

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**

**IRC234117**

**Assistant Economist**

**Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS)**

**Completed Application Forms  
must be submitted to  
HRConnect no later than 12  
noon (UK time) on**

***Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018***

**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 Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Economist Group has enjoyed a prolonged period of significant growth. It consists of circa 100 Economists providing valued professional economic services right across Northern Ireland government. Economists within the Group engage in a wide variety of important work areas including advising on investment decisions, undertaking and managing research and evaluation, undertaking qualitative and quantitative analysis to develop and shape policy, economic impact assessments, delivering utility regulation and price control and providing advice and commentary on the economy and economic issues.

Now more than ever, in the face of EU Exit, increasing demands for public expenditure and ongoing public sector reform, the analytical skills of Economists are central to supporting good decision making. It is certainly a time of great change and opportunity. I am keen to continue to build on the Group's strong reputation for objectivity and rigour and I welcome into the Group individuals who share these core values.

An attractive benefits package and good promotion prospects make for a rewarding career with Northern Ireland's largest employer. The job description and person specification spell 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 your interest in this recruitment competition. I hope you will find the information outlined in the following pages helpful.

**Tony Simpson**  
**Head of Profession**

## **BACKGROUND**

The NICS Economist Group is managed centrally within the Department of Finance's Strategic Policy Division. Economists are deployed across the NICS on long-term loan contracts. The Group consists of around circa 100 professional staff, from Staff Officer (Assistant Economist) level through to Director (Head of Profession). Economists are typically 'loaned-out', on a long-term basis, centrally by DoF to the nine NICS Departments, with occasional secondment opportunities with other non-departmental public bodies.

The group continues to expand and there are growing pressures within the NICS particularly around the need for economists in providing analytical support for EU Exit considerations, for example.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The work of Assistant Economists depends on where they are posted. Individuals will be expected to demonstrate and maintain an up to date understanding of current economic issues and topics. While the precise duties and responsibilities of individual posts will vary, all posts may involve varying degrees of the following broad activities:

- Economic support and analysis on a broad range of policy, programme and strategy development;
- Quality Assurance of economic appraisals, business cases and evaluations against the requirements of the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation (NIGEAE);
- Working with others to develop economic appraisals, business cases evaluations against the requirements of the NIGEAE;
- The provision of high quality, reliable, accurate and timely economic briefing to others, both in departments and externally;
- Drafting high quality, reliable, accurate and timely submissions to Ministers and/or Senior Officials;
- Responding to Assembly Questions and ad-hoc economic queries;
- Undertaking research, qualitative and quantitative analysis, economic assessments, best practice reviews and evaluation on a broad range of economic topics;
- Inputting into draft legislation; and
- Maintaining an up to date understanding of current economic issues and topics both in Northern Ireland and at a national and international level.

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

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

There are currently a number of permanent, full-time vacancies.

Further appointments may be made from this competition should positions become vacant, which require the same eligibility criteria and have similar duties and responsibilities.

### **Location**

The post holders will be based in the Greater Belfast Area, including Bangor.

### **Salary**

The salary will be within the range £30,149 - £31,760 (under review) within which pay progression will be as per current NICS pay policy

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale. 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](http://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: 37 hours excluding meal breaks Monday to Friday. Flexi-time is currently available.

### **Travel**

Applicants may, from time to time, be required to travel on official duty; the successful candidates must have access to a form of transport, which will enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. This may require post holders to travel outside of Northern Ireland on occasion, depending on the requirements of the post.

### **Vetting**

Most appointments to NICS will require security clearance to Basic Level. Some posts however may require a higher level of vetting. Any Department of

Justice (DoJ) posts will require security clearance to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) level.

### **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.

### **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may telephone Anne-Marie Dempster on 02890 819668 or email [anne-marie.dempster@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:anne-marie.dempster@finance-ni.gov.uk)

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](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications:

1. Be in possession of at least a second-class honours degree with Economics as a major component\*

## SHORTLISTING CRITERION

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

1. Be in possession of at least an upper second-class honours degree (2:1) with Economics as a major component\*

\*major component is defined as: at least 50% of the course modules must be in economics. **Candidates must list and briefly describe their modules to allow the panel to determine that their qualification contains 50% of economics. The onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made.**

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, for example, Master's Degree.

**Relevant or equivalent** qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). **If you believe your qualification is relevant or equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc so that a well-informed decision can be made.**

**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](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Assessment for this competition will comprise of 2 parts:

1. Test
2. Competency Based Interview

### Test

**It is anticipated that the test will be held in Belfast on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019. (please note this date is subject to change)** Please note, other test dates will not be available therefore candidates will need to make themselves available for this date.

Applicants who meet the above eligibility requirements will be invited to undertake a written test. This written test will be designed to assess the candidates' analytical skills and knowledge of basic economic theory. Candidates invited to test will receive additional information at that time. The test will carry a pass mark of 50% with only the top performing candidates progressing to the interview stage. The test score does not count towards the interview score.

## INTERVIEW CRITERIA

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

### **PRESENTATION**

As part of the selection process candidates will be required to make a presentation relevant to the responsibilities of the post lasting no longer than **7 minutes** followed by questions from a member of the panel. Candidates will be advised of presentation topic when they report for interview and will be given a maximum of **30 minutes to prepare** for their presentation. Candidates should therefore report for interview at least 45 minutes earlier than their scheduled interview appointment to allow time to prepare their presentation.

A flipchart and writing materials will be provided for candidates' use. No personal documentation may be brought in to the pre-interview room. Candidates will be allowed to bring any flipchart sheets and some short speaking notes into the interview room for assistance during the presentation (but note that use of the flipchart is not mandatory). No other materials or visual aids will be permitted.

The presentation will be used to score the '**Seeing the Big Picture**' and '**Leading and Communicating**' competencies.

**Marks available: 40**

**Minimum standard: 24**

## **1. 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**

## **2. 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: 20**

## **3. 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**

## **4. 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: 20**

**Total Marks Available: 120**

**Overall Pass Mark: 72**

## **COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS**

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

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for these posts will take place in Belfast on week commencing **11<sup>th</sup> February 2019. (please note these dates are subject to change)**

Please note that reschedule requests will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

## **NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

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

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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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.

For posts which require qualifications - You will be required to bring documentary evidence of your qualifications 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](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

## **Security**

### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For Assistant Economist posts in the NICS 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) 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](http://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;

### **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.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://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.

Any DoJ posts will require security clearance to:

- 2. Counter Terrorist Check (CTC): as at point 1 plus 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](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk).

**As women are currently known to be under represented in this occupation across Northern Ireland, applications from women would be particularly welcome.**

**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**