



Guide on
• Staff
• Relations

The graphic features three overlapping circles on the right side: a large light blue one, a smaller orange one, and a smaller green one. To the left of the text, there are three spheres: a green one, a yellow one, and a purple one, each with a soft shadow.

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What is Staff Relations?

It is the contacts between staff and management, including the personal contacts between staff and their supervisors, the way they behave towards each other, and how they communicate or co-operate.

The Government values good staff relations in the civil service and considers it an integral part of human resource management.

Why is it Important?

Good staff relations promote co-operation and mutual trust between staff and management. It helps cultivate team spirit and reduces conflict. Having a stronger sense of belonging, staff can work better with the management to attain the common goal of the organisation. If relations between staff and management are good, the organisation has a better chance of success.

With good staff relations, civil servants can work closely with the management to provide the quality of service that the public expects. The overall productivity and efficiency of the civil service can also be further improved.

How to Promote Good Staff Relations?

The Government believes that effective communication and better understanding between staff and management is key to achieving good staff relations. Supervisors should listen to their staff, and encourage them to air their views and to make suggestions. Supervisors must also lead by example.

The Staff Relations Division in the Civil Service Bureau plays an important part in promoting good staff relations in the civil service. One of its main objectives is to ensure that proper staff consultative machinery and procedures are established and that they are effectively used by staff, staff associations and government departments. The formal consultative forums now exist at both central (the Central Staff Consultative Councils) and departmental (the Departmental Consultative Committees) levels. Staff of the Staff Relations Division attend these meetings as management side representatives and provide support and guidance to both staff and departmental management on matters concerning staff relations whenever required.

In addition, they maintain effective liaison with civil service staff associations and publish the Civil Service Newsletter so as to improve communication within the service.

The Staff Relations Division also plays a proactive role in overseeing Government's staff welfare and relief schemes. These include Holiday Homes, Retirement Souvenir Scheme, Staff Welfare Fund, Staff Relief Fund and Counselling Service on Stress Management.

At departmental level, the Departmental Secretary is usually responsible for staff relations. In some departments, a dedicated Staff Relations Unit is established to promote staff relations in the department.

COMMUNICATION

I. Consultative Machinery

Importance of Consultation

Staff are consulted on matters that affect them. Staff views and suggestions are taken into account in the formulation of policies.

Through two-way communication, the management explains to staff the background and rationale behind the proposed initiatives, and staff can express their views and contribute usefully on areas where they have valuable working knowledge or experience. The consultation process also helps secure staff commitment and facilitate the subsequent implementation of the policy.

Channel of Consultation

There is a well-established consultative machinery within the civil service, comprising the Central Staff Consultative Councils and the Departmental Consultative Committees. Through this machinery, individual staff members, staff unions and staff groups can be consulted on a wide range of subjects such as conditions of service, working environment and various aspects of their work.

Central Staff Consultative Councils

There are four Central Councils, namely the Senior Civil Service Council, the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council, the Police Force Council and the Disciplined Services Consultative Council. Each Council

comprises the Management Side and the Staff Side. Members of the Management Side come mainly from policy bureaux and departments dealing with issues of staff concern whilst members of the Staff Side are all nominated by staff associations / unions. Meetings are held regularly to discuss issues of concern to staff.

It is the Government's policy to consult the Staff Sides of the Central Councils on any significant change to the terms and conditions of service which affects a substantial part of the service as a whole. Matters such as the annual pay adjustment, change to fringe benefits, measures to improve the overall efficiency of the civil service are discussed at the Central Councils.

Departmental Consultative Committees

Departments with more than 100 staff are encouraged to set up Departmental Consultative Committees comprising the departmental management (Management Side) and the staff representatives (Staff Side) who are elected by the staff themselves or

nominated by their staff associations. A Civil Service Bureau representative also attends the Departmental Consultative Committees to explain Central Government's policies and practices and acts as a bridge between Central Government and departments. There are at present 85 Departmental Consultative Committees.

