

## 9. REVIEW OF SCHEMES OF SERVICE AND QUALIFICATIONS

- 9.1 This Chapter stresses on the different aspects related to a scheme of service in general, including the review of the different components, with qualification being one of the most essential. All these are examined in determining the relative worth of a job. Therefore, if major changes are brought thereto, these may impact on the salary grading, *ceteris paribus*. We also report herein on the grant of higher qualification incentive.

### Scheme of Service

- 9.2 A scheme of service is an official document prescribed in accordance with regulations of the respective Service Commissions. Almost all established grades in the Public Service have a scheme of service except for a few high-level positions where their establishment and responsibilities have been provided by way of enactment. It specifies the mode of appointment to the grade, which encompasses the required qualification(s)/skills/experience required of the prospective job holder; roles and responsibilities; and duties. At times, where required the pattern of work is also mentioned. It, therefore, provides a clear delineation of duties and responsibilities, thereby ensuring proper deployment and judicious use of human resources.
- 9.3 The need to review a scheme of service is normally driven by: an evolution in work processes owing to emergence of new technologies; need for additional or new skills/competencies; obsolescence of existing qualifications required; enlargement/enrichment in duties; reviewed mandate of the organisation; and compliance with new laws/legislations, among others. Prior to bringing amendments to schemes of service, the organisational needs and objectives as well as the career path of officers are also to be considered.
- 9.4 During this process, the Ministry/Department concerned consults Staff Associations/Federations for their views and comments; an advance copy of the proposed scheme of service is submitted to the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms (MPSAR) for examination and the latter seeks the advice of the Bureau on any bearing on the salary grading further to the proposed changes. Lastly, the proposed scheme of service is forwarded to the appropriate Service Commission for consideration and agreement prior to its prescription in its official form.
- 9.5 Presently, there are around 2327 prescribed schemes of service for Ministries/Departments and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. According to the MPSAR's Circulars, schemes of service of grades in Parastatal Bodies are dealt with at the level of their respective parent Ministry, while their approval rests with their Board. We have been apprised that only in exceptional and complex cases or where it is considered essential, the parent Ministry concerned consults the MPSAR for advice and clarifications. Once the scheme of service is approved by the Board, it becomes official.

- 9.6 To expedite the processing of schemes of service of grades in the Civil Service, a Consultative Committee on Scheme of Service has been set up at the level of the MPSAR, comprising *inter alia* a representative of Federations. The Committee promotes meaningful discussions with stakeholders concerned.
- 9.7 Both the Federations and MPSAR made several proposals regarding schemes of service. These are reported and discussed below under the relevant sub-heading.

### Electronic Platform

- 9.8 With a view to digitalising the core HR functionalities including scheme of service, the MPSAR embarked on the implementation of the e-HR project. During consultation, the latter informed that a digital system for scheme of service has been developed under the Sandbox Framework with the aim of streamlining the consultation processes for approval.
- 9.9 The system has been implemented in a phased manner since 2022 and according to the Ministry, it is effectively contributing to reduce the time taken to finalise the prescription of schemes of service. Resultantly, same will be extended gradually to all Ministries/Departments. **We believe that such an initiative in this digital era would have a positive impact on the timely filling of vacancies in the Public Service.**

### Handbook for Drafting Schemes of Service

- 9.10 In 2013, the MPSAR came up with a Handbook for Drafting of Schemes of Service in the Public Sector, wherein guidelines for framing/reviewing of schemes of service have been provided to ensure consistency in this process. Considering that more than a decade has elapsed since then, we view that same should be updated to reflect any evolution in the various aspects of a scheme of service and recommendations/views of the Bureau on the subject. Since this document serves as a yardstick for every Ministry/Department/Organisation when drafting/bringing changes to schemes of service, we hold that it is high time for its updating. We are recommending accordingly.

