



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STAFF TRANSFER POLICY

June 2025

Staff Transfer Policy

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Ministry's position and provide clear guidelines for the transfer of employees from one location to another during their term of employment as public servants under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Training, Tonga.

This policy sets out the following:

- a) The principles governing staff transfers;
- b) The eligibility criteria and conditions under which a transfer may be considered;
- c) The procedures(*process*) for applying and approving transfer requests;

It aims to ensure that all transfer decisions are fair, transparent, and aligned with both the operational needs of the Ministry and the wellbeing of its employees. The Ministry will enforce staff compliancy with this policy, whilst having the understanding that exceptional cases may arise, and in such event, the Ministry's needs and the individual's reasons for transfer can be considered on a case by case basis.

2 Organizational Scope

This is a Ministry-wide policy that applies to all permanent staff members of the Ministry of Education and Training.

A copy of this policy shall be made available to all staff through the appropriate internal channels. Staff are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the policy and any updates.

3 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply;

Lateral Transfer	Moving one post to another within the Ministry that is placed on the same salary band
Permanent Transfer	A posting within the Ministry to a new location in a substantive capacity (not in an acting or temporary capacity)

Exceptional Circumstances	Situations or conditions that fall outside the normal scope of policy provisions, requiring special consideration or deviation from standard procedures. <i>(Substantial evidence to be provided)</i>
Elderly	Individuals who may require care, assistance, or support due to age-related physical, emotional, or cognitive decline. This includes dependents such as parents or close relatives who may rely on the employee for daily care or supervision.
Voluntary Transfer	Volunteer to transfer, volunteer due to Ministry's demands if there is available post
Disciplinary Transfer	Transfer due to breach of code of conduct, if confirmed.
Promotion Transfer	Transfer to a higher-level position with increased responsibilities, classification, and usually a salary increase. <i>(subject to Promotion Policy)</i>
Permanent Staff	An employee paid by Government of Tonga, excluding daily paid laborers and professional contractors
Outer Island-Service	Refers to the posting or relocation of Ministry of Education and Training staff between Tongatapu and the outer island groups (Vava'u, Ha'apai, 'Eua, and the Niuas), or between any of these outer island groups themselves. This includes staff moving from Tongatapu to an outer island, from an outer island to Tongatapu, or between outer islands. Staff engaged in Outer Island-Service may be eligible for specific allowances, transfer conditions, or other benefits as per Ministry policy.
Salary Band	Refers to a range of salary within a specified band.

4 Principles Governing Staff Transfers

The Ministry of Education and Training (MET) upholds the following principles in the management and implementation of staff transfers:

a) Fairness and Transparency

Transfers shall be managed in a manner that is open, consistent, and based on clearly defined criteria, free from favoritism or bias.

b) Merit and Suitability

Staff transfers will consider the individual's qualifications, skills, experience, and performance, ensuring alignment with the needs of the receiving post.

c) Operational Efficiency

Transfers should support the effective delivery of education services across all divisions and regions, addressing staffing gaps and balancing workloads.

d) Staff Welfare and Equity

The personal circumstances of staff, including health, family responsibilities, and hardship, will be taken into account to the extent reasonable and practical.

e) Consultation and Communication

Transfer decisions will involve timely consultation with affected staff and relevant supervisors, ensuring mutual understanding of expectations and timelines.

f) Consistency with Legal and Strategic Frameworks

All transfers must align with the Public Service Act, Education Act, and relevant MET policies, frameworks and strategies.

g) Recognition of Outer Island Service

Service in remote and outer island locations will be duly considered in transfer planning, with attention to equitable rotation and access to professional development.

5 Policy Content and Guidelines

5.1 CONTENT

Transfers within the Ministry of Education and Training may be initiated through the following pathways:

a) Staff-Initiated Transfers

- Requested voluntarily by the staff member, often for personal, professional, or humanitarian reasons etc...

- Staff who are transferred as a result of a voluntary, staff-initiated request will not normally be eligible for relocation allowances or related financial support.
- These requests will be reviewed by the Staff Board, through the Human Resource Division, in line with the Ministry's operational needs and priorities.
- While the Ministry will make reasonable efforts to accommodate such requests, it is not obligated to approve a transfer where no suitable vacancy is available.

b) Ministry-Initiated Transfers

- Initiated by the Ministry to meet staffing needs, improve service delivery, or support operational planning et
- The Ministry reserves the right to transfer a staff member to a different role at the same salary band and employment duration, notwithstanding any other policies or provisions.
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c) Disciplinary-Related Transfers

- Initiated as part of a disciplinary process, in accordance with established procedures and due process requirements.

