade staff performing tests for COVID-19 specimens to be granted a new time-limited Hardship Allowance and overtime honorarium.

3. Furthermore, AFCD and DH will consider views from the staff side on the working conditions of the two grades (e.g. remote office location and the job requirement of wearing protective gears for long hours, etc.) and whether the criteria for introducing specific job-related allowance could be met in collaboration with the relevant authorities/parties in accordance with the established mechanism.