### Recommendation 1

- 9.11 **We recommend that the MPSAR should revisit the Handbook for Drafting of Schemes of Service in the Public Sector by providing appropriate and clear guidelines that also reflect provisions of the PRB Report, new policies and trends.**

### Custodian of Schemes of Service

- 9.12 For this review, Federations represented that they should also participate when variations are brought to schemes of service of grades in Parastatal Bodies. According to them, such consultations would promote less strained relations between union/staff and Management and at the same time allow for collective negotiations.

- 9.13 The Bureau has observed in many cases that schemes of service of grades in certain Parastatal Bodies are significantly amended without examining their impact and seeking the prior advice of the Bureau on any bearing on salary. Such changes are often not according to the Bureau's framework and set policies. Had the proposed schemes of service been examined by the MPSAR, such distortions would not have occurred, but instead consistency and uniformity would have prevailed. We, therefore, consider that as custodian of schemes of service, the MPSAR should have an oversight on schemes of service of grades in Parastatal Bodies and Local Authorities. We are recommending in that direction.

## **Recommendation 2**

- 9.14 **We recommend that for consistency's sake and uniformity, the MPSAR should exercise oversight over all schemes of service of grades of Parastatal Bodies and Local Authorities and same to be reflected in its Handbook. Proposed amendments in the scheme of service of the above-mentioned grades should then be submitted through the MPSAR to the Bureau.**

## **Proposed Schemes of Service**

- 9.15 In the last Report, the Bureau recommended that the MPSAR should examine proposed amendments brought to schemes of service prior to submitting same to the Bureau together with their views and comments, to reduce the processing time involved in their prescription.
- 9.16 However, we noted with much concern that proposed schemes of service were still being submitted to the Bureau with several discrepancies coupled with lack of essential information. In certain cases, the qualifications requirement of a grade is reviewed in isolation without considering the need for any consequential amendments in the scheme of service of grades in the Cadre. At times, the MPSAR did not provide its views/comments on the proposed amendments but only transmitted the request from the Ministry/Department concerned. In the given circumstances, the time taken to examine the request is considerably delayed, the more so some requested information are submitted after several months. Moreover, in a few cases, holding of working sessions with parties concerned was necessary so as to better explain on the discrepancies noted and how to go about to thrash out the issue.

## **Recommendation 3**

- 9.17 **We recommend that the MPSAR should scrupulously examine all proposed schemes of service of new grades as well as proposed amendments to be brought to existing ones and their associated implications within the Cadre, if applicable and across the Public Service, before submitting same to the Bureau, together with its views and comments.**

## Alignment of Scheme of Service

- 9.18 Provision exists for alignment of schemes of service, wherever relevant, of similar/comparable grades in the Parastatal Bodies, Local Authorities and Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) with those in the Civil Service.
- 9.19 While this practice allows for a harmonisation of schemes of service of grades in the Public Service as far as generic duties are concerned, we hold that the specificity of the organisation should also be reflected in the duties devolving upon grades thereat. Management and the MPSAR should ensure that this aspect is not overlooked. We are, therefore, revisiting the present provision.

## Recommendation 4

- 9.20 We recommend that where the salaries of identical/comparable grades in Parastatal Bodies, Local Authorities and RRA are aligned on those of the Civil Service, the scheme of service of these grades should, wherever relevant, be amended along similar lines as those of their Civil Service counterparts.**
- 9.21 We further recommend that Management as well as the MPSAR should ensure that the specific duties devolving on grades concerned in their organisation are also reflected in their scheme of service during their alignment exercise.**

## Amendment of Scheme of Service

- 9.22 Notwithstanding the fact that the onus to amend schemes of service rests with Management, after consultations with relevant stakeholders, the Bureau has in certain instances, where deemed important, recommended or advised for changes to be brought thereto, with what obtains in its framework. Such cases relate mainly to a rationalisation with what has been recommended for comparable grades in the Public Sector and consequential amendments in schemes of service following creation or merging of grades and enlargement/enrichment in duties, among others. The impact of these amendments on salary has also been taken into consideration.
- 9.23 Moreover, following recommendations made in an overall review exercise, Ministries/Departments/Organisations are required to initiate necessary action for the framing of the scheme of service of new grades recommended in the Report and bringing amendments thereto, where required, within a period of four months as from the effective date of the Report.
- 9.24 The Federations submitted that there is need to reduce the timeframe to expedite the processing and prescription of schemes of service as the delay in conducting this exercise causes much prejudice to their members. The MPSAR on its side proposed a defined timeframe in that respect. After examining the proposals of both sides, we are reviewing the timeframe for an effective service delivery.

