

16.9 INCREMENTAL CREDIT AND HIGHER QUALIFICATION INCENTIVE

- 16.9.1 In the Public Sector, the salaries attached to most grades are in salary scales and some grades have a flat salary, that is, one salary point. The salary scales of the grades are segments of a Master Salary Scale. Normally an employee or officer joins the initial salary point of the salary scale of the grade. Movement thereon is incremental based on performance of work, behaviour/conduct and commitment to meet the standard of the performance agreement in the Performance Management System. The annual increment must be earned by an employee and is not as of right.
- 16.9.2 In the context of this review exercise, some Federations expressed that the current arrangement for the grant of an annual increment on the basis of performance give rise to frustration among employees and requested that the grant of annual increment should be automatic. Other Federations consider that the present arrangement is appropriate for an efficient public service. The Bureau holds that the current arrangement is valid and enforceable for efficiency of service.

Incremental Credit

- 16.9.3 Certain specific categories of employees are granted incremental credits up to a maximum of three as recognition for experience acquired under supervision prior to joining the service. In addition, provision exists for the grant of incremental credit to employees having completed temporary service in the same capacity prior to substantive appointment.

Incremental Credit for Experience

- 16.9.4 In the 2016 PRB Report, provision was made for the grant of one incremental credit for each year of experience subject to a maximum of three, as hereunder:
- (i) Specific categories of employees reckoning:
 - (a) post-registration experience of professionals such as in the case of Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officers and Dental Surgeon/Senior Dental Surgeons;
 - (b) experience after having obtained the right to practice from the appropriate registered professional body or Council as in the case of Architects, Engineers and others;
 - (c) post-qualification relevant experience acquired by other categories of graduates who may not normally require registration or authorisation before practice; and
 - (d) post-qualification experience in a recognised hospital for fully qualified nurses.

- (ii) public officers having acquired years of experience in a similar capacity who move from one institution to another where both are covered by the Pay Research Bureau and the officer joins at the initial point in the salary scale of the newly promoted/appointed grade.
- 16.9.5 Provision was also made for the grant of more than three incremental credits for relevant experience in areas of scarcity. In cases where an organisation encounters difficulty in the recruitment and retention of staff, incremental credit for experience acquired prior to joining the service beyond three increments was also allowed, subject to the approval of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (MPSAIR).
- 16.9.6 In the context of this Report, Federations/Unions/Staff Associations have made no representations in respect of incremental credit for past experience.
- 16.9.7 The MPSAIR has, among others, submitted that the effective date of payment for incremental credit for past experience should be as from the date of application, instead of date of confirmation in view of the impact on funds due to back payment; and direct cases be approved under delegated power on the basis of the eligibility criteria for incremental credit for past experience.
- 16.9.8 The Standing Committee on Higher Qualification Incentive and Incremental Credit for Past Experience has observed that officers applied for the grant of Incremental Credit for Past Experience many years after their eligibility, which ultimately resulted in administrative inconvenience and earmarking of funds. To address the issue, provision was made in the Addendum Report to the 2016 PRB Report for the payment of Incremental Credit for Experience as from date of application.
- 16.9.9 The Bureau has also observed that though the provision for the grant of incremental credit for experience at paragraph 16.9.4(ii), was primarily meant for those employees satisfying the criteria laid at paragraph 16.9.4(i), there have been instances where the grant of such incremental credit have been extended to non-graduates. Taking into consideration that there is no dearth of qualified candidates for appointment/filling of vacancies for grades not requiring degree qualifications, the Bureau considers that there is need to restore the initial philosophy for the grant of incremental credit for experience. Further, the Bureau has studied the proposals of all stakeholders and is bringing changes wherever deemed appropriate.

