

Frequently Asked Questions for Fórsa members working in the **Civil Service**

What should I do during the industrial action?

A union instruction issued to members working in the Civil Service, on Friday 18th September. It outlines the work to rule and non-cooperation actions you should follow as part of this industrial action. It is very important that you are familiar with the instruction and understand it.

This FAQ is a guide to help with general queries and will be updated as a live document over the coming weeks.

If a manager asks you to carry out any task or action covered by the withdrawal instruction, explain that you are following the union instruction and that the matter should be raised at national level.

What does this FAQ document cover?

This document covers questions asked to date about the work to rule industrial action that starts on Wednesday 30th September 2026. A separate strike FAQ document will be issued in early October before the national strike day on Wednesday 14th October 2026.

I haven't been able to attend one of the meetings to date – will there be more?

Yes. Emails are going to members regularly regarding information sessions. To date over 12,000 members have attended 15 meetings.

What does 'work to rule' mean in practical terms for staff in individual departments?

In short 'work to rule' means adhering strictly to the agreed terms and conditions of your employment. This means that you only do work that is appropriate to your grade.

You should check the links below before the beginning of the industrial action on Wednesday 30th September, so that you know what tasks are appropriate for your grade.

The work that you perform in your department can vary greatly to that of a union member of the same grade in a different department. Therefore, you should refer to what you have stated in your PMDS role description to confirm what is appropriate for your role.

We advise all members to link in with their local branch or attend one of the information sessions if they still need clarifications about what they need to do.

To help you check this information we have included the following for administrative grades. After you check the link for your grade, you should also check your PMDS role profile.

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CO: Clerical-Officer-job-descriptions-May-2019.pdf

EO: Executive-Officer-job-descriptions-May-2019.pdf

HEO: Microsoft Word - Higher Executive Officer job descriptions February 2020

AO: Career Path in the Public Service | publicjobs.ie

Where HEOs and AOs often carry out the same duties, how do we determine what duties are associated with each grade level?

AOs and HEOs are not the same grade – we have been fighting for some time regarding some employer's belief that these grades are interchangeable. AOs should be only doing the work as per your job description above.

Will specific guidance be issued for all grades working in public facing roles?

For members in public facing roles (Intreo Centres, Revenue phone lines, etc) this work continues but is subject to the work to rule instruction. For clarity, you are not to perform additional duties or attend different offices to facilitate vacancies not filled by management.

You are not to perform the work of a higher grade or volunteer for unscheduled overtime.

What is defined as a vacant post?

A vacant post is a role the employer has not filled. This can include a vacant post arising from short- or long-term sick leave, maternity leave, carers' leave, parental leave, parents' leave, shorter working year, protective leave, etc. You should not cover the work, duties or responsibilities of any vacancy during the industrial action.

Should I cover the work of a higher grade if they are on sick leave?

No. You should only be covering the work of a higher grade if you are in receipt of the Higher Duty Allowance. So, for example, a CO should not cover the work of an EO, nor should an EO cover for a HEO, and a HEO or AO should not cover the work of an AP either.

If work belongs to a colleague who is absent (sick leave, annual leave, etc.), should it remain undone?

You should not do this work, it should remain undone.

I am on probation, how does the work to rule apply to me?

If you are on probation and a union member, then you are protected by the Industrial Relations Act 1990. Therefore, a member on probation can, and should, take part in the industrial action.

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Where vacancies require staff to be borrowed from other teams to keep a building open, can that cover continue from the start of the work to rule?

No. Vacancies cannot be covered while industrial action is ongoing.

I have heard that we need to strictly adhere to the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997. What does this mean?

The Organisation of Working Time Act outlines what entitlements and obligations you have in relation to working hours. It still applies during the industrial action. All members are advised that they are entitled to regular breaks throughout the day. This needs to be strictly adhered to regardless of staff cover. You should take your breaks as they are scheduled and leave work at the end of your normal working day or shift.

Can I accrue flexi during the industrial action?

Yes, you can accrue flexi as usual, but you are not to perform voluntary or unscheduled overtime.

Can I perform overtime during the industrial action?

Regular and rostered overtime can continue, as this is normal work practice.

If you receive an allowance for overtime at unsociable hours, this can also continue.

Unscheduled, un-rostered, or ad hoc overtime is not allowed during the industrial action.

What is the distinction between regular overtime, which forms part of normal weekly income, and irregular or voluntary overtime?

Irregular or voluntary overtime is either additional hours worked after a full day has been completed or at weekends, including working at off-site events e.g. Ideal Homes Exhibition.

Should Service Officers who regularly open and close buildings on overtime continue their normal 9.00am to 5.30pm hours, including locking the building?

This is regular and rostered overtime, which is permitted during the work to rule as it is part of normal work practice.

I am on long term leave, what should I do?

If you are not at work during the work-to-rule period, you cannot participate in the industrial action. This includes maternity leave, long-term sick leave, parental leave, parents' leave, carers' leave, a career break, or any other protected leave.



I am on annual leave during the work to rule – what do I do?

As this is pre-approved annual leave you should maintain your leave and commence the work to rule when you return to work.

I receive an allowance or shift premium – what do I do during the work to rule?

If you receive an additional payment for working irregular hours which is outlined in your contract then you should continue to adhere to your contract, and the additional payment is unaffected.

Are we allowed to train colleagues appointed to acting-up positions during the work-to-rule?

No. You should not take on this additional work during the industrial action.

I have to attend an in-person conference, customer clinic, audit, site visit, during the work to rule, what should I do?

You should still attend. However, travel to and from the conference, clinic, audit, or site visit, should occur during your working hours, if it is not in your usual work base location.

If you are on flexitime, you may start your journey at 8.00am provided you are able to accrue flexi time for working before 9.12am and you must start your journey home in time to get home by the end of the flexi bands at 7.00pm. Again, you must be able to accrue flexitime between 5.30pm and 7.00pm.

I am currently working on the EU Presidency, which involves a lot of out of hours work and overtime, what should I do?

This overtime is structured and has been occurring since July, therefore it is currently permitted during the industrial action.

This may change if there is an escalation of the dispute.

What does that mean?

In general, during an industrial dispute, the union strike committee takes decisions designed to ensure that our dispute strategy maintains an advantage. While the EU Presidency is an important event the onus is on the employer to seek a derogation from the union strike committee if the consequence of any action is deemed to be critical.

What are APs and POs doing during the work to rule? Will I get in trouble with my manager?

Your AP and PO are likely to be in the AHCPs (Association for Higher Civil and Public Servants) and it has also just voted in favour of industrial action, therefore they will likely also be taking industrial action.

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I am taking part in further education and training linked to my employment, should I still attend during the industrial action?

You may continue to attend, the work to rule does not affect your education and personal development.

My question isn't answered here - how do I receive guidance about what to do from Wednesday 30th September?

Send in your question to csindustrialaction@forsa.ie

I don't know who my local rep is - how do I find this out?

Send in your question to csindustrialaction@forsa.ie with the subject line 'Who is my rep' and stating your department and workplace location.