## Recommendation 5

- 9.25 **We recommend that further to recommendations made in this Report, Supervising/ Responsible Officers of Ministries/ Departments/ Organisations should ensure that schemes of service are framed or amended within a period of three months.**

### Business Continuity in Case of *Force Majeure*/Public Emergency

- 9.26 Further to the Pandemic, provision was made in the last Report for Responsible Officers of Ministries/Departments to identify all functions where the delivery of service may be made from a remote location and to initiate action to review the scheme of service of the grades identified to enable business continuity. However, no consensus was reached among all stakeholders and schemes of service were not reviewed accordingly.
- 9.27 For this Report, the MPSAR submitted that Ministries/Departments should be responsible for identifying the specific grades required to ensure business continuity in cases of *force majeure*/public emergency and such services may be delivered by making arrangements for the implementation of the Work From Home Protocol in line with the Ministry's Circular Letter No. 14 of 2021. **We consider the proposal of the MPSAR appropriate to cater for such situations.**

### Qualifications

- 9.28 The requirement to possess specific qualifications is set in schemes of service for the appointment/promotion of employees with the appropriate knowledge-base, skills-set and years of experience to be able to assume the responsibilities/duties of the job.
- 9.29 Presently, only the highest qualification required is specified in the schemes of service of entry grades in the Public Service. However, lower-level qualifications are also specified in certain cases, in view of the nature of the duties to be performed. **We consider the present provisions adequate and should be maintained.**
- 9.30 With the emergence of advanced technologies, development in the educational landscape with the increase in the number of private and public universities and an easier access to tertiary education, the Public Service has witnessed a considerable rise in the number of overqualified candidates. As a result, demands were made from several unions to upgrade qualifications in general at all levels. However, possession of only academic qualifications is not sufficient as the candidate also requires the relevant skills and experience to satisfy the employer's criteria for employability. Sector-specific surveys on labour shortages and skills mismatch indicate that employees with the required technical and soft skills and past working experience are hard to find by employers.

- 9.31 The Public Service Commission has pointed out that for vacancies reported, the qualifications requirement of the post has not been reviewed to align with current academic qualifications/courses offered by universities/tertiary institutions; and that appellations of certain qualifications have become obsolete. They also reported that difficulties are encountered in matching the qualifications held by candidates which have not been explicitly specified in schemes of service.
- 9.32 We consider that qualifications requirement should be properly reviewed, particularly for positions that are difficult to fill. Moreover, while setting the qualifications, the nature and level of duties of the grade should be taken on board for coherence. It is, therefore, imperative to re-assess the requirements for all roles and to update those where deem relevant to meet organisational needs of Ministries/Departments.
- 9.33 Against this backdrop, we hold that it is incumbent on every Ministry/Department to review qualifications of grades where there is need, and in so doing, consideration should as far as possible be given to those courses that are being dispensed by locally-based universities/higher education institutions. In parallel, Management should pay heed to the relevance and equivalence of the qualifications possessed by serving officers so as not to jeopardise their chance of promotion when reviewing the qualifications requirement.**

### **Equivalent Qualification**

- 9.34 At present, the requirement for an equivalent qualification to those mentioned in the scheme of service is inserted to cater for candidates who may not possess the exact qualifications as specified. The MPSAR views that this provision should be maintained.
- 9.35 Moreover, during consultation, the Public Service Commission submitted that many potential candidates are unable to obtain equivalence for the 'equivalent qualification'. It was also highlighted that the Higher Education Commission is not able to assess the equivalence of qualifications which are no longer being offered.
- 9.36 Against this background, we view that it would be more appropriate for the Government to consider the relevant entity/authority for determination of qualification's equivalence. We are recommending along these lines.

