

LCQ15: Grade structure review for disciplined services grades

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua Law, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

Some trade unions of the disciplined services have relayed to me that as compared with civilian staff, disciplined services staff are required to have better physical fitness, have a higher sense of discipline and work shifts more frequently, while the work of disciplined services is more dangerous than that of civilian staff. However, the current remuneration packages for disciplined services staff have not sufficiently reflected such factors. For instance, the maximum pay point for Customs Officers is lower than that for Assistant Clerical Officers, whose entry requirement on academic qualifications is similar. Moreover, the pay difference between successive pay points in the pay scale for the former is smaller than that for the latter. Given that the Government is conducting a grade structure review for the disciplined services grades, will the Government inform this Council whether the review includes examining the raising of the pay levels for disciplined services staff (particularly for the rank and file), and widening the pay difference between successive pay points in their pay scales; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The civil service pay policy is 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 pay and private sector pay. To implement this policy, the Government devised the "Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism" in 2007, under which civil service pay is compared with private sector pay through regularly conducted pay surveys. Nevertheless, as it is not possible to find comparable posts and jobs in the private sector for the disciplined services, and individual disciplined services grades are also facing recruitment or retention difficulties, the Chief Executive-in-Council therefore decided in October last year to conduct a grade structure review (GSR) for the disciplined services, and once every 10 years in future, to ensure that the grade structure and remuneration of the disciplined services are effective in attracting and retaining talents.

The Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service (SCDS) has accepted the Government's invitation to conduct a GSR for the disciplined services grades. At the same time, the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service (SDCS) has also agreed to

advise on the salaries and conditions of service of the heads of the disciplined services. The two advisory bodies will conduct the review independently to consider the appropriate pay scales for each of the grades and ranks and the grade structure of each disciplined services, etc. The two advisory bodies will also consider the work nature, job duties and workload of the disciplined services; changes in public expectation towards the disciplined services; the recruitment and retention situation of the disciplined services; and other factors involving wider community interests (e.g. financial consideration). The SCDS and SDCS have commenced work, including meeting the management and the staff side representatives of the disciplined services and inviting them to submit proposals. If the staff side have any suggestions or views on, among other things, the pay of individual grades or the differences between pay points of the pay scales, they may raise them with the SCDS and the SDCS. In the course of the review, the two advisory bodies will maintain communication with the management and the staff side of the disciplined services. They will thoroughly consider proposals submitted by the management and the staff side and listen to stakeholders' views. It is expected that the review will take around 18 months for completion by around mid-2020.