



AGRI-FOOD & BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

Assistant Scientific Officer

IRC265409

[Candidate Information Booklet](#)

Completed application forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 30th July 2021.

Applications received after this date will not be accepted.

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

Contents	Page
INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND	4
JOB DESCRIPTION	9
MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	13
THE SELECTION PROCESS	18
GENERAL INFORMATION	28

INTRODUCTION

We are delighted you are interested in joining AFBI (Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute).

This recruitment process will be used to fill permanent Assistant Scientific Officers (ASO) vacancies throughout AFBI and is a fantastic opportunity for people who are looking for a scientific role within a diverse and dynamic workplace. Working in AFBI will provide the opportunity to work in a varied and exciting environment which will be challenging and rewarding.

This Candidate Information Booklet offers support and guidance to all applicants seeking to apply for the Assistant Scientific Officers positions within AFBI.

We ask that you please read this document in advance of submitting your application form and retain it for reference throughout the selection process.

We wish to ensure all applicants have the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability. We will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments. If you have any questions, or require any documentation in an alternative format e.g. braille, easy read, large print, audio etc. You should contact HRConnect on Tel: 0800 1 300 330 or email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

The closing date for applications is 12.00 noon on Friday 30th July 2021. Note:

Late applications will not be accepted.

It is intended that assessments and interviews will take place in August and September 2021. Please see the section entitled Assessment Tests and Interview Availability on pages 16 - 19 for further information.

Thank you for your interest in this competition.

BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

The Agri-food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental and commercial organisations.

AFBI was established on 1 April 2006 as a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

As the Northern Ireland Government's main research and science provider in the areas of agri-food, fisheries and the environment, AFBI's science plays a crucial role in providing the underpinning statutory and analytical testing, research and development work, emergency response and expert scientific advice required to support the work of DAERA and the wider agri-food industry. AFBI's key science themes represent, Leading improvements in the agri-food industry; Protecting animal, plant and human health; and Enhancing the natural and marine environments.

In line with AFBI's vision of "Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence" the Institute seeks to be an influential, internationally recognised centre for research and scientific services in the agri-food and marine sectors. AFBI's science is outcome-driven and aimed at solving important practical problems for a wide range of local, national and international funders in the public and private sectors. Our staff carry out world class research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for a wide range of funders in the fields of animal health and welfare, sustainable agricultural systems, plant science, food innovation and safety, environmental protection, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and agricultural and rural economics.

AFBI has three science Divisions and a one corporate Division. Further information can be found below as well as on our website.

SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)

SAFSD currently employs scientific, technical and support staff across its five scientific based branches.

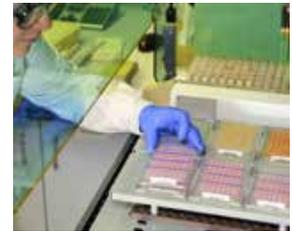
The Division is a highly multidisciplinary with a focus on livestock, plant and in general agriculture production and their interactions with the environment and the economy. This multi-disciplinary team can explore all aspects of the food supply chain taking research and scientific exploration from the soil through to the plant, the animal and the resultant food quality and nutritional value, while also working with colleagues at VSD to ensure animal health and food safety is optimised. A key element of the work also examines quantitative and qualitative socio-economic impacts.



SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock and land management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation and monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally.

VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)

VSD currently employs veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff and is predominantly based at Stoney Road, Belfast with a smaller disease surveillance centre based at Omagh, Co. Tyrone. The Division undertakes an integrated programme of statutory, disease surveillance, emergency response and R&D work on the diseases of major animal and human health significance along with significant programmes of work on the chemical and microbiological safety of food. The work of the Division supports Northern Ireland trade, government policy, food safety and disease eradication and control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis, food-borne zoonotic infections and transboundary diseases.



ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION (EMSD)

The Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD) is a new science division, which was established in late 2020 following a review of AFBI's organisational structure. It is comprised of two Branches, which have in recent years been part of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division.

The decision to establish this new division reflects the increasing importance and amount of scientific work undertaken by AFBI in the agri-environment, marine and aquatic ecosystems areas. The Division will focus on evidence based science, which is key to addressing the significant environmental challenges whilst ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and the future prosperity of the agri-food sector.



It is in a unique position to deliver on a high impact and quality integrated programme of research spanning from the "soil to the sea".

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION (FCAD)