### **Recommendation 6**

- 9.37 We recommend that the practice of including the term "equivalent qualification" in the qualifications requirement of grades should continue.**

- 9.38 We further recommend that the MPSAR in collaboration with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science and Research, the University of Mauritius or any other public university and the Higher Education Commission should come up with an equivalency process for those qualifications where the PSC has reported difficulties.**

### **Upgrading of Qualifications Requirement**

- 9.39 For this review also, an array of requests was made by both Management and staff side for an upgrading of qualifications requirements of grades at all levels. The different reasons advanced include, among others, an evolution of duties performed; qualifications prescribed in schemes of service are no longer run by universities/higher education institutions; serving officers possess higher qualifications; changes in work processes with the advent of new technologies; to meet legal requirements; as a means to retain officers; and for a better remuneration package.
- 9.40 After examining the requests, we observed that an evolution in the nature of duties may not necessarily be of a higher level; for certain grades, instead of requiring a higher qualification, a customised/competency-based training could be mounted and provided to the officers to allow them to perform their duties more effectively; qualifications are set based on the nature and level of duties/responsibilities of the job rather than on those possessed by incumbents; and staff mobility has become more prevalent owing to the excess supply of overqualified candidates in the labour market.
- 9.41 It is to be highlighted that qualification is one of the compensable factors in job evaluation. When same is upgraded in cases where the nature and level of duties have remained the same, there would be no incidence on the salary. Thus, an upgrading in qualifications may not fetch a higher salary. Merely, inflating qualifications may make it difficult to create a more diverse workforce, thus rendering the higher qualification a self-inflicted obstacle to recruitment.
- 9.42 In the circumstance explained, we consider that it would be more appropriate for Management to properly assess the need for any upgrading in qualifications taking into account the actual duties of the grade and functions of the organisation. As regards the provision made in the previous Reports for gradually raising the minimum qualifications requirement for grades requiring a degree to a postgraduate degree, except in scarcity areas, we consider it to be still valid and should be maintained.

### **Recommendation 7**

- 9.43 We recommend that, only after conducting a proper assessment of the different aspects of the grade concerned to determine whether incumbents who possess the existing prescribed qualifications cannot perform the core duties/responsibilities of the grade that involve at least 50% of their working time, should Ministries/Departments/ Organisations,**

after consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the MPSAR, consider upgrading the qualifications requirement of entry grades and/or promotional entry grades.

9.44 We further recommend that the MPSAR should submit the proposed schemes of service to the Bureau for advice on any bearing on salary grading, together with its views and findings thereon.

9.45 We also recommend that the competent authorities should consider raising the qualifications requirement for entry grades requiring a Degree with salary in a scale the maximum of which is not less than Rs 77750, to a postgraduate Degree or an equivalent qualification, except in scarcity areas.

9.46 The above recommendations should also apply to Parastatal Bodies, Local Authorities and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

#### Qualifications for Grade-to-Grade Promotion

9.47 Presently for a grade-to-grade promotion, where two or more qualifications are specified, the officer in the grade just below, who possesses the whole of the higher/highest qualification but lacks only part of the lower qualification, is also considered for promotion, provided he satisfies all the other requirements of the promotional grade. **We consider this provision still valid and are maintaining it.**

#### Qualifying Salary Point

9.48 The PSC remarked that the qualifications requirement in the scheme of service of certain grades comprises a qualifying salary point, which leads to recruitment difficulties, inasmuch as the salary point does not necessarily reflect its revised corresponding one. According to the MPSAR's Handbook for the Drafting of Schemes of Service in the Public Sector, salary points should, as far as possible, not be inserted under item "Qualifications" in schemes of service. **In this context, Management should initiate necessary action to review the schemes of service of grades concerned and propose valid amendments thereto.**

#### Experience

9.49 In addition to the qualifications requirement, experience/post-qualification experience in the relevant field is another requisite that needs to be satisfied to join a grade. This requirement ensures that prospective candidates possess the necessary knowledge through experience prior to shouldering effectively the responsibilities of the post.

