

Reference No: E109/103/85; **Date:** 17/10/87

Circular 9/1987:- Increments

A Dhuine Uasail

I am directed by the Minister for Finance to issue this comprehensive circular on increments, replacing all previous instructions on the subject.

General

2. An increment is an increase in pay for which provision is made in a pay scale. As a general rule increments are granted annually provided an officer's services are satisfactory.
3. The onus is on individual officers to show that their performance during the year merits an increment. It follows that officers are not entitled to any prior formal warning of possible deferral of an increment. However, every effort should be made to ensure that officers are advised in good time of any perceived deficiencies in their performance and are given an opportunity to remedy them.
4. The payment of an increment should normally be deferred as a matter of course where doubts arise, during a probationary period or a period of acting appointment, as to an officer's suitability for final appointment. Where such doubts are due solely to health considerations the increment may, however, be allowed provided that the officer's services including the sick leave record are in all other respects accepted as satisfactory.
5. Increments are normally earned only by periods of paid service. Special leave without pay, sick leave at pension rate of pay or without pay and any other forms of unpaid service do not in general reckon for incremental purposes (however the exceptional arrangements mentioned in DPS Circular Letter 2/76 for officers serving with international organisations will continue to apply).

White Paper

6. The White Paper Serving the Country Better had this to say about increments (paragraph 4.5):

"In future, increments will have to be earned by positively favourable assessment of performance and commitment throughout the year. Line managers will make, and if necessary justify, decisions about whether individual performances merit an increment".
7. A revised incremental form has been prepared (copy attached). This form should be completed in all cases where an increment is due.
8. Individual Departments bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that increments are granted only to officers whose attendance, performance and commitment throughout the year have been completely satisfactory. As a general rule, no officer below the rank of Higher Executive Officer (or equivalent rank) should complete the incremental form. Arrangements should be made to acquaint such officers of the considerations to be borne in mind in completing the incremental form and of the importance attached to the grant of the increment in question.
9. Certifying officers should be made fully aware of the need to be able to justify, where necessary, individual decisions about payment of increments. Departments themselves will best be able to judge what arrangements are necessary in this regard. As a minimum, it is suggested that arrangements be made to compare completed incremental forms with previous assessments to ensure, for example, that

increments are generally not paid to officers whose probationary services are giving cause for concern or to officers who have received unfavourable performance ratings on foot of a Staff Appraisal Scheme. (Officers not considered suitable for promotion could of course be granted an increment if their performance in their present grade was otherwise satisfactory.)

Absenteeism

10. Particular attention should be paid to absenteeism in assessing whether payment of an increment is justified.

Performance

11. It is important that, in completing the incremental form, certifying officers should give adequate weight to the question of work performance and not place an undue emphasis on punctuality. The revised form has been designed to help supervisors to quantify and expand as necessary their assessments of the performance, i commitment and conduct of their staff. The intention is that it should on completion provide a reasonably clear picture of the officer's strengths and weaknesses.

Efficiency Bar

12. In the case of grades to which efficiency bars apply, Departments should ensure that officers do not proceed beyond the bar point unless and until they are certified as being fully competent to perform the highest duties of the grade concerned. Efficiency in the highest duties of the grade remains a condition which must be satisfied before increments above the bar point are granted. Likewise such efficiency is a condition for the retention of the maximum of the officer's scale. The existing form E Gen 5 may continue to be used for the purposes of allowing staff to proceed beyond an efficiency bar.

Deferral of Increments

13. If a certificate of satisfactory service cannot be given, payment of the increment will be deferred for a specified period e.g. three, six, nine or twelve months. On the expiration of the period, the officer's performance should be reviewed and the increment may be allowed with effect from the end of the review period provided the officer's service is satisfactory. The increment should not be restored with effect from an earlier date save in the most exceptional circumstances.

14. The deferment of an increment does not in itself necessarily involve the alteration of future incremental dates. If the period of deferment is less than one year, and if the officer's conduct and service continue to be satisfactory after the award of the deferred increment, the next increment may be allowed in the ordinary course on the date on which it normally falls due. If, however, the period of deferment extends to one year the officer's normal increment, in addition to the deferred increment, may be allowed at the end of the period of deferment if the officer's conduct and service have been satisfactory in the period.

15. The provisions of paragraphs 13 and 14 do not apply to officers within the age - pay range of an age-pointed pay scale. Departments may, however, wish to note that the disciplinary powers conferred on the "appropriate authority" under Section 15 of the Civil Service Regulation Act, 1956 are not affected by the fact that an officer is on age-pay. Section 15 may also be used to withdraw, on disciplinary grounds, increments already allowed.

16. Where incremental dates are being deferred by periods of unpaid service, the revised date should be calculated by reference to the number of calendar days involved.

Payment of Increments

17. The following arrangements apply in relation to the payment of increments:

(a) In calculating salary payments, Accounts Branches should normally act on the assumption that increments will be paid on the dates on which they are due;

(b) Incremental certificates should be circulated to certifying officers at least a month in advance of the date on which the increments are due so as to allow sufficient time to Accounts Branches to enable the increments to be paid on the due dates if justified:

(c) Departments/Offices should make arrangements with a view to ensuring that

(i) incremental certificates being cleared are with Accounts Branches by the dates on which the increments are due and

(ii) where there is a doubt about whether an increment is to be allowed, Accounts Branches should be informed in sufficient time before the date on which the increment is due to enable them to withhold payment of the increment:

(d) If an Accounts Branch makes a payment in respect of an increment (which in the event is not allowed, recovery of the overpayment should be made within the quarter in which the overpayment occurred. Where, however, such recovery would impose hardship on the officer concerned, it may be spread into the subsequent quarter.

Mise le meas
Seamus o Ciosain
Runai Cunta

INCREMENT FORM
(To be retained on Officer's Personal File)

1. INFORMATION

Name	_____	Grade	_____
Scale	_____	Present Pay	_____
Amount of Increment	_____	New Pay	_____
		Date of Increment	_____

2. REPORT OF PERFORMANCE

	RATING		REMARKS
	Above Average	Average	Below Average
1. Work Output			
2. Quality of Work			
3. Effectiveness with others			
4. Punctuality - (specify number of lates including core-time infringements.)			
5. Sick Leave - (a) certified (b) uncertified			
6. General Conduct			

7. Overall Rating

Personnel Units should include the relevant figures for 4 and 5 above in the Remarks column.

3. CERTIFICATE

I certify that this officer's performance during the year merits an increment.

Signed _____ Approved _____
Immediate Superior Officer (for) Head of Department

Notes:

1. Where an officer's performance is not satisfactory Part 3 should not be completed. The Personnel Unit should be consulted.
2. Each supervisor should let the officer reported on know the overall rating given.

AUTHORISATION OF INCREMENT (TO BE SENT TO ACCOUNTS BRANCH)

The payment of an increment been authorised for the officer named below.

Name	_____	Grade	_____
Scale	_____	Present Pay	_____
Amount of Increment	_____	New Pay	_____
		Date of Increment	_____

Signed _____ Date _____
(for) Head of Department