

PUBLIC TRUSTEE ACT
(CHAPTER 260, SECTION 23(1))

PUBLIC TRUSTEE RULES

ARRANGEMENT OF RULES

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[15th April 1935]

Citation

1. These Rules may be cited as the Public Trustee Rules.

Definitions

2. In these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires —
 - “Court” means the Supreme Court;
 - “trust” includes any trust duty or office which the Public Trustee is authorised by the Act or these Rules to accept; and the expression “trustee” shall be construed accordingly;
 - “trust instrument” includes any instrument, Act or order of Court by which a trust is created or declared;
 - “trust property” includes all property subject to a trust, or comprised in an estate, which is proposed to be administered by the Public Trustee;
 - “Registrar of the Supreme Court” includes a Deputy or Assistant Registrar of the Supreme Court.

Authorised trusts and duties

3. Subject to the Act and these Rules, the Public Trustee is authorised —

- (a) to accept any trust created or declared by any trust instrument or arising upon an intestacy;
- (b) to accept any duty incident to, and to act in, any of the following offices:
 - (i) as incident to the office of the trustee of any trust accepted by him, the office of guardian of any infant beneficiary; and
 - (ii) the office (where the execution of any trust is involved therein) of agent or attorney for any person; and
- (c) to accept, by the name of the Public Trustee, probate or letters of administration of any kind and either as principal or as agent for any person:

Provided that he shall not accept the trusts of any instrument made solely by way of security for money.

Trusts involving management or carrying on of any business

4. The Public Trustee may if he thinks fit accept as ordinary trustee, under exceptional circumstances, a trust which involves the management or carrying on of any business, but upon the conditions that, except with the consent of the Minister, he shall only carry on the business —

- (a) for a period not exceeding 18 months;
- (b) with a view of sale, disposition or winding-up; and
- (c) if satisfied that the business can be carried on without risk of loss.

Duty of co-trustee to notify Public Trustee of appointment by testator or settlor

5. A person appointed by a testator or a settlor to be co-trustee with the Public Trustee, and who does not renounce or disclaim the trust, must give to the Public Trustee notice in writing of such appointment as soon as the appointment has come to such person's knowledge.

[S 864/2014 wef 31/12/2014]

Procedure for obtaining written consent of Public Trustee to act as trustee

6.—(1) An application for the consent of the Public Trustee under section 7(4) or 8(4) or (8) of the Act to act as trustee or co-trustee must be made in such manner as the Public Trustee may require.

[S 270/2022 wef 31/12/2021]

(2) An application under paragraph (1) must be accompanied by the following documents and information:

- (a) the will, settlement or other instrument creating the trust or the duty in question or a copy thereof;
- (b) particulars as to the nature and value of the trust property, including any liabilities attached to the trust property;
- (c) the names and addresses of the beneficiaries under the trust, including any residuary or reversionary beneficiary;
- (d) the names and addresses of the former or existing trustees (if any) under the trust.

(3) The Public Trustee may require the production of any other document or information relating to the trust which the Public Trustee may consider desirable to obtain in any particular case.

(4) The written consent of the Public Trustee under section 7(4) or 8(4) or (8) of the Act is to be given under the Public Trustee's official seal.

[S 270/2022 wef 31/12/2021]

[S 864/2014 wef 31/12/2014]

Matters to be considered by Public Trustee in deciding whether to give consent

7.—(1) The Public Trustee may consider one or more of the following factors in deciding whether to give the written consent required under section 7(4) or 8(4) or (8) of the Act:

- (a) the gross value of the trust property;
- (b) the mode of investment and the nature and condition of the trust property;

- (c) the situation, tenure and character of any land comprised in the trust property;
- (d) any liabilities attached to the trust property;
- (e) any liabilities incurred by a former or an existing trustee (if any) in the administration of the trust;
- (f) the duties imposed by or incidental to the office of the trustee;
- (g) the identities and addresses of the beneficiaries under the trust, including any residuary or reversionary beneficiary;
- (h) the financial circumstances of the beneficiaries under the trust, including any residuary or reversionary beneficiary;
- (i) the state of health and the education level of the beneficiaries under the trust, including any residuary or reversionary beneficiary;
- (j) the ability of the former or existing trustees (if any) to identify and locate all the beneficiaries under the trust, including any residuary or reversionary beneficiary;
- (k) whether there exists any person able to accept the appointment instead of the Public Trustee;
- (l) the duration or expected duration of the trust;
- (m) all relevant circumstances of the case.

