

## **ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS**

### **Purpose**

The Public Officers' One-Stop-Shop within the People & Standards Division is being set up to provide quality guidance and assistance to public service employees for a wide range of services. It aims to ensure that public officers are given timely information, support and guidance on entitlements or services accessible to them. The setting up of this Unit is a commitment towards quality assurance and to serve as an example to other government service providers as to efficiency and timely quality service to clients.

### **Introduction**

The Public Officers' One-Stop-Shop will be working closely with other departments and directorates to ensure that public officers are provided with timely information and guidance for their queries. Furthermore, the One-Stop-Shop will also be providing support through the Grievance Help Desk which will liaise with the Grievances Board (GB) in respect of alleged grievance claims.

### **Roles & Responsibilities**

#### *Public Officers*

Public officers may request information from the One-Stop-Shop should there be issues on which they require clarifications and support.

#### *One-Stop-Shop for Public Officers*

The One-Stop-Shop is responsible to provide quality guidance and assistance to public officers for a wide range of requests for information and guidance. The One-Stop-Shop is responsible to provide timely information, support on work and work life balance related issues as well guidance on entitlements or services as requested.

#### *Grievances Board*

The GB is responsible to provide public officers with an accessible contact point where they can report any alleged grievances in their regard, by means of the One-Stop-Shop for Public Officers. The GB is responsible to investigate all claims in receipt in a timely and fair manner with the aim of achieving a remedial solution for all parties involved. For one final time only, as explained in OPM Circular 24/2017, the board will also be looking at cases as per the criteria and conditions listed in OPM Circular 20/2014, unless these had already been investigated by the Grievances Units except in those instances where new evidence is presented which was not previously available and which could influence the final decision. The employing Ministry / Department has to abide by the Grievances Board decision and implement it within a time frame of not longer than 30 days. The approval of the PPS or his delegate needs to be sought for this period to be exceeded for valid reasons.

## *Officer's Employing Ministry/Department*

The Employing Ministry/Department is responsible to provide accurate, timely information requested by the One-Stop-Shop in order to complete a query or request for information by an employee. The Employing Ministry/Department is expected to cooperate with the requests of both the One-Stop-Shop and the GB to ensure the provision of good governance and quality services.

## **OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**

### **One-Stop-Shop for Public Officers**

1. Public Officers with any query or difficulty relating to their employment may access the services of the One-Stop-Shop. Once the public officer logs a case/request through one of the available channels (drop-in / post / telephone / e-mail) they will receive an auto-generated e-mail containing details about their case (case number, assisting officer, etc.). Officers who do not have access to e-mail will receive a written acknowledgement with a reference number. Officers may request an appointment for a one-to-one meeting at 3 Castille Place, Valletta. In some cases an appointment may be set for outside normal office hours if that would be more convenient for the officer to access service. Gozitan officers will be able to access the service through the P&SD Office in Xewkija. (Address: One-Stop-Shop, Soil Street, Xewkija)
2. In order for the case to be logged, the Customer Relations Officer (CRO) receiving the query / request at the One-Stop-Shop creates a contact record in the CRM system with the information/query presented by the public officer. In order for the case to be logged, public officers are requested to confirm their personal details as well as their employing department/Ministry.
3. First level queries/requests are addressed on the spot (details of query and resolution are logged into CRM for the necessary monitoring). In cases requiring information from departments external to P&SD/OPM, the One-Stop-Shop will retrieve such information on behalf of the client. Should a request require further details, the employee shall be duly informed of the required missing data/documentation **within twenty-four (24) hours** from the time of the receipt of the request. The respective department/Ministry supplying the further information required for the assessment of the case shall submit such information **within three (3) working days** after which the P&SD will take a decision by default in favour of the employee. The latter decision will be adhered to by the respective department/ministry and its implementation will be its responsibility.

P&SD will compile monthly statistics including types of queries and Ministries from where queries are originating.

4. Once all the necessary information is gathered from both the employee and the employing department, the officer at the One-Stop-Shop will evaluate the type of case presented. Cases can be either of 3 options; (1) request for information/clarification/support (2) claim/report of bullying/harassment, or; (3) lodging of a grievance case. To ensure appropriate assessment of the case, if the claim is related to the possible awarded or financial compensation and/or a backdated appointment, the case will be forwarded to and processed by the GB.
  - 4.1 If the case presented is a request for information, the CRO can either provide an immediate reply or, depending on the request, may need to involve other directorates within/outside the P&SD to ensure a correct reply.
  - 4.2 If the case presented is a claim of harassment or bullying, the CRO will liaise with the Standards & Integrity Unit within the P&SD to direct and guide the employee accordingly. A preliminary investigation will be initiated not later than 3 days from the claim submitted by the officer. The case may be investigated by the P&SD or delegated to the respective Permanent Secretary for necessary investigation. In all cases strict timeframes which are deriving out of the respective policies will be adhered to and monitored.
  - 4.3 In each of the 3 options for contacting the One-Stop-Shop, once all the information is gathered and evaluated, the employee is contacted with the resolution to his query/difficulty through the channel s/he originally used. The One-Stop-Shop will inform the employing department of any decision taken and issue instructions to the department where applicable, for **implementation within three (3) working days**. In case of failure to adhere to the timeframe, any action required will be implemented by P&SD by default. Disciplinary action may be initiated against the employing department.

