



## **Candidate Information Booklet**

**IRC283083**

**Veterinary Research Officer –  
Epidemiology**

**Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute  
Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022

### **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.

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## **FOREWORD**

### **ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE**

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 the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the wider agri-food industry.

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's current Corporate Plan outlines our strategy and ambitions for the period 2018 to 2022. It sets out the 3 strategic outcomes we aim to deliver for society, the economy and the environment, as well as industry and customers in an ever more efficient and effective manner. The plan, demonstrates the unique multidisciplinary strength of AFBI and how we will work with partners from science, government, industry and farmers to provide a positive impact. These achievements will be underpinned by attracting and developing excellent staff and building fit for purpose physical infrastructure.

AFBI's 'Science Impacts 2020' publication outlines key outcomes from AFBI science. Notably over the past 5 years AFBI have delivered approximately four million animal, plant and food safety tests to support sales from the NI agri-food industry to the value of £3.2 billion. A key drive within AFBI is to produce high quality peer review publications while also ensuring the research conducted has impact through an active dissemination programme. Over the past 5 years, AFBI have delivered over 90 evidence and innovation projects for DAERA, approximately 400 peer review scientific publications and have secured £44m of external research grants and contracts working with partners from across 35 countries. We are also actively developing strategic alliances with other research organisation and dissemination partners to facilitate a pipeline of research from fundamental to applied and onward application to ensure the impact of AFBI Science.

In order to fulfil these outcomes for our funders and stakeholders across society, the economy and the environment, AFBI enjoys access to highly instrumented laboratory, field and ship based scientific platforms. Furthermore, we are working closely with our sponsor department to take forward an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure

including a new animal health sciences building at AFBI Stormont, enhanced research farm facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a replacement sea-going research vessel.

## 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.



1. Newforge Lane (Headquarters)
2. VSD Stormont
3. Hillsborough
4. Crossnacreevy
5. Loughgall
6. Omagh
7. Bushmills

AFBI has a current staff complement of approximately 700 people, with an annual turnover of approximately £60 million. We are currently organised across 4 divisions – Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD), Veterinary Science Division (VSD), and Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD).

## **BRANCH BACKGROUND**

### **VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)**

VSD currently employs approximately 260 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its five Branches (Bacteriology, Chemical Surveillance, Immunodiagnosics, Disease Surveillance and Investigation, and Virology). The Division is predominantly based at Stoney Road, Belfast with a smaller disease surveillance centre based at Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

The Division is highly multidisciplinary undertaking an integrated programme of statutory testing, disease surveillance, emergency response and R&D work on the diseases of major animal and human health significance along with major programmes of work on the chemical and microbiological safety of food. The work of the Division is critical in supporting government policy and trade guarantees particularly in the context of EU Exit, as well as disease eradication and control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis, food-borne zoonotic infections and transboundary diseases. One of the key roles of the Division is in delivering a laboratory response to local, national and international emergencies involving animal diseases, and food and feed contamination incidents. The Division has collaborative links across the other Divisions in AFBI but particularly the other AFBI science Divisions, SAFSD and EMSD.

VSD staff have access to a wide range of state of the art equipment and there are ongoing plans to further develop the building infrastructure at the Stormont site.

Veterinary Sciences Division is composed of the following areas :

#### **Immunodiagnosics Branch (IDB)**

The Immunodiagnosics Branch undertakes a wide programme of testing for animal diseases, covering disease eradication, disease prevention and evidence of disease freedom for support of Northern Ireland and UK trade guarantees, and in full compliance with EU Regulations surrounding Food and Feed Controls. The branch also maintains a portfolio of commercial testing for Northern Ireland, UK and ROI agrifood industry. The major programmes of statutory testing include support of DAERA surveillance programmes for brucellosis as well as exotic diseases such as enzootic bovine leucosis, bluetongue virus, avian influenza, equine viruses, avian viruses and mycoplasmas. In addition, testing is undertaken for DAERA and private customers for the export/import of animals. The Branch also encompasses a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) testing unit operating inside a high containment laboratory suite.

