

**Candidate
Information
Booklet**

IRC241832

Staff Officer Accountant

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS)

**Completed Application Forms
must be submitted to
HRConnect no later than 12
noon (UK time) on
*Friday 23rd August 2019***

**Please retain a copy of this
booklet for your reference
throughout the selection
process.**

Northern Ireland Civil Service

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account, including junk mail folder, 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.

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FOREWORD

The spending constraints faced by the Northern Ireland public sector over the coming years present a very challenging environment. Meeting this challenge will require the support of the best finance professionals.

Good financial management is a high priority for all government departments and financial expertise is one of the key skills that must be engaged by all aspects of the service. Working in a government department you will be offered challenging and interesting work that will test your technical, management and people skills.

The NI Civil Service (NICS) is committed to delivering the highest standards of financial reporting and accountability. This commitment includes the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). We continually seek to develop and improve the quality of our financial management processes by looking at the applicability of emerging thinking, engaging with colleagues across the UK on the ongoing development of financial and governance practice.

The coming years will also see continued development of our finance shared services. The establishment of the Account NI financial shared service has played a key role in delivering efficiencies in the finance function over the past number of years and we will continue to seek opportunities for greater sharing of resources both within government departments and across the wider public sector. As a member of the finance community you will play a key role in the continuing process of modernising the finance function.

Good training and promotion prospects plus an attractive benefits package make for a rewarding career with one of Northern Ireland's largest employers. The job description and person specification set out in more detail the kind of people we are interested in recruiting. If you are highly motivated and can deliver results in a challenging and dynamic environment we would be very interested to hear from you.

Thank you very much for expressing an interest in this recruitment competition. I hope you will find the information outlined in the following pages helpful.

Richard Pengelly
Permanent Secretary and Head of Finance Profession

BACKGROUND

Strong financial management is critical to the achievement of optimum efficiency and value for money in the public sector.

Northern Ireland government departments, agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies generally produce annual commercial style accounts based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as tailored for the specific accounting needs of government bodies. Full Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) means that departments must plan, manage and account for public expenditure on a resource consumption basis, rather than cash. In addition, the implementation of wider developments in corporate governance and risk management has created an increasing focus within government on the area of systems and internal controls.

A major challenge now facing departments is tighter financial constraints, with the focus on good financial management, including the implementation of cost cutting plans to enable efficiencies to be realised. In the current economic climate, there is greater public scrutiny making financial information more widely available.

The process of developing excellence in financial accounting and management practices within the public sector is continuing as it derives the full benefits of RAB and IFRS and embeds the changes made to date.

In modernising financial reporting and rationalising financial management systems, the NICS has identified an increasing need for people with proven financial skills. Departmental finance functions increasingly focus on decision support and assisting front line business managers in the gathering and interpretation of financial information that allows them to make informed decisions to achieve the optimum value for taxpayers' money.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

While the precise duties and responsibilities of individual posts will vary, all posts may involve varying degrees of the following activities:

- Analysis of financial data;
- In-year budget management and monitoring, monthly budget profiling, variance analysis and reporting;
- Production of monthly and/or quarterly management accounting information;
- Preparation of departmental or agency Annual Reports and Accounts in accordance with HM Treasury and Department of Finance guidance incorporating GAAP/IFRS;
- Dealing with internal and external auditors including the Northern Ireland Audit Office;
- Development and review of financial IT systems;
- Providing advice and guidance on the use and interpretation of financial information, accounting requirements and best practice;
- Drafting and implementation of financial policies, procedures and controls;
- Use of activity based costing and benchmarking techniques;
- Management of the financial processing function; and
- Management of staff and other resources.

The above list is not exhaustive but gives an indication of some of the areas the role may involve. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time and according to business needs.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

There are currently a number of full time vacancies available. These are permanent appointments.

Further appointments may be made from this competition should NICS Staff Officer Accountant positions become vacant.

Location

This competition will be used to fill a number of immediate vacancies in NICS departments. Most of the posts will be located in the Greater Belfast area, including Bangor.