[S 270/2022 wef 31/12/2021]

[S 864/2014 wef 31/12/2014]

Amount prescribed under section 6(1) of Act

7A. For the purposes of section 6(1) of the Act, the prescribed amount is \$5,000.

[S 864/2014 wef 31/12/2014]

Administration of small estates

8. Upon receiving an application under section 6(1) of the Act, the Public Trustee shall require to be supplied to him such evidence as to the value of the estate, and the circumstances of the persons

beneficially entitled, and such other information relating thereto as he may consider it desirable to obtain in any particular case.

Estate less than \$5,000

9.—(1) If it is not proved to the satisfaction of the Public Trustee that the gross capital value of the estate is less than \$5,000, or if it does not appear to him that the persons beneficially entitled are persons of small means, or if he sees any other good reason for refusing the application, he shall refuse the application, and shall forthwith give notice to the applicant of such refusal.

(2) In any other case the Public Trustee shall make in respect of the estate the declaration mentioned in section 6(2) of the Act and shall give notice to the applicant that the application is accepted, and shall take such other steps as may be necessary or proper to enable him to administer the estate; and any person having the custody of the probate or letters of administration, or other document relating to the estate shall, upon the request in writing of the Public Trustee, deliver the same to him, or as he shall direct.

(3) A refusal under this rule shall not prevent the Public Trustee from exercising with respect to the estate any powers (other than the powers under section 6 of the Act) exercisable by him with respect thereto under the Act or these Rules, if duly appointed to exercise those powers.

Application for opinion of Court

10.—(1) The Public Trustee may, in the manner hereinafter provided and without judicial proceedings, take the opinion of the Court upon any question arising in the course of an administration.

(2) Any such question shall be submitted to the Judge in such manner and at such time as he may direct, and shall be accompanied by such statement of facts, documents and other information as he may require, and the Public Trustee shall, if the Judge so desires, attend upon him at such time and place as the Judge may appoint.

(3) The Judge may, before giving his opinion, require the attendance of, or communicate with any person interested in the

estate as trustee or beneficiary, but no such person shall have a right to be heard by the Judge unless he so directs.

(4) The Judge shall give his opinion to the Public Trustee, and the Public Trustee shall act in accordance with that opinion, and shall upon the request in writing of any such interested person communicate to him the effect of that opinion.

Registers and books of each trust or estate to be kept

11. There shall be kept at the office of the Public Trustee such registers and other books as shall be required for recording or entering in a convenient form as to each trust or estate which the Public Trustee is administering the following particulars:

- (a) the date of the acceptance of the trust or of the declaration made under section 6(2) of the Act;
- (b) particulars of the trust property from time to time;
- (c) the name and place of abode of the person in receipt of the income of the trust property;
- (d) a reference to any notice received of any dealing with any beneficial interest in the trust property and of any exercise or release of any power relating to the trust or estate;
- (e) an entry of any decision or opinion of the Supreme Court in respect of the trust or estate; and
- (f) such entries of his decisions and such other particulars as the Public Trustee may think fit,

and such particulars shall be recorded or entered accordingly.

Investment of trust money

12. The Public Trustee may invest or retain invested money belonging to any trust or estate and coming to his hands in any mode of investment expressly or impliedly authorised by the trust instrument or (if there is no trust instrument) authorised by law for the investment of trust funds, and may, if authorised by the trust instrument or otherwise by law, retain any investment existing at the date of the commencement of the trust:

Provided that he shall not invest in or hold any investment in such manner as to expose him to liability as the holder thereof, unless he is satisfied that he is fully indemnified or secured against loss.