The statutory serology and other testing undertaken by the Branch supports the NI agri-food industry and farmers, enabling them to successfully trade, not only nationally but also internationally. This work is particularly important in the context of EU Exit and the Northern Ireland Protocol. In addition, the units play a key role in detecting and preventing disease incursions, as well as

responding to new and emerging disease threats. The work of the Branch has previously played a pivotal role in supporting improvements in disease status including the eradication of Aujeszky's Disease in pigs and brucellosis in cattle, as well as reducing BSE incidence sufficiently to enable DAERA to seek negligible risk status for Northern Ireland.

Another aspect of the Branch will be to provide experimental animal services, primarily supporting VSD but also elements of work undertaken in the other AFBI Science Divisions. The unit consists of a scientific manager and industrial grade staff. Work undertaken by the unit encompasses animal disease models, vaccine studies, challenge studies and veterinary drug studies.

A key remit of the Branch is to provide DAERA and industry with an emergency response in the event of outbreaks of major epizootic diseases or newly emerging diseases. The Branch has capabilities in the delivery of high throughput serology testing, test method development and high containment laboratory expertise. Testing conducted by the Branch is accredited to ISO17025:2017 and uniquely the Branch also holds Flexible Scope Accreditation for a range of serological techniques.

At present the Branch is located in containment level (CL) 2 and 3 accommodation on the Stoney Road site but that the activities in CL2 will relocate to the new Animal Health Sciences Building which is planned for the Stoney Road site and due to be completed in 2024.

### **Bacteriology Branch**

Bacteriology Branch is located in a modern building which houses suites of laboratories at bio-containment levels 2 and 3. The Branch work programme includes statutory, analytical and research work on the major bacterial pathogens of animal and public health significance. Much of this work underpins important DAERA animal disease control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis and salmonellosis. Other work areas include food-borne zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance and paratuberculosis. The skill base within the Branch comprises traditional and specialist bacteriology methods, molecular diagnostics, test development, molecular epidemiology, experimental infection models, immunology, genetics, experimental design, wildlife ecology, veterinary epidemiology and biometrics. Multi-disciplinary approaches to bovine tuberculosis and the detection and control of *Campylobacter* are currently major research focuses of the Branch. Bacteriology Branch incorporates an Official Control Laboratory for Salmonella. Laboratory tests in support of statutory disease control are accredited and audited to ISO17025 and projects are managed and audited to ISO9001 certification standard. The Branch has a major international reputation for research and innovation, and works with a range of external industry and academic collaborators. Research funding sources include DAERA, the research councils, and the EU.

## **Chemical Surveillance Branch**

The main remit of the Chemical Surveillance Branch is to provide DAERA, FSA and industry with testing, specialist advice and R&D in the areas of veterinary drug residues, chemical contaminants and marine biotoxins. The work of the branch is funded both by government and commercial sources. The Branch delivers the National Surveillance Plan for Veterinary Medicines as well as programmes on abattoir surveillance, targeted surveillance, feed-stuffs and marine biotoxin monitoring programmes.

The Branch has UK National Reference Laboratory status for illegal veterinary drug residues and marine biotoxins. It has national and international recognition in the fields of veterinary drug residue analysis and mass spectrometry. The majority of the analysis delivered by the branch is accredited to ISO17025:2017.

The Branch undertakes both screening and confirmatory analysis of chemical residues from a range of tissue matrices including meat products from cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, shellfish and fish, milk and eggs, as well as animal feeding-stuffs. This statutory analytical work is supported by basic and strategic research that has resulted in the development of novel analytical methods for a wide range of compounds. A key element of the branch work is to deliver an emergency response capability for DAERA, FSA and industry to deal with food or feed contamination incidents or misuse of veterinary drugs, pesticides or chemical contaminants.

## **Disease Surveillance and Investigation Branch (DSIB)**

The main remit of the branch is the provision of a passive animal disease surveillance service for Northern Ireland on behalf of DAERA, along with the provision of associated specialist advice. The branch is, however, increasingly involved in commercial animal disease testing and also undertakes applied research typically in association with other AFBI branches.

The Branch includes veterinary pathologists and diagnosticians operating from two locations : AFBI Stormont and AFBI Omagh.

Expertise in the Branch is maintained across a wide range of scientific disciplines including pathology, histopathology, bacteriology, virology, parasitology and biochemistry, with additional specialist backup from other VSD branches.