The topics to be discussed by the Departmental Consultative Committees usually include issues specific to the department, for example :

- The consultative arrangements within the department.
- The appointment and promotion criteria for individual grades within the department.
- The conditions of service of individual grades within the department.
- Departmental welfare and recreational activities.
- Departmental training.
- Office accommodation and working conditions.
- Departmental quarters and uniforms.

Some departments also set up sub-committees to the Departmental Consultative Committee, such as the General Grades Consultative Committees, to facilitate communication between a particular group of staff and management.

Communication with Staff Representatives

Some heads of department / grade also hold regular meetings with staff association representatives and divisional / section staff representatives so as to exchange views with them on issues affecting the particular group of staff.

II. Staff Complaints Procedures

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by any member of staff about the treatment he has received from other staff in his department or from the management. A set of well publicized procedure to handle these complaints has been drawn up in each bureau and department. Any member of staff who has a cause to make a complaint may do so in Chinese or English, in writing or in oral form, to his Departmental Staff Complaints Officer.

A similar set of procedure on handling sexual harassment complaints has also been drawn up in each bureau and department. Any member of staff may make a complaint in accordance with the laid down procedure.

III. Staff Suggestions Scheme

It is an incentive award scheme to encourage civil servants to make improvement suggestions on civil service efficiency. A Departmental Staff Suggestions Committee is set up in each department to consider suggestions for improvement to its own operations and / or management. A Central Staff Suggestions Committee is set up in the Civil Service Bureau to handle improvement suggestions with service-wide implications from all members of the civil service. Awards are presented to civil servants who make meritorious suggestions.

IV. Civil Service Newsletter

The Civil Service Newsletter, issued on a quarterly basis to all serving and retired civil

servants, aims to enhance communication between management and staff.

The Newsletter covers service-wide issues which are of primary concern and interest to the entire civil service. Policy bureaux make use of the publication to get across important messages and explain policy initiatives. Furthermore, the Newsletter also serves as a useful tool in fostering a sense of corporate identity and common purpose within the civil service. The Newsletter is also available on the CSB Home Page at <http://www.csb.gov.hk> through the Internet.

V. Other Communication Channels

Some heads of department / grade publish departmental or grade newsletters through which staff are regularly updated on major issues / developments affecting their well-being.

In some departments / grades, management representatives conduct regular goodwill visits to meet members of the department / grade at their work place.

STAFF WELL-BEING

I. Holiday Homes

There are at present seven holiday bungalows, three at Cheung Sha of Lantau Island and four at Tai Mei Tuk, available for staff use at subsidized rates. These bungalows are situated at scenic locations, conveniently accessible by public transport, spacious, air-conditioned and self-contained with facilities to accommodate eight persons.

Applications for use of these holiday facilities can be made two months in advance. Telephone booking at short notice is also accepted for unallocated period. Details and application forms can be obtained from personnel registries of each department / bureau.

II. Staff Welfare Fund

Staff Welfare Fund is provided to bureaux / departments for organising sports, recreational, social and welfare activities or for purchasing sports / recreational equipment for staff use. The purpose of the fund is to improve staff morale and foster a greater sense of belonging in the civil service.

For disciplined services departments, the operation of their staff welfare funds is governed by statute. Apart from supporting social and recreational activities, their funds can be used to provide relief in the form of loans to officers in need of financial assistance.

III. Retirement Souvenir Scheme

The scheme is a token of the management's appreciation of staff's contribution. A memorable souvenir engraved with the retiring officer's name and the year of retirement is awarded to staff who have completed at least 10 years' service with the Government and who have received good reports when they retire from service.

IV. Pre-retirement Seminar

Pre-retirement seminars are organised for retiring civil servants on a regular basis. These seminars aim to provide information to retiring civil servants so that they can prepare themselves better for the transition to retirement life and develop a positive approach to retirement.

V. Departmental Welfare Office / Unit

Departmental Secretaries are usually responsible for staff welfare. In some departments, a designated Departmental Welfare Office / Unit is established to better look after staff well-being.

STAFF RELIEF / SUPPORT

I. Training Courses to Cultivate Healthy Work Style

As a caring employer, the Government endeavours to help staff cope with stress arising from work pressure and family problems.

