

FEDERATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR AND OTHER UNIONS (FPSOU)

Our ref.:-FPSOU/S/2

Tuesday, 17 May 2011

The Secretary
Mr. A. Cuniah
Public Service Commission
7, Louis Pasteur Street
Forest Side

Thro' the Senior Chief Executive
Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
New Government Centre
Port Louis

Dear Sir,

Examination subjects:- written examination re- filling of vacancies for the post of "Senior Officer" and Executive Officer (Rodrigues)

This follows representations the Federation of Public Sector and Other Unions has received from two of its affiliates namely the Government General Services Union (GGSU), and the Rodrigues Government Employees Association (RGEA)

2. In view of representations received, the Federation is urging the Public Service Commission to take into account some crucial considerations while making arrangements to hold its written examinations as mentioned in Public Service Commission Circular Note No. 26 of 2011 and Public Service Commission Circular Note No. 27 of 2011.

3. According to the two circulars, candidates competing for the two posts will have to take a written examination to be conducted by the Public Service Commission. The relevant extract of the two circulars is being reproduced hereafter.

Extract:- PSC Circular Note No 26 of 2011 (Senior Officer)	Extract:- PSC Circular Note No 27 of 2011 (Executive Officer Rodrigues)
B. Candidates will be required to take a written competitive examination conducted by the Public Service Commission designed – (i) to assess their knowledge of the Public Service Commission Regulations, the Personnel Management Manual, the Financial Management Manual and the procedures of the Government of Mauritius for the conduct of its business; and (ii) test their knowledge of current affairs and their ability to express themselves coherently on matters of public interest.	2. Candidates will be required to take a written competitive examination conducted by the Public Service Commission designed to: (a) assess their knowledge of the Public Service Commission Regulations, the Personnel Management Manual and the procedures of the Government of Mauritius for the conduct of its business; and (b) test their knowledge of current affairs and their ability to express themselves coherently on matters of public interest.

4. In view of these specifications of the Circulars under reference candidates have to learn provisions of inter-alia the Public Service Commission Regulations, the Personnel Management Manual and the Financial Management Manual (applicable for the post of Senior Officer only) to prepare themselves for the respective written examination to be conducted by the Commission.

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5. You will agree that it is essential for candidates to have easy access to the regulations/manuals in order to become conversant with their contents. Moreover, all candidates should have access to the same information. The Federation is drawing your attention to the following:-

i. Public Service Commission Regulations

- a. The Public Service Commission Regulations have been recently amended.
- b. Consequential amendments have been brought to the Public Service Commission Regulations.
- c. As at date, the old version of the Public Service Commission Regulations is available on the Downloads page of the Web site of the Commission.
- d. GN No 177 of 2010 Amendment PSC Regulations 2010 has not been posted on the Downloads page of the Web site of the Commission.
- e. GN No 177 of 2010 Amendment PSC Regulations 2010 has been posted in the news section on the Home Page of the Web Site of the Public Service Commission.
- f. Anyone downloading the Public Service Commission Regulations from the Downloads page of the web site of the Commission can easily miss the GN No 177 of 2010 Amendment PSC Regulations 2010.
- g. Many candidates may not be aware of the last amendments that have been brought to the Public Service Commission Regulations.
- h. An updated version of the Public Service Commission Regulations is still not available.
- i. An "Officer" or Clerical Officer/Higher Clerical Officer cannot be expected to unmistakably revise the old version of the Public Service Commission Regulations with a view to integrating amendments brought to it.
- j. Most candidates have learnt the old regulations and it will take them time to forget the old ones and assimilate the new regulations.

ii. Personnel Management Manual

- a. The Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms has issued a revised version of the Personnel Management Manual which is downloadable from its website.
- b. Amendments to the Public Service Commission Regulations do not seem to have been taken into account while the Personnel Management Manual was put on paper. For example, there is a difference between the definition of "appointment" in the amended Public Service Commission Regulations and the New Personnel Management Manual.
- c. It will be quasi- impossible for an "officer" or clerical officer/ Higher Clerical Officer to collate contents of the Personnel Management Manual with the amendments brought the Public Service Commission Regulations.

iii. Financial Management Manual

- a. The Financial Management Manual is more fully valid and it will be wrong to examine candidates on sections of the existing Financial Management Manual that are no more applicable.
- b. Except for those who are not posted to a finance section, the vast majority of candidates are not even aware of changes that have been brought to Financial Management Manual.
- c. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning is not in a position to provide a consolidated version of provisions of the Financial Kit and the Financial Management Manual that are presently applicable. Annexed is a copy of letter dated 10 May 2011 that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning has addressed to the Government General Services Union on this issue.
- d. Candidates will be highly confused on exactly what is right or wrong to learn.

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6. It is all evident in view of what precedes, that all candidates:
 - i. may learn differing versions of a same subject of examination,
 - ii. shall not have the same access to materials from which to acquire knowledge about the examinations subjects, and
 - iii. will not have fair and equal chance at the written examinations.

As such the selection exercise to be conducted by the Public Service Commission will become highly contestable. And, there will be strong grounds for unsuccessful candidates to appeal against prospective appointments to the post of "Senior Officer" and Executive Officer (Rodrigues) that will be made by the Commission. The Commission should therefore ensure that:-

- i. all confusions relating to examinations subjects are dispelled before the written examinations are held, and
- ii. give adequate and reasonable time to all candidates to acquaint themselves with and assimilate all changes in the examinations subjects matter,

before scheduling its written examinations in the context of its selection exercise to fill vacancies for the posts of:

- i. "Officer", and
- ii. Executive Officer, Rodrigues.

7. There are strong inferences that the written examinations will be held by the end of July 2011. The Federation and its affiliates strongly fear that it will be very difficult:-

- i. to dispel all confusions about the examinations subjects that have been mentioned in this letter, and
- ii. give candidates adequate time to acquaint themselves with and assimilate all changes in the examinations subjects matter,

if the examinations are held as inferred by the end of July 2011.

8. The Federation considers it inappropriate for the Commission to proceed with the relevant written examination unless problems mentioned herein are addressed to, and it is requesting that it conducts its selection exercises such that all candidates are given a fair and equal chance.

Yours faithfully

B. Brizmohun (Miss)
Secretary

Forward Copy to:- The Secretary, Public Service Commission

Copy to:- The Secretary to Cabinet and the Head of the Civil Service

N.B. It is the practice for the Government General Service Union to organize relevant courses for the benefit of its members taking part in the written examinations conducted by the Public Service Commission. The response of the Commission on this letter will be of high relevance to it in organization of its courses in the context of the Senior Officer Examination.

An Urgent consideration would therefore be highly appreciated.