Recommendation 1

16.9.10 We recommend that:

- (i) officers who fall under categories listed at paragraph 16.9.4 (i) (a) to (d), confirmed in service, and holding a substantive appointment in their current grade should, upon production of duly certified documentary evidence of experience acquired under supervision in a similar capacity either locally or internationally, under licensed private practice or in a legally recognised institution or firm, be eligible for one incremental credit**

for each year of experience acquired up to a maximum of three increments as from date of application;

- (ii) employees falling under the categories laid down at paragraph 16.9.4 (i) (a) to (d) employed in either the Civil Service or Parastatal and other Statutory Bodies or Local Authorities or Private Secondary Schools, reported upon by the Pay Research Bureau, who move from one institution where the Civil Service is considered as a single institution, to another where both are covered by the PRB should be eligible for one incremental credit, for each year of experience acquired in a similar capacity up to a maximum of three increments as from the date of application, provided the officer has been granted the initial salary in the salary scale of the newly promoted/appointed grade;
- (iii) where an organisation encounters difficulty in the recruitment and retention of staff, incremental credit for experience beyond three increments may be granted subject to the approval of the MPSAIR;
- (iv) the Standing Committee under the Chairmanship of the MPSAIR comprising representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority, the Higher Education Commission, the Pay Research Bureau and, where necessary, the Ministry/Department/Organisation concerned, should continue to examine applications for incremental credit for experience acquired prior to joining the service and make awards as appropriate; and
- (v) notwithstanding the above provisions, incremental credit for experience acquired prior to joining the service should not be granted to employees:
 - (a) who have benefitted from a negotiated salary at entry representing more than three increments at initial of the salary scale of the grade concerned through any specific recommendations contained in other Volumes of this Report; and
 - (b) who have been recruited in grades where at least three years' post-qualification experience is a requirement for appointment thereto.

Incremental Credit for Temporary Service

- 16.9.11 Officers, whether on first appointment or not, are presently granted one incremental credit for each completed year of temporary service in the same capacity as for the substantive position, provided that certain conditions are satisfied.
- 16.9.12 In the context of this Report, no proposal/representation has been received from the staff side. On the other hand, the MPSAIR has submitted that all requests for incremental credit for temporary service are presently being dealt with at the level of the respective Ministry/Department. We are bringing no change to the current provisions.

Recommendation 2

16.9.13 We recommend that one incremental credit for each completed year of temporary service in the same capacity as for the substantive position should continue to be paid to employees whether on first appointment or not provided that:

- (i) their service is continuous;**
- (ii) the adjusted salary is not higher than what the officer would have drawn had he been appointed in a substantive capacity on joining the grade concerned;**
- (iii) in case of first appointment, eligible employees appointed on or after 01 January 2021 do not draw a higher salary than officers appointed in the same capacity before 01 January 2021 and having a similar period of service or more;**
- (iv) such incremental credit is payable as from the date the officer is appointed substantively in the post or the date of confirmation, as applicable; and**
- (v) where the temporary service, in the case of a confirmed officer, is less than one year, one incremental credit is payable as from the date the officer completes one year service in the grade or on 01 January, whichever is the earlier.**

Incremental Credit for Actingship/Assignment of duties

16.9.14 Officers appointed to act/assign duties in a higher office and subsequently appointed to the same office, after a selection exercise and in cases when appointment takes effect as from the date of assumption of duty, are currently eligible to one incremental credit for each completed year of actingship/assignment of duties provided that such actingship/assignment of duties is continuous; the adjusted salary is not higher than what the officer would have drawn had he been appointed in a substantive capacity on the date he was appointed to act/assigned higher duties; and such incremental credit is payable as from the date the officer is appointed substantively in the post. **After thorough analysis, it has been found that the current provision is inequitable and fraught with implementation problems and is, therefore, being waived.**

Higher Qualification Incentive

16.9.15 In its 2016 Report, the Bureau recommended the payment of lump sum rates of Higher Qualification Incentive (HQI) for qualifications which are directly relevant to the performance of the duties of the grade and are higher than the qualifications specified in the scheme of service subject to satisfying the following conditions:

- (i) the additional qualifications are obtained following an examination and are duly recognised by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority or the Higher Education Commission;