The Civil Service Training and Development Institute runs regular training courses / seminars to help participants identify sources of stress in their personal and work environment and develop strategies and techniques to cope with and reduce stress. A self-learning package on stress management in the form of interactive CD-ROM is also available. Some departments organise stress management seminars for their staff on an ad hoc basis.

Certain general grades also include courses on cultivation of healthy working style as an element of induction programmes for their new recruits. Some disciplined services departments also cover stress management in their induction or departmental training programmes.

II. Counselling Services on Stress Management

A number of departments, including the Customs and Excise Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Fire Services Department, the Department of Health, the Social Welfare Department,

the Hongkong Post, the Transport Department, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Correctional Services Department, the Housing Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, have been providing different forms of counselling service to help their staff manage stress arising from work or other personal problems. Apart from this in-house service, the Civil Service Bureau has since July 2002 provided a free hotline counselling service on stress management to about 70,000 staff of some 60 bureaux and departments who have hitherto not been covered by any form of counselling service. The hotline number is 2715 9936.

III. Staff Relief Fund

The Staff Relief Fund is to provide interest-free loans to lower-paid non-disciplined staff (on or below MPS Pt. 19) to meet unforeseen domestic distress such as family members' illness, loss of belongings in natural disasters, expenditure related to children's schooling, etc. The maximum amount of loans available under the Staff Relief Fund is \$4,000. Applications could be made to the Departmental Secretary or the Departmental Welfare Officer.

IV. Advance of Salary

Civil servants who face certain types of unexpected expense may seek assistance in the form of an advance of salary. Advice on how to apply for these advances can be obtained from the Departmental Secretary or the Departmental Welfare Officer.

V. Special Grant for Funeral Expenses

The Special Grant for Funeral Expenses is to provide immediate financial relief to the deceased officer's family to meet the funeral and other related expenses in exceptional circumstances.

The Grant is centrally administered by the Civil Service Bureau. The amount to be granted depends on individual circumstances but it will normally not exceed \$5,000. A larger sum may be approved where the Secretary for the Civil Service is satisfied that the case deserves special sympathetic consideration.

VI. Other Support

The following are examples of other forms of support available in some departments / grades :

Grade Management Meeting

The grade management meeting is an effective forum for consultation between heads of grade and individual grade members. Matters which are of interest to the grade are discussed to enhance communication between management and staff.

Liaison Scheme

One of the general grades has put in place a liaison scheme to provide an additional channel of communication between the grade management and members. Under this scheme, grade members are invited to join the scheme voluntarily and the participants are formed into a number of liaison groups to facilitate discussion of issues of common concern among group members. The grade management meets the convenors and the liaison groups from time to time to exchange views on issues of concern to the grade.

Mentor Scheme

The aim of the scheme is to provide new colleagues with support on an informal and personal basis. While support can be readily

solicited from supervisors, staff may find it difficult to air their problems and anxiety with their immediate supervisors. Some staff may also be less expressive to their supervisors. The less formal but friendly relationship with mentors can provide them with more effective emotional support. Mentors can also give guidance, share their experience and broaden the perception of mentees about the department, and thus help new colleagues integrate better into the corporate culture.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

I. Working Group on Occupational Safety and Health in the Civil Service

The Government has always been taking an active role in promoting occupational safety and health in the civil service. It showed its commitment by signing the Occupational Safety Charter in 1996 and the Civil Service Bureau established the Working Group on Occupational Safety and Health in the Civil Service in the same year.

Members of the Working Group include staff representatives from the Central Staff Consultative Councils and also representatives from various government departments. The objective of the Working Group is to examine service-wide issues of occupational safety and health and to recommend measures for promoting awareness and action at departmental level. The Working Group has played an active role in organising various activities to promote occupational safety and health. These activities included seminars, fun day, exhibitions, survey, an Occupational Safety and Health Mini Information Kit and a publicity and utility kit which includes a “Good Practice Guide”, a video tape and a CD-ROM.