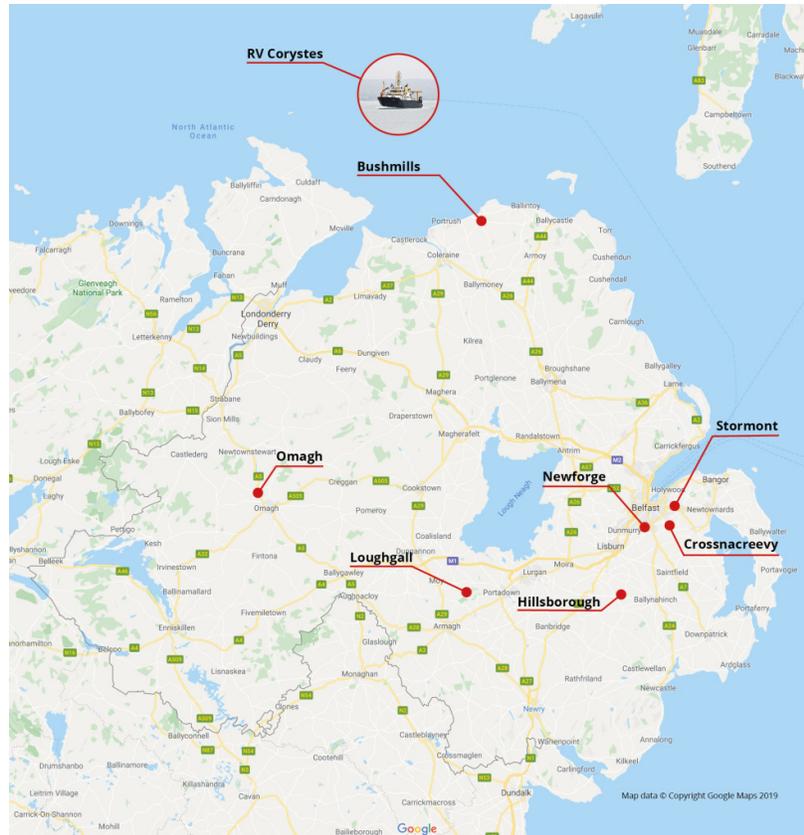
The Finance and Corporate Affairs is based primarily at AFBI headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast but with staff deployed at some of the larger sites. The Division supports the AFBI Chief Executive and Executive management team (EMT) in securing and deploying the financial, people and infrastructure resources of AFBI. The Division has a key role in ensuring that AFBI is an efficient, effective, sustainable and accountable organisation with high standards of governance. The Division also includes the Research Support Office, which has recently been developed to enhance AFBI's success in maximising the benefit from relevant external funding and commercialisation opportunities.



developed to

AFBI SITES

AFBI is located on seven sites across Northern Ireland with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.



In addition AFBI has a dedicated marine research vessel, the RV Corystes, based in Port of Belfast.

- Newforge Lane (Headquarters)
- VSD Stormont
- Hillsborough
- Crossnacreevy
- Loughgall
- Omagh
- Bushmills

JOB DESCRIPTION

There are currently a number of full time permanent positions for Assistant Scientific Officers. The successful candidates will be appointed to the Assistant Scientific Officers (ASO) grade. The experience and skills required for appointment are listed against the Main Duties and Responsibilities on page 15.

A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months, to cover any similar vacancies which may arise. The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

SALARY

The salary for these posts will be within the range £22,296 - £23,718. Your starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale. If you are currently an AFBI employee, normal pay on promotion / re-grading arrangements will apply.

ANNUAL LEAVE

We provide a generous annual leave allowance to all employees which is 5 weeks each year, moving to 6 weeks after 5 years' service.

In addition, all employees are entitled to 12 days public/ privilege holidays each year.

HOURS OF WORK

The normal hours of work are 37 hours per week (Monday to Friday), excluding meal breaks. The working pattern will predominately be between the hours of 9am and 6pm, however some working patterns may be between the hours of 8am and 6pm.

FLEXI-TIME

AFBI appreciates the need for flexibility due to work/life commitments and want to support you to get the balance right. To support flexibility we offer the opportunity for employees to work flexibly over a working week outside of core working hours.

PROBATION

Confirmation of appointment is dependent upon the- satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 1 year. If performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory the appointment may be terminated.

TRAINING

Appropriate training will be provided, where required, to enable the successful candidates to carry out the full range of assigned duties.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

AFBI actively engage with employees to encourage and support professional goals.

We continuously develop our employees with a range of professional and personal development opportunities. Our corporate Learning and Development programme is open to all staff and consists of a number of formal and informal initiatives.

In addition to corporate Learning and Development opportunities, AFBI will encourage you to be proactive and self-direct your own development. Through regular conversations with your line manager you will have the opportunity to discuss and agree future learning needs to help you excel in your new role.

LOCATION

This competition will be used to fill permanent ASO vacancies throughout AFBI. The successful candidates may be employed within any of the various locations within the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute i.e. Newforge Lane, Stormont, Crossnacreevy, Hillsborough, Loughgall, Omagh, and Bushmills.

Although it is expected that the majority of vacancies will arise in the Belfast area, successful candidates should be prepared to serve where the vacancies arise.

Candidates will have the opportunity to declare on the application form any location(s) they would prefer to work. Management will try to accommodate location preferences where possible. Please note there are currently no vacancies in the Loughgall, Omagh, and Bushmills locations.

Successful candidates will only receive one offer of appointment from this competition. If you refuse an offer of employment for any reason, you will be withdrawn from the competition. Extenuating circumstances will be considered.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

AFBI has a range of family-friendly policies to allow staff to balance work with the other aspects of their lives. These include part-time working, job-sharing arrangements, flexible working and special leave provisions.

AFBI provides maternity provisions, paternity, parental and adoption leave, many of which are provided at an enhanced rate beyond statutory entitlement.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

We are committed to support each employee where we can throughout their journey with us. To support employees we offer a number of initiatives, including workplace health checks, cost towards flu vaccinations, Occupational Health Services, and the provision of trained Mental Health First Aiders.

INSPIRE WORKPLACES

To support employees we contract Inspire Workplaces who provide support to all employees anonymously. They offer professional counselling sessions and a 24/7 helpline.

