

For discussion
on 21 October 2024

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Policy Measures of Civil Service Bureau in the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address

Purpose

This paper outlines the policy initiatives relating to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) featured in the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address (Policy Address) and the Policy Address Supplement.

Details

2. The current-term Government strives to strengthen our governance systems and the civil service management system. For example, we have updated the Civil Service Code, and introduced a mechanism to mobilise the Government at all levels to enhance emergency response. The Chief Executive has proposed various measures in the Policy Address to continue to strengthen the civil service management system.

Strengthening civil service training

Patriotic education

3. To equip the civil service for effective governance, establishing the mindset of a staunch patriot is of utmost importance. We actively promote patriotic education to strengthen civil servants' understanding of the country's history as well as their appreciation for and recognition of the Chinese culture.

4. Training provided by the Civil Service College (CSC) places a significant emphasis on mindset building, making use of elements such as historical background, deeds of heroes, martyrs and role models, and traditional Chinese culture to enhance the emotional impact of its programmes so as to reinforce civil servants' patriotic spirit. In particular, the CSC launched the Thematic Study Programme on Modern Chinese History in September 2024 to deepen civil servants' understanding of the history of the country's endeavours over the past century and Hong Kong's role and mission in the journey of national rejuvenation so that they will be proactive in contributing to Hong Kong's development and the country's prosperity. This programme is a key initiative of the CSC to deepen patriotic education. The CSC will continue to organise the programme for civil servants so that they can better understand their roles and responsibilities and reflect on how they can contribute to the development of the country and Hong Kong.

5. Furthermore, civil servants must have a full grasp of the policy objectives and strategies of our nation. To this end, we will organise seminars and learning activities in a timely manner to elaborate on the important policies and the spirit of speeches/reports of the Central People's Government, enabling principal officials and civil servants of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to develop a more acute and profound understanding of the core essence and spirit. Heads of departments and directorate civil servants will also share their learning with colleagues in their respective bureaux and departments (B/Ds) after attending the seminars. Besides, the CSC will incorporate the relevant contents into its training programmes for civil servants at all ranks, encouraging them to integrate their learning into their own work and implement it across policy objectives and measures on different fronts.

Governance Talents Development Programme

6. To enhance the governance capabilities of leaders, the CSC will launch the Governance Talents Development Programme within 2025. This long-term programme seeks to garner wide participation from B/Ds, bringing together officers with potential for advancement as nominated by different B/Ds. Through a series of targeted and ongoing training

initiatives including local, Mainland, and overseas leadership development programmes, platforms for regular interactions and exchanges with the governing team and elite leaders from various sectors, as well as personal development coaching etc., the programme aims to nurture governance talents with a macro perspective and professional leadership capabilities, dedicated to serving both our country and Hong Kong. Besides, the CSC will enhance its internal research capability building, establishing collaborative platforms with universities, think tanks and research institutions to conduct research in public policy and governance.

Civil Service Exchange Programme

7. In 2023, the CSB launched the Civil Service Exchange Programme with Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The first batch of 10 middle and senior level civil servants of Hong Kong joined the exchange programme in Shenzhen from December 2023 to early March 2024, taking part in projects that promote Hong Kong-Shenzhen cooperation and city development. We are discussing with the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the People's Government of Guangdong Province the arrangements for selecting civil servants for exchanges with HKSAR government departments. Moreover, the CSB will sign staff exchange agreements with Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Wuhan and Hangzhou within 2024 for launching civil service staff exchange activities in an orderly manner.

National studies and international training

8. After the pandemic, the CSC resumed arrangements for middle, senior, and directorate level officers to attend training programmes in the Mainland. These programmes introduce participants to the policies of governance and macro strategies for development of the country so as to help them develop holistic views and strengthen their patriotic spirit and leadership skills. Since 2024, about 1 200 middle and senior level civil servants have completed training at nine Mainland institutions (namely the National Academy of Governance, Tsinghua University, Peking University, China Foreign Affairs University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, Wuhan University, Jinan University and Sun Yat-sen

University). Individual B/Ds also arrange for their staff to take part in Mainland programmes according to their own operational needs.