## **Virology Branch**

The work of the Virology Branch is aimed at improving the diagnosis and control of viral diseases of farmed animals (pigs, poultry, cattle, sheep and aquaculture) in support of DAERA policy objectives on animal health and welfare of N. Ireland livestock. Through its research programme, the Branch aims to develop or improve diagnostics for a range of virus infections, particularly exotic viruses which pose a potential threat to the local industry; to provide or improve vaccines for the control of viral diseases; and to investigate new disease syndromes of potential viral aetiology, with the aim of providing new diagnostics and control measures. The Branch has



responsibility for the molecular confirmation of major infectious / epizootic diseases in animals and provides a range of support services to other branches such as tissue culture. Virology staff provides expert scientific advice to DAERA on animal health issues including the statutory testing programmes for animal diseases, emerging animal health risks and emergency responses to epizootic disease incidents. The skill base within the Branch comprises traditional and specialist virology methods, molecular diagnostics, test development, experimental infection models, immunology, experimental design and access to veterinary epidemiology and biometrics. The Branch has a major international reputation for research and innovation, and works with a range of commercial, government and university research organisations. Research funding sources include DAERA, commercial companies, research councils, and the EU.

AFBI's other science and Finance and Corporate Affairs divisions are as follows:-

### **SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)**

SAFSD is a highly multidisciplinary division with a key focus on livestock, plants and in general agriculture production and the quality of food it produces. The Division has a key focus, on the impact of food production on the environment and the economy. This multi-disciplinary team spans all aspects of the food supply chain taking research 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, land management and environmental management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation as well as monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally. A key drive within SAFSD is to produce high quality peer review publications while also ensuring the research conducted has impact through an active dissemination programme.

### **ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION (EMSD)**

The Environment and Marine Sciences Division is a new science division, which has been created following an organisational structure review. It is comprised of two Branches, which were formerly part of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division, namely Agri-Environment and Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems.

The areas of work which will fall within EMSD include environmental management and regulation, assessing the impact of agricultural land use practices on soil, water and air, monitoring and technology transfer in marine and freshwater fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone research, oceanography and marine ecosystems health.

### **FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION**

The Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD) 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 currently has five senior post holders reporting to the Director of Finance & Corporate Affairs namely Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Affairs, Head of Corporate Communications, Head of Human Resources and Head of Research Support. This senior team has the responsibility for leading and providing the support and science enabling services across the Institute.

## **EPIDEMIOLOGY WORK AREA**

The Epidemiology work area is based within the Bacteriology Branch. This vacancy offers the opportunity to join a well-established research group and to develop and lead a range of veterinary epidemiology projects within the Bacteriology Branch and the wider Veterinary Sciences Division. It is anticipated that at least initially much of the work will focus on current and future projects on bovine tuberculosis (TB), but opportunities exist for work in other areas including, for example, the food-borne zoonoses, and endemic and emerging animal diseases.

### **Epidemiology research**

Previous epidemiology research at AFBI has included case-control and other risk factor studies, detailed analysis of the performance characteristics of diagnostic tests from large-scale field datasets, and projects on molecular and genetic epidemiology. Current and anticipated research includes projects on the impact of non-genetic cofactors on bovine TB susceptibility, alternative diagnostic tests, interactions/associations between cattle and wildlife, and in the area of molecular and genetic epidemiology.

The Bacteriology Branch has an international reputation for research work on bovine tuberculosis with key staff active in collaborative, international research networks. The research work includes both applied (translational) and basic research, reflecting the mix of DAERA- and externally-funded research work, respectively. This work within the Branch and also the spectrum of veterinary scientific work within the wider VSD provides significant opportunities to undertake innovative epidemiological research work in conjunction with research scientists from a number of disciplines and in collaboration with external experts.

### **Facilities**

The veterinary epidemiology work in AFBI is supported by in-house computing, database and statistical expertise.

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

There is currently one vacancy for a Veterinary Research Officer (VRO) - Epidemiology. The VRO-Epidemiology will be based in the Bacteriology Branch and report to a Senior Veterinary Research Officer. The successful applicant will play a key role in helping the Branch and the Division deliver their animal health and food safety commitments by providing sound veterinary epidemiological input and advice and leading significant areas of epidemiology research. It is anticipated that, at least initially, a significant part of the work will be related to current and future projects on bovine TB and this vacancy offers the opportunity to join a well-established research group.

