

# 7.1 Teacher - Employer Relations

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Note: Processes are currently under development

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# Rules: Teacher-Employer relations - link

## Conditions of work

- The TSC must provide favourable working terms and conditions for teachers and ensure their entitlements, rights and privileges are maintained in accordance with agreements made through the Trade Group Negotiation Council.
- Remuneration for teachers is provided according to the teaching profession grades. The lowest grade is 5 and the highest is 11. The grade of a teacher is determined by the teacher's position, education, and years of service. Remuneration increases with intervals and is subject to negotiation between the representatives of employers and employees.
- Working hours are 28-32 periods in a week. A period or lesson is 40 minutes. This is equal to 21 hours per week or 4-5 hours per day. A teacher must stay in school from 08:00 to 14:00 even if the teacher does not teach all the time. The equivalent applies to shift schools, which operate from 08:00 to 13:00 and 13:00 to 18:00.
- The retirement age for teachers is 60 years. Early retirement is 55 years with reduced pension. Dispensation can be given under special circumstances. *For further details go to [Retirement](#).*
- Benefits and allowances for teachers are currently under review.

## Grievance and Appeal

TSC Department of Teacher-Employer Relations is developing systems and processes for complaints and grievances. Comprehensive guidelines will be published soon. Please refer to the *Grievance/Dispute Settlement Mechanism (TSC, 2020)*.

- The TSC shall establish an appeals tribunal, develop procedures of appeal and review justification for dismissal.
- Teachers shall have the right to appeal against a decision to be removed from the register and payroll within a stipulated time frame.

- Grievance and appeal can be addressed by visiting <https://grm.tsc.gov.sl>

## Legal Proceedings

- A teacher may apply to the TSC for legal assistance if a civil suit is instituted against the teacher for an action or omission related to the discharge of the teacher's official duty.
- The TSC requires an application for legal assistance shall be submitted together with a report prepared by the DD of the respective TSC-DO with details of the case against the teacher.
- The TSC shall assess whether the subject of litigation falls within its mandate and assess associated risks involved.
- If appropriate, the TSC may take steps to settle the matter out of court, rather than provide legal assistance.
- The TSC shall seek (free) legal assistance from the Attorney-General; and consult with the Attorney General and the Ministry of Finance on use of public funds to settle damages or costs awarded against a teacher in civil proceedings.
- The TSC as employer shall not be involved in any way in legal proceedings where a teacher is charged with a criminal offence.
- The TSC as employer shall not be involved in any proceedings relating to private litigation unconnected to the official position or duty of a teacher.
- The TSC may decline to provide legal assistance or to meet the costs of a legal procedure, if it judges the action of the teacher is in breach of policy, regulations, rules or the Code of Conduct.
- Teachers may also contact SLTU for assistance and guidance.

# Process: How to join the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union

- Anyone who is regularly and actively engaged as a teacher, school leader or lecturer in public or private educational institutions is eligible for membership of the SLTU, including teachers on study leave, retired teachers and anyone associated with teaching who wishes to be a member.
- The SLTU has offices at national, regional, district/zone and branch level, and is represented at schools by a teacher. Official representatives are selected by the SLTU's National Executive Committee. Most representatives are
- Prospective members are required to complete a membership form and submit it to their nearest SLTU office/representative. Members must register using their full name, ID number and other details.
- The National Executive Committee has the power to reject or cancel any individual membership whose professional conduct is considered to be unsatisfactory.
- A person declared ineligible by the National Executive Committee remains ineligible until the National Executive Committee decides to admit or re-admit the person as a member. This does not interfere with his/her rights.
- To be a member and enjoy the benefits/ privileges of the Union, the individual must pay their subscription fee and fulfil conditions and obligations.

# Process: The procedure for grievance and appeal

The Grievance/Dispute Settlement Mechanism is under development. Until then, it is recommended grievances/disputes are received, registered and processed in the following ways:

- At school level, teachers can make verbal complaints to the school leader or the SLTU school representative.
- Teachers can make a written complaint to the appropriate authority depending on the seriousness or complexity of the issue.
- TSC can be addressed directly on <https://grm.tsc.gov.sl>
- Toll-free lines are provided at TSC District Offices
- The existing Ministry of Education 4060 toll-free line provides an opportunity for complaints from any mobile network in the country free of charge.

# Further reading:

## Introduction to teacher - employer relations

Employee - employer relations is concerned with the relationship between employees and their employers. It covers the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees, including:

- The terms and conditions offered by employers to their employees
- The organisations which represent employers and employees respectively and look after their interests
- The laws, acts, regulations and legal institutions that govern the relationship
- The mechanisms of communication between employers and employees and their representatives
- Negotiations on employment terms and conditions and other issues
- Grievances and rights of appeal.

In Sierra Leone's teaching service, teachers, school leaders, and school administrators are all employees while MBSSE, TSC, district authorities, and school proprietors are employers, with the Government as the overarching employer. Universities and TTCs operate separately using a different system.

Employer-employee relations within the teaching service adhere to Sierra Leone's current labour laws and other relevant legislation.

School leaders, SMC's and BoG's carry out some of the duties of employers as part of their regular HR responsibilities.

Teachers are represented by Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU) while the Trade Group Negotiation Council (TGNC) serves as a forum for negotiations between employers and employees

in the teaching service. School leaders are represented by the National Council of Head Teachers (NACOHT) and Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (CPSS).

Traditionally, employees and their representatives negotiate for the best possible conditions in terms of salary, working hours, leave, etc. while the employer has an interest in cutting costs and maximising work efficiency.

In modern HR this conflict of interest is considered old-fashioned. Best practice now is to focus on common interests, i.e. a business thrives when its employees thrive and vice versa. If employees are motivated and committed, they will achieve more and the organisation will benefit, which again encourages the organisation to look after its employees, creating a positive circle of common interests and healthy cooperation.

This also applies to the teaching service where teachers and their employers share a common interest in the successful achievements of school children.

Terms and conditions associated with employer relations in the teaching service are wide ranging including wages, working hours, leave, benefits, pension, grievances, legal rights, etc. It could even incorporate matters such as smoking on school grounds and use of internet in the workplace.

## Who is responsible

- TSC, the Teacher-Employer Relations Department: Responsible for teacher-employer relations from an HR perspective.
- Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU): represents the interests of teachers and negotiates on their behalf.
- Trade Group Negotiation Council (TGNC): Includes all key stakeholders in teacher affairs and is a key negotiating body.
- Legal Aid Board: Provides legal aid for the poor.
- Ombudsman: An autonomous body with the power to deal with complaints relating to employee-employer relations.
- National Council of Head Teachers (NACOHT).
- Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (CPSS).