9. Starting from 2022, we have been jointly organising the Master's Degree in Public Policy Programme with the Peking University for senior civil servants with potential for advancement, so as to deepen their understanding of the national development and strengthen their strategic vision by studying at the Peking University in the first year and completing their thesis in Hong Kong in the second year. In addition to learning theories, participants will also visit various places in the Mainland for in-depth exchanges with scholars, officials and the public, seeing for themselves the national development and people's lives. After consolidating and assessing the learning outcomes of the first two cohorts, we consider that the programme has achieved its objectives and will seek long-term collaboration with the Peking University.

10. Following the abatement of the pandemic, the CSB has resumed arrangements for middle- and senior-ranking civil servants with potential to attend training at overseas institutions. Take the past year for example, 24 Administrative Officers have attended programmes on public administration, international relations, and leadership development at Sciences Po in Paris of France and the London School of Economics and Political Science in the United Kingdom respectively. Apart from the CSB, individual departments/grades will also arrange for civil servants under their charge to attend executive development programmes at renowned overseas institutions (e.g. the University of Oxford, the International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland, INSEAD, and the National University of Singapore), and to participate in training programmes or attachment schemes related to their professional fields at different places (e.g. France, Italy, Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom).

United Nations Junior Professional Officer Programme

11. We first joined the United Nations (UN) Junior Professional Officer Programme in 2019, under which two batches totalling 17 young public officers from the HKSAR were recommended by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for secondment to the UN offices in New York of the

United States, Geneva of Switzerland, Vienna of Austria and Nairobi of Kenya as Chinese personnel. With the support of the Central People's Government, the HKSAR Government will continue to send civil servants to work in the UN offices worldwide through the Programme, thereby enhancing their experience in participating in the affairs of international organisations.

Optimisation of the use of civil service manpower resources

12. The CSB has been striving to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the civil service by encouraging departments to review their manpower profile and suitably deploy their manpower resources from time to time, with a view to implementing the Government's various policy initiatives and measures effectively. We will, with the assistance of the Digital Policy Office, introduce management tools and technological solutions to departments in 2025 through various means such as reports, briefings and visits to departments. We will continue to endeavour to drive the adoption of management measures and digitalisation among departments to reprioritise and re-organise their work, capitalise on technological solutions and streamline work processes, so as to optimise the use of the civil service manpower resources.

Digitalisation of civil service recruitment

13. Leveraging technology, applications for civil service jobs are handled in a more environmentally friendly and efficient way. For the recruitment of clerical and secretarial grades, and the joint recruitment of Administrative Officer, Executive Officer II, Assistant Trade Officer II and Transport Officer II, all applicants have to submit on-line applications. Applications submitted by post or fax are no longer accepted.

Digitalisation of Basic Law and National Security Law Test

14. A pass result in the Basic Law and National Security Law Test (BLNST) is a basic requirement for appointment to the civil service. At present, the CSB organises local BLNST (Degree/Professional Grades) in June and October every year for prospective applicants for civil service

posts of degree or professional grades and issues examination results to them within a month after the examination. The number of candidates invited for the examinations in 2024 is about 32 100. As an effort of pursuing digitalisation of public services, the Government will launch a digitalised BLNST (Degree/Professional Grades) in 2025 providing digitalised examination service at a fixed venue with no less than 60 000 examination slots each year. Persons interested in applying for civil service posts at degree or professional level will no longer need to observe the fixed examination schedule. They can submit applications for examination anytime, sit for the examination as early as possible and obtain the examination result on the day of examination. The new measure will not only facilitate persons who aspire to join the Government in attaining the entry requirements of civil service posts at an early stage, but also benefit individual departments or grades in speeding up the recruitment process and intake of talents, saving manpower and making the process more environmentally friendly.