WELFARE SUPPORT/EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

AFBI understands that there may be times when you may need independent advice and help coping with personal or work-related issues that may be affecting your ability to work effectively. To help you with these issues AFBI offer a confidential Welfare Support Service. AFBI also operates an Employee Assistance Programme, delivered through Inspire which provides free independent and confidential counselling, advice and support for any

personal or work-related issues.

BENENDEN HEALTHCARE

A mutual healthcare society which provides you and your family with access to affordable healthcare products, helping you to take control of your health and wellbeing. See link below for more information: <http://www.benenden.co.uk>

EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

AFBI grant special leave with pay up to a maximum of three days on the condition that staff contribute an equivalent amount of their own leave (annual or flexi) to the same voluntary sector organisation for the purposes of volunteering. This is providing there is no adverse impact on official business and no conflict of interest.

TRAVEL INITIATIVES/CAR PARKING

AFBI offer all staff the opportunity to partake in the Cycle to Work Pay and Reward Scheme. Under the Cycle to Work Scheme employees may 'sacrifice' part of their pay in exchange for the use of a bicycle and any associated safety equipment, with the potential to save money on Tax and National Insurance Contributions. AFBI has seven sites throughout Northern Ireland that all offer free convenient car parking.

PENSION

We offer an unrivalled pension scheme that will help you beyond your employment with us. All permanent AFBI staff are enrolled into the Northern Ireland Civil Service Scheme from their first day of employment. There is no qualifying or waiting period. Staff contribute between 3 and 8% of salary and AFBI contribute a further 21 to 26% of salary, depending on your rate of pay. Pension contributions are collected before tax, so you also get tax relief at your marginal tax rate on the contributions you pay.

Employee contribution rates for all members from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 are set out below.

SALARY THRESHOLDS				% CONTRIBUTION RATE
2019 – 2020		2020 – 2021		
FROM	TO	FROM	TO	
£0	£23,500.99	£0	£23,999.99	4.6%
£23,501.00	£54,500.99	£24,000.00	£55,499.99	5.45%
£54,501.00	£150,000.99	£55,500.00	£152,499.99	7.35%
£150,001.00 and above		£152,500.00 and above		8.05%

SICK ENTITLEMENT

We recognise that throughout our lifetime we may experience ill-health. To support you financially and to alleviate stress while recovering from ill-health, AFBI offers a generous sick entitlement to support you until you return to the workplace, fit and well.

DEATH IN BENEFIT

In addition to the contribution to your pension pot the scheme also offers a range of benefits to you and your family while you are in work and when you retire. If you die in service the scheme provides valuable life cover to your family in the form of a lump sum and a pension for your dependants.

These pension arrangements form a valuable part of your remuneration package. For further information on the available pension options, please visit the [Northern Ireland Civil Service Pensions Scheme website](#).

GIVE AS YOU EARN SCHEME

AFBI support The Charity for Civil Servants, providing (financial) help and advice to serving and former staff of the Civil Service and associated organizations, including AFBI. More information can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.foryoubyyou.org.uk/>

About the laboratory based Assistant Scientific Officer role

Assistant Scientific Officers play a key role in AFBI's mission of using scientific excellence to advance the local and global agri-food sector. As such, successful applicants will join teams of scientists with long established international reputations across many disciplines and an Institute already respected as a centre for innovation in the agri-food and biosciences.

The role of a laboratory based ASO varies widely across the Institute. However, all are tasked with providing analytical support to senior scientists who may be leading programmes of work in animal and plant health, food safety and quality, environmental protection, and marine and aquatic ecosystems. The work undertaken may be statutory, in support of local industry or may form part of multi-million, multi-partner projects funded by the EU or other such funding bodies. ASOs undertake or assist in analyses, utilising long established scientific processes and procedures and also some of the latest and most sensitive technologies currently available. Methods routinely employed range from, for example, the traditional techniques applied within any standard microbiology laboratory through immunochemical techniques such as enzyme immunoassay and molecular techniques, such as polymerase chain reaction, to analysis based on the latest mass spectrometers which are capable of detection in the 0.25 parts per billion range.

Working together as part of a wider team, ASOs are vital in the provision of statutory or diagnostic testing services. Organisational skills and attention to detail are both key in terms of planning workloads to meet deadlines and ensuring sample reception, analysis and reporting is performed to the highest standards and in accordance with quality procedures. Results of testing are highly important and can for example be used to confirm disease, deny or permit export or prevent food entering the food chain.

Laboratory based ASOs may also be involved in research projects, method development or experimental trials. These roles rely on self-motivated individuals, who are able to use their own initiative to overcome analytical problems and deliver on time against milestones. The individual will often be required to assist in drafting scientific progress reports and papers and keep abreast of relevant scientific literature.

Working in AFBI will provide the opportunity to work in a varied and exciting environment which will be challenging and rewarding.

As an Assistant Scientific Officers your main duties and responsibilities might be:

Scientific and Technical

- Receipt, recording and preparation of samples for examination and analysis;
- Carrying out analytical tests and recording results and experimental data;
- Preparation of laboratory reagents;
- Delivering results in line with instructions accurately and within expected deadlines;
- Making appropriate records as work proceeds and ensuring results are accurately recorded;
- Ensuring results are validated through carrying out appropriate quality checks;
- Completing all work in line with AFBI accepted quality standards and both technical and scientific operating procedures (ISO9001/17025);
- Perform all procedures in accordance with standard operating procedures and scientific protocols;
- Operate complex and expensive scientific instrumentation;
- Temperature monitoring and respond to alarms or report when out of specification;
- Removal, labelling and disposal of samples and all other clinical waste.