9.50 Provisions exist for Responsible Officers to ensure, as far as practicable, that officers are made to rotate to acquire experience and make them conversant with the various aspects of the job.



9.51 Furthermore, Management should ensure that the terms “Management, Middle Management, Senior Management and Top Management” be avoided as far as possible, when setting the requirement for experience.

**9.52 We consider that such practices should continue.**

### **Recognition/Accreditation of Prior Experience**

9.53 Recognition/accreditation of prior learning presently exists for appointment of officers who lack certain technical/vocational qualifications but have acquired knowledge and skills/competencies through experience over the years. However, this is subject to the experiential learning being recognised by an approved body. Simultaneously, Management should continue to identify alternative modes of training/qualification particularly in scarcity areas, to ensure that staff are able to perform their duties effectively.

9.54 We consider these provisions still relevant and should continue to apply.

### **Recommendation 8**

**9.55 We recommend that for posts requiring technical/vocational qualifications, consideration be given to the appointment of candidates who do not possess part of the qualifications but have acquired a minimum of 10 years’ relevant experience/competence which has been duly recognised by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority or any other recognised body.**

**9.56 We also recommend that Management should identify alternative modes of training/qualifications for grades requiring technical/vocational qualifications which are considered to be scarce. These should then be submitted to the MPSAR for consideration.**

### **Aggregate Years of Service**

9.57 Several discrepancies have been noted while examining proposed schemes of service submitted to the Bureau regarding the aggregate years of service required in a grade or cadre or more than one level for appointment/promotion to another position.

9.58 We consider that Ministries/Departments/Organisations should invariably consult the MPSAR when setting the aggregate years of service in schemes of service. **For consistency, the MPSAR may consider the advisability of evolving a guideline on aggregate years of service in its Handbook for Drafting of Schemes of Service.**

## Core Duties

- 9.59 New grades have been created in the different parts of Volume 2 of this Report for an improved service delivery. In this respect, we have provided their respective mode of appointment and the core duties that incumbent(s) would be required to perform. These duties being the main ones would normally involve at least 50% of the employees' working time. **We hold that Management may consider updating the duties to reflect the actual requirements of the job and submit the proposed schemes of service, through the proper channel, to the Bureau for advice on any bearing on salary grading.**

## Registration with Recognised Bodies

- 9.60 At present, officers in certain professional grades who are required to be registered with a recognised professional institute/body are presently refunded the full amount of the annual subscription fees. Those who are not required to be registered as per their scheme of service but who opt for same so as to keep in touch with the latest development in their fields, are in turn, refunded part of the annual subscription fees, subject to satisfying certain conditions.
- 9.61 Proposals have been made from different quarters for the refund of subscription fees to officers who are required to be registered with the Allied Health Professionals Council (AHPC) in order to be able to practice. In this respect, the Bureau has been apprised that the scheme of service of the grades concerned in the different Ministries is still under process for amendment in line with the requirements of the AHPC Act. **After examination, we hold that it would be more appropriate for the matter to be dealt with at the level of the Ministry concerned.**
- 9.62 We consider the present provisions adequate and are therefore maintaining same, while revising the ceiling of the annual subscription fee refunded.

## Recommendation 9

- 9.63 **We recommend that an officer, who, by virtue of his scheme of service, is required to be registered with a recognised Professional Institute/Body, should be refunded the full amount of annual subscription fees payable to not more than one of the relevant professional bodies, unless stated otherwise.**
- 9.64 **We also recommend that an officer drawing salary in a scale, the maximum of which is not less than Rs 77750 who, though not required to be registered with professionally recognised Institutes/Bodies according to the relevant prescribed scheme of service but has opted to register himself to keep abreast of latest development in his specific field of activities may be granted, subject to the approval of the Responsible Officer, an assistance of 75% of the annual subscription fee subject to a maximum of Rs 4000, provided that the knowledge/knowhow derived**

