

PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION



**REVISED POLICY FRAMEWORK ON LEAVE
ENTITLEMENTS AND MANAGEMENT FOR THE PUBLIC
SERVICES OF GHANA**

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INTRODUCTION

A variety of leave entitlements and provisions are available for all Public Servants so far as they have full-time (confirmed) or on fixed term appointments. The types of leave include :- annual leave, sick leave; study leave with pay; study leave without pay; maternity leave; casual leave; part leave; compassionate leave; embarkation and disembarkation leave; leave without pay or personal leave (exams, sports, paternity, special leaves and leave of absence) etc.

The primary objective of the annual leave, for example, is to allow officials the opportunity to rest in order for them to remain at their highest levels of productivity. Leave is also a vital human resource management (HRM) instrument at the disposal of employers to ensure the promotion of healthy and productive work environments. Apart from its financial implications, high levels of annual leave accrual have serious implications on the health and productivity of individuals.

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF LEAVE TYPES

In recent past, the Public Services Commission (PSC) has received numerous requests from public service institutions on types of leave, their duration and leave entitlements which public service employees could benefit from and access. The spate of enquiries, and calls for advice on the administration and management of leave indicate the challenge in leave administration. This situation has been further worsened by the varied leave entitlements/duration in the various Conditions of Service of each Public Service Institution.

In response, therefore, to the concerns of Heads of institutions for clarification on the administration, management and duration of the various types of leave available to public service employees, the Public Services Commission (PSC) undertook a survey of thirty (30) selected public service institutions to find out, among other things, the types of leave and their durations. The findings of the study and recurring issues that have been brought to the attention of the PSC in the administration of the various leaves in the public service are summarized as follows:

- Significant disparities in the duration of leave entitlements and provisions, especially, in the Agencies. This was attributed to the different, disparate and varied nature of Collective Bargaining Agreements in the Public Services.
- Non-adherence to existing guidelines on the administration of leave entitlements especially in such areas as leave of absence, sick leave, study leave with or without pay, among others.
- Existence of high levels of leave accruals in the Public Services, especially, by Directors and Heads of institutions, using “the exigencies of the Service” as an excuse. This, in combination with the high number of annual leave days which these public servants are

entitled to, obviously results in high levels of leave accruals. This has serious financial implications when such leaves have to be commuted to cash at retirement. Currently, the uncontrolled level of accrual of annual leave and its attendant request for committal to cash is not only a drain on State coffers, but more importantly, may be silently creating unfavourable health conditions among public servants.

- High rate of absenteeism from work by some public service employees, and for which the "french leave" days, are not deducted from their annual leaves.
- Misuse and abuse of government time by employees who are on approved study leave for professional, first degree, post graduate diploma and post graduate courses. These employees use government time to carry out their course assignments and employ the use of the computers and photo copying paper for their private work.
- Poor documentation of leave entitlements. Not all leaves taken by public servants are recorded and there are long delays before leave approvals are given. In addition, the requirements for prior submission of medical certificates, especially, for sick leave or excuse from duty due to ill-health are not always met and many a time ignored and not demanded by the Human Resource Managers. Although familiar with the relevant prescripts and procedures, Human Resource Managers in the Public Service, have logistical problems with the recording of leave and instituting control measures in the management of leave types.
- Unethical conduct of Public Servants especially in respect of abuse of sick leave, taking leave without prior notification, non-adherence to official work hours and regulations with regards to leave management. These have serious implications generally, in terms of productivity and performance of the Public Service.

RATIONALE FOR A REVISED POLICY FRAMEWORK ON LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS AND MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES

The apparent differences in the duration of leave entitlements raise questions of equity since all Public Service employees draw their salaries from the Consolidated Fund. Added to this, has been the institutionalization of the Single Spine Pay Policy in the determination of compensation matters in the Public Services. The underlying principle of equal pay for work of equal value in the new salary administration regime, strengthens the case, therefore, for a uniform application and administration of leave entitlements across board in the Public Service. There is the need, therefore, for all Public Servants to be treated fairly and consistently.

Human Resource Managers in the Public Service have, therefore, the responsibility in ensuring that sick leave, study leave and other types of leave are fairly and consistently administered across-

board to all public servants. The mismanagement of leave days can result in substantial numbers of working hours being lost. The regular absence from work by some errant public service employees should also be seen as an added overhead costs and loss in productivity which negatively impacts on service delivery.

Ghana has also joined the “league” of middle income countries which necessitates that international best practices in public administration and good human resource management practices be taken on board. It is common knowledge that in many middle income countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, India and South Africa, there are on-going discussions and reviews with regard to the management and administration of leaves. These reviews have been necessitated as a result of new demands in the international labour market and new trends in public administration practice.

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE REVISED POLICY FRAMEWORK ON LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

The Government of Ghana is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment for all Public Service employees and developing responsive work practices and human resource policies that support work-life and balance. In encouraging this balance, the policy framework on leave entitlements shall be guided by the principles of equity, accountability, transparency and ownership as follows:

(a) EQUITY

❖ Uniform Duration of Leave Entitlements

- All employees serving in the Public Services of Ghana shall have uniform duration of leave entitlements as per their grades/ranks.

