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Programme questions: evaluation

Triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its fifty-ninth session on the evaluation of the Office of Human Resources Management

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) recommendations three years after the Committee had decided to endorse them (see [A/37/38](#), para. 362). The triennial review was conducted to assess the extent to which six of the seven recommendations emanating from the OIOS programme evaluation of the Department of Management-Office of Human Resources Management ([E/AC.51/2019/3](#)) had been implemented. Recommendation 3 on delegation of authority was closed by OIOS shortly after the evaluation, in view of the changes to the delegation of authority that took effect on 1 January 2019.

The OIOS evaluation was finalized just prior to the implementation of United Nations management reforms on 1 January 2019 whereby two new departments, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support were created. In its evaluation, OIOS supported the reforms proposed in the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations” ([A/73/372](#)), and data and analyses from the evaluation were specifically referred to in the report of the Secretary-General on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: review of progress in the implementation of management reform ([A/75/201](#)).

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

** [E/AC.51/2022/1](#).



The triennial review was conducted through: (a) a review and analysis of biennial progress reports on the status of OIOS recommendations; (b) an analysis of relevant information, documents and reports; and (c) interviews with staff of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support.

OIOS determined that all six recommendations reviewed had been implemented.

In recommendation 1, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance was to simplify and streamline human resources policies. In May 2020, the Office of Human Resources of the Department articulated its approach for establishing strategic policy priorities in its policy reset proposal, which, among other goals, was focused on the setting of priorities and policy simplification and established the Management Client Board to prioritize the policy development workplan and provide a forum for feedback from Secretariat entities on their policy and operational requirements. The Board guides and informs Department decisions on policy development and issuance.

In recommendation 2, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance was to strengthen procedures for promulgating new or revised administrative issuances. In July 2019, the Department launched the first central database of policy issuances (policy.un.org), which is accessible to all Secretariat staff. This database continues to be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis and has been integrated with the new Knowledge Gateway online platform, an internal knowledge management tool developed by the Department of Operational Support and launched in 2020 to host operational and administrative guidance for staff.

In recommendation 4, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance was to strengthen workforce planning. In response, the workforce planning guide, which was initiated before the OIOS evaluation was finalized but for which the recommendation provided the necessary support for finalization, was completed and introduced to departments and offices through an information campaign in August 2020. The guide was also made available to all staff through the Knowledge Gateway online platform and was announced in an article published on the iSeek intranet in October 2020.

In recommendation 5, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance was to strengthen the selection and recruitment policy in line with good human resources practices. The reports of the Secretary-General assessing good practice and revision of the human resources policy on mobility ([A/73/372/Add.1](#) and [A/73/372/Add.2](#)) were presented to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Subsequently, Department staff interviewed noted that the report entitled “New approach to staff mobility: building an agile Organization by providing opportunities for on-the-job learning and skills development” ([A/75/540/Add.1](#)) reflected all the best practices and lessons learned from the previous mobility efforts and Senior Review Board deliberations.

In recommendation 6, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance was to establish a certification programme for human resources practitioners. The human resources partner eCertification programme, designed and developed by the Department of Operational Support, was established in 2020, with all 11 modules currently available as of December 2021. The certification programme is open to: (a) certification learners required to complete the mandatory training to apply for a human resources partner role in Umoja and (b) continuous development learners wishing to refresh their knowledge and acquire new skills. As at December 2021, 400 staff with human resources responsibilities had been trained and partially certified, while 26 had been fully certified.

In recommendation 7, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance was to enhance its overall client orientation. The Department reinstated a biennial client satisfaction survey as part of its regular human resources management processes in 2019 and 2021. Results have provided staff input to the policy prioritization process, as well as input to training on human resources policies.