- (ii) where different qualifications are laid down in a particular scheme of service, the highest one is taken as the basic qualification for the purpose of determining eligibility for payment of HQI;
 - (iii) only officers holding a substantive appointment are considered for the grant of HQI for additional qualifications;
 - (iv) officers who have already benefited from the payment of HQI for additional qualifications in one capacity are not to be granted HQI anew for the same qualifications in another capacity;
 - (v) the additional qualification is not a requirement for promotion/selection in the cadre; and
 - (vi) officers have not benefitted from the payment of HQI/Incremental credit for more than twice in their career.
- 16.9.16 In the context of this review exercise, the Federations have expressed that the payment of lump sum rate of HQI has led to frustrations and demotivation among public sector officers opting for higher studies. They have unanimously and vehemently requested for the reintroduction of the payment of incremental credit, as it was prior to the 2016 PRB Report.
- 16.9.17 The MPSAIR has submitted that since acquiring degree qualifications are being sponsored by the Government, no HQI should be granted for holders of bachelor level qualifications from universities receiving grants from the Government. Nevertheless, officers in service should be motivated to pursue further studies. They have also proposed that the approval for the payment of lump sum rate of HQI should be delegated to Supervising Officers of Ministries/Departments, provided that the request satisfies the eligibility criteria for HQI.
- 16.9.18 The rationale for the introduction of incremental credit was to address the need for public sector officers to acquire higher qualifications for better service delivery. Moreover, Responsible Officers were to ensure that the higher qualifications acquired by public sector officers were in line with the attainment of the organisational goal. Instead, it has been represented that officers have embarked on any course with a view to obtain increment and for career exploration. Moreover, the grant of incremental credit for higher qualifications has in subsequent reports led to supersession of salaries whereby junior officers following the grant of incremental credit, drew higher salaries than their senior who were granted a lump sum. In addition, establishment of several universities and free education at tertiary level have resulted on the availability of abundance of qualified candidates on the market.
- 16.9.19 During consultative meetings, it has been widely canvassed that the Bureau would be moving towards the gradual phasing out of HQI. We are therefore reviewing the existing provisions.

16.9.20 The Bureau considers that for judicious use of public funds and due to availability of qualified candidates, the need for HQI for acquisition of higher qualifications has to be prioritised. However, as a transition provision, public officers who are undergoing or would enrol for higher studies on or before **31 December 2021** would exceptionally be allowed to benefit from the grant of HQI. **We recommend that this scheme should lapse thereafter.**

Recommendation 3

16.9.21 We recommend the payment of lump sum rates of Higher Qualification Incentive (HQI) as per the table below for qualifications which are directly relevant to the performance of the duties of the grade and are higher than the qualifications specified in the scheme of service of the grade and subject to satisfying all criteria listed at paragraph 16.9.15 above.

Qualification	Amount (Rs)
Doctorate and above including specialist qualifications for medical profession.	30000
Master's Degree	20000
Bachelor Degree	16000

16.9.22 We further recommend that the Standing Committee under the Chairmanship of the MPSAIR and comprising representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority, the Higher Education Commission, the Pay Research Bureau and, where necessary, the Ministry/Department/Organisation concerned should continue to look into the award of HQI and consider all related cases of disputes. However, straightforward cases should be dealt with at the level of the MPSAIR.

16.9.23 We also recommend that:

- (i) an officer should not be eligible for HQI for more than twice in his or her career;
- (ii) an officer should not be granted lump sum rate for HQI for a second qualification pitched at same level; and
- (iii) no HQI should be granted for higher qualifications in the event that same is a requirement for promotion/selection in the cadre.

16.9.24 We additionally recommend that the provisions pertaining to HQI should also be applicable to Parastatal and Other Statutory Bodies and Local Authorities and straightforward cases should be dealt with at their level. However, the Standing Committee mentioned at paragraph 16.9.22 above should continue to consider cases of disputes in regard to Parastatal and Other Statutory Bodies and Local Authorities that are submitted through the respective parent Ministry.

HQI for scarcity areas

Recommendation 4

16.9.25 The Bureau recommends that notwithstanding the above provisions, organisations may grant the payment of HQI as per table at paragraph 16.9.21 above for qualifications in scarcity areas, subject to recommendation of Responsible Officer and approval of the MPSAIR, to public officers who have enrolled in higher studies after 31 December 2021 provided the criteria at paragraph 16.9.23 are adhered to.
