

# NATIONAL PENSIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY



**NPRA/GD/OPSS/01/12**

## GUIDELINES FOR OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEME AS EMPLOYER SPONSORED SCHEME

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide the basic rules for managing Occupational Pension Schemes as Employer-Sponsored Scheme, pursuant to the provisions of the National Pensions Act, 2008 (Act 766) hereinafter referred to as the Act and the accompanying Regulations (L. I. 1990).
- 1.2 In developing these requirements, the National Pensions Regulatory Authority (NPRA), has provided the minimum standards to assist Approved Trustees to manage the Occupational Pension Schemes as Employer-Sponsored Scheme in order to achieve the prudential objectives of the Act's requirements.
- 1.3 These Guidelines are subject to change by the NPRA. Reference should be made to the Act or to the Regulations when and where necessary.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

Unless the context otherwise requires:

- 2.1 "Occupational Pension Scheme" means a pension Scheme offered through an individual's employment to private or public sector workers. Benefits are generally paid as lump sum, but could also be paid as an annuity or a combination of lump sum and annuity;
- 2.2 "Member-nominated Trustees" are Trustees of an Occupational Pension Scheme who are:
  - 2.2.1 nominated as the result of a process in which the active members of the scheme are eligible to participate, and
  - 2.2.2 selected by all or the majority of the members of the Scheme.
- 2.3 " Member-nominated Directors" are directors who are:
  - 2.3.1 nominated as the result of a process in which the active members of the Occupational Pension Scheme are eligible to participate in, and
  - 2.3.2 selected by all or majority of the members of the Scheme.
- 2.4 The terms used in these Guidelines for Occupational Pension Schemes, have the same meaning as defined in the Act. Appropriate reference to the Act should be made where necessary.

### 3. SCHEME REGISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 Application for registration of an Occupational Pension Scheme as Employer-Sponsored Scheme hereinafter referred to as “the Scheme” shall be made to the NPRA by the completion of the form labeled “Application for Registration of an Occupational Pension Scheme as Employer-Sponsored Scheme” – (Form No.: **NPRA/FM/OPSS/01/12**) issued by the NPRA.
- 3.2 An application for registration of the Scheme may be made to the NPRA only by
- 3.2.1 a company which has been approved as a Trustee or has applied for approval as a Trustee;
- 3.2.2 two or more individuals who are Approved Trustees, or have applied for approval and at least one is an Independent Trustee; or
- 3.2.3 a company and one or more individuals.
- 3.3 An application for registration of an Occupational Pension Scheme as Employer Sponsored Scheme, shall be made to the NPRA and signed
- 3.3.1 by at least two directors of the company if the applicant is or includes a company; and
- 3.3.2 by at least two of those Trustees, including the Independent Trustee if the applicant consists wholly of individual Trustees.
- 3.4 Where an application is made by Trustees all of whom are individual Trustees, each of those Trustees who is not an Independent Trustee shall be a member of the Scheme.
- 3.5 Where an application is made by Trustees one or more of whom are companies and the others are individual Trustees, each of those individual Trustees shall be members of the Scheme.
- 3.6 The Schemes shall only be managed by Trustees licensed and approved by the NPRA.
- 3.7 Application for Registration shall:
- 3.7.1 Specify particulars of the Scheme to be registered, namely:
- a. Information relating to the Employer Sponsoring the Scheme, (Form No.: **NPRA/FM/OPSS/01/12**)
- b. An undertaking regarding compliance with requirements and standards for approved schemes as specified by provisions in

the National Pensions Act, 2008 (Act 766), the Regulations on Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (L. I 1990) and these Guidelines.

- c. Information relating to the Scheme,
- d. Information relating to Trustees of the Scheme,

3.7.2 Be accompanied by a copy of the following:

- a. Proposed Rules that govern the Scheme
- b. The Trust Deed
- c. Investment Policy of the Scheme.
- d. Investment Management Contract
- e. Custodial Agreement

3.7.3 Be accompanied by an Application Fee of **GHS 1,500.00 (One thousand five hundred Ghana Cedis)**, or any sum as determined by the NPRA from time to time.

3.7.4 Be accompanied by any additional information and documents reasonably necessary to enable the NPRA evaluate the application.

3.8 On registration of the Scheme, the NPRA shall issue a Certificate of Registration to the Approved Trustees of the Scheme

3.9 The Trustees of the Scheme shall ensure that arrangements are put in place to provide for at least one-third of the total number of Trustees to be member-nominated Trustees within six-months after the registration of the Scheme, and implement the arrangements.

3.10 For Schemes where all the Trustees are individuals, or individuals and companies, the member-nominated Trustees' requirements rather than the member-nominated director's requirements apply.

3.11 Where a Trustee body comprises both individuals and companies, each company counts as a single Trustee for the purpose of determining the total number of Trustees.

3.12 For Schemes where all the Trustees are companies, the member-nominated director's requirements apply.

3.13 Where a company is the sole Trustee of the Scheme then the member-nominated Director's requirements apply to the total number of company directors.