6. GUIDELINES ON ELIGIBILITY, CONDITIONS AND REASONS FOR TRANSFER

1. Eligibility for Transfer

These are the basic requirements that a staff member must meet in order to be considered for transfer:

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| a) The conditions for transfer are applicable to all permanent staff, fixed term and daily-paid employees of the Ministry (teaching and non-teaching staff). |
| b) A transfer can be undertaken only if a staff member has been serving in one location for at least 3–5 academic years, unless in exceptional circumstances. |
| c) Outer island-service is mandatory for teaching staff during their employment. |

d) Staff must use the Transfer Request Form (TRF) included in this policy.
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2. Conditions for Transfer

The following conditions may or must be met for a staff transfer to be processed or approved:

1) Alignment with Ministry Needs
a) The transfer must align with the operational requirements of the Ministry.
b) There must be a suitable vacant position available at or below the staff member's current band.
c) The transfer should support the Ministry's commitment to equitable education and improved student performance.
d) If the transfer is Ministry-initiated, it must receive CEO-level approval.
2) Staff Suitability and Readiness
a) The staff member's knowledge, skills, qualifications, experience, and personal attributes must match the requirements of the proposed post.
b) The transfer should support the staff member's professional development needs and/or career progression.
c) The performance history of the staff member will be taken into account.
3) Administrative and Financial Considerations
a) The costs involved in the transfer must be reasonable and within the Ministry's capacity.
b) No relocation allowance is guaranteed for staff-initiated transfers.

c) No late applications will be considered.
d) Staff may submit an appeal in writing to the CEO within 14 days of receiving the transfer decision.
4) Additional Factors Considered
a) When assessing transfer requests, the following may also be considered:
b) The staff member's career paths and professional standing
c) The potential for redeployment from a teaching to a non-teaching role (e.g., HR, Finance, Administration)
d) The fit between the staff member's capabilities and the requirements of the new role
e) The availability of interested staff in the receiving location
f) The recruitment difficulty at the intended post

Note: The conditions outlined in this policy may be amended, withdrawn, or replaced at the discretion of the Ministry. It is the responsibility of all staff to refer to the most current version of the policy prior to submitting any transfer request, using the official transfer request form provided. (See Annex1).

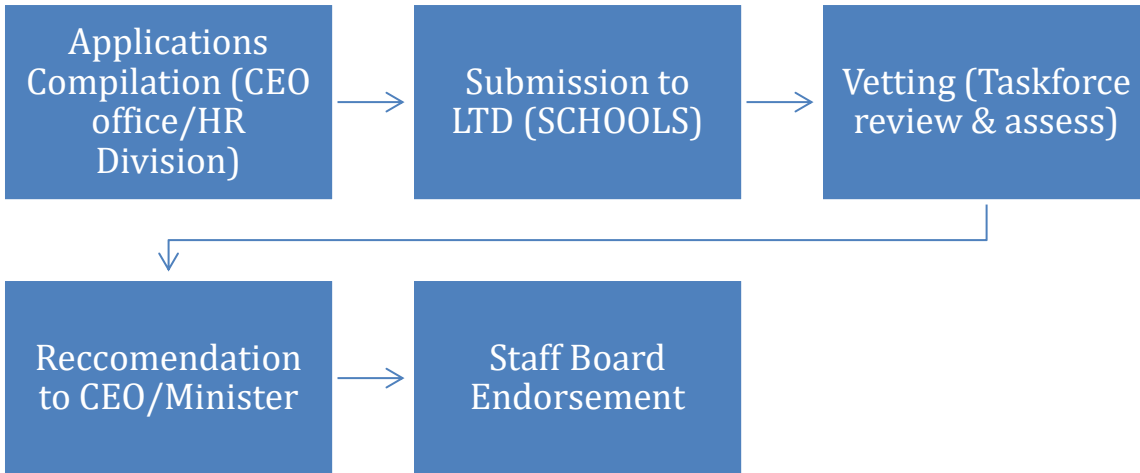
3. Reasons for Transfer

These are the justifications or motivations that a staff member may give when requesting a transfer:

1. Humanitarian / Compassionate Grounds
a) Sole caregiver for elderly parents or close relatives
b) Medical (self or immediate family)
c) Family separation (due to desertion, adultery, or domestic violence)

d) Hardship (e.g. child care relying on extended family)
e) Social welfare or child protection concerns
f) Security concerns
2. Family-Related Relocation
a) Church transfer of spouse
b) Work transfer of spouse
3. Career Development / Education
a) Study programme available only in Tongatapu
b) Long service in one location (e.g. more than 5-10 years)
c) Island-service (rotation or equity in remote postings)
4. Logistical / Practical Challenges
a) Transportation challenge
b) Accommodation issues (<i>subject to conditions under Housing Policy</i>)
5. Administrative / Disciplinary Grounds
a) Disciplinary reasons (breach of regulations/policies)