Salary

Starting salary will **always** be at the minimum of the scale, i.e. £33,526 - £35,157 (under review).

If the successful candidate is an existing civil servant, normal pay on promotion/re-grading arrangements will apply.

Pensions

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni

Holidays

In addition to public and privilege holidays, currently 12 days, the annual leave allowance will be 25 days, rising to 30 days after 5 years' service.

Hours of Work

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 42 hours per week which includes a 1 hour meal break (37 hours net) Monday to Friday. Most offices work flexi-time.

Travel

The successful candidates must have access to a form of transport, which will enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. The work will include the occasional need to travel to meetings at different locations inside Northern Ireland; travel outside Northern Ireland may also be required in some posts.

Vetting

For all Staff Officer Accountant positions the successful candidates will require security clearance to Baseline standard. However, depending on the role there

maybe a number of positions that also require clearance to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) standard (see pages 16 & 17)

Probation

Confirmation of appointment will be 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.

Career Development

The NICS is committed to career development and offers attractive career prospects across a wide variety of roles and professions. Career development is an integral part of the performance management system. Personal Development Plans identify learning and development needs with a view to enhancing skills and capabilities. NI Civil Servants have access to a wide range of internal job opportunities, including secondments with external organisations and are encouraged and supported in proactively managing their career.

Conflict of Interest

It is a basic requirement of all Civil Servants that their private activities should not bring them in to conflict with their official duties.

Conflict of Interest is not limited to the individual's own private, financial or other interests, as family, friends and associates may also have dealings which affect the Department's business directly or indirectly. Therefore to avoid any conflict or potential conflict and to demonstrate impartiality to the public at all times, an officer must not, without prior approval, engage in any activity which could be considered to be in conflict with official business.

Further Information

If you have any questions about the competition process, or require any documentation in an alternative format, you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications:

1. Have successfully passed the final professional examinations and be a full current member of one of the professional bodies detailed below:
 - (a) Chartered Accountants Ireland;
 - (b) The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland;
 - (c) The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales;
 - (d) The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants;
 - (e) The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants;
 - (f) The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy;
 - (g) The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland.

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.

AND

2. Have at least a total of one year's experience, gained within the last five years, in one or more areas of:
 - (a) financial planning and budgeting;
 - (b) financial accounting/auditing (including forensic accounting);
 - (c) management accounting and cost analysis;
 - (d) investment finance;
 - (e) treasury management; and/or
 - (f) development/implementation of financial systems.

***Relevant or equivalent** qualifications: give the details of the awarding body and the date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were admitted by the official awarding body). 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 etc so that an informed decision can be made.

You will be required to provide documentary evidence of your *qualifications/professional membership* at interview so please ensure you have these readily available.

SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

In addition, applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criteria will be used:

1. The requirement at eligibility criterion 2 will increase to at least a total of one year's experience, gained within the last five years, in two or more of the areas listed.

The Panel will complete this assessment against the information provided in the application form in response to eligibility criterion 2.

Please note:

- You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required.
- It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.
- The selection panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.
- If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be explored 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 are interested in, not that of your team or division.
- 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.
- ONLY the details provided by you in your application form (the employment history and eligibility criteria) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post. Please do not include your name in the employment history or eligibility criteria sections.
- The NICS Competency framework can be accessed via www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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

1. Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well reasoned, justifiable decisions.

Marks available: 30

Minimum standard: 18

2. Delivering Value for Money

Delivering value for money involves the efficient, effective and economic use of taxpayers' money in the delivery of public services. For all staff, it means seeking out and implementing solutions which achieve a good mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay, thus reducing the risk of fraud and error. People who do this well base their decisions on evidenced information and follow agreed processes and policies, challenging these appropriately where they appear to prevent good value for money.

Marks available: 30

Minimum standard: 18

3. Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

Marks available: 20

4. Changing and Improving

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. For all staff, it is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways.

Marks available: 20

5. Leading and Communicating

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens.