3.14 Where a Trustee body has more than one company as Trustee then the member-nominated director's requirements apply separately to each company.

3.15 For the purposes of these Guidelines

3.15.1 "member-nominated Trustee" includes 'member-nominated directors';

3.15.2 "requirements" means the requirements for Trustees to put in place and implement arrangements to provide that at least one-third of the Trustees are member-nominated Trustees; and

3.15.3 "Trustees" means Trustees of an Occupational Pension Scheme registered by the NPRA.

#### **4. STATEMENT OF INVESTMENT POLICY**

4.1 A statement of investment policy must be prepared and maintained in respect of the Scheme.

4.2 The statement of investment policy must include sufficient information to enable Scheme members to ascertain in relation to each fund of the Scheme:

4.2.1 the investment objectives of the Fund;

4.2.2 the policy as to the kinds of securities and other assets in which the fund may be invested;

4.2.3 the policy as to the balance between different kinds of securities and other assets of the fund; and

4.2.4 the risks inherent in implementing the policies referred to in paragraphs 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 above, the return expected to result from giving effect to those policies.

#### **5. INVESTMENT STANDARDS (PERMITTED INVESTMENTS)**

The funds of an Occupational Pension Scheme as Employer- Sponsored Scheme shall be invested only-

5.1 in the investments permitted under section 176 of the Act; and

5.2 in accordance with the restrictions imposed under Sections 178 and 179 of the Act and any additional restrictions that may be imposed by the NPRA from time to time.

## **6. PROVISION OF ANNUAL STATEMENTS TO SCHEME MEMBERS**

The Approved Trustee of the Scheme must ensure that:

- 6.1 Within three (3) months after each financial period of a registered Scheme, each of the Scheme members is provided with a benefit statement setting out the member's position with respect to the Scheme as at the end of that period, whether or not the auditing of the financial statements of the Scheme for that period has been completed then; and
- 6.2 If there are subsequent audit adjustments made to the benefit statements affecting the members' balances, members are notified in writing within thirty (30) days after the Trustee becomes aware of those audit adjustments.

## **7. PRESENCE OF INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES (CORPORATE/INDIVIDUAL) AT MEETINGS**

The Approved Trustee of the Scheme must ensure:

- 7.1 that the Independent Trustee of the Scheme is, as far as reasonably practicable, present at all meetings of the Trustees; and
- 7.2 that any decision taken at a meeting of the Trustees at which the Independent Trustee or Independent Director is absent does not have effect until it is acknowledged in writing by that Independent Trustee or Independent Director.

## **8. AMENDMENTS TO SCHEME'S GOVERNING RULES**

- 8.1 An Approved Trustee of the Scheme must notify the NPRA in writing of any amendment proposed to be made to the Scheme Rules and lodge with the NPRA a copy of the proposed amendment.
- 8.2 An amendment to the Scheme Rules does not take effect until the NPRA has given written notice to the Trustee that the NPRA has approved it, or after thirty (30) days whichever is earlier.
- 8.3 In this section, a reference to an amendment to the Scheme rules of the Scheme includes a reference to addition of new provisions, or substitution or omission of existing provisions, of those rules.

## **9. SEPARATION OF SCHEME ASSETS**

- 9.1 The Approved Trustee of the Scheme must ensure that the Scheme assets:
- 9.1.1 are administered and dealt with as trust property; and
  - 9.1.2 are applied ONLY for the purposes of the Scheme.
- 9.2 Subsection 9.1 above has effect irrespective of whether or not the Trustee has appointed a Custodian or Pension Fund Manager to perform functions with respect to the Scheme assets.
- 9.3 The Trustee must also ensure that the Scheme assets are separately recorded in the records required to be kept in respect of the Scheme and, in particular, are distinguished:
- 9.3.1 from the Trustee's personal assets; and
  - 9.3.2 from any assets held by the Trustee for the benefit of a participating employer or any other person.

## **10. PROHIBITED TRANSACTIONS**

The Approved Trustee of the Scheme must ensure that pension funds and Scheme assets are not:

- 10.1 held by the Trustee or Fund Manager appointed for the Scheme or
  - 10.2 kept with a Custodian where the Trustee or Fund Manager has a business interest, shares or any other interest in that Custodian
- 10.3 For the purposes of these Guidelines, a Pension Fund Manager is independent of the approved Trustee of the Scheme and of the Custodian of the Scheme assets if:
- 10.3.1 the Pension Fund Manager is not an associate of the Trustee or Custodian;
  - 10.3.2 a person is not the controller of both the Manager and the Trustee or Custodian or any associate of the Trustee or Custodian; and
  - 10.3.3 the Manager acts independently of the Trustee and Custodian in their dealings with the Scheme.