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-ninth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the then Department of Management-Office of Human Resources Management (E/AC.51/2019/3).
2. The Committee welcomed the report and recommended that the General Assembly endorse the seven recommendations contained in paragraphs 62 to 68 (A/74/16, paras. 584 and 585).
3. The OIOS evaluation was finalized just prior to the implementation of United Nations management reforms on 1 January 2019, whereby two new departments, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support were created. In its evaluation, OIOS supported the reforms proposed in the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations” (A/73/372), and data and analyses from the evaluation were specifically referred to in the report of the Secretary-General on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: review of progress in the implementation of management reform (A/75/201).
4. In the triennial review, OIOS examined the status of implementation of six of the seven recommendations contained in its evaluation report. The seventh recommendation (recommendation 3 in the report), regarding the establishment of delegation of authority was closed by OIOS shortly after the evaluation, in view of the changes to delegation of authority that took effect on 1 January 2019 as part of management reforms. The remaining six recommendations have all been implemented.
5. The methodology for the triennial review included:
 - (a) Review of progress reporting on the status of recommendations monitored by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS;
 - (b) Analysis of relevant information, documents and reports obtained from the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance;
 - (c) Interviews conducted with staff of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support.
6. The report incorporates comments received from the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support during drafting. The final report was shared with both Departments for comment (see annex). OIOS expresses its appreciation for the cooperation and assistance provided by both Departments in the preparation of the report.

II. Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Simplification and streamlining of policies

7. Recommendation 1 reads as follows:

The Department should support the ongoing simplification and streamlining of policies project by incorporating the following components:

 - (a) Assessment of existing policy gaps;

- (b) Review of the overall policy framework to eliminate redundancy and ensure cohesion;
- (c) Identification of resource requirements for policy development, review, revision and communication.

Indicator of achievement: a streamlined human resources policy framework that takes into account all of the components in (a)–(c) above

8. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance has simplified and streamlined the existing human resources policy framework. This included: a baseline assessment of policy gaps and priorities; the initiation of a policy streamlining and simplification process; and the identification of budget requirements for implementing the new human resources policy framework in 2020.

9. In May 2020, the Office of Human Resources in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance articulated its approach for establishing strategic policy priorities in its policy reset proposal.¹ This proposal was developed in response to United Nations management reforms, the Secretary-General's subsequent proposed global human resources strategy (as set out in [A/73/372](#)) and the ongoing policy streamlining and simplification project completed at the end of 2018. The following elements were adopted as part of this policy reset proposal:

- (a) Focus on strategic priorities and substantive simplification over the updating and revision of administrative issuances;
- (b) Establishment and use of the Management Client Board in 2020 to prioritize the policy development workplan and provide a forum for feedback from Secretariat entities on their policy and operational requirements ([A/75/201](#), para. 18);
- (c) Streamlining of the process through proactive consultations with strategic and operational partners in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Department of Operational Support;
- (d) Proactive consultations with stakeholder entity members of the Management Client Board during the process of developing or revising key policies;
- (e) Streamlining of consultations with the Senior Management Committee by replacing email consultations with transparent online consultations and by the targeted use of time-limited working groups for highly sensitive policies.

10. The Management Client Board has played a key role in the policy prioritization process to date. In 2020, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance provided a list of 323 administrative issuances to the Board for guidance on which to prioritize. Of these, the Board suggested emphasizing 151, of which 29 relating to entities impacted by the reform were considered to be priorities for 2020 and 2021. Staff interviewed confirmed that the Board guidance informed the decisions of the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance on policy development and issuances and that the 2020 and 2021 annual budgets for the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support reflected the resources needed.

11. In the light of the above, OIOS considered this recommendation to have been implemented.

¹ Office of Human Resources, "The human resources policy priorities", Management Client Board, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance memorandum, 19 May 2020.

Recommendation 2
Strengthen the procedure for promulgating new or revised administrative issuances

12. Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

The Department should strengthen the procedure for promulgating new or revised administrative issuances by:

- (a) Undertaking a regular review of the use of discretionary actions and exceptions to identify needs for policy development or revision;
- (b) Reviewing existing policies to check for measures that are inconsistent with new or revised policies;
- (c) Identifying the necessary preparatory work for implementation;
- (d) Issuing timely communications to staff, including concerning the policy rationale.

Indicator of achievement: revised procedure for promulgating new or revised issuances integrating the issues in (a)–(d) above

13. In addition to the activities discussed above with regard to recommendation 1, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance launched, in July 2019, the first central database of policy issuances (policy.un.org), which is accessible to all Secretariat staff. This database continues to be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis and has been integrated with the new Knowledge Gateway online platform, an internal knowledge management tool accessible to all United Nations staff, developed by the Department of Operational Support and launched in April 2020 to host staff operational and administrative guidance (A/75/201, para. 17). These two tools now provide staff with up-to-date human resources policy, as well as operational and administrative guidance.

