

政府總部  
公務員事務局  
香港下亞厘畢道



CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU  
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT  
LOWER ALBERT ROAD  
HONG KONG

本函檔號 Our Ref.: AP/C241/177 Pt.6  
來函檔號 Your Ref.:

電話號碼 Tel. No.: 2810 3063  
3106 3004  
傳真號碼 Fax No.:  
電郵地址 E-mail: csbts@csb.gcn.gov.hk

11 May 2004

Ms Rosalind Ma  
Clerk to Panel  
LegCo Panel on Public Service  
Legislative Council Building  
8 Jackson Road, Central  
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Ma,

**Concerns expressed by the Khalsa Diwan  
(Sikh Temple) Hong Kong**

Thank you for your letter of 26 April relaying the Chairman's request for our response to the issue raised by leaders of the Khalsa Diwan (Sikh Temple) Hong Kong to the Secretary General of the Legislative Council Secretariat on a social occasion about the difficulties of their followers in meeting the Chinese language proficiency requirement when applying for civil service posts. Our response is as follows.

**Policy on language proficiency requirements**

It is our policy to develop and maintain a civil service which can operate efficiently and effectively in the official languages of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, i.e. Chinese and English. This is to meet the operational needs of the great majority of the civil service positions, which involves frequent communication, both oral and written, with members of the public. Since 1995, all civil service recruits appointed on permanent terms are required to be proficient in both Chinese and English. To meet the rising expectation of the community on the quality of the civil service and to improve our service to the community, we have further enhanced the language proficiency requirements with effect from January 2003, as follows –

- (a) for civil service posts requiring degree or professional qualifications, applicants should pass the two language papers (i.e. Use of Chinese and Use of English) in the Common Recruitment Examination, or equivalent; and
- (b) for civil service posts requiring general academic qualifications set below degree level, applicants should attain at least Grade E in Chinese Language and English Language (Syllabus B) in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, or equivalent.

We recognise that under certain circumstances, some departments may have special operational needs to recruit persons who may not meet the stipulated language proficiency requirements. We therefore allow departments to seek exemption, before commencement of the relevant recruitment exercises, to appoint candidates who do not meet the specified language standard. Such applications for exemption must be fully justified and would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

#### **Our views**

Civil service posts are filled to meet functional needs for delivery of public service. It is therefore important that post holders are proficient in Chinese and English in both oral and written form so that they can effectively communicate with the community. If individual departments consider it operationally necessary to recruit candidates who do not meet the stipulated language proficiency requirements, the existing mechanism already allows for exemption to be sought. We therefore do not consider it appropriate to give preferential treatment to a particular group of candidates on a service-wide basis by waiving the language proficiency requirements for them in the job application stage and allowing them to attain the specified language standard only after appointment. To do so would run against our policy and would not be equitable to other candidates interested in joining the civil service.

I am afraid we cannot be more helpful in this case but trust you would appreciate that we have practical need to maintain the existing mechanism.

Yours sincerely,



Agnes Wong (Miss)  
*for* Secretary for the Civil Service