

**Candidate
Information
Booklet**

Northern Ireland Civil Service

***Senior Civil Service
Grade 5***

IRC186481

**Only online applications will be
accepted.**

**On-line Application Forms must
be submitted by **no later than 12
noon (UK time) on****

Friday 15 November 2013

Northern Ireland Civil Service

**Delivering high quality services for
the people of Northern Ireland**

IMPORTANT

Only on-line applications will be accepted.

E-mail communication between HRConnect and you

During the competition HRConnect will issue as much correspondence as possible via e-mail. You are responsible for ensuring that the e-mail address you provide is correct and kept up-to-date. If your e-mail address changes throughout the lifetime of this competition please ensure you notify HRConnect as soon as possible.

You should check your email account (and junk mail folders) 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.

Contents	Page
Foreword	3
Background	4
Job Description and Core Competences	5
Appointments and Terms	6
Selection Process	8
Making your Application	11
Communication	14
Annexes	15

FOREWORD

FOREWORD BY DR MALCOLM MCKIBBIN, HEAD OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

Thank you for your interest in these important senior management posts at Grade 5 level in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

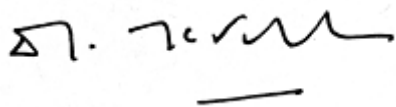
The Grade 5 role is a diverse one that carries significant responsibility and challenges. You will play a key strategic leadership role in a fast-changing, dynamic organisation with responsibility for leading important policies, programmes or public services.

As a Grade 5 it is likely you will work closely with your Minister(s) and their Special Advisor(s). You may expect to have responsibility for delivering complex and challenging programmes of work and managing competing priorities. You will be required to establish effective working relationships and partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, provide strategic advice, lead your divisional team and ensure the effective and efficient use of human, financial and technical resources within your areas of responsibility.

While working at Grade 5 level carries considerable responsibility, it also provides an unrivalled opportunity to make a real difference for the people of Northern Ireland.

This Candidate Information Booklet will provide you with information about the NICS, the roles and responsibilities of Grade 5 Senior Civil Servants and details of the selection process. If after reading this booklet you would like to speak to someone before making an application, I would encourage you to contact Marianne Fleming, Head of Resourcing Division, Corporate HR, Department of Finance and Personnel on 028 90547439 who will answer any questions you might have.

Thank you again for your interest.



M McKibbin (Dr)

BACKGROUND

The NICS

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) comprises 12 Departments which support the Northern Ireland Executive and Ministers by developing and implementing government policies and legislation and delivering key public services in areas such as health, social development, justice, education, regeneration, environment, culture, agriculture, economic development, employment and transport. In addition, the Public Prosecution Service is staffed by civil servants and is a non-Ministerial Department.

Further information on the devolved government arrangements in Northern Ireland, including the functions of the Departments, is available at

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/government-citizens-and-rights/government-1/government-in-northern-ireland.htm>

The key priorities for the Northern Ireland Executive are outlined in the Programme for Government 2011-15 which can be accessed at <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/work-of-the-executive/pfg.htm>.

All civil servants are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and are expected to carry out their role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. These core values support good government and ensure the achievement of the highest standards in all that the NICS does. This in turn helps to ensure the NICS has the respect of Ministers, the Assembly and the public.

At 1 July 2013 there were 27,474 full-time equivalent posts in the NICS. Of these, 245 were the most senior level posts known collectively as the Senior Civil Service. Approximately two thirds of staff in the NICS are administrators and managers in, what are referred to as, general service grades. The remaining staff are employed in a wide range of professional, specialist and technical occupations including legal, accounting, engineering, ICT, statistics, industrial and scientific.

The Senior Civil Service

Staff in grades below the Senior Civil Service are managed as a departmental resource. However, the Senior Civil Service is managed as a corporate NICS resource in recognition of their key role in supporting the Northern Ireland Executive and Ministers and providing leadership, vision and drive to act collaboratively to achieve NICS corporate aims as well as departmental objectives. While Senior Civil Servants are appointed initially to a specific post, they can expect to move to other posts at the same grade in any NICS Department during the course of their career thus providing the opportunity for a wide ranging and varied career.

