

## **Frequently Asked Questions for AHCPS Members UPDATED**

### **Work to Rule Industrial Action**

The AHCPS work to rule industrial action commences on **Wednesday, 30 September 2026**.

A detailed instruction has issued to members outlining the work to rule and non-cooperation measures which members are required to follow. It is important that all members familiarise themselves with that instruction.

This FAQ is intended to provide practical guidance to members and will be updated as necessary as the industrial action progresses.

#### **1. What does “work to rule” mean?**

A work to rule means that members continue to attend work and perform their normal duties but adhere strictly to their agreed terms and conditions of employment, contractual working hours and the duties appropriate to their grade and role.

In practical terms, members should:

- work only their normal contracted hours;
- take their normal breaks;
- perform only work appropriate to their own grade and role;
- not provide cover for vacancies or absent colleagues;
- not undertake the work of a higher grade, unless covered by a formal paid acting arrangement;
- not volunteer for unscheduled additional attendance; and
- not undertake work, respond to emails or calls, or attend meetings outside their contracted working hours.

The purpose of a work to rule is to withdraw the additional flexibility and goodwill upon which employers frequently rely while members continue to perform their own normal duties.

#### **2. How do I determine what work is appropriate to my grade and role?**

The functions performed by members at the same grade can vary considerably between Departments and Offices.

Members should have regard to the normal responsibilities of their grade and their own role, including their PMDS role description. A member should not take on additional duties simply because another member of staff is absent or because a vacancy exists.

If you are uncertain about whether a particular task is appropriate to your role, contact your local AHCPS representative or the Association for advice.

#### **3. Am I still expected to perform my normal duties?**

Yes. A work to rule is not a withdrawal of labour.

Members should continue to perform their normal duties, within their normal contracted hours, subject to the specific AHCPS industrial action instruction.

#### **4. Can I work beyond my normal contracted hours?**

No, other than where you are working an established contractual or rostered arrangement for which you receive an additional payment.

Members should not voluntarily work additional hours, remain late to complete work, log back on after finishing work, or deal with work-related emails, telephone calls or messages outside their contracted working hours.

#### **5. What if urgent work arises outside my normal working hours?**

The fact that work is considered urgent does not, of itself, alter the work to rule instruction.

Members should not undertake work, attend meetings, check emails or carry out other duties outside their contracted working hours.

Where an employer considers that particular work should be exempted from the industrial action, the appropriate course is for the employer to seek a derogation from the Association.

#### **6. Should I work through lunch or shorten my break to complete urgent work?**

No.

Members should take their normal breaks in full. The fact that work is urgent, that there are staffing difficulties or that a deadline is approaching does not mean that members should work through their normal breaks.

#### **7. Can I cover a vacancy in my team?**

No.

Members should not cover the work or responsibilities arising from an unfilled vacancy during the work to rule.

The principle is simple: **One Person, One Job.**

#### **8. What happens to the work of a colleague who is absent on annual leave, sick leave or another form of leave?**

Members should not absorb or cover the work of an absent colleague where that work is not normally part of their own responsibilities.

The work should remain outstanding or be managed by the employer without requiring AHCPs members to act contrary to the industrial action instruction.

#### **9. Should I cover the work of a higher grade where that person is absent?**

No.

Members should not undertake the duties or responsibilities of a higher grade simply because the person normally performing those duties is absent or the post is vacant.

#### **10. What if staff are normally moved or borrowed from another team to cover a vacancy or absence?**

Members should not provide additional cover or move between teams or offices for the purpose of filling vacancies or covering absences where this is not part of their normal role.

**11. I am formally acting in a higher grade and receiving an acting-up allowance. What should I do?**

Where a member is already in a **formal paid acting arrangement**, they should continue to perform the duties of the grade in which they are formally acting.

This is different from being informally asked to take on additional duties or responsibilities because a higher-grade post is vacant or its holder is absent.

**12. I am a manager. What do I do if members of my team are absent?**

You should continue to perform your own normal managerial responsibilities.