## **MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The main duties and responsibilities of the post will include:

### **1. Epidemiological work programme**

The post-holder will be responsible for ensuring the successful delivery of a programme of epidemiological research and other work aimed at improving the diagnosis and control of animal diseases. This will include the design and implementation of field and other epidemiological studies, advanced statistical and other quantitative data analyses, scientific and other report writing. The work may also include providing input to the design and implementation of surveillance systems, the preparation of surveillance and other reports, and on occasions the field investigation of disease outbreaks.

The post-holder will be responsible for planning, managing and delivering innovative and productive research projects, on time and to budget. They will be required to interact effectively at a senior level with potential DARD and other external research funders and will play an important role in maintaining and expanding the research base of the Branch through securing such research funds.

The post-holder will be expected to lead scientific and other support staff and to develop and maintain productive collaborative links with research and other groups both within AFBI and locally, nationally and internationally. They will be expected to have a high level of technical expertise in epidemiology and associated statistical analyses, be expert with scientific developments in their specialist area and to demonstrate continued professional development.

### **2. Management**

The post-holder will be required to deliver efficient management of projects, staff, resources and finances. They will be required to assist senior management in the management of staff and other resources as required. This will include contributing to the preparation of Section, Branch and Division business planning, staff reporting, management of budgets and ensuring compliance with Health and Safety and other relevant legislation. The post-holder will be required to maintain ISO9001 quality certification for research projects and deliver extension to scope as required.

### **3. Scientific outputs**

The post-holder will be responsible for publication of high quality peer-reviewed scientific papers in high impact journals and for presentation of research results at local, national and international scientific meetings and conferences. They may undertake technology transfer and representational duties as required, including participation in national, international or local veterinary, agricultural and other scientific meetings and preparation of scientific and other popular publications.

### **4. Scientific Advice**

The post-holder will be expected to provide expert epidemiology advice on animal disease or food safety matters to AFBI senior management, industry, and relevant stakeholders as required.

### **5. Student supervision**

The post holder may be required to supervise/co-supervise postgraduate and undergraduate students involved in research programmes.

### **6. To fulfil other duties**

The post holder may be required to fulfil other duties and responsibilities as determined by management including as part of the Institute's response to major epizootic disease, food-chain or other emergency situations. They may also be required to teach university or other students, deliver talks to groups of industry representatives and carry duties under the Animals Scientific Procedures Act. 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 not put at risk and appropriate protective clothing and training will be given to staff dealing with such samples.

The job description is not intended to be rigid and inflexible. Rather, it should be regarded as working guidelines within which the post-holder will work.

The successful applicant will be required to travel locally, nationally or internationally in order to perform the duties of the posts. They will also be required to occasionally work outside of normal office hours including weekends.

**The above is not meant to be an exhaustive or prescriptive list but to provide a good indication of the main duties of the post. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time according to business needs.**

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

There is currently one full-time permanent position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further vacancies which may arise.

The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

### **Salary**

Salary will be within the range £52,026- £55,685 which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale except for existing AFBI staff for whom starting salary may be determined by either promotion or re-grading terms if these are more favourable.

In exceptional circumstances only, consideration may be given to starting at a higher point on the salary scale for applicants with additional relevant experience and/or qualifications. The relevance and extent of the additional experience will be determined by AFBI at the time of offer of appointment.

### **Annual Leave**

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 after five year's satisfactory service.

### **Working Hours**

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours. On occasions the duties may include some evening and weekend working. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

### **Location**

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Stormont, Belfast however, they may, on occasion, also be expected to work at other AFBI sites in Northern Ireland as required.

### **Travel**

The post will entail travel locally, nationally and internationally for this reason the successful applicant will require access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

### **Probation**

The post holder will serve 12 months probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a

formal review will be conducted to determine if the posting will be made permanent.

### **Further Information**

Further information about the post may be obtained from AFBI by email at: [recruitment@afbini.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@afbini.gov.uk) or by telephone on 028 9025 5588.

