Candidate Information Booklet

Data Engineer – ICT Level 5

IRC332594

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Friday 4th December 2026.

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Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue competition communications electronically. Please ensure you check your email account regularly, to make sure that you don't miss any important communications.

Please update us with any changes to your email address and home address to ensure you are fully informed at all times.

Equal opportunities

Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute (AFBI) is an equal opportunities employer and has been awarded the Bronze Charter Mark in recognition for our commitment towards Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace. All appointments will be made strictly on the basis of merit. If you have any queries with regard to this recruitment process or require any documentation in an alternative format, please contact HRConnect via email Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net or call 0800 1 300 330.

Feedback - AFBI is committed to providing feedback to assist the development of current and future applications.

Recruitment overview

Thank you for your interest in our organisation. At AFBI you will find a fantastic team spirit and a commitment to the development of both you and your skills so that you can choose to have a long-term career with us.

This Candidate Information Booklet offers specific information to applicants. **Please note (AFBI specific) - read across will not be undertaken by the panel. The candidate must demonstrate how they meet each criterion in the relevant response to each criterion.**

Please read this document carefully in advance of submitting your application and retain it for reference throughout the recruitment process.

At AFBI, we take great pride in the work we undertake. All AFBI employees are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

We wish you every success in your application!

Important dates - It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast during week commencing **4th January 2027**.

Compulsory documentation - It is compulsory that all candidates invited to attend an assessment and/or interview, bring sufficient identification. Your attendance may not be permitted in instances where identification cannot be shown.

You want to change the world. So do we.

Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute (AFBI) is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations. We are sponsored by our key stakeholder, the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

Our customers include a range of local, national and international commercial companies, Northern Ireland and UK Departments, Agencies and associated bodies in the European Union.

As a leading institute of research, we tackle the complex challenges of our industry through purpose-driven science. We are a community with a common goal: to leave the world better than we found it. Are we ambitious? Definitely. Are our ambitions achievable? Absolutely. AFBI has been defying scientific boundaries to create measurable, scalable and enduring solutions to agri-food and marine science complexities in Northern Ireland - and beyond - since 2006.

We are delighted that you are considering joining us.

Of all the many factors that come together to make AFBI what it is, nothing is more important than our employees. Every area of our service delivery is underpinned by a number of dedicated teams working in synchrony to ensure the provision of scientific excellence. Across our four divisions, every team member, from those on the scientific front to those working behind the scenes in one of our offices, plays an essential role in delivering our long tradition of excellence, whilst helping to propel future discoveries.
Together we are better.

Our People Vision is to:

Attract, empower and grow purpose-driven staff with the passion and capability to pursue excellence, embrace technology and cultivate innovation and change.

This is how we do great science.

Great people. Great science.

About Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD)

Finance and Corporate Affairs Division is based primarily at AFBI headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast but with staff deployed at some of the larger sites.
It supports the AFBI Chief Executive and the 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.

FCAD also includes the Research Office which identifies research, funding and commercial opportunities.

FCAD Branches

- Corporate Communications
- Corporate Projects
- Estates Management & Development
- Finance
- Governance and Performance
- Health, Safety & Compliance
- **IT Solutions**
- People & Culture
- Research Office

About IT Solutions

IT Solutions provides Digital, Data and Technology (DDAT) services and solutions in AFBI and to public and private sector customers. This work underpins AFBI's scientific remit and supports key relationships with external partners.

We are an energetic team of individuals working together to support the IT and Digital needs of AFBI and the wider agri-food and environmental sectors. We work across multiple work areas including IT Infrastructure & Technical Support, and Application & Database Development, working in a stimulating and rewarding environment, whilst being encouraged to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The team regularly engage with the full range of AFBI scientists in addition to external clients and are therefore involved in a wide variety of interesting and cutting-edge projects.

DDAT Services include:

- Management of AFBI's IT Infrastructure and services.
- Provision of expert IT advice, guidance, and support.
- Development, deployment and management of bespoke Digital solutions.
- Management of the corporate IT budget.
- Management of IT services accreditation cycle and cyber security.
- Development and implementation of an IT strategy to address current and projected business needs.

Job Background

In today's digitally interconnected collaborative world, AFBI is committed to developing opportunities through data technologies and data integration, building data architecture to match the potential of increasing data and science opportunities, and providing a platform to exploit datasets and enable new discoveries.

This role will be instrumental to the implementation of AFBI's Data Strategy as a primary contributor to the achievement of the vision for scientific excellence. In addition, the role encompasses database administration responsibilities, supporting the effective management and delivery of data services.