## **11. SCHEME ADMINISTRATIVE/OTHER EXPENSES AND CHARGES**

Subject to these Guidelines, the Approved Trustee of the Scheme may periodically deduct from each Scheme member's account, the Scheme fees for administrative/ other expenses, subject to the limits determined by the Authority with reference to Guidelines on Fees and Charges **(NPRA/GD/FCH/01/11)**. A Trustee shall not charge any expenditure or make any deductions from the Scheme fund other than those prescribed the NPRA.

## **12. SCHEME ACCOUNTING RECORDS**

12.1 The Approved Trustee of the Scheme must ensure that:

12.1.1 such accounting records are kept so as to correctly record and explain all transactions concerning the Scheme and the financial position of the Scheme; and

12.1.2 those records are so kept that:

(a) financial statements showing a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the Scheme during each financial period and of the disposition of its assets and liabilities at the end of each financial period can be prepared from time to time; and

(b) those financial statements can be conveniently and properly audited in accordance with the Act and the Regulations.

12.2 The Approved Trustee of the Scheme must ensure that, at all reasonable times and without charge, the accounting records of the Scheme are made available for inspection by the Authority.

## **13. OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

The Scheme Rules must in addition to the requirements and standards of an Occupational Pension Schemes, comply with other requirements prescribed by the Act 766 (refer to relevant Sections in the attached appendix)

13.1 Portability (Transfers into and from approved Schemes)

13.2 Income on contributions

13.3 Assignment of Benefits

13.4 Accounts and Audit

13.5 Annual Report

#### 14. REVIEW AND ENQUIRIES

These Guidelines shall be subject to review by the NPRA.

All Enquiries regarding these Guidelines shall be directed to the:

***Chief Executive Officer,  
National Pensions Regulatory Authority,  
PMB, Ministries, Accra.***

**Website:** [www.npra.gov.gh](http://www.npra.gov.gh) **Email:** [info@npra.gov.gh](mailto:info@npra.gov.gh) **Telephone:** (302) 968692 / 968693

**Location:** Onwona House, Kanda Highway, opposite Accra High School

## APPENDIX

### **13.1 Portability – (Section 100)**

- 13.1.1 A member of an employer sponsored Scheme who ceases to be an employee shall, elect to have the member's accrued benefits transferred to another Scheme in accordance with the regulations of the Scheme.
- 13.1.2 Subsection 13.1.1 above does not apply if a member exercises an entitlement to have the member's accrued benefit paid to the member on retirement.
- 13.1.3 The accrued benefits of a member of the Scheme may be transferred
- (a) to another registered Scheme to which the member is eligible to belong, or
  - (b) to another account within the same Scheme, if permitted or required by regulations of that Scheme.
- 13.1.4 Where the accrued benefits of a member of a Scheme are to be transferred, the approved Trustees of the respective Schemes shall comply with requirements with respect to the transfer of the benefits.
- 13.1.5 An employer shall comply with requirements or regulations with respect to the transfer of benefits if a member of a Scheme whose accrued benefits are to be transferred under this section ceases to be an employee.
- 13.1.6 The regulations required for the management of a Scheme may include
- (a) notices to be given, and
  - (b) procedure to be followed, in connection with the transfer of accrued benefits.

### **13.2 Income on contributions – (Section 108(3))**

Contributions made and returns earned from investment of the contribution shall, be credited to the account of the contributor subject to any deduction of fees.

### **13.3 Assignment of Benefits – (Section 114(Optional))**

- 13.3.1 A Scheme shall have rules that prevent the assignment of benefit.
- 13.3.2 Despite subsection 13.3.1 above, a Scheme may allow a member to use that member's benefit to secure a mortgage for the acquisition of

a primary residence but a member is not liable to pay tax on any withdrawal under this section.

#### **13.4 Accounts and Audit, (Section166)**

- 13.4.1 A Trustee, Pension Fund Manager or Custodian licensed or registered under this Act shall cause proper books of accounts and records to be kept in relation to the Scheme in a form that the NPRA may determine.
- 13.4.2 A Trustee, Pension Fund Manager or Custodian shall, not later than four months after the end of the year cause its accounts to be audited by qualified external auditors and prepare an audit report, which shall include a statement on the extent of compliance with the
- (a) provisions of this Act and Regulations made under it,
  - (b) Trustee's duties under the trust deed and under this Act, and
  - (c) the Scheme's investment objective and other requirements under this Act.
- 13.4.3 Without limiting the scope of Subsection 13.4.2 above, the NPRA may order technical audits of the facilities, equipment, resources and accounts of a Trustee, Pension Fund Manager or Custodian to be conducted as the Board considers appropriate.

#### **13.5 Annual Report – (Section167)**

- 13.5.1 A Trustee, Pension Fund Manager or Custodian shall submit an Annual Report to the NPRA within four months after the end of each financial year to give details of its activities in relation to the Scheme in the preceding year.
- 13.5.2 A Report under Subsection 13.5.1 above shall include the Audit Reports referred to in Section 166 (2) of the Act and any other Reports that the NPRA may prescribe.