However, you should not personally absorb the work of absent colleagues, fill vacancies, or require AHCPs members to undertake work contrary to the Association's instruction.

Prioritising and managing available resources is a management responsibility. It does not require an individual AHCPs member to compensate for vacancies or absences by taking on additional work.

**13. What if some members of my team are participating in the industrial action and others are not?**

Members should respect colleagues regardless of whether they are participating in the industrial action.

AHCPs members should follow the Association's instruction and should not place pressure on colleagues who are not participating. Equally, members should not allow the actions of others to cause them to depart from the AHCPs instruction.

**14. What if a colleague is not an AHCPs member?**

AHCPs can only issue industrial action instructions to its own members. A colleague who is not an AHCPs member should continue to attend work and perform their own normal duties.

Non-members should not, however, be asked to take over the work of AHCPs members simply because those members are participating in the industrial action.

**15. Can a non-member participate in the AHCPs work to rule?**

The AHCPs industrial action instruction applies to AHCPs members. The Association cannot instruct a person who is not a member to participate in its industrial action.

Any person who wishes to participate as an AHCPs member should contact the Association regarding membership.

**16. Should I ask a member of staff or a colleague whether they are a member of a trade union?**

**No.**

Trade union membership is a private matter and is specifically recognised as **special category personal data under GDPR**.

Members should not ask colleagues or staff whom they manage whether they are members of AHCPS or any other trade union for the purpose of establishing whether they are participating in the industrial action.

If you are managing a team, you should manage on the basis of the work being undertaken and the instructions that apply, rather than seeking information about an individual's trade union membership.

**17. Do normal attendance arrangements continue?**

Yes.

Members should continue to attend work in accordance with their existing attendance arrangements and work their normal contracted hours.

The work to rule does not mean that members should alter their normal starting or finishing arrangements, except insofar as they must ensure that they do not work beyond their contracted hours.

**18. Do existing blended or remote working arrangements continue?**

Yes.

Existing approved blended or remote working arrangements continue as normal. Members working remotely or on a blended basis participate in the work to rule in exactly the same way as members working onsite.

In particular, working remotely does not mean working beyond contracted hours or logging back on later in the evening to complete outstanding work.

**19. I am on probation. Should I participate in the work to rule?**

Yes.

A member on probation should follow the AHCPS industrial action instruction in the same way as other members.

Being on probation does not mean that a member should cover vacancies, undertake additional duties or work beyond their contracted hours.

**20. I am on annual leave during the work to rule. What should I do?**

If your annual leave has already been approved, you should take your leave as normal.

When you return to work, you should participate fully in the work to rule.

**21. I am on long-term or other approved leave. What should I do?**

If you are not at work, you cannot participate in the work to rule during that period.

This includes maternity leave, long-term sick leave, parental leave, parent's leave, carer's leave, a career break or other approved leave.

Where a period of shorter working year has been approved in advance and you are not working during the industrial action, you similarly do not participate until you return to work.

## **22. What if I am sick during the work to rule?**

Normal sick leave arrangements continue to apply.

When you return to work, you should participate in the work to rule in accordance with the AHCPS instruction.

## **23. I receive an allowance or shift premium for working irregular hours. What should I do?**

Where you are contractually required to work particular hours or an established roster and receive an allowance or premium for doing so, you should continue to adhere to that arrangement.

The work to rule is directed at additional or voluntary flexibility and work rather than established contractual arrangements.

If you are uncertain about your particular arrangement, contact AHCPS for advice.

## **24. What about work-related travel, site visits, inspections, audits, customer clinics or appointments?**

These activities may continue where they form part of your normal duties, but **all travel and work associated with them must take place within your contracted working hours.**

Members should not extend their working day in order to facilitate work-related travel.

## **25. Can I attend training, seminars or conferences during the work to rule?**

Yes, where attendance forms part of your normal work.

However, attendance and associated travel should take place within your contracted working hours. Members should not extend their working day in order to facilitate attendance.

Where arrangements have already been made which create particular difficulties, members should seek advice from AHCPS.