The post holder will initially report to the Technical Architect. Following the appointment of a Senior Data Engineer, the reporting line will change, and the post holder will report directly to the Senior Data Engineer.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Lead the administration, maintenance and optimisation of on-premises SQL Server databases, including backup and recovery, security management, performance tuning, monitoring, troubleshooting and disaster recovery.
2. Design, develop, implement and support ETL/ELT pipelines, data integrations and automated data flows that ingest, transform and deliver data from multiple sources to cloud-based and analytical platforms.
3. Support the development, enhancement and operation of AFBI's data platform, ensuring solutions are scalable, secure, resilient and aligned with business requirements.
4. Monitor, maintain and continuously improve the performance, reliability and operational efficiency of databases, data pipelines and associated services.
5. Collaborate with business users, data analysts, software developers, scientists and other stakeholders to understand requirements and ensure data is accessible, reliable and fit for reporting, analytics and research.
6. Develop and maintain technical documentation, operational procedures, standards and best practice guidance relating to database administration, data engineering and data platform operations, including the cataloguing of automated data flows, data pipelines, and system integrations.
7. Act as a technical point of contact for database and data engineering activities, providing specialist advice and contributing to the continual improvement of data management, governance and engineering practices.

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

Job Information and Employee Benefits

A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any similar vacancies which may arise.

Salary

Currently the salary for the post will be within the range £37,694 - £38,990 (under review) within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory. **In addition, the post will attract an annual ICT allowance of £3,640**.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

Working Hours

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week (Monday – Friday), totalling 37 hours. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

Location

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Newforge, 18a Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX, however, they may, on occasion, also be expected to work at other sites in Northern Ireland as required.

Hybrid working can also be considered.

Travel

The post will require access to a form of transport which will permit the successful candidate to meet the requirements of the post in full.

Pre-employment checks

Pre-employment checks consist of a qualification check and an AccessNI check. The security check required for this post is basic level. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. This is a two-part process during which all communications will be issued to you electronically.

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.

Probationary Period

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.

Professional Development

We believe in our employees and understand the importance of investing in ongoing development. Support for professional development will always be considered.

VISAs (if applicable)

If there is a requirement for a VISA/VISA renewal, AFBI would not be responsible for the financial costs, this would be the onus of the candidate. AFBI will however support the Certificate of Sponsorship.

Employee Benefits

AFBI offers employees an excellent benefits package. For further information please click here.

Further Information

Further Information about the post may be obtained from AFBI People and Culture via email at fcadpeopleandculture@afbini.gov.uk

For information on how the recruitment process will be managed and for further recruitment and selection resources, please click here.

For information on our equal opportunities, please click here.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications provide evidence in their application form which demonstrates that they satisfy the following essential criteria.

1. At least a level 4 qualification in Computing, Software Engineering, or another discipline relevant to Information Systems and Information Technology*
2. A minimum of two years' experience designing, developing and supporting data integration solutions, including the extraction, transformation and loading (ETL/ELT) of data from multiple sources using appropriate tools, technologies and scripting languages.
3. A minimum of two years' experience administering Microsoft SQL Server databases, including backup and recovery, security management, performance monitoring and troubleshooting.
4. A minimum of one years' experience in SQL programming, relational database design, data modelling and query optimisation.

*__Information Systems and Information Technology:__ Only those courses where a computing content of **50% or more** can be demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the panel, will be considered relevant. The onus is on you to provide sufficient detail to demonstrate this.

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.

Further information on determining the equivalence of relevant formal qualifications can be found at www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels

SHORTLISTING

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 order:

1. At least one years' experience designing, developing or administering solutions using Microsoft Fabric, including data ingestion, transformation, storage and analytics capabilities.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

This position is analogous to Staff Officer Level in the NICS.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Essential Criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate competency in Professional Knowledge & Skills pertaining to this post together with the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 3 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

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

You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 3 of the relevant competence areas.

To view the NICS Competency Framework, please click here.

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 Skills and Knowledge**

   Candidates will be assessed against the relevant experience definition in 'Job Background and Eligibility Criteria'.

   Marks Available: 40 Pass mark: 24

2. **Changing and Improving**

   Marks Available: 20 Pass mark: 12

3. **Making Effective Decisions**

   Marks Available: 20 Pass mark: 12

4. **Collaborating and Partnering**

   Marks Available: 10

5. **Delivering at Pace**

   Marks Available: 10

Total marks available: 100

Overall pass mark: 60/100 (60%)