

## **Legislative Council Panel on Public Service**

### **Civil Service Recruitment Policy**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides information on the civil service recruitment policy.

#### **Guiding Principle**

2. The guiding principle on civil service appointment, including recruitment and promotion, is to select qualified and suitable persons through an open, fair and competitive process.

#### **Filling of Vacancies in Basic Ranks**

3. Vacancies in basic ranks in civil service grades or in one-rank grades<sup>1</sup> are normally filled by open recruitment and/or in-service recruitment from other grades. On an exceptional basis, vacancies in one-rank grades (a small number can be found at the directorate level) may also be filled by posting of serving officers from other grades. The entry requirements for basic ranks in civil service grades or for one-rank grades are set with reference to the operational need of the grades/ranks concerned. The more common entry requirements are expressed in the form of academic or professional qualifications, technical skills, working experience, language proficiency and other qualities or attributes as necessary. Where recruitment difficulty is encountered, the relevant Permanent Secretary/Head of Department/Head of Grade (PS/HoD/HoG) may, with the advice of the Public Service Commission (PSC) for those civil service grades under its purview<sup>2</sup> and the agreement of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), change the entry requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> One-rank grades are those without related grades from which eligible candidates could be drawn to fill the vacancies concerned.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the Public Service Commission Ordinance, advice of the Commission has to be sought for appointment of officers to some 32,500 (as at 31 March 2007) middle and senior ranking posts, excluding the judiciary and the disciplined ranks of the Hong Kong Police Force.

## **Filling of Vacancies in Promotion Ranks**

4. Vacancies in promotion ranks (including those at directorate level) of a civil service grade are normally filled by promoting suitable officers from the immediate lower rank of the same grade or the same family of grades. Selection for promotion is based on objective criteria, including performance, character, ability, experience, and – if relevant – specified professional qualification prescribed for the higher rank. A higher academic qualification than that required for the basic rank of the grade is not a requirement for promotion to HoD level. Thus an officer belonging to a grade whose basic rank does not require a university degree as an entry requirement may be promoted to the highest rank of the grade concerned, which may be pitched at HoD level.

5. Where no officer from the immediate relevant lower rank of a civil service grade is identified as suitable for promotion, a vacancy in a promotion rank of a grade may be filled by an officer from the immediate relevant lower rank on an acting for administrative convenience and temporary basis, or by posting an officer from a different grade for a limited period of time, or through in-service recruitment, or by way of open recruitment, depending on individual circumstances and operational requirements of the bureau/department/grade concerned at the time.

6. For in-service recruitment to a promotion rank, the entry qualifications are set with reference to the operational need of the concerned promotion rank. They may be expressed as serving officers whose current substantive rank is at or above a specified threshold (e.g. those ranked at D2 or equivalent are eligible to apply) and possessing prescribed skills and working experience. A minimum academic qualification may or may not be prescribed. For open recruitment to a promotion rank, the entry requirements are likewise set with reference to the operational need of the concerned rank. They may be expressed in the form of academic or professional qualifications, working experience, language proficiency and other qualities or attributes as necessary. Where difficulty is encountered in either in-service or open recruitment, the concerned PS/HoD/HoG may, with the advice of the PSC for those civil service grades under its purview and the agreement of the CSB, change the entry requirements.

## **Recruitment Process**

7. Recruitment exercises are conducted in an open and fair manner. For in-service recruitment, recruiting bureaux/departments/grades concerned may issue internal circulars to draw the attention of serving civil servants. All civil service vacancies for open recruitment are posted on the CSB website. In addition, recruiting bureaux/departments/grades may publicise their vacancies through their departmental websites and place recruitment advertisements in newspapers and/or journals. Where appropriate (usually for open recruitment to vacancies at directorate ranks), they may also engage the service of recruitment agencies to help

identify qualified candidates and encourage these candidates to put their names forward for the vacancies concerned.

8. Recruitment boards are formed to assess candidates, to recommend suitable ones for appointment, and to prioritise their suitability. In general, the chair of a recruitment board (including that for a directorate rank vacancy) is a serving civil servant two ranks higher than the vacancy under recruitment and – if possible – belonging to the same grade as the vacancy under recruitment. Members of a recruitment board (including that for a directorate rank vacancy) consist of one or two civil servants who are at least one rank above the vacancy under recruitment.

9. Where a large number of candidates meet the specified entry requirements, the recruiting bureaux/departments/grades may devise shortlisting criteria to select the more qualified candidates for further processing. The shortlisting criteria have to be objective, specific and directly related to the effective and efficient performance of duties in the rank<sup>3</sup>. The recruiting bureaux/departments/grades may also make use of written examinations for shortlisting purpose or conduct trade tests (e.g. driving) for skills assessment. Selection interviews are in most cases the final stage of the selection process whereby a recruitment board will assess the suitability of candidates by examining whether they have the requisite abilities, skills, qualifications and experience; and ascertain whether the orientation and aptitude of the candidates meet the requirements of the vacancies concerned.

### **Public Service Commission**

10. The PSC is set up under the PSC Ordinance (Cap. 93). It is an independent statutory body responsible for advising the Chief Executive on civil service appointment, promotion and disciplinary matters to ensure impartiality, integrity and fairness. Its prior advice must be sought for the recommended ways to fill vacancies in a promotion rank, and for the proposed entry requirements and any subsequent amendments. In addition, information on any shortlisting criteria and the results of shortlisting must also be submitted to PSC for scrutiny. The Chairman and members of the PSC may attend recruitment boards as observers. Upon completion of a recruitment exercise, the recommendations of the concerned recruitment board must be submitted to PSC for advice before any offer of appointment may be made.

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<sup>3</sup> The shortlisting criteria do not apply to disabled candidates. It is the Government policy to place people with a disability in appropriate jobs wherever possible. Thus if a disabled candidate meets the entry requirements, he/she will be invited to attend the selection interview/ written examination without being subject to further shortlisting.

## **Conclusion**

11. Civil service vacancies are filled by selection from eligible candidates through a competitive process on the basis of merits. There are established rules and guidelines governing the proper conduct of recruitment exercises to ensure impartiality and fairness. There is the watchdog and advisory role performed by the PSC.

Civil Service Bureau  
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