Enhancing medical and dental benefits for civil servants

15. The Government, as the employer, has an obligation to provide medical and dental benefits for civil servants according to the conditions of service. We have been providing civil service medical and dental benefits for around 570 000 civil service eligible persons (CSEPs) through the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority.

Civil Service Eligible Persons Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Pilot Scheme

16. On medical benefits, to encourage CSEPs to receive influenza vaccination early with a view to better protecting their health and reducing the risk of community and workplace transmission of influenza, the Government will launch the Civil Service Eligible Persons Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Pilot Scheme in all six families clinics on 28 October 2024, providing free influenza vaccination service to about 30 000 CSEPs. Maintaining a healthy civil service will reduce the impact on public service delivery due to illness in the civil service during the influenza peak season, and alleviate the burden on the public healthcare system.

Increase service quotas of the Chinese medicine services

17. With regard to the Chinese medicine services, the three Civil Service Chinese Medicine Clinics (CSCMCs) currently provide a total of over 100 000 annual service quotas, offering free Chinese medicine general consultation and acupuncture services to CSEPs for treatment purpose. In response to the overwhelming services demand, we will increase the annual service quotas of the CSCMCs by 2 000 from November 2024 and by a further 3 000 from 2025-26, totalling an increase of 5 000 (about 5%).

Continue to mitigate the waiting time for dental services

18. As for dental benefits, to alleviate the situation where CSEPs have to wait a long time for dental services, the Government launched an 18-month Pilot Scheme on Dental Services (Dental Scaling) for CSEPs (PDS) in July 2023 with a view to arranging for around 140 000 CSEPs to receive dental scaling services at private dental clinics (PDCs). As at end September 2024, the DH has issued invitations for joining the PDS to about 266 000 CSEPs, among which about 131 000 CSEPs have completed or booked dental scaling services. According to participants' feedback collected by the DH through e-questionnaires, a vast majority of participants having received dental scaling services from PDCs were satisfied with the services provided under the PDS. The CSB is now reviewing the effectiveness of the PDS and expects its completion by end-2024 with a view to determining its way forward.

19. Separately, the Government, having considered the opportunities for medical cooperation in the GBA, will roll out a pilot scheme for CSEPs to receive designated dental services at a medical institution in Shenzhen. Under the pilot scheme, we will arrange for about 2 000 CSEPs who are queuing for the DH's dental services and willing to receive dental services in Shenzhen to participate. The pilot scheme will be launched in the first quarter of 2025 and will last for a year. We are now working on the relevant implementation details and will announce the detailed arrangements in due course.

Enhancing family-friendly measures for civil servants

Provision of childcare leave for government employees

20. As a good employer, the Government has all along been committed to creating a family-friendly working environment for staff. Following the introduction of marriage leave and compassionate leave for government employees in April 2024, the Government will, starting from April 2025, provide childcare leave for government employees with children aged under three as a new family-friendly employment measure to support families with newborns and create an environment conducive to childcare, so as to further exemplify the Government's commitment as a caring employer and dovetail with the Government's policy of encouraging childbirth. We plan to allow eligible government employees to take three days of childcare leave per year for each child under the age of three. The CSB is formulating the details and implementation arrangements, and will put the measure in place after consultation with the staff side.

Enhancing special work arrangements on festivals or their eves

21. Another new initiative to provide a family-friendly working environment for government employees is to enhance the special work arrangements on specific festivals or their eves. With a view to facilitating staff in taking care of their family needs during working days on specific festivals, government departments currently may allow government employees to leave work early for up to two hours on up to two of four festivals or their eves (Lunar New Year's Eve, Mid-Autumn Festival, Winter Solstice Day and Christmas Eve), depending on their operational arrangements and on the premise of not affecting public service delivery. Starting from January 2025, the Government will enhance the arrangement by allowing government employees to leave work early for up to two hours on up to three of five festivals or their eves (with the addition of New Year's Eve on 31 December). The CSB is working out the relevant details and implementation arrangements, which will then be implemented after consulting the staff side.

