



Candidate Information Booklet

IRC287608

Scientific Officer – Animal Services Unit

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 23rd December 2022.

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

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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BACKGROUND

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 customers 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).

VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)

VSD currently employs approximately 260 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its five Branches (Bacteriology, Chemical Surveillance, Immunodiagnostics, 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, 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 supports government policy, trade guarantees, 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 :

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.

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 the National Reference Laboratories (NRL-UK-NI) for Brucellosis and the NRL-UK-NI 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.

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.

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. 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 and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies 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 provides DAERA and industry with an emergency response in the event of outbreaks of major epizootic diseases. Another aspect of the Branch is the provision of experimental animal services, primarily supporting VSD but also elements of work undertaken in the other AFBI Science Divisions.

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 etiology, 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 tissue culture support services to other branches. 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.

VIROLOGY WORK AREA

AFBI has an international reputation for its research work on viral diseases in food producing animals and fish, the development of molecular and serological tests, the identification of new viruses and work on novel vaccines. The work in the Branch has involved the identification of key pig and fish viruses resulting in the development of vaccines supporting the control of important economic production diseases in these species. The work includes applied and basic research, reflecting the mix of DAERA and externally-funded work with an emphasis on supporting the economic performance of farming through the scientific understanding and control of animal diseases.

The Virology Branch has secured substantial external funding for research in avian, bovine, porcine and aquaculture in a competitive, international field. The majority of these external projects and current project negotiations are undertaken in collaboration with world-leading institutes across the UK, Ireland, the EU and USA elsewhere, and allows NI to benefit from the latest international research findings. Recent external funders include the EU, BBSRC, USDA, Innovate UK, Invest Northern Ireland, DAFM/Stimulus and international commercial companies.

Understanding the host immune response, viral infection cycles, viral evolution and strain variation, routes of transmission, co-factors (stress, other infectious agents, nutrition and husbandry) and agricultural production systems are crucial to understanding disease control strategies through improved diagnostics and vaccines. Virology R&D at AFBI has included: understanding the early immune response; disease transmission routes; developing new diagnostics reagents; trialling novel vaccine candidates and novel vaccine carrier systems; and characterising the effects of co-infection on disease development and diagnosis. Work has included genetic sequencing studies to determine viral strain variation for the development of accurate molecular and serological diagnostic tests.

Some examples of previous work include the identification of new viruses such as porcine circoviruses, salmon pancreas disease, chicken astroviruses and porcine bocaviruses. Next generation sequencing (NGS) technology is increasingly being applied for virus identification. Central to this work has been the development of disease models that closely mimic natural infection, allowing the development of the most suitable disease control tools. This work has allowed the development of diagnostic services and has attracted a range of international pharmaceutical and commercial primary producers for collaborative research and innovation that has had a global impact on animal health.

The Branch also includes a Viral Molecular Diagnostic work area, which undertakes the molecular identification and sequencing for a number of epizootic and emerging viral pathogens such as influenza, Newcastle Disease and porcine epidemic diarrhoea viruses. The work provides an essential emergency response capability for DAERA and NI agri-food industry, allowing

the identification of outbreaks of notifiable diseases, new or emerging diseases, and those appropriate for further research.

JOB DESCRIPTION

There is currently one full time permanent position for a Scientific Officer within the Animal Services Unit. The successful candidate will be appointed to the Scientific Officer (EOI) grade.

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

Salary

The pay scale for the post will be within the range £28,706 - £29,307, within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided performance appraisals demonstrate that the employee fully meets the requirements of the post.

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.

Working Hours

The successful candidate will be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours.

However, candidates should be aware that experiments undertaken within the ASU continue 365 days/year, and this means that working during weekends, holiday periods, early mornings and into the evenings is required to meet business needs. The successful candidate will be required to help cover these work requirements on a rota basis. Overtime is paid for time worked outside of the standard 37 hour week.

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 confirm if the appointee has met the performance requirements of the post.

Training

The successful candidate will be required to undergo training as a 'Named Animal Care & Welfare Officers' (NAWCO) as required by the Animal Scientific Procedures Act (ASPA). This will include an online course, followed by exam as well as onsite training in some other areas in the UK.

Location

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Stormont, Stoney Road, Belfast BT4, 3SD. They will also be expected to, on occasion, work at other AFBI sites, other research sites, and on commercial farms, as required.

Travel

The post may entail travel throughout the UK, Republic of Ireland.

Further Information

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may email Workforce Planning on Workforceplanning@afbini.gov.uk

If you have any questions about the competition process, you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

ABOUT THE ROLE

The post holder will report to the ASU Manager.

The post will be based at AFBI's Animal Services Unit at VSD, Stormont. The unit consists of conventional animal buildings, poultry houses, fish tanks and BCL2 and BCL3 containment facilities. Current research programmes include a range of trials with regard to vaccines, the microbiome and animal nutrition.