Handling and Management of documents/electronic files

- Comply with AFBI policies;
- Assist in the preparation of Standard Operating Procedure's (SOP's);
- Operate IT hardware such as PC's, keyboard and printers. Input data to computerized database. Generate reports and computerized data and maintain accurate written or electronic records;
- Ensure that all paper records are completed and filed correctly; and
- Archive storage of documentation.

Communication

- Communication with work colleagues recognising when issues/events need to be referred to a line manager;
- Communicate with other colleagues and Branches as required; and
- Take an active part in, and contribute to team meetings.

Stock management

- Requisition of consumables as required; and
- Assist in the stock maintenance of appropriate consumables, using best practice in stock control to facilitate minimal wastage.

Quality and service improvement

- Report and escalate incidents and supply information required for investigation;
- Make suggestions for change and assist in improvement initiatives to service, product or process;
- Participate in the development, validation and introduction into routine use of new techniques/processes/equipment;
- Effectively participate in audits; and
- Use initiative and precedent in dealing with day to day problems.

Team working and development

- Work as a member of a team, valuing the contribution of others and forming co-operative working relationships with all colleagues;
- Demonstrate work tasks and related procedures to new members of the team, other staff, visitors and students;
- Train colleagues in the use of IT systems;
- Contribute to the personal objective setting in development reviews taking responsibility for own continuing personal development;
- Organise own workload as required; and
- Adherence to Health and Safety and other legislative requirements and maintenance of a safe and effective working environment.

This list is not exclusive and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management.

Applicants should be aware that they may also be expected to deal with blood samples and/or tissue samples which may be contaminated with transmissible diseases. AFBI goes to great lengths to ensure that the health and safety of its workforce is safeguarded and appropriate training will be given to staff dealing with such samples.

AFBI is required to ensure that there is full compliance with all relevant Health and Safety legislation with regard to the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and of others who may be affected by its operations.

Applicants should be aware that in all posts the job requirement may involve working with biological samples from animals, plants or other organisms.

Applicants should be aware that in some of the posts the job requirement may involve the occasional wearing of face masks and as such will be required to undergo face fit testing.

AFBI CORE VALUES AND MISSION STATEMENT

Vision

- Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence.

Mission

- Enhancing industry innovation and informing government policy across the agri-food and rural sectors through excellence in scientific services, research and development and knowledge exchange.

Core Values

- Customer First;
- Scientific Excellence & Integrity;
- Respecting People;
- Honest & Trust;
- Innovative & Forward Looking.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below:

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has a strong and clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the NICS on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere where they are treated with dignity and respect. We aim to provide opportunities for all sections of the community and continue to strive to create an inclusive working environment in which difference is recognised and valued. Bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and giving each person the opportunity to contribute their skills and experience will help us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve.

We all want to work in a harmonious workplace where we feel valued, respected and included, irrespective of gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race/ethnic origin, religious belief or political opinion, disability, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation and age.

In order to provide a high quality service the NICS needs to attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best people at all levels. Our approach is based on three key principles:-

Equality – we promote equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

Diversity – we accept each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity – and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders.

Inclusion – we create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued;

where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with, and adheres to, NICS values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

These principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are considered when human resources policies are being developed and reviewed.

Both Management and Trade Union Side are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation.

DISABILITY REQUIREMENTS AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS

We will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments during this recruitment process.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

THE SELECTION PROCESS IS MADE UP OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. Online application;
2. Online aptitude test;
3. Formal Screening and shortlisting of applications;
4. Interview; and
5. Merit List.

1. Online Application:

- Read the Candidate Information Booklet.
- If you are interested in applying make sure you meet the requirements.
- Complete your online application making sure you supply a valid email address.
- You are also invited to declare any location(s) you would prefer to work. Please note that current positions are available in Stormont, Newforge Lane, Hillsborough and Crossnacreevy. Management will try to accommodate location preferences where possible.

2. Online Aptitude Test:

The second stage of the selection process will comprise of a balanced portfolio of online assessments to determine suitability for this type of ASO role. There will be 4 separate tests. All applicants are required to provide an email address on their application form for this purpose.

- Test links will be issued by 5pm on 6th August 2021.
- If you do not receive an email by 6th August 2021, please e-mail recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net inserting 'ASO test link not received' in the subject line.
- This link will take you to a website where you will have to complete the tests.
- The online tests can be done in your own time and at a place that suits you.
- You cannot stop an individual test once started but you can take the four tests at different times.

3. Formal Screening and shortlisting of Applications

Applications deemed invalid at this stage will be withdrawn from the competition.

Following the aptitude test, the top scoring applicants will be assessed against the eligibility criteria listed below. A sift of the application forms will be carried out by the appointed selection panel to assess each applicant against the eligibility criteria. The selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each criterion on the basis of the evidence provided on their application form.

Eligibility criteria

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications have:

1. GCE 'A' level passes (A to E) or equivalent, in 2 separate subjects, one of which must be biology or chemistry; and
2. GCSE/GCE 'O' level grades A, B or C in English and Maths.

Relevant or equivalent qualifications: Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated. If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied, information proving equivalency, etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made. Further information on determining the equivalence of relevant formal qualifications can be found at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/qualifications-what-different-levels-mean>.