Strengthening the performance-based management system and discipline management

22. We will advance the performance-based management system through the following measures.

Enhancing the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme

23. In order to commend civil servants for their outstanding performance, we launched the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance¹ in 2023, and intensified our efforts in publicising the good stories of civil servants by enhancing our publicity to promote the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance and the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme to be presented in November each year through different media. This year, we will enhance the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme by lifting the minimum service length requirement for an awardee to sustain 20 years of service for obtaining the travel award², with a view to motivating civil servants (including those of shorter service) to continuously strive for excellence.

Enhancing the civil service disciplinary mechanism

24. The Government attaches great importance to the conduct and integrity of civil servants. On the whole, civil servants are law-abiding and dedicated to their duties. As regards individual officers who have breached the law or misconducted themselves, the Government would handle each case seriously under the civil service disciplinary mechanism, and consider taking corresponding disciplinary action against them having regard to the circumstances of each case. In the five financial years from 2019-20 to 2023-24, a total of 1 073 civil servants were

¹ The CSB organised two rounds of the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance, and the award-winning teams were the HKSAR search and rescue team deployed to the quake-stricken areas in Türkiye in 2023, and the Task Force on Basic Law Article 23 Legislation comprising the Department of Justice, the Security Bureau and the Hong Kong Police Force respectively.

² Awardees of the Secretary for Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme will be awarded a certificate and a gold pin, as well as travel award. The travel amount is granted on a reimbursement basis. The awardee can flexibly nominate a companion to use the travel amount for one round-trip with the maximum monetary amount at \$27,470 per head in 2024-25.

punished with formal disciplinary action for serious misconduct or criminal conviction, and 2 080 with summary disciplinary action for misconduct of less serious nature. Among those who were punished with formal disciplinary action during the above period, 214 were removed from the service. In 2023-24 alone, 51 officers were removed from the service, which exceeded the yearly average of 39 officers in the past five financial years (i.e. 2018-19 to 2022-23).

25. The CSB has been striving to enhance the civil service disciplinary mechanism and has been rolling out the relevant measures consecutively since 2023. Starting from January 2024, we required departments to report on a half-yearly basis to their senior management as well as the CSB on the progress of their handling of disciplinary cases with a view to stepping up the monitoring of the processing time of disciplinary cases by department's senior management and the CSB, and ensuring that punishments meted out are commensurate with the gravity of the misconduct concerned. To ensure that for officers on probationary or trial terms, their minor misconduct can be appropriately handled in time by the corresponding summary disciplinary action before they are confirmed to the permanent establishment, we have required all B/Ds to strengthen the monitoring of summary disciplinary actions imposed against officers on probationary or trial terms³ starting from October 2024⁴. Separately, by-end 2024, the Secretariat on Civil Service Discipline will have organised four workshops for training departmental managers on the skills and capability in conducting investigation of disciplinary cases.

26. In 2025, we will continue to implement the above measures and enhance the momentum and intensity of the handling of disciplinary cases. Our work include the review on the Public Service (Administration) Order (PS(A)O) and Public Service (Disciplinary) Regulation (PS(D)R) to explore whether there is any room to streamline the procedures of

³ Trial term is applicable to an officer who is confirmed to the permanent establishment and is appointed on transfer without a break in service to another established office; whereas probationary term is applicable to an officer who is not confirmed to the permanent establishment but is appointed to an established office.

⁴ The relevant Pilot Scheme was launched in four departments from April 2023, including Department of Health, Fire Services Department, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, and Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

disciplinary proceedings, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the handling of disciplinary cases; and to make corresponding amendments and updates to PS(A)O and PS(D)R in light of the implementation of The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region⁵ and the requirement for civil servants and Government employees to report their arrest by law enforcement agencies to their Heads of Department since July 2023. We will consult the Public Service Commission on the preliminary proposals in 2025. Moreover, to strengthen civil servants’ understanding of the disciplinary mechanism, we will issue a booklet on Knowing More about Civil Service Disciplinary Mechanism to civil servants in mid-2025 for introducing the disciplinary mechanism and sharing cases to raise their awareness of compliance with civil service rules and discipline requirements.