Securities, etc., to be kept in a safe place

13. The securities and documents belonging or relating to a trust or estate which the Public Trustee is administering shall, if under his control, be kept at the bank to the trust or estate or at some other safe place of deposit allowed generally or specially by the Minister, so far as the convenience of business will admit.

Separate accounts for every trust or estate

14.—(1) Separate accounts shall be kept for every trust or estate.

(2) A separate account shall be kept of the capital of the trust property and of the mode in which it is from time to time invested, and all dealings with the capital shall be entered in that account.

(3) A separate account shall be kept of the income of the trust property (if received by the Public Trustee) and of the mode in which it is from time to time dealt with by the Public Trustee.

Payments through bank

15. All payments of money to or from the capital of the trust property shall be made through the bank to the trust or estate.

Official seal of Public Trustee

16. In all cases where any deed or other instrument requires to be executed by the Public Trustee under his official seal, the affixing of the seal may be authenticated by the signature either of the Public Trustee or of some officer in the office of the Public Trustee duly authorised by the Public Trustee in that behalf under his seal, and any deed or other instrument purporting to be a deed or instrument executed by the Public Trustee and to be sealed with his seal authenticated in the manner provided by this rule shall be received in evidence and be deemed to be a deed or instrument so executed without further proof unless the contrary is shown.

Income of trust property

17.—(1) The income of the trust property may be paid to the person for the time being entitled to receive the income either through a bank or direct (and where the person is a married woman may be so paid notwithstanding any restraint on anticipation).

(2) Where authority is given to any corporation or bank to pay any income to any person, the books of that corporation or bank showing the payment of that income in accordance with the authority shall be a sufficient discharge to the Public Trustee.

(3) Where authority is given to any person to pay any income to the bank of the person entitled, the certificate of that bank stating the receipt of that income shall be a sufficient discharge to the Public Trustee.

(4) Where any person is solely entitled to receive any income, the Public Trustee may, on the request in writing of that person, and notwithstanding any restraint on anticipation, authorise that person, for such period as the Public Trustee may think fit, to collect or arrange for the collection of the income. During the continuance of any such authority such request in writing shall be a sufficient discharge to the Public Trustee in respect of the income, so long as that person remains solely entitled to receive the income.

Income may be paid to another trustee on undertaking

18. The Public Trustee may, if the special circumstances of the case appear to him to render it desirable, pay to any other trustee of the trust or allow him to receive the income of the trust property or any part thereof, on such trustee undertaking to apply it in the manner directed by the trust.

Advances for purposes of trust

19. The Public Trustee may make advances for the purposes of any trust or estate in course of administration, or about to be administered, by him, out of any moneys which may be placed at his disposal by the Minister for that purpose, and upon such terms as the Minister may think proper.

Public Trustee may use professional advice

20. Subject to the provisions of the Act and of these Rules and to the terms of any particular trust, the Public Trustee may, in the administration of any trust or estate, take and use professional advice and assistance in regard to legal and other matters, and may act on credible information (though less than legal evidence) as to matters of fact.

Statutory declaration

21. The Public Trustee may at any time require a statutory declaration or other sufficient evidence that a person is alive and is the person to whom any money or property is payable or transferable, and may refuse payment or transfer until that declaration or evidence is produced.

Untraceable beneficiary

22. Where a person appearing to be beneficially entitled to any sum of money under the trust or to be interested in the trust property cannot be found, or it is not known whether he is living or dead, the Public Trustee may apply to the Court for directions as to the course to be taken with reference to that person, and until an order of the Court is made shall keep any sum payable to that person, and if it is kept for more than 6 months shall invest that sum of money or deposit the sum at interest and shall accumulate the dividends or interest thereof.

