

The main administrative and executive functions of government are carried out by 13 policy bureaux in the Government Secretariat, and various departments and agencies, mostly staffed by civil servants. The Secretary for the Civil Service is one of the Principal Officials appointed under the Political Appointment System and a Member of the Executive Council. He heads the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) of the Government Secretariat and is responsible to the Chief Executive (CE) for civil service policies as well as the overall management and development of the civil service. His primary role is to ensure that the civil service serves the best interests of the community and delivers various services in a trustworthy, efficient and cost effective manner. CSB assumes overall policy responsibility for the management of the civil service, including such matters as appointment, pay and conditions of service, staff management, manpower planning, training and discipline.

**Core values:** The following are the core values of the civil service as set out in the Civil Service Code, which all civil servants are expected to uphold:

- commitment to the rule of law;
- honesty and integrity;
- objectivity and impartiality;
- political neutrality;
- accountability for decisions and actions; and
- dedication, professionalism and diligence.

The Hong Kong civil service provides a wide range of services, e.g. public works and public facilities, cleansing and public health, education, fire services and the police force work. These services are often provided by different public authorities in many countries. By contrast, Hong Kong civil servants are responsible for a wide variety of work.

As at June 30, 2020, the civil service employed about 177 300 people (excluding judges, judicial officers, officers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and locally engaged staff working in overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices) or about 4.6 per cent of Hong Kong's labour force. About 1 400 of them were directorate officers. Over 99 per cent of the service are local officers and there are about five men to three women employed. The annual growth of the civil service establishment had been mostly in the range of 1 per cent to 1.9 per cent between 2007-08 and 2019-20. In 2020-21, the civil service establishment is estimated to increase by about 3.2 per cent to facilitate the delivery of new policy initiatives and improved services to the public.

The civil service is a unified service in the sense that all its employees are subject to common appointment procedures and similar disciplinary codes.

**Appointments:** Appointment to the civil service is based on the principle of open and fair competition. Candidates have to go through a competitive process on the basis of merit and are appointed only if they possess the qualifications and capabilities required for the job. Promotion rank vacancies can be filled by promotion from within the service. In the cases of basic ranks, where promotion is not possible and where there is a special need, vacancies may be filled by open recruitment.

Entry requirements for civil service posts in general are set on the basis of academic or professional qualifications, technical skills, work experience, language proficiency and other qualities as required. Appropriate Chinese and English language proficiency requirements are specified for appointment to individual grades having regard to the job requirements of the grades concerned. In addition, applicants for civil service jobs will be assessed on their Basic Law knowledge. In accordance with the Basic Law, new recruits appointed on or after July 1, 1997 must be permanent residents of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, save for certain specified exceptions.

**Promotion:** Officers are promoted on the criteria of character, ability, experience and prescribed qualifications. All eligible officers are considered on an equal basis.

**Public Service Commission:** The Commission is an independent statutory body responsible for advising the CE on civil service appointment, promotion and discipline matters. The chairman and members of the Commission are appointed by the CE. The Commission seeks to safeguard the impartiality and integrity of the appointment and promotion systems in the civil service. It also aims to ensure that fairness and broad consistency in disciplinary punishment are maintained throughout the civil service. The Commission's remit is stipulated in the Public Service Commission Ordinance and its subsidiary regulations. The Commission is also consulted on policy and procedural issues pertaining to appointment, promotion and discipline applicable to the civil service.

**Independent Advisory Bodies on Pay and Conditions of Service:** Three independent bodies advise the CE on matters relating to pay and conditions of service of civil servants. Their members are from outside the Government. The Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service advises on pay and conditions of service matters affecting the civilian directorate and heads of disciplined services. The Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service advises on the principles and practices governing the pay and conditions of service of non-directorate staff except those in the judicial and disciplined services. The

Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service advises on the pay and conditions of service of disciplined services staff except the heads of the services. These advisory bodies are supported by the Joint Secretariat for the Advisory Bodies on Civil Service and Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service.

**Pay Policy and System:** It is the Government's established policy 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 maintain broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay.

Under the improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism, three sets of surveys are conducted to assess how the prevailing civil service pay compares with the pay in the private sector and, having regard to the findings of the surveys, whether and how civil service pay should be adjusted. The three sets of surveys are the annual pay trend survey, the six-yearly pay level survey and the starting salaries survey which will be conducted as and when necessary. Apart from these surveys, grade structure reviews for individual grades will also be conducted as and when necessary.