Encouraging and assisting civil service unions to organise local national studies activities and visits

27. We will continue to encourage and assist civil service groups to organise more local national studies activities and visits, with a view to further deepening civil servants’ understanding of the country and cultivating their patriotic spirit. We will organise guided tours for civil service groups and provide them with related information to facilitate their organisation of visits for their members⁶. Civil servants may apply for authorised absence under the Civil Service Regulations subject to their fulfilment of relevant criteria, or use their leisure time to participate in national studies activities organised by civil service unions.

Indicators for specified tasks

28. Various indicators (including key performance indicators (i.e. KPIs)) relevant to the policy initiatives of the CSB are set out in **Annex** for Members’ reference.

⁵ In accordance with the Article 35 of the National Security Law, any public officer who is convicted of an offence endangering national security by a court shall be removed from the office with immediate effect.

⁶ For instance, we arranged representatives of the Central Consultative Councils and major service-wide civil service unions to visit the National Security Exhibition Gallery in September 2024, and provided information of the venue to encourage them to organise visit activities.

Advice Sought

29. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Civil Service Bureau
October 2024**

**Indicators for policy initiatives relevant to the Civil Service Bureau
(including key performance indicators (KPIs))**

A. Indicators for Specified Tasks in 2024 Policy Address

1. Review the Public Service (Administration) Order and Public Service (Disciplinary) Regulation **by end-2024**, and consult the Public Service Commission on the preliminary proposals **within 2025**.
2. Launch the Governance Talents Development Programme **within 2025**.

B. Progress of 2023 Policy Address Indicators for Specified Tasks

Indicator No	Indicators for Specified Tasks	Progress
10	Launch the “Civil Service Volunteer Commendation Scheme” in Q3 2024 to encourage participation in and organisation of more volunteer work among civil servants.	Task completed. The list of awardees of the inaugural “Civil Service Volunteer Commendation Scheme” was announced in August 2024. The award presentation ceremony will be held in conjunction with the Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Presentation Ceremony.
11	Publicise the good stories of award recipients in the Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Scheme held in November annually as well as in various other commendation schemes for civil servants from end-2023 onwards through electronic, social and print media to showcase and promote achievements of the awardees in their	Task completed. The good stories of award recipients in the “Chief Executive’s Award for Exemplary Performance 2024” and the “Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Scheme 2023” have been broadcast through different media channels. The Government will continue to publicise, through various channels, the good stories of award-winning civil servants in various commendation schemes and that of other civil servants with outstanding performances.

Indicator No	Indicators for Specified Tasks	Progress
	work and their dedication to serving the community.	
12	Conduct briefings for and issue guidelines on the streamlined mechanism of retiring officers in the public interest with persistent sub-standard performance to Heads of Departments/Grades and departmental management by end-2023, and step up efforts to monitor the handling of these cases by departments.	<p>Task completed. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) introduced the streamlined mechanism to all departmental management through briefing sessions during October and November 2023, and provided all departments with a management kit for handling cases in December, so as to enable departments to better understand the operation of the streamlined mechanism.</p> <p>The CSB will continue to step up efforts to monitor the handling of cases by departments through quarterly returns submitted by them and checking with them the progress of cases.</p>

C. On-going and Valid Indicators for Specified Tasks Introduced in the 2022 Policy Address

Indicator No	Indicators for Specified Tasks	Progress
9	Issue the draft updated Civil Service Code for consultation with the staff side in Q1 2024 or earlier.	Task completed. The updated Civil Service Code (Draft for Consultation) was issued in December 2023. Having considered the views of various stakeholders, the updated Civil Service Code was promulgated in June 2024.