

Specialist Pay Lead Policy

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Contents

Contents.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
3. Policy Principles.....	2
4. How Specialist Pay Leads are funded.....	2
5. How the value of a Specialist Pay Lead is determined.....	2
6. What is the process for agreeing a Specialist Pay Lead?	3
7. What would be expected in a Specialist Pay Lead Business Case?	4
8. How will a Specialist Pay Lead be paid?.....	4
8.1. Effect on SPL of a change in role	4
8.2. Staff on promotion	4
8.3. Staff who work part time hours	5
9. How will approved Specialist Pay Leads be monitored?	5
Other Useful information and documents.....	5
Annex A: Specialist Pay Lead Business Case Form	5

1. Introduction

This policy applies to all staff from SEO to Grade 6 (and equivalent grades) in core Defra, VMD, APHA and RPA. It includes details for staff who are Permanent, Fixed Term Appointments (FTAs) or Short Term Appointments (STAs). SPL is not available at grades AA-HEO.

It is recognised that Defra operates in a highly competitive market when recruiting certain skills, and that pay levels can sometimes be a barrier to recruitment and retention in this environment.

To enable Defra to compete effectively in these markets, a Specialist Pay Lead (SPL) of up to £6,000 per annum is available for roles at SEO to G6. The policy and the process for awarding an SPL are set out in this document. The business

case template can be found in Annex A.

All Specialist Pay Leads must be reviewed at least every 12 months by Heads of Profession in consultation with the Defra group Reward team and HRBP's. They may be removed subject to 1 months' notice. They may be increased or reduced in response to market changes.

2. Policy Principles

Key principles for Specialist Pay Leads are set out below:

- SPLs will only be agreed in exceptional cases where Defra requires scarce skills for specific roles and pay levels have been identified as a barrier to recruitment and retention.
- The Head of Profession will be responsible for managing and reviewing all the SPLs in their profession, with support from their HRBP and the Defra group Reward team.
- No SPL will result in a total reward value that exceeds the market rate (including consideration of the value of pension provided)
- SPLs will be
 - Paid in monthly instalments
 - Attached to a specific post
 - Removed where an individual moves from a post attracting SPL to one that does not attract SPL
 - Non-Pensionable
 - Reckonable for overtime
- Removal of an SPL (with 1 months' notice) will not incur mark time allowance
- All SPLs are subject to review at least every 12 months.

3. How Specialist Pay Leads are funded

Individual business areas must ensure that adequate funding is available within their budget for any proposed SPL.

4. How the value of a Specialist Pay Lead is determined

The value of an SPL (up to a maximum of £6,000 per annum) will be determined by using the following factors:

- Requirements of the role e.g. scarce skills
- Benchmarking Data from the annual pay survey held by Defra group Reward
- Salaries compared against the lower quartile comparable roles within the private sector.

- Consideration of the total package on offer including the value of the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme including the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

Decisions will also be based on affordability, and a judgement will be made on the appropriate level of reward required to address the key issues identified in the business case. Location of the role should be considered when reviewing whether a Specialist Pay Lead is required.

The Annual Pay data currently provided by Civil Service Pay & Reward should be the primary data set for benchmarking information. Other data may be used on an ad-hoc basis with the agreement of the Defra group Reward team.

5. What is the process for agreeing a Specialist Pay Lead?

To apply for a Specialist Pay Lead, the Head of Profession or recruiting manager with the support of the Head of Profession must work together with their HR Business Partner before submitting a business case to the Defra group Reward team. The Defra group Reward team will then produce a recommendation for the Reward Deputy Director regarding the proposed pay lead.

The process is outlined below, and a business case template is included in [Annex A](#).

1. -The hiring manager considers there to be a significant difficulty in recruiting and retaining high calibre staff to the post(s).
2. Hiring manager to liaise with the HR Business Partner to complete business case and to submit to Defra group Reward team. HRBP to liaise with Head of Profession where appropriate.
3. -The Defra group Reward team is content that there is a sufficiently robust business case, having sought additional information or further clarification where appropriate.
4. -Defra group Reward team submits a business case to the HR Deputy Director for EO, ER and Reward for approval.
5. -Decision given.
6. -Defra group Reward team notifies Head of Profession and HR Business Partner of the outcome and reasons.
7. -If approved, specialist Pay Lead applies to post or posts identified in the business case.

If the Defra group Reward team is not content that there is a sufficiently robust business case, or the business case is not approved by the HR Deputy Director the team will notify HR Business Partner of the outcome and reasons, who is responsible for informing the Head of Profession. Normal recruitment procedures should then be followed.

6. What would be expected in a Specialist Pay Lead Business Case?

For an SPL to be approved, a business case must be provided demonstrating that an SPL would help the department avoid recruitment and retention issues which could adversely affect the Department's ability to meet its objectives. It should include analysis of the recruitment market and retention issues for the post(s) within that profession and demonstrate that an increase in pay would help alleviate these issues. The SPL business case form and advice for recruiting managers is provided at [Annex A](#).