Shortlisting

Applicants should be aware that after the eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criteria will be applied:

1. (a) A Level 4 qualification or above in a science related discipline.
(Please refer to the link above for clarification on accepted qualifications)

OR

- (b) 12 months experience in a Laboratory which must include experience of each of the following areas:
 - i. Carrying out analytical tests and recording results using a range of scientific techniques;
 - ii. Carrying out a range of complex scientific duties and a description of the outcome that was achieved;
 - iii. Delivering results accurately and within strict deadlines; and
 - iv. Experience of working in a team to achieve a goal and description of personal contribution.

Further Shortlisting

In the event that further shortlisting is required the shortlisting criteria above will be **combined** so that only candidates who can demonstrate that they hold **both** a Level 4 qualification or above in a science related discipline. (Please refer to the ofqual link above for clarification on accepted qualifications) **and** 12 months experience in a Laboratory which has included experience of each of the areas listed at i, ii, iii and iv above will be considered eligible to proceed.

Additionally, AFBI may decide to further limit the number of applicants it invites for interview in a proportionate manner. In this instance those candidates who have met the requirements and have both a A Level 4 qualification or above in a science related discipline. (Please refer to the ofqual link above for clarification on accepted qualifications) **and** 12 months experience in a Laboratory which has included experience of each of the areas listed at i, ii, iii and iv above will have the evidence provided in relation to the **experience element** of the criterion 1(b) assessed on a scored basis. All applicants who meet the minimum score set will be listed in merit order according to their total score and the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

4. Interview

- The top performing candidates validated by the online test and the above shortlisting process will be invited to an interview.
- The interview will be based on the NICS Competency Framework.

5. Merit List

- If you score high enough at interview you will be placed on the merit list.
- The top scoring applicants will start the security clearance process immediately.
- Applicants will be offered vacancies in merit order.

THE SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

2. Online Aptitude Test – All Applicants

This assessment will be proctored. Proctoring means that your identity will be verified before starting the assessment and that you will be monitored via your webcam during the assessment.

Before starting the ID Verification process, you should click the link at the top of the main menu page ('ID Verification and Proctoring – instructions, common issues and resolutions.pdf') and read the document. If you encounter a problem with your ID verification or starting a live test, please consult it before emailing support.

To complete the ID Verification process and the online tests, applicants will require a computer which has a working webcam, a reliable internet connection and an up to date

Chrome or Microsoft Edge browser on a PC. If you are using a Mac, please use Chrome. If you need to use Safari on your Mac, please read Appendix 1 of 'ID Verification and Proctoring - instructions common issues and resolutions.pdf' before starting a live test. **Do not use a tablet, phone or Chromebook.**

It is **ESSENTIAL** that you use the online familiarisation and practice material to check that your browser and the internet connection that you intend to take the live tests on are compatible with the online assessment. Note that some network firewalls may block access to the test site or prevent images from showing. If the familiarisation materials work well on your IT equipment, this is a good indication that the live tests will work also. It is **ESSENTIAL** that you access the familiarisation materials using the computer and internet connection that you intend to take the live tests on well in advance.

For best results we recommend the online assessment is completed in a test-like environment. Any possible distractions should be turned off, for example mobile phones, TV, music etc. Concentration is needed throughout the assessment, so if you are completing it at home or work, ensure other people are aware they should not disturb you until you are finished. Note no responsibility can be accepted for any issues arising from where you choose to sit the tests.

Please note: Candidates are advised **not to use computer equipment supplied by an employer to complete the testing process**, as the use of such equipment may create security conflicts that will block access.

Once you log into the test platform and complete the honesty and privacy statements you will see a menu showing (i) the Identity Verification and (ii) the Familiarisation. You need to successfully verify your identity to gain access to the live tests. If your identity has been verified the links to the live tests will appear on the test site menu during the live test period. You should access the familiarisation material using the same computer and internet connection that you intend to take the live tests on, to ensure that your machine and software are compatible with the testing programme.

You should receive an email (sent to the email address you provided) with a link to the online test by **5pm on Friday 6th August 2021**. Please check your email and junk folders during this time to ensure you receive the email. You will have until **5pm on Sunday 15th August 2021 to complete the tests**.

The Familiarisation, practice and verification will be available from when you receive your invitation. You **MUST** submit your images for identity verification by midnight **Wednesday 11th August 2021** to gain access to the live tests. You can access the live tests following submission of your ID until **5pm Sunday 15th August 2021**.

Verifying your identity – for this you will need to have a valid photo ID (Passports, driving licenses and electoral cards are acceptable). Once you receive the link, using a webcam you will need to take a photo of your photo ID and also a photo of yourself. Within 24 hours we will verify your identity and you will receive an email from ProctorSupport@assessmentintelligence.com informing you of this. You will be asked to enter your email after taking the photos so that we can inform you of the verification by email.

The online aptitude test will consist of four tests:

- **Scientific Knowledge** - 10 minutes
- **Numerical Reasoning** - 20 minutes
- **Verbal Reasoning** - 25 minutes
- **Checking and Accuracy** - 10 minutes.

You do not need to complete all four tests at the same time or even on the same day. Individual tests do however need to be taken in a single sitting therefore you should ensure that when completing each test that you have sufficient time for the test itself plus additional time for reading and understanding the relevant instructions for each test.