Over recent years Virology programmes and those in the other VSD Divisions have expanded to encompass a wide range and complexity of projects. These projects often span multiple work areas, branches and divisions within AFBI, and incorporate external specialist partners. To meet the demands of these expanding research programmes, and studies which encompass a range of species, including cattle, pigs, sheep and poultry. The ASU is managed by the unit Manager, while all research programmes are managed by other senior staff within the Branches in VSD.

The ASU currently has a manager, 5 industrial staff and an AO. Together, this team has responsibility for the coordination and delivery of all research activity conducted by the ASU, both at VSD, and on occasion at other AFBI sites. There is currently one new position of Scientific Officer within the ASU. The key responsibilities of this post are described below.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Assist/deputise managing the farm, poultry house, isolation houses & surgical facility in respect of sourcing and purchasing animals, maintenance and servicing of equipment & machinery. Assisting with animal work wherever necessary.
2. Line manager for all industrial staff in ASU and coordinate their overtime working hours.
3. NACWO – Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer responsible for overseeing the day-to-day husbandry, care and welfare of protected animals held at the establishment. Have up to date knowledge and experience of relevant animal technology and thorough knowledge of the husbandry and welfare needs of the species kept in the establishment. Ensuring that ASU is in line with ASPA (Animal Scientific Procedures Act) and other legislation. Continually updating knowledge base to ensure that highest standards of animal welfare are achieved.
4. Take monthly stock takes of all animals at VSD and keep accurate records. Maintaining herd and flock registers and ensuring compliance with DAERA registration and movement requirements.
5. Keep records and maintains files of all Project licences and Personal licences in relation to ASPA, maintaining all legal documentation and updating critical information on Secure Animal Folder. Advise project licence holders on animal welfare, animal accommodation availabilities etc. Aid completion of personal licences, project licences and annual animal returns.
6. Liaison with laboratories and scientific staff and on occasions carry out sampling and immunological/molecular assays on fluid and tissue samples.
7. Liaise with the DHSSPS (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety) to ensure documentation is up-to-date, and on the behalf of AFBI staff. Liaison with DHSSPS Inspector, facilitating inspection of premises and any ASPA related matters.
8. Dealing with procurement transactions including purchasing animals, animal feed and other necessary consumables.
9. Assist in providing study costings for animals, accommodation, staff time etc. and liaising with staff from other AFBI sites to organise procurement of farm animals for projects. Assist in creating business cases and invitations to tender for large expenditures.
10. Develop written protocols relating to the management of the ASU. This includes animal health screening, keeping staff training records, keeping records for NTCO (Named Training & Competency Officer).

Health & Safety matters including updating and preparing COSHH and Risk Assessments. Writing SOPs for all animal work in the ASU.

11. Carry out work in conjunction with the NILTG (Northern Ireland Licensee Training Group) which provides training for licensee applicants. Facilitates the booking and setting up of rooms, provision of hospitality, security arrangements, welcoming of applicants, provision of equipment and technical support.
12. Participate on a rota basis to cover any overtime which may fall across public, privileged holidays, weekends and unsociable hours.

To fulfil other duties

The post holder will be required to fulfil any other duties and responsibilities as determined by management that fall within the remit of the post. 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.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants **must** by the closing date for applications have:

1. GCE 'A' level passes (A to E) or equivalent, in 2 separate subjects, one of which must be in a science discipline;
2. At least 2 years' experience of directly contributing to research studies with animals, with strong evidence of designing and implementing scientific protocols;
3. At least 2 years' lab based experience in the last 5 years of fluid and tissue sample preparation and associated immunological laboratory assays on these preparations;
4. Proven experience of collecting and collating data in an electronic format and undertaking quality control of data.

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.

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 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.

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 Panel will carry out an objective evaluation of the breadth and depth of information provided by candidates in response to eligibility criterion 2 - 3. This will be completed on a scored basis. Only the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

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**

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 2 for the purposes of personal and professional development.

Scientific Officer is analogous to EOI Grade 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

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

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview:

1. Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance; demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current developments in the science of immunopathogenesis.
- Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation, manipulation, analysis and interpretation of scientific data.
- Applies knowledge and skills in writing scientific and technical reports and presenting to stakeholders.

Marks available: 60 Minimum standard: 36

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: 15

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. 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. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times.

Marks Available: 15

5. Building Capacity 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. At senior levels, it is about ensuring a diverse blend of capability and skills is identified and developed to meet current and future business needs. It is also about creating a learning and knowledge culture across all levels in the organisation to inform future plans and transformational change.

Marks Available: 15

Total marks available: 125

Overall pass mark: 75

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 VSD, Belfast during week commencing Monday 23rd January 2022.

Consideration may be given to those candidate who wish to avail of online facilities.

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.

- 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 28.

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.

Nationality Requirements

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

Vetting Procedures

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

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

- a) Your passport OR

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

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

Basic Disclosure Certificate

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

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

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

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

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

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.