If you have any questions about the competition process, 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. Have a primary or postgraduate degree in veterinary medicine, animal science, biological science or a closely related / relevant scientific discipline;

**AND**

- 2a. Have a taught MSc in Epidemiology;

**OR**

- 2b. A PhD, involving substantial training in epidemiological study design, data analyses, interpretation, report writing and advanced statistical analyses;

**OR**

- 2c. A PhD in a closely related area plus a minimum of 2 years' experience in undertaking epidemiology studies including, epidemiological study design, data analyses, interpretation, report writing and advanced statistical analyses;

**AND**

3. Demonstrable in-depth knowledge of and experience of undertaking a broad range of specified epidemiological approaches across the project lifecycle including study design, data collation, data analysis (including the application of statistical software, eg. R, SAS or STATA) and study reporting;

Applicants must provide details of their roles and responsibilities and show how their experience equates to the criterion specified above, i.e. you must provide specific examples and dates (month and year) including date from and date to so as to clearly demonstrate that you meet the required experience.

In providing evidence for each criteria it will be essential that candidates draw upon specific examples of work they have undertaken to illustrate the extent to which they possess the experience and skills required. It will not be sufficient simply to list the duties and responsibilities of posts held.

## 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 in the order listed:

1. The selection panel will assess criterion 3 on a scored basis;
2. Authorship of peer reviewed publications in the area of epidemiology or a closely-related natural science discipline and other scientific outputs;

Only those applicants assessed as meeting all essential criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

### **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 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.**
- **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.**
- **Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)**

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 4 for the purposes of personal and professional development.

This position is analogous to Deputy Principal in the NICS.

### **What is the NICS competency framework?**

The 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 through [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 the assessment / interview criteria as outlined below.**

## INTERVIEW CRITERIA

The selection process will include a presentation and a competence-based interview.

### PRESENTATION

Before the competence-based interview, candidates will be required to deliver a presentation, lasting no more than 7 minutes, the subject of which will be provided to candidates in the invitation to interview letter.

Candidates should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview and no preparation time will be provided on the day of interview. Your presentation should be delivered via PowerPoint and you will be asked to submit it to HRConnect by a specific date prior to your interview. Full details will be provided should you be invited to interview.

Following the presentation, the panel may elect to ask questions on the presentation.

The presentation will be used to assess against the **Seeing the Big Picture** and **Leading & Communicating** competencies.

**Marks available: 20**

#### 1. Professional Knowledge & Skills

Demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the application of current scientific approaches to epidemiology; Experience of developing, leading and managing a epidemiological research programme and associated analysis pipelines, including the provision of expert advice to stakeholders, in a science-based organisation; Creating and maintaining positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the organisation to help achieve business objectives and goals. Can develop professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet programme/project objectives.

**Marks available: 45      Minimum standard: 25**

#### 2. Building Capability for All

Effectiveness in this area is having a strong focus on continuous learning for oneself, others and the organisation. For all staff, it is about being open to learning and keeping their knowledge and skill set current and evolving.

**Marks available: 10**

### **3. 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      Minimum standard: 12**

### **4. 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: 15      Minimum standard: 9**

### **5. 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: 15      Minimum standard: 9**

**Total Marks Available: 125  
Overall Pass Mark: 75 (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.

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI Newforge, Belfast during week commencing Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022.

## **INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

**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 in relation to each of the competences. 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.

## SELECTION PROCESS

### 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

- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed 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.
- State clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. State "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 are interested in, not that of your team or division.

### Application Form Submission

You can apply online at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://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 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.

- Please note - 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.
- Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this will result in disqualification.

### **Changes in personal circumstances**

Please ensure HRConnect are 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 one year.

### **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 29.

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.

### **Employment Requirements**

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.

Entry to the United Kingdom is controlled under the Immigration Act 1971. Everyone who does not have the right of abode is subject to immigration control. You should check whether there are any restrictions on your stay or your freedom to take or change employment before you apply for a post. If you are invited to interview we will ask you to provide documentation confirming that you are entitled to work in the UK, under the terms of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

Advice on entitlement to work may be obtained from the Home Office website, [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).

### **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](http://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](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk) under Useful Information.

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

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: <http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>. 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.

### **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 Civil Service Pensions (Northern Ireland) website at:

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/civil-service-pensions-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](mailto: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 by;

**Email:** [Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net](mailto: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 an 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 the, 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 carryout 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.