To complete the ID Verification process and the online tests, applicants will require a computer which has a working webcam, a reliable internet connection and an up to date Chrome or Microsoft Edge browser on a PC. If you are using a Mac, please use Chrome. If you need to use Safari on your Mac, please read Appendix 1 of 'ID Verification and Proctoring - instructions common issues and resolutions.pdf' before starting a live test. **Do not use a tablet, phone or Chromebook.**

For best results it is recommended that the online test is completed in a test environment. Any possible distractions should be turned off, for example, mobile phones, TV, music etc. Concentration is needed throughout the test, so if you are completing it at home or work, ensure other people are aware they should not disturb you until you are finished. Note no responsibility can be accepted for any issues arising from where you choose to sit the tests.

Before starting a test you should close all other browsers and browser tabs. You should not take

the test on a computer that is remotely connected to a work network as the link may be unstable.

If you lose internet connection while in the live test, you should immediately close your browser. When your internet connection is restored and you are confident it will be reliable, you should log back into the live test. Your previous answers will have been saved (except possibly on the last page you were on before losing connection) and you will not lose any time.

Familiarisation and Practice

Familiarisation and practice questions for all four tests are available from when you receive your invitation, through the link you will be sent and will remain available until the end of the live test period.

The familiarisation materials will explain the tests, how to enter your answers and use the test programme. There are additional practice materials to help you further prepare.

You are strongly encouraged to use this opportunity to familiarise yourself with the test practice questions before completing the live test.

It is **ESSENTIAL** that you use these materials not only to familiarise yourself with the tests, but also to check that your computer, browser and the internet connection that you intend to use to take the live test will be compatible with the online tests. Some network firewalls may block access to the test site or prevent images from showing. If the familiarisation materials work on your IT equipment, this is a good indication that the live tests will also work.

There are no practice materials other than the familiarisation and practice materials that you can find via the link above.

If you have any technical problems accessing the familiarisation, practice or live tests, you should email support@assessmentintelligence.com including your candidate reference number and 'AFBI' in the subject line.

Disability Requirements and Reasonable Adjustment Requests

We wish to ensure all applicants have the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability. If you require any form of reasonable adjustment, please note this in the box provided on your application form. You should include details of your disability and the specific adjustment you need. We will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments for any stage of this recruitment process.

Further information on reasonable adjustments

You will need to provide relevant evidence to support your request for a reasonable adjustment – for example, an Occupational Psychologist's report or a GP's medical statement.

Evidence to support your request should be sent to HRConnect at recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net as soon as possible following submission of your application. Please mark your correspondence with the competition reference number IRC265409 and title it 'Supporting evidence for reasonable adjustment request'.

You may be contacted directly to discuss your requirements. Test familiarisation materials are available to help inform your decision regarding a need for a reasonable adjustment.

It is essential that special arrangements concerning any adjustment requests are made in advance of starting the live test, as retrospective arrangements cannot be made after you have started.

3. Formal Screening and Shortlisting of Applications

We will complete a formal screening and shortlisting of applications progressing to ensure your application is valid. These checks will ensure applicants meet the age requirements for the role. We will also check the status of any current AFBI staff to ensure they are eligible to apply. Applications deemed invalid at this stage will be withdrawn.

As it is not practicable to check in detail a large number of applications before we invite candidates to test, such an invitation, or other correspondence, should not be taken to imply that we have accepted you meet all requirements.

Applications may be allowed to proceed conditionally pending such confirmation.

Failure to provide any evidence requested may lead to your withdrawal, therefore you should ensure that these documents are readily available.

4. Competence Based Interviews

The top performing candidates of the online test who pass the formal screening of applications will be invited to an interview.

AFBI adopts The NICS Competency Framework which sets out how all employees should work, thus putting the values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Essential Criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate competency in Professional Knowledge & Skills pertaining to this post together with the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 1 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

You should familiarise yourself with the [Competency Framework](#) as this forms the basis of the interview selection process.

If you need help accessing the Competency Framework please contact HRConnect at: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

Interview questions have been designed to test a candidate's knowledge and skills in each of the areas below and to award marks accordingly.

You are not allowed to refer notes or other personal documentation during the interview. The panel will seek clarification of this upon introduction of your interview.

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

Applicants will be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview:

Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Demonstrates the required level of scientific knowledge and skills.
- Applies knowledge and skills in undertaking a range of analytical tests and other scientific procedures.
- Develops professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet work objectives and improve performance.

Marks Available: 40 **Pass mark: 24**

Collaborating and Partnering

- Proactively contribute to the work of the whole team.
- Get to know fellow team members/colleagues and understand their viewpoints and preferences.
- Seek help when needed in order to complete own work effectively.
- Be open to taking on different roles.
- Try to see issues from others' perspectives and check understanding.
- Listen to the views of others and show sensitivity towards others.

Marks Available: 20 **Pass mark: 12**

Making Effective Decisions

- Make and record effective decisions following the appropriate decision making criteria, framework or guidance.
- Ask questions when unsure what to do.
- Undertake appropriate analysis to support decisions or recommendations.
- Investigate and respond to gaps, errors and irregularities in information.
- Speak up to clarify decisions and query those constructively.
- Think through the implications of own decisions before confirming how to approach a problem/issue.