7. PROCESS



8. APPEAL PROCESS

Staff members who wish to appeal a transfer decision must adhere to the following process:

<p>1. Timeframe for Appeal: Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) within 14 calendar days of the official transfer announcement.</p>
<p>2. Grounds for Appeal: Appeals may be based on:</p>
<p>a) New or overlooked information relevant to the transfer decision;</p>
<p>b) Concerns of unfair or inconsistent application of policy;</p>
<p>c) Procedural errors during the transfer process.</p>
<p>3. Submission Requirements: Appeals must:</p>
<p>a) Be submitted in writing and signed by the appellant;</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clearly state the grounds for appeal and any supporting documentation;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be addressed to the CEO, Ministry of Education and Training.
<p>4. Review and Decision:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The appeal will be reviewed by a designated panel or the CEO's office, in consultation with the Policy Division and other relevant Divisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing within a reasonable timeframe.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The decision on appeal is final.

9. Reference

Education Act 2013

Public Service Policy Instructions 2010

10. Approval Agency

Hon Minister for Education and Training

11. Approval Dates

Approved by:		
	Minister for Education and Training: Hon. Mo'ale 'Otunuku	Date

Recommended by:		
	Chief Executive Officer Isikeli Oko	Date
This policy was originally approved on:	August, 2020	
This version was approved on:	*****2026	
This version takes effect from:		
Review Date:		

12. Policy Sponsor

Chief Executive Officer for Education and Training

Contact Person

The following person(s) may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this policy:

<p>Mrs Supiesi Halafihi Legal officer Email: supihalafihi20@gmail.com Mr. Soane Selui Director Policy, Planning, Research & EMISgr</p>
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13. Annex

A copy of the Staff Transfer Request Form (TRF) is included in this Policy, an electronic copy is available upon request.

Ministry of Education and Training
TRANSFER REQUEST FORM (TRF)(4 pages)
For PERMANENT EMPLOYEES only
(Please submit to CEO for Education and Training)

		Write your answer in this column
1	Last Name	
2	First and other names (as on Birth-certificate/add married name if married)	
3	Date of Birth (day/month/year)	
4	Gender (Male or Female)	
5	Marital Status (Single/Married/Widowed/Separated)	
6	No. and age of Dependent children (under 18)	
7	Where is your usual home residence? (name of village)	
8.	Where are you residing now? (name of village)	
9.	(i) Name of your current school/place of work?	
	(ii) Title of your current post? (TUT, SAT, SATD, ATD, ATG, ASL, SL etc)?	
	(iii) What is the Salary <u>Band</u>¹ of your post?	

¹ See annex XXXXX

10.	Work History/Employment Record	Please submit your work history in the attached form (page 4)	
11.	If you have worked in the outer islands (outside your own), how many years in total have you worked there?)		
<i>For Teaching Staff Only</i>			
12.	If a secondary/tertiary school teacher, what are your areas of teaching?	Main subject & Form (s) taught:	Minor subject & Form(s) taught:
13.	I wish to be transferred to:	1st choice	
		2nd choice	
14.	Reason(s) for seeking transfer (<i>please provide relevant supporting documentation for the reasons given, for example, if you wish to be in the same location with your spouse, please submit a letter from your spouse's employer confirming location of employment, etc</i>)		
<i>Add additional paper if necessary</i>			

Signature of Immediate Supervisor:

Date _____ **Phone contact** _____ **Email address:**

Signature of Employee applying for Transfer:

Date _____ **Phone contact** _____ **Email address:**

FOR OFFICIAL – MINISTRY’S USE ONLY

(DECISION OF THE MINISTRY’S STAFFING CONSULTATION MEETING)

Recommended for approval and to be transferred to:

Name of School/Div/Unit:

And to be replaced by: _____ (name of teacher/staff member) from

_____ (Name of School/Div/Unit)

_____ (Band: has to be the same Band with transferred employee)

Not recommended for approval.

State below reason for not recommending approval:

Name of Deputy CEO _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

WORK HISTORY – EMPLOYMENT RECORD

Full Name of Employee: _____

Year (and date if known)	Qualification and date obtained	Position and Location
Example: 27 Jan 2015	e.g. DipEd (Primary) from TIOE on 5/12/2014	e.g. SAT Diplomate, GPS Neiafu
Use additional paper if necessary		