

P/L 5460 2630

14 April 2000

ROYAL MAIL WAY FORWARD – SENIORITY

1. INTRODUCTION

This Directive implements the revised approach to seniority, set out in detail in the Way of Working Agreement. The new national agreement on seniority was operative since 10 February 2000, and replaces the previous national agreement and all local agreements covering the same issues.

2. DEFINITION OF SENIORITY

Section 13 of the Way of Working agreement sets out the new definition of seniority, based in all cases on length of service. The general position is that all service since joining the business counts for seniority purposes, whether full- or part-time, with the exception of:

- Periods worked on a lower grade than the current one (section 4 of the agreement). Note that for this purpose all the grades being assimilated into the new Operational Grade (i.e. PMN, PHG, SL1-6, Cadet, and the part-time equivalents) are treated as equivalent, as are the three grades being assimilated into the new Support Grade
- Periods worked on a casual contract (section 6)
- Periods of career breaks or sabbaticals (section 6)
- Periods before a break of contract (section 6). Here the general position is that such periods should be excluded, but with scope to agree locally to vary this in exceptional circumstances (an example might be someone who had to give up work due to serious domestic reasons but is later re-employed)

The new definition of seniority is the only one that may be used for the grades concerned, and the new seniority lists must therefore be used for all processes where seniority is employed as a selection mechanism. Offices may not use alternative lists based on different locally derived criteria, since this would be contrary to the nationally agreed definition. Note also that seniority will not be used for leave selection (except possibly to allocate employees into rotating groups) once local leave selection processes have been reviewed. This will be necessary to conform with the criteria set out in the agreement on Annual Leave: “all employees will be included on an equal basis”.

Where several employees started on the same day, the following factors will determine the relative order: firstly, any periods of Post Office service on other grades, secondly, earliest date of selection (i.e. of interview) and thirdly, earliest date of birth.

3. COMMENCING EMPLOYMENT ON THE SAME DAY

Where several employees have the same length of service (as defined above), the agreement provides for seniority to be determined in the following order: firstly, any periods of Post Office service on other grades (i.e. longest total PO service first), secondly, date of selection (i.e. earliest date first) and thirdly, date of birth (i.e. oldest first). For employees recruited since the date of the agreement (14 February 2000), "date of selection" will be defined as follows: firstly date of the letter offering employment (earliest first), if still equal then date of interview (earliest first), if still equal then date of test (earliest first). If then still equal then the third "date of birth" criterion is considered as above.

For employees recruited before 14 February 2000, it will not be practicable to re-visit records of recruitment processes that took place in some cases many years previously. Therefore, purely as a one-off exercise used only to separate employees with exactly the same length of service, the date of selection and date of birth criteria above will be replaced with: firstly, existing substantive grade (highest first), if still equal then position on existing locally agreed seniority list (highest first). In applying this last criteria the local seniority list must be one that conforms with the previous national agreement, and in particular one where the provisions of the part-time harmonisation agreement have been fully applied. Where employees are added into an existing list (e.g. following transfer) where there are already other employees who started on the same day, every effort should be made to apply the date of selection criterion to determine a placing. Where this is not possible then date of birth should be used.

4. PRODUCING NEW SENIORITY LISTS

Pending the implementation of the new grading structure, the seniority list for each grade is simply a list of employees in date order of starting on their current grade (including periods of temporary service or temporary promotion continuous with permanent or substantive service). Such lists can be extracted from the HR system by personnel units. These lists should be used for filling one-off vacancies. For wider selections and revisions to be introduced close to or after the new grades commence, looking forward to the new grading structure, it would be appropriate to use the new lists. The only need for manual adjustment will be for any employee who:

- has, since joining the grade, had a career break or sabbatical;
- has had a break in contract but for exceptional personal reasons has had service prior to the break counted, as above.
- has transferred in from another business but from a grade treated as equivalent for seniority purposes (e.g. a front-line employee from the Parcels & Express or Cash Handling Businesses transferring into Service Delivery as a PMN/woman or PHG). An equivalent grade is defined as one that, prior to a past re-organisation, would have been part of the same grade.

Care should be taken to include periods of both part- and full-time service.

The Resourcing arrangements for non specialist jobs, as set out in the Way of Working agreement, operate on the basis of the currently recognised resourcing units (most commonly the office). Therefore local lists should be provided on the basis of these units, listing employees in the order they joined their current grade. The joining date should be shown against each employee, to facilitate comparison for processes that operate over a wider area (for example when seniority is considered within the process for selecting to jobs with specialist skills, which operates at Area level).

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The new grading structure will require new lists to be produced, reflecting for each employee the period since they joined any of the grades assimilated into their new grade. Thus, for the Operational Grade, the date required is the date of commencement as a PMN/woman, PHG, Cadet, or SL1-6, whichever was the earliest. Again this can be extracted from HR. Care must be taken to include service on eligible lower grades (e.g. a current PHG who started as a Cadet, then PMN, then PHG, would count service from the starting date as a Cadet) whilst excluding service on other *lower* grades (e.g. a current PMN who started as a Cleaner would count service from promotion to PMN).

5. DISPLAY

The new lists should be displayed locally for a reasonable period of time (at least three weeks) to allow time for queries, which may be resolved locally provided that all decisions are taken on the basis of the national agreement. The final lists should then be supplied to Unit Managers, Resourcing Units and CWU representatives, and displayed until updated.

6. REVIEW

Locally produced lists should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain current. Nevertheless because seniority is transferable between locations and based simply on length of service, it should be relatively straightforward to integrate employees from outside of the area (e.g. level transferees) into these lists immediately after joining or transfer. Reviews should be completed in line with the local resourcing cycle (i.e. every six months or when the 5% trigger point is reached).

7. QUERIES

Either to Ian Bond (5460 2630) or Dave West, Employee Programmes Manager (5460 2073).