Marks Available: 10

Managing a Quality Service

- Communicate in a way that meets and anticipates the customer's requirements and gives a favourable impression of AFBI.
- Act to prevent problems, reporting issues where necessary.
- Gain the knowledge needed to follow the relevant legislation, policies, procedures and rules that apply to the job.
- Take ownership of issues, focus on providing the right solution and keep customers and delivery partners up to date with progress.

Marks Available: 10

Changing and improving

- Review working practices and come up with ideas to improve the way things are done.
- Learn new procedures, seek to exploit new technologies and help colleagues to do the same.
- Co-operate with and be open to the possibilities of change and consider ways to implement and adapt to change in own work role.
- Be constructive in raising issues with managers about implemented changes and the impact these are having on the service.
- Respond effectively to emergencies.

Marks Available: 10

Delivering at Pace

- Work in an organised manner using own knowledge and expertise to deliver on time and to standard.
- Work with enthusiasm to get the job done.
- Take responsibility for the quality of own work and keep manager informed of how the work is progressing.
- Remain focused on delivery.
- Maintain consistent performance.
- Participate in quality assurance of products or services.

Marks Available: 10

Total marks available: 100

Overall pass mark: 60

COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly.

Interview Availability

Any reasonable adjustments due to disability should be conveyed to HRConnect at recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

It is intended interviews will take place in September 2021.

Requests to reschedule interviews will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances and only within the timeframe above.

If, having received your invitation to interview, you decide to withdraw from the competition please inform HRConnect as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours of receiving your invitation. This will help us manage the competition more effectively.

Covid 19

Due to the current government guidelines, all interviews will be carried out remotely via WebEx to ensure the safety of everyone during the current restrictions due to Covid 19.

All candidates will be provided with at least 10 working days' notice to attend the interview. Candidates should make arrangements to secure a location where they can attend their interview remotely and make sure they have downloaded WebEx onto their laptop or computer.

WebEx like all technology, can be subject to connection issues. If you experience any technical issues during your interview that cannot be sorted out within a reasonable time, then the interview will have to be paused until such times as the technical problem has been resolved. Additional time will be scheduled for each interview for instances such as this, however, where technical issues continue, there may be a requirement to reschedule the meeting. This will only happen where we have concerns over the interview schedule not running to time. We appreciate that this may be upsetting but please be assured that the panel will inform HR, who will ensure that you are given the opportunity to complete your interview as soon as possible.

In addition, due to the fact we are all working remotely it is difficult to ensure we are not disturbed. If anyone is disturbed, do not worry. You should in these circumstances, excuse yourself from the interview, deal with the situation and then return to the interview as soon as possible. **Verifying your identity** – for this you will need to have a valid photo ID (Passports, driving licenses and electoral cards are acceptable). Before your interview begins the panel will ask you to show your photo ID.

5. The Merit List

Upon completion of the interviews, all scores will be collated to form the merit list, where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition. We will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed.

You will need to provide identification documents to satisfy the nationality, Right to Work and Security requirements of the post. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued if successful:

- Photographic ID (e.g. valid Passport or valid Driving License).
- Proof of Address (e.g. recent utility bill or bank statement).
- Proof of Nationality (Passport or Birth Certification accompanied with proof of National Insurance number - NI number card or payslip).
- Documents to satisfy AccessNI check

GENERAL INFORMATION

THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

Appointments to AFBI are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

MAKING YOUR APPLICATION

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility/ shortlisting criteria.

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat application forms.
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline;
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your branch or your job.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write "I" statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be checked out at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your unique role the panel is interested in, not that of your team or division.

APPLICATION FORM SUBMISSION

You can apply online at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk.

- Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application.
- All parts of the application form must be completed by the applicant before this application can be considered. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.
- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- When completing the on-line application, your information is saved as you move through the pages. You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button. Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- Please note - the session timeout for the on-line application is 40 minutes, if you do not save or change page within this time you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.
- Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this will result in disqualification.

CHANGES IN PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Please ensure HRConnect is informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HRCONNECT AND YOU

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

TRANSGENDER REQUIREMENTS

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact HRConnect. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

FURTHER APPOINTMENTS FROM THIS COMPETITION

Where a further position in AFBI is identified which is considered broadly similar to that outlined in this candidate information booklet, consideration will be given to filling the position from this competition. The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to two years.

DISABILITY REQUIREMENTS

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MONITORING FORM

Please note, this form is regarded as part of your application and failure to complete and return it will result in disqualification.

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement to which AFBI adheres please refer to page 30.

Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and Females as these groups are currently under-represented within AFBI.

AFBI is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility/shortlisting criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

RIGHT TO WORK AND NATIONALITY REQUIREMENTS

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

VETTING PROCEDURES

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post the level of vetting is a Baseline Standard. For this check you will be required to provide the following:

- a. Your passport ***OR***
- b. A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) AND your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).
- c. Other acceptable documents are listed on www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.
- d. A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI through Experian. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is:

BASIC DISCLOSURE CERTIFICATE

You should not put off applying for a post because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner, and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made. Further information regarding policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the vetting process is available at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at: www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk under Useful Information.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni

ORDER OF MERIT

The selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment. The selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. The order of merit is valid for one year.

GENERAL INFORMATION

PENSIONS

New entrants who join the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme.

Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at: www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni

Or

If you are unable to access the website please contact Civil Service Pensions as follows: Civil

Service Pensions
Waterside House
75 Duke Street
Londonderry BT47
6FP
Tel: 02871 319000

Email: cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk

FEEDBACK

AFBI is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/ shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Contact details:

If you have any queries regarding the competition process, please contact HRConnect on:

Email: Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net

Tel: 0800 1 300 330

Fax: 028 9024 1665

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

POLICY STATEMENT

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below:

“The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has a strong and clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the NICS on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere where they are treated with dignity and respect. We aim to provide opportunities for all sections of the community and continue to strive to create an inclusive working environment in which difference is recognised and valued. Bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and giving each person the opportunity to contribute their skills and experience will help us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve”.

We all want to work in a harmonious workplace where we feel valued, respected and included, irrespective of gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race/ethnic origin, religious belief or political opinion, disability, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation and age.

In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best people at all levels. Our approach is based on three key principles:-

Equality – we promote equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

Diversity – we accept each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity – and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders.

Inclusion – we create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with, and adheres to NICS values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and to apply this policy. Both Management and Trade Union Side are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING

Equality monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information that is relevant to and necessary for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between different categories of persons. This section sets out what information is collected, the reasons for doing so and what it is used for.

You should note that the Monitoring Form is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return it will result in disqualification. The Monitoring Form will be processed separately and neither the form nor the details contained in it will be available to those considering your application.

Monitoring equality and diversity in the workforce enables the NICS to examine how our employment policies and processes are working and to identify areas where these appear to be impacting disproportionately on certain groups of staff.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

This section explains the reasons for gathering this information by setting out the legislative background.

GENDER

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of his or her sex. Information on gender is also provided in the annual statutory monitoring return, as required by the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally.

AGE

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 make it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on grounds of age. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different ages and age groups.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The Order also requires the NICS to submit an annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This takes the form of a statistical return, providing information on the gender and community background composition of all people working in the NICS at the 1st January each year.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief and political opinion. Following guidance issued in July 2007 by the Equality Commission for NI the NICS has decided to use “community background” information as a proxy for political opinion.

DISABILITY

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) provides protection for disabled persons against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The DDA defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

Physical Impairment: this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs etc) caused through illness by accident or from birth. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease.

Mental Impairment: this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability, and social functioning.

Substantial: put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day to day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

Long-term adverse effect: the effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one. A person with a life expectancy of less than 12 months is of course covered if the effect is likely to last for the whole of that time.

A normal day to day activity: this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something so individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

What sort of effect must there be?

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech; hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; ability to take part in normal social interaction and form social relationships; or perception of risk of physical danger.

What happens if the effects are reduced by medication or other treatment?

Broadly speaking, the effects that matter are those that would be present if there was no medication or treatment taking place. The exception is people who wear spectacles or contact lenses when what matters is the effect that remain while the spectacles or contact lenses are being used.

Are there any types of condition covered by special provisions in the DDA?

Yes, because some people with particular conditions might not otherwise be counted as disabled. These are provisions covering:

Recurring or fluctuating conditions such as arthritis, where the effects can sometimes be less than substantial, which are treated as continuing to have a substantial adverse effect so long as that effect is likely to recur;

Conditions which progressively deteriorate, such as motor neuron disease, which count as having a substantial effect from the first time they have any effect at all on ability to carry out normal day to day activities even if it is not substantial, so long as there is eventually likely to be a substantial adverse effect; and

People with cancer, HIV, or multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled people from the point of diagnosis, regardless of whether or not they have any symptoms.

Are any conditions not covered?

Yes, the following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:

Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from the substance being medically prescribed);

Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition;

Tendency to set fires, or steal, or physically or sexually abuse other persons;

Exhibitionism and voyeurism;

Severe disfigurements consisting of tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing are not treated as having substantial adverse effects.

What if someone has recovered from a disability?

Much of the DDA also applies to people who have had a disability in the past (for example, someone who was disabled by mental ill health) but have now fully recovered. People who were registered disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (NI) 1945 both on 12 January 1995 and 2 December 1996 will be regarded as having had a disability in the past if they do not in any case fall within the definition of the DDA.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without.

RACE

The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial group(s).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) Order 2003 makes it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. In order to monitor the effectiveness of NICS policies information is gathered on sexual orientation. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation.

MARITAL STATUS

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended), makes it unlawful to discriminate against married persons and civil partners in employment. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different marital status.

DEPENDANTS STATUS

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions in NI, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF MONITORING INFORMATION

The following general principles will be applied to all individual monitoring information:-

- individual monitoring information will be afforded a high degree of confidentiality;
- misuse of monitoring information will be viewed as a disciplinary offence; and
- Individual monitoring information will only be disclosed to members of staff or officials of a trade union, members of which are employed in the NICS, if it is necessary to do so for the appropriate discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the above internal safeguards on the protection of equality monitoring information generally, the confidentiality of community background monitoring information is protected through Regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (FETO). These make it a criminal offence, subject to specific exceptions, for an employer or employee to disclose information on the community background of an individual which has been obtained, or is used, for the purpose of monitoring under FETO.

As with other forms of personal data, the obtaining, use, storage and disclosure of monitoring information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Monitoring information is held on computer and is protected by a high level of security. Access to this data is restricted to those NICS staff, employees of HRConnect and Trade Union officials whose duties make it necessary for them to have it. Misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.