

Reference No: E109/254/74; **Date:** 21/11/75

Circular 43/1975:- Irish requirements in the Civil Service

A Dhuine Uasail

1. I am directed by the Minister for the Public Service to refer to this Department's Circular Letter 9/74 conveying the Government's decision that the position as to Irish requirements in the Civil Service will in future be as follows:

(a) A knowledge of Irish will not be obligatory for entry to Civil Service positions apart from those for which Irish is essential for the performance of the duties, This change will also apply at confined competitions for the establishment of temporary and unestablished staff.

(b) Proficiency in Irish and in English will be given equal credit at recruitment and establishment competitions. Candidates will be allowed to present either Irish or English or both. Those shown to be proficient in both languages will get credit for this in determining the order of merit. This system will supersede all previous arrangements including the absolute preference given for a "competent" knowledge of Irish at professional and technical competitions.

(c) The probationary Irish tests will no longer apply.

(d) Except where Irish is essential for the performance of the duties, a knowledge of Irish will not be obligatory for eligibility for promotion where this requirement previously applied. A knowledge of Irish will, however be one of the factors which will be assessed in selecting staff for promotion. The formal promotion tests hitherto conducted by the Civil Service Commission will continue to be available to give staff an opportunity of having their knowledge of Irish assessed. The courses provided by Gaeleagras na Seirbhíse Poiblí, which enable staff to acquire a knowledge of Irish or to improve their existing knowledge, will be expanded, Successful completion of these courses will continue to be accepted as the equivalent of passing the Civil Service Commission promotion tests.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS

Recruitment and establishment competitions

2. The changes at (a) and (b) of paragraph 1 are being applied at recruitment competitions conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners. They are also being applied at confined establishment competitions according as these competitions are agreed.

Probationary tests

3. The probationary Irish tests were abolished with effect from 11 November 1974. Where on 11 November 1974 payment of an increment or increments was being withheld from any officer on probation solely because of failure at the probationary Irish test the increment(s) became payable with effect from that date, Payment of the restored increment(s) should not, however, be made in respect of the period of deferment.

Promotions - period after 1 April 1976

4. Consideration is being given to the detailed arrangements necessary to give effect in the long-term to (d) of paragraph 1. These arrangements relate to

* the standards of proficiency in Irish and English to be accepted in respect of different levels and types of promotion

* the precise method of assessing such proficiency

* the credit to be given for it in various circumstances.

As it will take some time to settle these new arrangements in detail and as, in any event, staff may need a period in which to adjust to them, it is not envisaged that the new arrangements, in fully developed form, will come into operation until 1 April 1976. A further Circular will issue on this matter as soon as possible.

Promotions - period up to 1 April 1976

(a) Confined interview competitions and departmental promotions for grades which have been subject to Irish requirements

5. In the period to 1 April 1976, (d) of paragraph 1 will be implemented on the following basis at confined interview competitions, and in relation to the departmental selection of staff, for promotion to posts which have been subject to Irish requirements:

(1) Subject to (4), credit for proficiency in Irish and English will be given to those who (i) have passed a relevant Irish test conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners or completed appropriate attendance at Gaeleagras na Seirbhíse Poiblí and (ii) are accepted, as a result of the selection process for promotion, as proficient in English.

(2) The detailed arrangements for the assessment of proficiency in Irish for the purposes of (1) will be as follows

(a) In the period until results become available from the tests listed at (b), officers who were not liable for or have not fulfilled the previous Irish promotion test requirements and who come up for promotion either departmentally or by way of interview competition will be given an opportunity, if they so wish, of taking a special oral Irish test. The test will be conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners. It will be accepted as establishing proficiency in Irish only in respect of the period mentioned. It is important that the Civil Service Commission be given as much notice as possible of tests required.

In this interim period, therefore, officers will be accepted as proficient in Irish if they have passed the special oral Irish test or had fulfilled the previous Irish promotion test requirements or have satisfactorily attended a relevant Gaeleagras course.

(b) Irish tests on the lines of the previous "5-year" promotion tests will continue to be held by the Civil Service Commissioners to give officers who so wish an opportunity of having their knowledge of Irish assessed for promotion purposes. The next series of such tests will be held as follows:

11 February 1976 - for officers at Executive Officer level and higher.

12 February 1976 - for officers below Executive Officer level.

The tests may in future be taken by any officer out of probation and will be available on a completely voluntary basis. Details of the tests will be announced in due course and it will be up to officers themselves to enter for them, if they so wish. Application forms will be available from the Civil Service Commission and Personnel Branches. Completed application forms must be with the Civil Service Commission not later than three weeks before the date of the tests.

After the results of each of the tests listed become available, officers in the relevant categories will be regarded as proficient in Irish if they have passed these tests or had already fulfilled the previous Irish promotion test requirements or have satisfactorily attended an appropriate Gaeleagras course.

(3) Officers whose proficiency in both Irish and English has not been established will not, of course, be excluded from consideration for promotion, Where selection for promotion is made on a formal basis the credit for proficiency in both Irish and English will be 10% of the total marks available otherwise. A weighting on similar lines will be applied where selection is made on a less formal basis. Proficiency in Irish will continue to be a requirement for assignment and promotion to positions in certain Departments e.g. assignments under the Higher Executive Officer promotion scheme to Roinn na Gaeltachta.

(4) Officers who by reference to date of birth or date of entry to the Civil Service were exempt from the Irish promotion requirements which previously applied will automatically qualify for a credit as indicated at (3) in the context of their first promotion after the date of this Circular. To qualify for the credit for the purposes of any subsequent promotion they must satisfy the Irish requirements applicable to other members of their grades. These arrangements will not apply at competitions announced before the date of this Circular.

(b) Confined written competitions

6 As regards confined written competitions, (d) of paragraph 1 is being implemented as follows. Candidates must, as part of the competition, take a written test in Irish or in English but they may take both the Irish and English tests. If they take both tests and qualify in them the marks for both subjects reckon towards the order of merit.

(c) Promotion to Posts not previously subject to Irish requirements

7. The position in relation to promotion to posts which have not been subject to Irish requirements will remain unchanged in the period to 1 April 1976.

CIRCULATION

8 Please bring this Circular to the attention of all officers serving in your Department/Office. DPS Circular Letter 9/74 is hereby cancelled.

Mise le meas
S O Conaill