The Senior Civil Service grading structure from entry level to top level is as follows:-

- Grade 5
- Grade 3
- Permanent Secretary
- Head of Civil Service

JOB DESCRIPTION AND CORE COMPETENCIES

Job Description

A Grade 5 normally undertakes a 'Head of Division' role with responsibility for a number of discrete or interrelated business or functional areas and the associated budgets, working closely with their Departmental Minister(s) and his/her Special Advisor(s), as required.

Typically Grade 5s will have responsibility for leading the development and effective delivery of public services, policies, plans and strategies and commissioning and overseeing programmes of work that contribute to the achievement of Divisional, Departmental and Programme for Government objectives. Their role generally involves leading and managing complex and challenging work areas and competing priorities, requiring the ability to communicate clarity of purpose to divisional staff and to ensure effective working relationships and partnerships with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders.

Grade 5s may expect to have responsibility for the effective and efficient use of human, financial and technical resources within their areas of responsibility ensuring there are sound financial controls and governance in place to deliver on budget. As members of the SCS Grade 5s play a key part in gaining staff commitment to corporate aims and values and to ensuring staff are empowered and developed to deliver business objectives.

Core Competencies

The key leadership and core skills required of senior leaders in the NICS are set out in the Professional Skills for Government (PSfG) framework which can be accessed at www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk

APPOINTMENTS AND TERMS

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for this competition **you must have at least two years senior management experience at the closing date of the competition.** Senior management experience is defined as reporting directly to the top management levels of the organisation. For example, reporting directly to a Chief Executive, Director, Head of Function or a management Board. In the case of existing civil servants, this experience must be at least Grade 7 level or equivalent. (See guidance on 'making an application' at page 11).

You must also be legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom (see Nationality requirements at Annex A). During the selection process you will be asked to produce evidence of your identification and that you meet the Nationality requirements. You will be advised in advance of the details of the documentation required. Failure to produce the required documentation will result in disqualification from the competition.

All those appointed to the NICS are subject to a criminal records check (see details at Annex A).

Appointments

These are permanent appointments to the Senior Civil Service (SCS), the NICS' top leadership and management resource. This competition will be used to fill current and anticipated Grade 5 vacancies over a two year period from completion of the competition. Successful candidates will be assigned, in merit order, to vacancies in any of the NICS Departments as and when they arise.

Successful candidates may also be appointed on a secondment basis. Secondment means a voluntary transfer from a permanent employer for a fixed period which does not sever the employment relationship of the person seconded with the permanent employer. Secondment would be on the candidate's current terms and conditions and salary. Any discretion will be based on the terms outlined in the Salary Scale paragraph on the following page. It is essential that candidates interested in the secondment option make their employers aware that under the NICS secondment arrangements, a successful candidate would remain an employee of their current employer.

The duration of any appointments made from this competition on a secondment basis will be for a maximum period of three years. At the end of the secondment period the successful candidate will have the option of taking up permanent appointment in the NICS on NICS pay and terms and conditions of service, subject to satisfactory performance.

Salary Scale

The salary scale for Grade 5 posts at 1 August 2013 is £63,994 to £78,275. The successful candidates can expect to be placed at the minimum point of the payscale. If the successful candidate is an existing civil servant, starting pay on transfer to a new substantive grade will apply.

In order to comply with the disclosure requirements in Annual Accounts, Departments are required to disclose details of the total remuneration, including any taxable benefits in kind and pension benefits for SCS posts, including Grade 5, in their annual accounts. Further information may be disclosed in line with any future disclosure requirements relating to the senior management of Departments. It is a condition attached to the appointment to any SCS post in Northern Ireland that appointees agree to these disclosure requirements.