Inspection, copies and information

23.—(1) Upon an application in writing by or with the authority of any person interested in the trust property, the Public Trustee —

- (a) shall permit the applicant or his solicitor or other authorised agent to inspect and take copies of any entry in any register or book relating to the trust or estate and (so far as the interest of the applicant in the trust property is or may be affected thereby) of any account, notice or other document in the custody of the Public Trustee;

- (b) shall at the expense of the applicant supply him or his solicitor or other authorised agent with a copy of any such entry, account, notice or document as aforesaid or with any extract therefrom;
- (c) shall give to the applicant or his solicitor or other authorised agent such information respecting the trust or estate and the trust property as shall be reasonably requested in the application and shall be within the power of the Public Trustee.

(2) Subject to paragraph (1), the Public Trustee shall observe strict secrecy in respect of every trust or estate in the course of administration by him.

Investigation and audit of trust accounts

24. An application under section 22(1) of the Act shall be made to the Public Trustee, and notice thereof shall (unless the Public Trustee otherwise directs) be given by the applicant to every other person being a trustee or beneficiary under the trust.

Security

25.—(1) Upon receiving any such application the Public Trustee may in his discretion by notice to the applicant require that before a day to be specified in the notice such security (by deposit of a sum of money) as he shall consider sufficient shall be given to him by the applicant for the payment of any expenses of the investigation and audit which may be ordered by the Public Trustee to be paid by the applicant personally.

(2) Where any such requirement is made, no further proceedings shall be taken upon the application until the security has been given and if the security is not given before the day specified in the notice the application shall be disallowed unless under special circumstances the Public Trustee thinks fit to extend the time for giving the security or to dispense therewith.

(3) Any sum so deposited shall be kept by the Public Trustee on deposit in his name and to a separate account at a bank until all proceedings in connection with the investigation and audit have been

concluded, and thereupon the deposited sum and the interest (if any) allowed thereon by the bank shall be applied in or towards payment of any expenses of the investigation and audit which may be so ordered to be paid by the applicant personally and the balance (if any) shall be paid to the applicant.

Duration of investigation and audit

26. The Public Trustee may in his discretion upon the application of any trustee or beneficiary direct that the investigation and audit shall extend only to a specified period of time or to a specified part of the trust property or shall be otherwise restricted.

Default of agreement

27. If within one month from the date of the application under section 22(1) of the Act, no solicitor or public accountant shall have been appointed by the applicant and the trustees to conduct the investigation and audit, there shall be deemed to be a default of agreement within the meaning of that section and the applicant may apply to the Public Trustee accordingly.

Remuneration and expenses

28. The remuneration of the auditor and the other expenses of the investigation and audit shall be such as may be determined by the Public Trustee:

Provided that the Public Trustee may refer the costs of any solicitor (being part of such expenses) for taxation to the Registrar of the Supreme Court, and in such case the amount of the costs when taxed shall be included in such expenses.

Copies of documents

29.—(1) Where any investigation or audit has been made, copies of the report and certificate of the auditor under section 22(4) of the Act and such copies of accounts and other documents as the Public Trustee may require shall be forwarded to him by the auditor and shall be considered by the Public Trustee before giving any direction under section 22 (7) or making any order under section 22(8) of the Act.

(2) The expenses of making and forwarding any such copies and the fee of the Public Trustee (within the limits prescribed by or in pursuance of any order relating to the fees of the Public Trustee for the time being in force) shall for the purpose of section 22(7) and (8) of the Act be part of the expenses of the investigation and audit.

Parties to be heard

30.—(1) Before making any order under section 22(8) of the Act, the Public Trustee shall, if any of the parties interested so desires, hear the parties in such manner as he may think fit.

(2) Any such order shall specify the person by or to whom any sum is to be paid and the amount of such sum provided that such an order may direct payment of the taxed costs of any solicitor employed in connection with the investigation and audit, and the costs shall be taxed by the Registrar of the Supreme Court, and the amount of the costs when taxed shall be paid as if the amount had been specified in the order.