II. Safety Committees

Many departments have set up their own Safety Committees to discuss with staff on a regular basis their safety policy and procedures with a view to putting in place safety measures and promoting safety management and culture in the work place.

Useful References

COMMUNICATION

(a) Consultative Machinery

- CSB Circular No. 12/91
Officers Engaged in Staff Consultative
Councils and Staff Association Activities
- CSB Circular No. 21/91
Departmental Consultative Committees
- CSB Circular Memo No. 33/98
General Grades Consultative Committees

(b) Staff Complaints Procedures

- CSB Circular No. 20/91
Staff Complaints Procedure
- CSB Circular No. 11/2004
Guidelines for Handling
Sexual Harassment Complaints in the
Civil Service

(c) Staff Suggestions Scheme

- CSB Circular No. 12/96
Staff Suggestions Scheme

(d) Civil Service Newsletter

- CSB Home Page at
<http://www.csb.gov.hk>

STAFF WELL-BEING

(a) Holiday Homes

- CSB Circular No. 5/2003
Holiday Homes for Civil Servants

(b) Staff Welfare Fund

- CSB Circular No. 6/96
Staff Welfare Fund
- CSB Circular No. 11/2003
Donations to the Staff Welfare Fund

(c) Retirement Souvenir Scheme

- CSB Circular No. 10/95
Retirement Souvenir Scheme

STAFF RELIEF / SUPPORT

(a) Staff Relief Fund

- CSB Circular No. 15/92
Staff Relief Fund

(b) Advance of Salary

- The circumstances in which salary advances are given are explained in Civil Service Regulations 618-639.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

- CSB Circular Memo No. 53/96
Occupational Health and Safety in the Civil Service, Occupational Safety Charter

Questions Commonly Asked

CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY

Q1. Who represents me at the Departmental Consultative Committee ? How can I make my view known at the Committee ?

A1. Staff Side representatives are usually elected by the staff working in a division / office or by the staff of a particular grade (or grades). In some cases, Staff Side representatives are nominated by the relevant staff associations. You may approach the Staff Side representatives if you want to express your view at the Departmental Consultative Committee. You may find out who are the representatives by contacting your Departmental Secretary or Staff Relations Unit.

Q2. Will I be penalised for joining staff association activities ? Can I be released during office hours to deal with staff association matters ?

A2. No officers will be penalised for joining staff association activities. Whilst internal meetings of a staff association or its executive

committee should normally be held outside office hours, a reasonable amount of staff association activities (such as participation in meetings between a staff association and Government officials) is permitted during office hours. The head of department will exercise flexibility to consider the merits of each case to decide whether approval should be given.

STAFF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Q3. How do I make a complaint ?

A3. Any member of staff having cause to make a complaint may do so in Chinese or English, preferably in writing, either by himself or through a colleague or staff association. If he prefers, he may make his complaint orally and an oral complaint will be given the same weight and similar treatment as a written one. The complaint should be addressed to the head of

department, for attention of the Departmental Staff Complaints Officer.

Q4. Will I be penalised for making a complaint ? Will my complaint be kept confidential ?

A4. An officer will not be penalised for making a complaint which is justified and made in good faith. All complaints will be dealt with in confidence. The identity of the complainants will not be revealed, without their consent, to anyone other than those involved in investigating the complaint.

STAFF SUGGESTIONS SCHEME

Q5. Who should I approach if I have suggestions to improve office efficiency ? What is the award ?

A5. Suggestions with service-wide implications should be directed to the Secretary, Central Staff Suggestions Committee, Staff Relations Division, Civil Service Bureau. Suggestions concerning a department should be sent to the Secretary

of the particular Departmental Staff Suggestions Committee. The level of award is determined by the extent of improvement in efficiency or effectiveness likely to be brought about by a suggestion. The highest award is \$15,000.

STAFF WELFARE FUND

Q6. Can bureaux / departments accept donations to the staff welfare funds ?