14. In the light of the above, OIOS considered this recommendation to have been implemented.

Recommendation 4
Strengthen workforce planning

15. Recommendation 4 reads as follows:

The Department should further strengthen workforce planning by undertaking an information campaign led by senior management of the Office of Human Resources Management to reintroduce the workforce planning model to departments and offices, including communicating specific benefits gained when undertaking such planning.

Indicator of achievement: information campaign conducted for workforce planning

16. Development of the workforce planning guide was initiated before the OIOS evaluation was finalized, and thus the recommendation helped to support and ensure its completion and emphasize the importance of strong workforce planning. The guide was produced by the Human Resources Services Division in the Office of Support Operations of the Department of Operational Support, in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, in August 2020. The guide provides a five-step methodology supporting entities with workforce planning exercises and best practices. To further assist entities with workforce planning, the Department of Operational Support also produced an organizational design inventory, a staffing review toolkit and other supplementary documents in May 2020.

17. The information campaign to introduce the workforce planning guide to the Secretariat began in August 2020, when the guide was sent to all chiefs of human resources. The guide was also made available to staff through the Knowledge Gateway online platform and announced in an October 2020 article on the iSeek intranet.²

18. The workforce planning guidance and associated learning and dissemination strategy discussed above were focused on identifying and keeping the right staff for the Organization to ensure that it was fit for purpose in meeting its goals. According to the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance staff interviewed, the Knowledge Gateway supported a more dynamic human resources practice, including interactive human resources policy dissemination, learning and communities of practice.

19. In the light of the above, OIOS considered this recommendation to have been implemented.

Recommendation 5
Strengthen the selection and recruitment policy

20. Recommendation 5 reads as follows:

Within the existing parameters of General Assembly mandates, the Department should strengthen the components/requirements within the selection and recruitment policy by aligning them with good human resources practice.

Indicator of achievement: proposal for changes to the current selection and recruitment policy for discussion during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly

21. In his 2020 review of progress in the implementation of management reform, as presented in [A/75/201](#), the Secretary-General described progress on strengthening the selection and recruitment policy in a section entitled “Getting the right people” (paras. 24–28). As discussed in that report and confirmed in interviews with Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance staff, the Secretariat has developed the tools and guidance for human resources clients to develop workforce plans. In addition, a plan of action was developed to address capacity gaps in critical areas, such as cybersecurity. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance has also launched a geographical diversity strategy and better targeted generic job openings. Staff interviewed reported that work was also continuing on the staff mobility policy, as this was also a priority for Member States.

22. The reports of the Secretary-General assessing good practice and revision of the human resources policy on mobility ([A/73/372/Add.1](#) and [A/73/372/Add.2](#)) were presented to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Subsequently, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance staff interviewed noted that the report entitled “New approach to staff mobility” ([A/75/540/Add.1](#)) reflected all the best practices and lessons learned from the previous mobility efforts and the Senior Review Board deliberations. A dynamic online guidance manual incorporating good practices for staff selection was updated on 22 November 2021.³

23. In the light of the above, OIOS considered this recommendation to have been implemented.

² See <https://iseek.un.org/article/achieve-operational-workforce-planning-goals-five-steps> (restricted).

³ See <https://www.manula.com/manuals/united-nation-dos-cdots/staff-selection-system/1/en/topic/what-039-s-new> (restricted).

Recommendation 6

Establish a certified training programme

24. Recommendation 6 reads as follows:

The Department should recognize and enhance the Secretariat human resources community as a separate and critical organizational profession by, inter alia, establishing a certified training programme. The training should lead to a certification for all human resources practitioners and include Secretariat-specific training and broader human resources theory and practice.

Indicator of achievement: an established human resources training programme

25. A certification programme for human resources practitioners was established in 2020. All 11 modules of the programme are currently available. The human resources partner eCertification programme is open to two types of participants:

(a) Certification learners, required to complete the mandatory training to apply for a human resources partner role in Umoja.

(b) Continuous development learners, wishing to refresh their knowledge and existing skills or acquire new ones.

26. As at December 2021, 400 staff with human resources responsibilities have been trained and partially certified, while 26 have been fully certified as a result of the training certification programme.