## **26. What guidance applies to work connected with the EU Presidency?**

Members should continue to perform EU Presidency work which falls within their normal duties and normal contracted working hours.

Members should **not undertake additional or out-of-hours work** associated with the Presidency unless a specific derogation has been agreed by AHCPS.

The importance of the Presidency does not, in itself, remove this work from the scope of the industrial action.

## **27. Are any AHCPS members exempt from participating in the industrial action under the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme?**

Yes.

Paragraph 89(3) of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme provides that persons serving in the posts or categories of posts specified in **Part I of Appendix 1 to the Scheme shall not participate in industrial action.**

Appendix 1 includes, among others, Principals and Assistant Principals and certain departmental, professional or technical staff in posts or categories of posts having responsibility for work arising in:

- personnel;
- conciliation and arbitration;
- staff relations; or
- organisation, including management services,

in relation to the Civil Service or other parts of the Public Service.

Members who fall within the categories specified in Part I of Appendix 1 are therefore **exempt from the AHCPS industrial action and should continue to perform their normal duties**.

This exemption arises under the C&A Scheme and is separate from any derogation granted by the Association.

If you are uncertain whether your particular post falls within the exemption, please contact AHCPS for clarification.

## **28. What is a derogation?**

A derogation is an agreement by AHCPS that specified work may continue notwithstanding the industrial action instruction.

An employer seeking a derogation must make a request to the Association. The fact that an employer considers particular work important, urgent or business-critical does not mean that it is automatically exempt from the industrial action.

Members should **not make their own decisions to derogate work**. Unless AHCPS has confirmed that a derogation applies, members should continue to follow the industrial action instruction.

## **29. Has AHCPS agreed any derogations?**

Yes.

The Association has agreed a **limited and exceptional derogation in relation to the preparation and delivery of Budget 2027**.

Members covered by that derogation will be advised of its scope. The existence of this derogation should not be interpreted as a general exemption for other urgent, important or time-sensitive work.

Any further derogation agreed by AHCPS will be communicated to the members concerned.

## **30. What happens if my manager tells me that particular work is essential or exempt?**

You should ask whether a derogation has been formally agreed with AHCPS.

Individual managers or Departments cannot unilaterally exempt work from the Association's industrial action instruction.

If there is any doubt, contact AHCPS before departing from the instruction.

### **31. What if I am asked to undertake work contrary to the AHCPS instruction?**

You should explain politely that you are participating in official AHCPS industrial action and are following the Association's instruction.

You should not become involved in an argument with your manager.

If the instruction is repeated, or if you are put under pressure to undertake the work, contact your local AHCPS representative or the Association for advice.

### **32. What if following the work to rule means that a deadline will not be met or work will remain outstanding?**

The purpose of industrial action is to have an impact.

Members should not compensate for the effects of the work to rule by working additional hours, covering vacancies or absences, undertaking additional duties, or otherwise providing the flexibility that has been withdrawn as part of the industrial action.

Members should continue to perform their own normal duties during their contracted working hours and allow management to determine how outstanding work is to be prioritised.

### **33. Could the industrial action be changed, suspended or escalated?**

Yes.

The Association's Executive Committee will keep the industrial action under review in light of developments in the wider public service pay campaign.

Members should continue to follow the current AHCPS instruction unless and until the Association advises them otherwise.

Any change, suspension or escalation of the industrial action will be communicated directly to members.

### **34. How will members be informed of developments?**

AHCPS will communicate directly with members through the Association's normal communication channels.

Members should ensure that their contact details with the Association are up to date and should rely on **AHCPS communications for instructions concerning AHCPS industrial action**.

### **35. My question is not answered here. What should I do?**

If you are uncertain about how the work to rule applies to your particular circumstances, please contact your local AHCPS representative or email [info@ahcps.ie](mailto:info@ahcps.ie).

Members should seek clarification rather than make an individual decision to depart from the industrial action instruction.

### **36. I do not know who my local AHCPS representative is. How do I find out?**

Email [info@ahcps.ie](mailto:info@ahcps.ie) with the subject line **"Who is my rep?"**, stating your Department/Office and workplace location.

