

INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

Secretariat



ISBA/ST/IC/2013/11
29 October 2013

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

INFORMATION CIRCULAR*

TO: All members of the Staff

FROM: The Secretary-General

SUBJECT: **LANGUAGE TRAINING, PROFICIENCY AND INCENTIVES**

The Secretary-General hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1 **General Principles**

1.1 In order to achieve and maintain linguistic balance in the Authority, staff members are strongly encouraged to become proficient in two or more of the official languages of the Authority (Arabic, Chinese, French, English, Russian and Spanish). Staff members who have established language proficiency in accordance with the conditions set out in section 3 and 4 below may receive a monetary language incentive, under conditions set out in section 5 below. The working languages of the Authority are English and French.

Language Training

- 2.1 At present the Authority offers language training in French and Spanish.
- 2.2 The language training will be open to staff members at all levels who hold a fixed-term contract for at least twelve months with the Authority. Classes will be held during working hours over a 12 week period, with a written and oral examination at the end of each term. The Authority will pay all costs associated with the course, including the tuition costs and basic course materials.
- 2.3 Staff members are encouraged to focus on one language at a time and complete all available courses in one language before taking a course in another language. On days when staff members attend the language class, the lunch break for those staff members should be shortened from one hour to half an hour.

*The present circular will be in effect until further notice.



2.4 Staff members who participate in language training courses are expected to attend all classes and to complete the course assignment, unless prevented from doing so by official travel, sick leave, annual and special leave or other reasonable justifications.

2.5 In all cases, staff members should inform their teacher in advance about late arrivals, early departures or absences. Teachers are under no obligation to provide any opportunity to make up work missed, especially for those who have not given any prior notice.

2.6 Staff members are expected to pass both the written and oral examination at the end of each term. Staff members who fail the examination or fail to sit the examination, after attending less than 50 per cent of classes, will not be eligible to participate in any further courses at the Authority's expense, but may take such courses at their own expense. Staff members, failing the examination for reasons other than low attendance, may repeat the course once at the Authority's expense. Thereafter they may take such courses at their own expense.

Section 3

Language proficiency

3.1 Staff members shall be said to have demonstrated adequate knowledge of one of the six official languages when they have passed the appropriate United Nations language proficiency examination (LPE). These examinations are held annually at the Office of the United Nations Development Programme in Kingston.

3.2 The LPE requirement shall be waived in the following cases:

(a) Staff members whose mother tongue is one of the official languages of the Authority need not take the LPE in that language. They may demonstrate adequate knowledge of another official language by passing the LPE in any of the other five languages;

(b) Staff members whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of the Authority need not take the LPE in the working languages of the Authority. They may demonstrate adequate knowledge of another official language by passing the LPE in any of the other five languages;

(c) Staff members previously in receipt of a language allowance under section 5.1 of this information circular do not need to take an LPE upon promotion to the Professional category to qualify for accelerated increments under section 5.3 of this information circular.

Section 4

Conditions governing language proficiency examinations

Eligibility for the LPE

4.1 The LPE is opened to all individuals admitted to a language course offered by the Authority, upon completing the highest level of that course.

4.2 Additionally, the LPE may be taken by staff members who have not attended or completed language courses at the Authority, but who can provide documentation to prove that they possess an equivalent knowledge of the language in which they wish to be tested. Equivalent

knowledge may be demonstrated by language study outside the Authority for at least two years, or the regular use of the language at school or work.

4.3 Staff members on a fixed-term appointment expiring prior to the date of the LPE for which they are applying may take the LPE only with authorization from the Office of Administration and Management.

Application

4.4 Candidates for the LPE who meet the conditions set out above shall complete the appropriate application form and submit it to the Human Resources Officer with all required documentation in accordance with the procedures set out in the information circular, or notice issued by the Office of Administration and Management, announcing upcoming examinations.

Requirements for passing LPE

4.5 The LPE consists of a written and an oral part, which shall be taken at the same session.

4.6 A minimum score of 65 per cent in both parts shall be required for a passing grade. Where candidates receive a score of 80 per cent or more on the written examination but fail the oral part, the jury adjudicating the examination shall review the case and may allow candidates to retain their written score for the following examination session. In this event, the candidate shall receive written notification of the jury's decision and will be required to apply or retake only the oral examination at the following session.

4.7 Candidates who receive 80 per cent or more on the oral part, but fail the written part, and candidates who have taken only one part of the examination at one session, shall retake both the written and oral parts at a subsequent session.

Section 5

Language incentives

Language allowance

5.1 Staff members in the General Service category shall be paid a language allowance in accordance with Staff Rule 3.2 under the condition that they have established proficiency in a second language in accordance with section 3 of this information circular.

5.2 The language allowance shall be paid to staff members who have met the conditions of section 5.1 of this information circular from the first of the month following the month in which the staff member passed the LPE.

Accelerated increments

5.3 Staff members in the Professional category and above shall be eligible for accelerated increments after they have established proficiency in a second official language.

5.4 Professional staff on special leave with partial pay or without pay shall be ineligible for accelerated increments for the duration of their special leave.

5.5 Subject to satisfactory service, eligible staff members will receive accelerated increments at the following rates:

(a) For grades and levels with a normal qualifying period for in-grade increment of one year, intervals between steps will be reduced from 12 months to 10 months;

(b) For grades and levels where the normal qualifying period for in-grade increment is two years, the intervals between steps shall be reduced from 24 months to 20 months.

5.6 Eligibility for accelerated increments shall become effective from the first of the month following the month in which the staff member successfully passed the LPE. For implementation purposes, the increment that would have otherwise been granted in the course of the following year shall normally be granted two or four months earlier, as appropriate, provided that the first accelerated increment shall not be given back to a period prior to the effective date of eligibility for accelerated increments. Thereafter, increments shall be awarded, subject to satisfactory service, after 10 or 20 months, as appropriate.

Section 6

Final provisions

6.1 This information circular shall take effect as of 1 November 2013.

6.2 Information Circular ST/IC/2012/03 is hereby withdrawn.