Apart from salaries, civil servants are eligible for various fringe benefits depending on their terms of appointment, rank, salary point, length of service and other eligibility rules. Proactive steps have been taken over the years to modernise the provision of fringe benefits to civil servants.

**Training and Development:** The main objectives of training and development are to equip civil servants with updated knowledge and skills, and to develop their potential so that they can continue to improve their performance and provide quality service to the public. Training and development programmes are carefully designed to enhance performance and to support the core values and functions of the civil service.

While bureaux and departments provide vocational training to meet job-specific needs, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute under CSB provides training services in four core areas to fulfil the common training needs of civil servants: senior executive development, national studies programmes, human resource management consultancy service and promotion of a continuous learning culture.

A wide range of leadership development programmes, thematic workshops and seminars, and the Secretariat Attachment Scheme are offered to enhance the capabilities of officers at the managerial level. National studies programmes include courses at Mainland institutes (such as the National Academy of Governance, China Foreign Affairs University, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, Wuhan University, Jinan University and Sun Yat-sen University). There are also thematic visits, staff exchange programmes with the Mainland as well as local programmes on national studies and the Basic Law. Through the provision of advisory services to departments, the Institute disseminates best practices in human resource development (such as training needs

analysis, formulation of learning strategies, development of competency profiles and performance management systems). Continuous learning is promoted through the e-learning portal, "Cyber Learning Centre Plus". The portal features comprehensive learning resources and training information to enable staff to learn at their own pace.

**Performance Management:** As an integral part of the overall human resource management strategy, performance management is a major tool in human resource planning (e.g. succession planning), development (e.g. training and job rotation) and management (e.g. confirmation to the permanent establishment, promotion, posting and action to address under-performance). Through the performance management process, supervisors and staff communicate on the work objectives and expected standard of performance. Proper management of the process helps maximise individual performance and improve weaknesses thereby enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service.

Performance management is an on-going process. While appraisal reports are normally completed annually, continuous communication between managers and staff on performance is essential. Transparency, objectivity and timeliness in appraisal are emphasised in the process.

Departmental management is encouraged to establish assessment panels to undertake levelling and moderating work among appraisal reports where necessary, identify substandard and outstanding performers for appropriate action, and adopt other management tools including target-based assessment and competency-based assessment to facilitate comprehensive and objective performance appraisal.

Good performance management ensures that exemplary performers are rewarded or given due recognition, whilst under-performers are managed, counselled and offered assistance to bring their performance up to requirement. For persistent substandard performers who fail to improve, action will be taken to retire them in the public interest. On the other hand, there are commendation schemes to award officers with meritorious performance. These schemes include, inter alia, the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme, the Commendation Letter Scheme and the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme.

**Integrity Management and Staff Discipline:** The Government is committed to upholding integrity and probity in the civil service under a three-pronged approach, namely prevention, education and training, and sanction. The emphasis of prevention is placed on the provision of clear policies and guidelines, and proper checks and balances. On education and training, the Government continues to provide integrity education and training at all levels in the civil service, and to embed the core value of integrity and honesty through integrity initiatives spearheaded by senior management of all bureaux/departments. On sanction, the Government takes a serious view on offences and misconduct committed by its staff particularly those involving a breach of trust in the public office or misuse of power. The Government is determined to take disciplinary action against the staff concerned to achieve

a punitive, deterrent and rehabilitative effect. All disciplinary cases are processed expeditiously subject to the adherence to principles of natural justice and observance of procedural propriety.

**Staff Relations:** There is a well-established staff consultative machinery at both the central and departmental levels. Centrally, there are four central consultative councils, namely the Senior Civil Service Council, the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council, the Police Force Council and the Disciplined Services Consultative Council. Through these councils, the Government consults staff on major changes which affect their conditions of service.

At the departmental level, there are departmental consultative committees which aim to improve cooperation and understanding between management and staff through regular exchange of views.

There are established channels to deal with staff grievances and complaints. Individual staff with problems can receive counselling, advice and help.

A Staff Suggestions Scheme is run by both CSB and departments to encourage staff to make suggestions for improving the efficiency of the civil service. Awards are given to those whose suggestions are found useful.