(3) The Public Trustee may apply to the Court under the Rules of the Supreme Court (Cap. 322, R 5) to enforce any such order.

Accounts to be audited

31. The accounts of the Public Trustee shall be audited and the securities held by him verified from time to time by such person or persons as the Minister may appoint.

Authorised officers

32. Any officer of the Public Trustee who shall be authorised by him in writing in that behalf may take any oath, make any declaration and verify any account and give personal attendance at any Court or place.

Notices to be addressed to Public Trustee at his office

33.—(1) Any notice or application required to be given or made for the purposes of the Act or these Rules to the Public Trustee may be addressed to the Public Trustee at his office.

(2) Any notice or application required to be given or made for the purpose of the Act or these Rules to any person other than the Public Trustee may be addressed to that person at his last known place of abode or place of business.

(3) Any such notice or application may be delivered at the place to which it is addressed or may be served by post.

Persons under disability

34. Where any person who (if not under disability) might have made any application, given any consent, done any act, or been party to any proceedings in pursuance of these Rules is an infant, idiot or lunatic, the guardian or (as the case may require) the committee or receiver of the estate of that person may make such application, give such consent, do such act, and be party to such proceedings as that person if free from disability might have made, given, done or been party to, and shall otherwise represent that person for the purposes of these Rules. Where there is no guardian or committee or receiver of the estate of any such infant, idiot or lunatic, or where any person is of unsound mind or incapable of managing his affairs, but has not been found to be a lunatic under any inquiry, it shall be lawful for the Court to appoint a guardian of that person for the purpose of any proceedings under these Rules and from time to time to change the guardian.

Forms, directions and regulations

35. The Public Trustee with the approval of the Minister may frame and cause to be printed and circulated or otherwise promulgated such forms and directions and regulations as he may consider requisite or expedient for facilitating proceedings under the Act and these Rules.

Bank accounts for trust moneys

36.—(1) In cases where the moneys of a trust normally kept in current account at a bank are sufficient to earn bank interest, the Public Trustee shall, and in other cases may, cause a separate banking account to be kept in respect of that trust.

(2) In respect of trusts not dealt with under paragraph (1), the Public Trustee shall cause to be kept one general banking account.

(3) Interest allowed by the bank on daily bank balances of the general banking account kept under paragraph (2) shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund.

Restriction on powers

37. Nothing in these Rules shall empower the Public Trustee when he is one of two or more trustees and is not the sole trustee to act alone in any matter when one of two or more trustees could not lawfully act alone.

Reserve Fund

38. For the purposes of section 15A(3) of the Act —

- (a) such amount in the Reserve Fund as the Board may determine may from time to time be transferred to the Common Fund;
- (b) such amount in the Reserve Fund as the Board may determine may from time to time be transferred to and included in the distributable sum referred to in section 12A of the Act;
- (c) such amount in the Reserve Fund as the Board may determine may from time to time be invested in such investments permitted by law for the investment of trust funds; and
- (d) the Board may at any time sanction the sale or liquidation of any investment referred to in paragraph (c).

[S 864/2014 wef 31/12/2014]

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY
PUBLIC TRUSTEE RULES
(CHAPTER 260, R 1)

This Legislative History is provided for the convenience of users of the Public Trustee Rules. It is not part of these Rules.

1. G. N. No. S 1464/1934 — Public Trustee Rules 1934

Date of commencement : Date not available

2. G. N. No. S 1044/1935

Date of commencement : Date not available

3. G.N. No. S 644/2012 — Public Trustee (Amendment) Rules 2012

Date of commencement : 1 January 2013

4. G.N. No. S 864/2014 — Public Trustee (Amendment) Rules 2014

Date of commencement : 31 December 2014

5. G.N. No. S 270/2022 — Public Trustee (Amendment) Rules 2022

Date of commencement : 31 December 2021