Pension

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions (Northern Ireland) website at: <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni/index/new-members.htm>

or

if you are unable to access the website please contact Civil Service Pensions as follows:

Waterside House,
75 Duke Street,
Londonderry,
BT47 6FP;
Tel: 028 7131 9000;
Email: cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk

Location

As indicated at page 4, Senior Civil Servants are appointed initially to a specific post. They can however expect to move to other posts at the same grade in any NICS Department during the course of their career. While the majority of posts at this level are currently in the greater Belfast area, post holders must be prepared to serve anywhere in Northern Ireland. For example, it has been decided to relocate the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Headquarters to Ballykelly.

Transport

Post holders will be expected to travel throughout Northern Ireland and may be required on occasions to travel nationally and internationally.

Holidays

In addition to the 12 public and privilege holidays, the annual leave allowance will be 30 days.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The Merit Principle

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

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

Overview of Selection Process

The selection process will assess applicants against the core competencies for senior grades. It will comprise several stages as outlined below. You will be provided with guidance on each stage of the selection process. Details of how to make your application, the eligibility sift and first shortlisting sift are included in the 'making an application' section at page 11. General guidance on competency based selection is included at Annex C.

GatenbySanderson, a provider of executive recruitment and assessment solutions, will assist the NICS in running some elements of the selection process. Information provided by you on your application form will be made available to GatenbySanderson to facilitate these arrangements, as appropriate.

Formal screening of applications	Applications made online will receive a confirmation of submission. All application forms received by the closing date will be screened to check that they have been fully completed and to ensure that the information provided demonstrates that the nationality requirements are met. Applications deemed invalid at this stage will be removed from the competition.
Eligibility sift	All valid applications will be screened to determine if they meet the eligibility criterion. Only those who have sufficiently demonstrated on their application form that they meet the eligibility criterion will be invited to the next stage.

<p>Shortlisting will be used if required to reduce the number of applicants proceeding to the next stage.</p>	<p>First shortlisting sift: The information you provide in the Shortlisting section of your application form will be assessed to determine to what extent you meet these competency requirements.</p> <p>Only those whose responses meet the highest standards expected for this Grade will be invited to the next stage.</p> <p>Second shortlisting sift: You will be invited to participate in a short telephone interview and undertake a number of on-line tests.</p> <p>Again, only those whose responses meet the highest standards expected for this Grade will be invited to the next stage.</p>
<p>Assessment Centre</p>	<p>The Assessment Centre will be held in Belfast (venue to be confirmed) and will last one day. It will comprise a number of exercises designed to assess the core competencies as set out in the Professional Skills for Government framework.</p> <p>Of the applicants who meet the minimum standard at Assessment Centre, only those who attain the highest standard will be invited to the next stage.</p>
<p>Panel Interview</p>	<p>The final stage will be an interview by a panel, chaired by a Civil Service Commissioner, who will use the Professional Skills for Government Framework taking into account your performance at the Assessment Centre.</p>
<p>Order of Merit list</p>	<p>A weighted score for each candidate will be calculated from the panel interview and Assessment Centre scores.</p> <p>Candidates will be listed in order according to this final score and offered appointments in merit order, as and when vacancies arise.</p>

Timings

It is not possible to be definitive about timings for the various stages in the selection process. However, at this juncture, the intention is to have the shortlisting sifts completed by end February / start March 2014 and to run the assessment centre during mid March / early April 2014 and the final panel interviews end April / early May 2014.

These timings are indicative, however, you will be given advance notice of each stage of the competition and also advised of the dates for the later stages of the selection process as they become known. This will ensure that you have as much notice as possible of the selection process and enable you to ensure you are available to participate.

Please note that you must be available to undertake any stage of the selection process by the date of its completion. No stage of the selection process will be reorganised because of the unavailability of applicants.

Feedback

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken at all stages of the selection process. Feedback in respect of eligibility and shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria.