**from being a member of the Institutes/Bodies is of relevance to the duties of the officer.**

### **Continuous Professional Development**

- 9.65 Professionals who are required every year to achieve a minimum number of units of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to maintain their membership in their respective professional institute/body, are provided in that respect, a financial assistance of 75% of the total amount up to a maximum of Rs 14450.
- 9.66 Representations have been made, among others, for full refund of the membership fees. Since the allowance is meant as a financial assistance, we consider that the present mode of compensation is appropriate. We are, nevertheless, revising the rate.

### **Recommendation 10**

- 9.67 We recommend that for grades requiring membership to recognised Institutes/Bodies as per their scheme of service and where the achievement of a minimum number of Continuous Professional Development units is essential for continued membership, the incumbents should be provided a financial assistance of 85% of the total expenses in relation thereto, subject to a maximum of Rs 14450 annually.**

### **Higher Qualification Incentive (HQI)**

- 9.68 Transitional provisions were made in the last PRB Report for the gradual phasing out of the HQI scheme. Hence, officers who were undergoing or had enrolled for higher studies on or before 31 December 2021 were exceptionally allowed to benefit from the grant of HQI, subject to satisfying set criteria, prior to its discontinuation.
- 9.69 Requests of Unions were geared towards, among others, re-introduction of the grant of incremental credit for possessing additional higher qualifications instead of the HQI scheme; and for the latter not be restricted to scarcity areas only; and compensating for additional qualifications which are not directly relevant to the duties of the grade. During consultative meetings, parties were informed of the rationale for introducing the HQI scheme and the phasing out of the grant of incremental credits for possessing additional qualifications. Appropriate explanations were provided on requests that could not be acceded to due to technical reasons.
- 9.70 The Bureau considers that further to the development in the educational landscape, triggered by an increase in the number of private and public universities and coupled with an easier access to tertiary education, thereby leading to a considerable rise in the number of overqualified candidates in the market, including in the Public Service, there is no ground to maintain the HQI Scheme in its original form. However, we are maintaining the payment of HQI

to public officers for possessing additional higher qualifications in scarcity areas, subject to the recommendation of the Responsible Officer and approval of the MPSAR.

## HQI for Scarcity Areas

### Recommendation 11

- 9.71** We recommend the payment of lump sum rates of HQI to eligible officers for possessing additional qualification in scarcity areas, which is directly relevant to the performance of their duties and higher than that specified in the scheme of service of their respective grade, as per the table below:

Qualification	Amount (Rs)
Doctorate and above including specialist qualifications for medical profession	33000
Master's Degree	22000
Bachelor's Degree	17600

**AND** subject to satisfying the following criteria:

- (i) the additional higher qualification has been acquired following an examination and is duly recognised by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority or the Higher Education Commission;
- (ii) the officers concerned should hold a substantive appointment; and
- (iii) they should not have benefitted from the payment of HQI or Incremental credit for possessing additional higher qualification for more than twice in their career.

- 9.72** We also recommend that an officer:

- (i) who has already benefited from the payment of HQI for additional higher qualification in one capacity should not be granted HQI anew for the same qualifications in another capacity;
- (ii) should not benefit from the payment of HQI for more than twice in his career; and
- (iii) should not be granted lump sum rate for HQI in respect of another qualification pitched at same level as that for which he has already benefited from the payment of HQI.

- 9.73** We further recommend that where different qualifications are laid down in a scheme of service, the highest one should be taken as the basic qualification for the purpose of determining eligibility for payment of HQI.

**9.74 We additionally recommend that:**

- (i) for the purpose of implementation of paragraph 9.71, the MPSAR, in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission, should draw up a list of courses falling under scarcity areas for the Public Service and conduct a periodic review of same; and**
- (ii) the provisions pertaining to HQI should also be applicable in Parastatal and other Statutory Bodies, Local Authorities and Rodrigues Regional Assembly.**