❖ Non-Discriminating Practices

- The application/administration should be non-discriminatory with respect to gender, ethnicity, geographical location, work locations, physical infirmity and others.

(b) ACCOUNTABILITY

❖ Right to Rest

- Each public service employee is entitled to enjoy his/her annual leave. This is a mandatory requirement. Each employee shall, therefore, apply for his/her annual vacation leave and approved by the appropriate authority.

❖ Absenteeism

- **Absence from work with or without permission shall be counted and shall be recorded and deducted from the annual leave entitlements.**

❖ Accrual of Annual Leave

- There shall be no accrual of annual leave beyond two years including the current year for public service employees both in management and staff positions. Where the exigencies of work do not permit/allow for the annual leave to be taken, **appropriate approval** should be sought from the Governing Boards and Councils as in the case of management staff and from the Heads of Public Service Institutions , Chief Directors/Chief Executives and Heads of Departments for the senior and junior staffs. The reason(s) for the leave accrual should be properly documented in writing by the approving authority. **Payment for any accrual shall not exceed two years of accumulation of annual leave and shall only be enjoyed at the end of one's service .**

(c) TRANSPARENCY

❖ Approving Authority /Approval Process

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- With the exception of casual/compassionate leave, for all types of leaves, each public service employee shall apply in writing two (2) weeks before start day of leave and shall await prior approval from the approving authority i.e. the Governing Councils /Boards, Chief Executives, Chief Directors, Heads of Departments and Heads of Public Services as the case may apply before proceeding on the requested leave. The appropriate authority shall, within one (1) week of receipt of application, notify the employee of approval or otherwise in writing and with stated reasons, if leave is denied. Any public employee who does not receive approval before proceeding on leave shall face disciplinary charges. It also behoves on the approving authorities to respond to such applications before the start date of leave.
- An Annual leave roster shall be caused to be prepared by the Human Resource Manager and approved by the Head of institution by the end of March of each year. All employees are to be informed and copies of the leave roster made available to each employee. Employee and management must strictly adhere to the roster unless unforeseen circumstances/emergencies arise which may necessitate changes in the leave roster arrangements.
- Owing to the exigencies of work, which may from time to time occur, for persons serving in critical and essential areas in the Public Service, leave entitlements may be staggered for such persons within a given year.
- Casual and compassionate leaves shall be taken after the annual leave has been exhausted.
- On exhaustion of the mandatory ten (10) working days examination leave, any other examination leave being requested for any given year shall be counted against the annual leave days.

❖ Refusal of Leave

- If for one reason or another, the Institution refuses an application for leave or time off in order to maintain appropriate levels of service, such a decision should be reasonable in all of the circumstances. If leave is refused, the employee must be informed and be given the reasons for the decision to turn down the request. However, adequate arrangements should be made by the approving authority for the employee to take his/her leave within the leave year in question.

- Employees who feel that they have been unreasonably refused leave (all types of leave) or who feel they have been victimized for requesting for leave shall in the first instance raise the matter with their Human Resource Managers and if dissatisfied with the Heads of Institution.

(d) OWNERSHIP

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❖ Communication /Sensitization Programmes

In the roll-out of the policy framework of the Revised Leave Entitlements, it shall be the responsibility of the Heads of Institutions and the Human Resource Managers to ensure the dissemination of the policy guidelines and the information contained therein to their employees.

• RECOMMENDED Types of Leave and Durations

The Public Services Commission in consultation with the Public Service Workers Unions and Associations, the Governing Councils and Boards, Chief Executives of Public Service Institutions and Heads of the Public Services have agreed to the under-listed leave days (duration) for the different types of leaves for implementation as follows:

TYPES OF LEAVE

DURATION

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| • Annual Leave/Senior Level | 36 working days |
| • Annual Leave/ Middle Level | 28 working days |
| • Annual Leave/Junior Level | 21 working days |
| • Sick Leave (full pay) | one year (maximum) |
| • Sick Leave (half pay) | one year - do - |
| • Study Leave (with pay) | two years - do - |
| • Study Leave (without pay) | two years - do - |
| • Maternity Leave | 12 weeks |
| • Casual Leave | 10 working days |
| • /Compassionate Leave (Special Leave) | 10 working days |
| • Examinations Leave | 10 working days |
| • Sports Leave | 5 working days |
| • Leave of Absence | 1 year maximum |
| • Embarkation and Disembarkation Leave (short course) | 2 working days |
| • Embarkation and Disembarkation Leave (Long Course) | 10 working days |

This applies to all categories of public service employees, but under certain circumstances where longer leave days are required or desirable this should be referred to the Public Services Commission for the necessary guidance.

Please note that the existing circulars and administrative directives on the administration of the above types of leaves issued by the Public ⁶ Commission **remain unchanged** and can be provided on request.

Coverage

The Revised Policy Framework for leave entitlements and its associated guidelines shall cover all public servants who subsist on the Consolidated Fund, as defined in Article 195 of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana.

CONCLUSION

The need for a revised leave policy and management of leave types in the Public Service cannot be over-emphasized. It is the lifeline for a productive, healthy and a well managed workforce delivering quality services to the people of Ghana. Prudent management of leave does not only save the government money in terms of committal of leave to cash but also promotes good health amongst employees. It also ensures conformity with international best practices in human resource management.

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