SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER - GRADE DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

1. Senior Executive Officer (SEO) is the highest grade within the Executive Group. The Grade is used on a range of management, specialist and other functions throughout the Civil Service, but it needs to be assigned to individual posts with considerable care.

As with grades in any hierarchy, that of SEO should not necessarily be included in every organisational chain. Nor does it have to report through a member of the Open Structure at OS7 level. SEO posts should contain oversight of the day-to-day management task and refer or seek advice only on problems which are particularly complex or have wider implications. In all areas SEOs should have the necessary authority in order to be fully accountable for the achievement of satisfactory performance within their responsibilities.

The characteristics of work undertaken at SEO level are such that post holders are required to exercise sound judgment and interpretative ability where work is governed by general guidelines, rules, regulations or legislation; to apply innovative thought on, for example, policy formulation or determination of strategy; to employ expert personnel management and resource management skills and to bring specialist or professional knowledge to bear in, for example, the accountancy, audit, information technology, management services and staff inspection fields. SEO jobs require good drafting skills and numeracy.

EXAMPLES OF SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER LEVEL

Casework, policy and specialist work combined with a significant responsibility for management are features which most commonly distinguish the SEO grade.

(a) **Casework** - In areas where the SEO grade is the working level or where post holders manage a small team concerned with specialist or complex subjects. The SEO will have considerable discretion to modify or adapt the rules to suit particular circumstances. Work coming to this level will inevitably involve complex material or issues which prevent the ready application of well known regulations or precedent.

(b) **Policy** - In policy areas SEOs will be required, for example, to research or commission the research, analyse and evaluate the effects of proposed changes to departmental/governmental policy and to produce papers making recommendations for consideration; to consider and where possible to resolve problems arising on existing policies or to give advice as appropriate; to provide departmental responses to Tynwald questions or ministerial enquiries in a particular policy area, co-ordinating comments from sources as necessary.
(c) **Specialists** - In addition to the team leader "management" functions, aspects of Computer Programming/Systems analysis, Staff Inspection, finance/audit and establishment work require first hand input at SEO level. At this level a good deal of novelty is expected in the work and previously unencountered situations are to be expected which require a flexible innovative and frequently persuasive approach.

In specialist areas problems tend to fall into two separate areas; those concerned with the specialist area itself and, secondly obtaining acceptance of the recommendations based on the proposed solutions.

(d) **Management**

i) **Administrative and Staff Management** - In areas where the main working level is below SEO and post-holders have responsibility for co-ordinating various administrative and executive tasks in order to achieve a consistent and coherent service.

AND

ii) **Functional Activities** - In areas where a range of working levels are employed and which involve the management of a specialised function such as finance, personnel services, contracts.

As staff manager SEOs are responsible for oversight of the day-to-day management of a total unit. A senior officer may or may not be located close at hand. In most SEO areas post holders will be confronted with the general problems of forward job planning; of devising and improving measures of personal and work related performance; of monitoring and achieving targets and objectives within the constraints of agreed financial, manpower and other resource budgets; and the need to account for and to demonstrate in the case of all activities the achievements of value for money.

SEO\'s take operational decisions on the allocation and priorities of the work and the deployment of resources; are responsible for both quality and quantity of the output; for personnel management decisions such as method of motivation, amount and quality of desk and local training; for career development; reporting and appraisal system operation, day-to-day discipline.

In managing functional areas of work, for example finance, where staff work to prescribed procedures and regulations the SEO will, in addition to the staff management role decide on the more complex issues, and cases referred from lower working levels, will require the SEO grade to make decisions based on considerative judgment where experience or precedent do not provide the answer.

Whether budget holders themselves, or responsible to a budget holder, SEOs are accountable for a sensible and accurate budget and for the proper and efficient use of allocated resources.
SEOs are called upon to represent their department at interdepartmental meetings in discussions with a wide variety of external bodies, commercial organisations, Trade Associations and at meetings with the general public.

Depending on the importance of the meeting the SEO may take the chair or act as sole representative of the Department, often as the recognised expert in a particular area and may be required to give instant responses or commit the Department to a course of action having regard to possible repercussions and the impact on the Department.

Where there is greater departmental commitment or where the SEOs are responsible for only a part of the business they may participate as a member of a team or in support of another officer or a senior officer.

**TRAINING**

As the senior grade in the Executive Group, SEOs will require expertise in one or more fields and a competence in general administration, financial and staff management obtained through progression from the lower grades. Some specialist post holders will require formal training courses. Government "in-house" training courses i.e. Induction, Interviewing Skills, Senior Management Development Programme, Financial Awareness for Managers, Applied Computing Training would be of benefit to most SEO post holders.