The timeframes as per Directive 8.1 and Directive 4.1 will be respected. In all cases of processes delegated to ministries whereby timeframes have been established, failure to inform officers of their request at the line ministry will lead to approval by default and One-Stop-Shop will simply inform the ministry to implement such action. Furthermore, One-Stop-Shop is binding itself with Service Agreement as follows:

- 4.3.1 Resolution by **not later than three (3) working days** from the date of the receipt of the query. This timeframe may be extended to five (5) or ten (10) working days, only for reasonably justified reasons approved by the Permanent Secretary P&SD. In the case of queries of a complex nature or which require consultation with other stakeholders, the CRO shall give

an indication of the expected final reply to the employee and will inform the stakeholder that a reply is requested by the same timeframes as indicated in the Directives.

- 4.3.2 The CRO will follow up the case with both the employee and the employing department to ensure that the instructions were followed and the case is resolved accordingly. Information given to employee and/or any action taken is recorded by the CRO and case is closed. Employees will receive an auto-generated notification that the case is closed.
  - 4.3.3 The standards and compliance teams within P&SD will carry out regular checks to monitor that all actions that have been requested and confirmed are implemented.
5. If during the CRO's assessment of the query it is noted that the officer is experiencing difficulties of an emotional, psychological, social or substance misuse nature, the officer will be referred to the Employee Support Programme (ESP) for individual assistance. The public officer is notified by the ESP of the first meeting within three days of the initial contact.

## GRIEVANCES BOARD

1. Grievances may be defined as claims by Public Officers who believe that they are victims of some injustice that has not been already assessed and decided upon by any other body such as the Courts of Law, Tribunals and other Grievances Boards or the Ombudsman.
2. Each claim is to be made in writing and should include an explanation of the alleged injustice and the reason for the claim.
3. A person who makes a claim is automatically giving consent for personal information to be gathered about him or her.
4. Cases that will be evaluated and investigated by the Grievances Board will be those beyond the scope of the One-Stop-Shop and refer to infringements on the rights of the Public Officer regarding employment and career paths.
5. The Board will meet with the employee, assess their claim in detail, and investigate the case requesting interviews as will be required for each specific case.
6. On conclusion of a case, the Grievance Board will inform the One-Stop-Shop Head of the decision reached and henceforth the implementation required about the case will be notified to the Ministry/Department of the public officer.

7. The One-Stop-Shop will monitor and ensure compliance and implementation of the decision given by the board to the respective ministry.

The Board may conduct an investigation in relation to appointments / selection process practices where:

- a. There were exceptional circumstances that prevented a person from placing a petition as per the PSC Regulations;  
Or
- b. There was evidence that was not brought to the attention of the Public Service Commission that could have affected its final decision or the case itself.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD**

### *Review and Monitoring of Grievance Redress Mechanism*

- a. Identify points of agreement between the parties in an effort to search and explore options for settlement /redress. The Board may review and decide the grievance itself or refer the grievance to the appropriate ministry with its recommendation on the grievance.
- b. Should the Board determine that the complaint is not an appropriate matter for a hearing, it will be dismissed and referred back to One-Stop-Shop. A letter will be sent to the applicant with the decision. Any work related decision which is considered to be unfair that cannot be satisfactorily resolved, will be referred to the attention of the respective Permanent Secretary. It is also envisaged that this Board will serve as an appellate body that investigates grievances selectively, particularly those where the complainant had failed to get redress at the hands of the direct superior, management or line ministry. The Board will make suitable recommendations for consideration, which will be adopted by the concerned Ministry/Department. Such recommendations will be required to be implemented within a specific time frame. Failing this, the Board will see to it that a response and resolution to these grievances is obtained from the department or organisation. Disciplinary action for failing to carry out this decision could be considered.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of recommendations is the responsibility of the Directorate responsible for People Management, which will be informed by One-Stop-Shop of the decision that has been taken.

The important factors that will be adhered to are:

- i. It conforms with existing legislation.
- ii. It is fairly acceptable to all – it provides justice to the employees, reasonable authority to the management and maintains industrial harmony.