27. According to staff interviewed at the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support, the new human resources partner eCertification programme is a key part of the Secretary-General's vision of a modern, efficient and effective human resources division serving all United Nations staff and their day-to-day learning needs. It follows from the road map for implementation contained in the People Strategy 2021–2025.⁴

28. Staff interviewed reported that the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support worked closely together to establish and support a global and decentralized human resources community of practice across the Organization. Within the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, the Organizational Development Section, under the Office of Human Resources, led the United Nations staff learning needs analysis, which was finalized in 2020 and identified over 1,200 Secretariat staff with human resources-related functions.⁵ Subsequently, in 2021, the Section, in close collaboration with the Capacity Development and Operational Training Service of the Department of Operational Support, oversaw the development of the United Nations Learning Strategy.⁶ In the same year, the Office of Human Resources launched the United Nations Values and Behaviours Framework,⁷ which will inform human resources processes, such as workforce planning, recruitment, learning and performance management.

29. Finally, staff interviewed noted that the Office of Human Resources of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of

⁴ The Secretariat's People Strategy was launched in 2021. It is the Secretariat's response to move forward the proposed global human resources strategy. See <https://iseek.un.org/article/people-strategy-2021-2025-our-road-map-future> (restricted). The proposed global human resources strategy has not to date been endorsed by the Member States.

⁵ The Global Learning for the United Nations Secretariat, launched in 2020, phase 1, learning needs assessment. See https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/Draft_v8_LNA_Report_2020_LT_1.pdf.

⁶ The United Nations Secretariat learning strategy 2021–2025 was launched in August 2021.

⁷ United Nations Values and Behaviours Framework, launched in October 2020.

Operational Support are following knowledge management principles with the roll-out of needs-based human resources learning products and services. The designers of the 11-module human resources partner eCertification programme have employed a staff mentoring and peer-to-peer learning approach, available on the Knowledge Gateway platform, to host queries and discussions within the human resources practitioner community.

30. In the light of the above, OIOS considered this recommendation to have been implemented.

Recommendation 7
Enhance overall client orientation

31. Recommendation 7 reads as follows:

The Department should introduce specific measures to enhance its overall client orientation, including a strategy for better identifying client needs, including the conduct of regular client satisfaction surveys, and effectively managing their expectations.

Indicator of achievement: client orientation strategy

32. Beginning in 2019, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance reinstated a biennial client satisfaction survey as part of its regular human resources management processes. The survey results provided regular staff input to Department policy prioritization processes, as well as to training on human resources policies. Senior management Department staff interviewed reported that Secretariat respondents to the 2021 survey appreciated the opportunity to provide input to human resource policy processes and that the inclusion of these staff viewpoints is supporting needs-based and targeted human resources policy and learning programmes.

33. In the light of the above, OIOS considered this recommendation to have been implemented.

III. Early results of the implementation of recommendations

34. Early positive results already identified, with the implementation of the recommendations, as reported by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance staff interviewed and/or identified in documents reviewed, included:

(a) A more effective human resources framework and policy development process, based on client needs as determined through Management Client Board consultations, resulting in better prioritized and more streamlined United Nations human resources policies;

(b) A more streamlined set of policies and a dynamic new process for human resources policy prioritization, including policy training needs and budget decisions;

(c) Strengthened links between policymaking and operational and administrative learning for human resources staff. For example, better knowledge management and dissemination of revised policies through the portal (policy.un.org), launched in July 2019, and a new staff operational and administrative learning and sharing portal (Knowledge Gateway) launched in 2020;

(d) More coherent workforce planning supported with relevant guidance and tools, such as the workforce planning guide;

(e) New human resources training and learning programmes that have created a better capacitated human resources community of practice in the Secretariat.

Annex*

Comments received from the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance

Thank you for your memorandum and for sharing with us the formal draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the triennial review of recommendations from the evaluation of the Office of Human Resources Management.

I am pleased to see that the OIOS review has taken note of our efforts and considers all recommendations as implemented. We welcome that the report highlights our key actions to implement the evaluation recommendations.

As mentioned in your report, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance provided comments on an earlier informal draft report. We concur with the main findings of the review and have no further comments on this formal report.

I take this opportunity to thank OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division, in particular the review team that worked closely with the Office of Human Resources on this exercise.

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.