A6. Yes. The procedures for handling and the criteria for accepting donations to staff welfare funds are spelt out in the Civil Service Bureau Circular No. 11/2003. Authority has been delegated to the bureaux and departments to approve acceptance of donations of \$150,000 and below. For donations exceeding \$150,000 and also donations exceeding \$150,000 from the same donor within any period of 12 months, approval has to be sought from the Civil Service Bureau.

Q7. Can I make suggestions on how to use the staff welfare fund ?

A7. Any officer may make suggestions on the use of the staff welfare fund to his Departmental Staff Welfare Officer, Departmental Secretary or his representatives to the Departmental Consultative Committee.

ADVANCE OF SALARY

Q8. If I am faced with unexpected expenses arising from sudden and serious illness, can I apply for an advance of salary ?

A8. If an officer is faced with expenditure arising from unforeseen domestic calamity or serious illness, he could apply for an advance of an amount up to the dollar value of MPS Point 30 under CSR 624.

If an officer has a close family member (i.e. spouse, child, parent, brother or sister) who is seriously ill in a place outside Hong Kong, he could apply under CSR 620 for an advance of an amount up to the dollar value of MPS Point 15 to cover the cost of passage from and back to Hong Kong to visit the family member.

Advance of salary in the above circumstances is interest-free.

Q9. How to apply for an advance of salary in the above circumstances ?

A9. Applications could be made by memo or letter to the officer's head of department for the attention of the Departmental Secretary.

FURTHER ENQUIRIES

Q10. I need clarification on some of the subjects covered in this guide book. Who should I turn to ?

A10. You may contact your Departmental Secretary or your Departmental Staff Relations Unit if the matter is related to your department. For general or policy issues, you may refer to the list on the following pages and contact the relevant subject Senior Executive Officer of the Staff Relations Division in the Civil Service Bureau.

Subject Officer

Senior Executive Officer
(Staff Relations)¹
Tel 2810 3702

Schedule of Bureaux / Departments

Education and Manpower Bureau
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Civil Aviation Department
Companies Registry
Department of Health
Judiciary
Department of Justice
Land Registry
Legal Aid Department
Official Receiver's Office
Rating and Valuation Department
Social Welfare Department
Student Financial Assistance Agency
University Grants Committee Secretariat

Subject Officer

Senior Executive Officer
(Staff Relations)²
Tel 2810 3703

Schedule of Bureaux / Departments

Chief Executive's Office
Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau
Home Affairs Bureau
Census and Statistics Department
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Government Laboratory
Government Logistics Department
Home Affairs Department
Hong Kong Monetary Authority
Office of the Commissioner of Insurance
Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
Intellectual Property Department
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Marine Department
Radio Television Hong Kong
Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority
Treasury

Subject Officer

Senior Executive Officer
(Staff Relations)3
Tel 2810 3704

Schedule of Bureaux / Departments

Chief Secretary for Administration's Office
Financial Secretary's Office
Constitutional Affairs Bureau
Civil Service Bureau
Economic Development and Labour Bureau
Audit Commission
Environmental Protection Department
Government Property Agency
Housing Department
Hong Kong Observatory
Hongkong Post
Inland Revenue Department
Information Services Department
Joint Secretariat for the Advisory Bodies on Civil Service and Judicial
Salaries and Conditions of Service
Labour Department
Public Service Commission
Registration and Electoral Office

Subject Officer

Senior Executive Officer
(Staff Relations)⁴
Tel 2810 3705

Schedule of Bureaux / Departments

Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau
Security Bureau
Auxiliary Medical Service
Civil Aid Service
Correctional Services Department
Customs and Excise Department
Fire Services Department
Government Flying Service
Hong Kong Police Force
Immigration Department
Independent Commission Against Corruption
Secretariat for Independent Police Complaints Council
Innovation and Technology Commission
Invest Hong Kong
Office of the Telecommunications Authority
Trade and Industry Department

Subject Officer

Senior Executive Officer
(Staff Relations)5
Tel 2810 3706

Schedule of Bureaux / Departments

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau
Architectural Services Department
Buildings Department
Civil Engineering and Development Department
Drainage Services Department
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department
Highways Department
Lands Department
Planning Department
Transport Department
Water Supplies Department