Business cases must be supported by the following people:

- Relevant Director or Deputy Director to confirm criticality of the post and affordability
- Head of Profession to confirm the criticality of the post in relation to the other posts in the profession.
- Defra group Reward team.

7. How will a Specialist Pay Lead be paid?

An SPL is payable monthly, in addition to contractual base pay. The supplement is non-pensionable and cannot be consolidated into base pay.

Recruitment adverts for posts for which an SPL has been approved may specify that an SPL is payable, indicating its value and that it is subject to annual review.

7.1. Effect on SPL of a change in role

SPLs are linked to specific roles not personal attributes or experience. When an individual moves role they will cease to receive the SPL tied to their prior role. Where a member of staff changes role to a post that attracts either a lower or higher SPL, the SPL would be adjusted accordingly, or a new case might be required.

It is the responsibility of the releasing manager to inform the receiving manager if an SPL exists if an individual receiving an SPL moves to another role in the department. It is the responsibility of the receiving manager to stop or adjust the allowance.

7.2. Staff on promotion

SPLs are not included in pay on promotion calculations.

7.3. Staff who work part time hours

Staff who work part time in roles that attract SPL will have their SPL pro-rated.

8. How will approved Specialist Pay Leads be monitored?

The Head of Profession or line manager, as appropriate, is responsible for conducting an annual review of the posts which attract a Specialist Pay Lead in their profession and providing this information to Defra group Reward. This will include:

- Ensuring the post still meets the qualifying criteria stipulated in the business cases and the policy principles
- Consideration of the impact the SPL has had on difficulties with recruitment and retention, and the likely impact of any change to the SPL
- Update on the current and future development of specialist skills to mitigate against future recruitment/retention issues, for example, training other staff in the specialist skills to prevent the skills becoming scarce.
- Fresh benchmarking should be sought to ensure the SPL reflects the market. It may need to be adjusted or removed according to the revised data provided.

Data on the use of SPL's may be shared with Trade Union colleagues for information.

Other Useful information and documents

Please see the [pay pages](#) on the Defra intranet and the Pay on Appointment policy for more information on general pay and pay on appointment.

Annex A: Specialist Pay Lead Business Case Form

In accordance with the policy and guidance relating to Specialist Pay Leads (SPLs), the business case below should be completed by the manager with support from their HR Business Partner.

Please ensure that all sections are completed and that all the relevant information is provided.

Provide details of the role i.e. job advert and/or role description.

Once completed, the HR Business Partner should review the case and share it with the relevant Head of Profession (if appropriate) to establish their support.

Once finalised, the HR Business Partner should send the business case and any supporting documentation to Defra group Reward team:

Defra.reward@defra.gov.uk

Please note:

- This document is a record of the decision-making process, and it is essential that the factors considered are described, including the risks and potential employee relation issues associated, in appointing on a salary above the grade rate.
- The case should be supported by evidence and not be subjective.
- It will form part of the employee's record and may be a reference for equal pay audit purposes or in the event of legal challenge.

Job Title	
Role grade	
Profession of role	
Number of posts SPL will apply to? ie., how many roles of this type are there in the business	
Value of SPL allowance requested	
Date SPL commences if approved	

Manager name	
HR Business Partner	
Head of Profession	

Provide business context including the business-critical risks on not appointing this role.

What are the unique or exceptional, skills and/or experience qualifications this role requires that validate offering an SPL allowance?

Note these must be relevant to the role and not the individual.

Provide market information for this role.

This might include demand from OGD/private sector organisations, projects and initiatives that demonstrate why these skills are in demand or scarce.

Provide salary information for this and/or similar roles.

Typically, this will include competitor salaries, benchmarking data and details of roles currently being advertised.

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If role has been recently advertised, describe challenges recruiting this role and actions taken to resolve them?

I.e., when, and where has the role been advertised? how many times has it been advertised? Detail the number of applicants, interviews and how many candidates passed the bar.

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Has the role been offered?

Detail offers made and rejected. Also include information about on-going negotiations. Provide reason for opening negotiations and steps taken to secure candidate within out Pay on Appointment Policy

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Is there evidence of retention problems for this role?

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Provide details of staff turnover data with as much evidence as possible. Typically indicating turnover figures or where staff have left (recently or in the past). Other data might include tenure of roles and /or reasons for leaving.

Does this role occur any elsewhere in the Core Defra or any of its bodies?

I.e., are there other roles that are likely to become eligible for the SPL Allowance if this business case is approved? This may require investigation via you HR Business Partner and the Head of Profession.

What are the risks to equality and fairness of implementing this allowance i.e., the possibility of an equal pay challenge?

This answer must consider staff in the team and staff elsewhere in the organisations carrying out similar roles.

Provide any other information supporting this business case.