Marks available: 20

6. Collaborating and Partnering

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the NICS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

Marks available: 20

Total Marks Available: 140

Overall Pass Mark: 84

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.

No notes or personal documentation may be brought into the interview room.

INTERVIEWS

It is intended that interviews will take place in Belfast from the 24th September 2019.

AVAILABILITY

This competition is being run to a tight timescale. Changes to the timetable will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS competency framework at level 3.

Staff Officer Accountant is analogous to the Staff Officer grade in the NICS.

The NICS competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results.

Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service competency framework can be accessed via www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk

It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of selection process. Should you require assistance in accessing the competency framework please contact HRConnect.

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

APPLICATION FORM

Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before making your application and retain a copy for your reference. 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. **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.

Please note:

- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, hard copy application packs are available on request. All applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- 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, unless it is specifically requested in the application form and candidate information booklet.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date and time.
- 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.
- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- When completing the online 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.
- The session timeout for the online 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.
- You must click SUBMIT once you have finished your online application. You will receive an acknowledgement email. Please contact HRConnect if you do not receive an acknowledgment email within 24 hrs.

Help with making your application

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office - contact details are available on NIDirect: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices-jobcentres-and-social-security-offices>

You can also get advice or assistance from local disability employment organisations. To find out more about local disability employment organisations contact Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), an umbrella group for individuals and organisations promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to access and maintain employment, email info@niuse.org.uk, tel. 0044 (0)28 71 377709, text phone 0044 (0) 28 71 372077

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

A competence-based interview does however require you to:

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfill the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:

- Situation – briefly outline the situation;
- Task – what was your objective, what were you trying to achieve;
- Action – what did you actually do, what was your unique contribution;
- Result – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience to demonstrate the range of behaviours associated with the competences being assessed. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

For professional and technical posts, questions may be framed in the context of professional elements of the post.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Merit Principle

In accordance with the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code, appointments to the NICS are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Further information on the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at www.nicscommissioners.org.

NICSHR Privacy Notice

NICSHR are committed to protecting your privacy. HRConnect manage job applications on behalf of NICSHR, in line with the NICSHR privacy notice available via www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk

Offers of Employment

Candidates will only receive one offer of appointment which, if not accepted, will generally result in withdrawal from the competition.

Changes in personal circumstances and contact details

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances. It is important that HRConnect have up to date contact details.

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.

Merit List

HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. It is presently intended that the merit list for this competition should remain extant for a period of one year. However you should be aware that circumstances may arise in the future where it will be necessary to extend the currency of the merit list for a further period. The merit list will only be extended where cogent practical reasons for doing so arise.

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.

Documentation

Identification documents to satisfy the Nationality and Security requirements of the post will be required. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You will be required to bring documentary evidence of your qualifications / professional membership to assessment.

You should ensure that the required documents are readily available.

Right to Work and Nationality Requirements

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom and satisfy the Nationality requirements for appointment to the NICS. Applicants must be either:

- (i) A UK national; or
- (ii) A Commonwealth citizen; or
- (iii) A British Protected Person; or
- (iv) An EEA national; or
- (v) A Swiss National; or
- (vi) A person who is not an EEA or Swiss national, but is a family member of an EEA national who has moved to the UK from another EEA Member State for an approved purpose.

Further guidance on Nationality requirements is available via www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk.

Security

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For the majority of Staff Officer Accountant posts in the NICS the level of vetting is 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) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

Further information regarding the Baseline Personnel Security Standard, including other acceptable documents is available via www.gov.uk.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is;

Standard 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.

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

Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment.

Failure to complete the application form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

2. Counter Terrorist Check (CTC)

There may be a number of positions that require security clearance to CTC standard. This will include the checks carried out as per point 1 above, plus a check of Security Service records.

Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form

Please note the Equal Opportunities monitoring section of the application form is mandatory in order to submit an application.

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to the DoF website www.finance-ni.gov.uk.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer.
All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit

Feedback

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. 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**