All requests for feedback are welcome.

MAKING YOUR APPLICATION

Method and Closing date for Applications

Applicants can only be made online at the following address:
www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk

The closing date for this competition is **12 noon on Friday 15 November 2013**.

It is recommended that you read the Candidate Information Booklet in detail before you begin to complete your application.

Important information about making your application

- **ONLY the details provided by you in your application form (under employment history, eligibility and shortlisting criteria) will be used for the purpose of assessing your application.**
- **You must ensure that you provide sufficient evidence in your application form to demonstrate how you meet each criterion.**
- **If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility and shortlisting criteria, your application will be rejected.**

Eligibility Criterion

You must provide evidence in your application form which demonstrates that, by the closing date of the competition, you have at least two years senior management experience. Senior management experience is defined as reporting directly to the top management levels of the organisation. For example, reporting directly to a Chief Executive, Director, Head of Function or a management Board or, in the case of existing civil servants, being at least Grade 7 level or equivalent.

- **The definition of senior management has been provided as a guide. The NICS reserve the right to apply their judgement in establishing whether an applicant has provided sufficient evidence to meet the eligibility criterion.**
- **You should include an explanation of where your role/position sits within the senior management structure of the organisation and provide dates as required to demonstrate that you meet the eligibility criterion. It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.**
- **Assumptions will not be made based on the title of your post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience you have.**

Shortlisting Criteria

If it is necessary to reduce the number of applicants following the eligibility sift, those who meet the eligibility criterion will go forward to the first shortlisting sift. The shortlist will be determined based on your response to the questions below and included in the shortlisting section of the application form. These questions provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate your experience in the key areas of competency required across the range of jobs at Grade 5 level.

- The following guidance relates to both Shortlisting Criteria.
- **ONLY** the details provided by you in your application form (under the shortlisting criteria) will be used for the purpose of determining the shortlist. You should therefore ensure that you provide sufficient evidence in your application form to demonstrate how you meet the shortlisting criteria.
- It is not sufficient to state 'see career history' in answer to a question. Any such applications will not be assessed.
- In answering each question please describe the situation and context you faced, what activities you undertook, taking care to use the word 'I' rather than 'we' where relevant, and the outcome.
- Please ensure the example you provide is directly related to and answers the question.

Shortlisting Criterion 1: Leadership

Please give an example where you have demonstrated sound leadership in a challenging situation. What was this situation and why was it challenging? How did you respond to this situation? What did you do to address the challenges? How did you involve others? What was the outcome? On reflection where did you apply your strengths and what were your learning points from the situation?

Shortlisting Criterion 2: Programme and project management

Please give an example where you have been responsible for developing and implementing a project and plan to deliver on a business policy or service change. What was the business policy or service change you were delivering on? How did you approach developing the plan and putting in place the project? How did you involve others in the project? What factors did you consider during implementation? What was the result; how did the project deliver on the business policy or service change?

Disability Requirements

The application form will ask if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to undertake 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 indicate 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.

General Guidance on making your application

The online application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility and shortlisting criteria. Some general guidance is set out below.

- When completing your 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.
- You should be aware that the session timeout for an 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.

- Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and **must not be altered**.
- You must complete the application form in typescript font size 12
- You must not reformat the application form as this will result in disqualification.
- You should write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote.
- If you do not provide sufficient detail, including dates to demonstrate you meet the eligibility criterion, your application will be rejected.
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. without explanation.
- Ensure that you provide a valid email address on your application form.
- Ensure you complete **all** parts of the application form. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.
- Late applications or applications received other than online will not be accepted.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline.

Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form

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

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to **Equal Opportunities – Information for Candidates** on the DFP website at:

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/working-in-the-nics.htm>

If you are unable to access the website please contact Equality & Diversity Branch as follows:

Equality & Diversity Branch
 Corporate Human Resources,
 7th Floor,
 Royston House,
 34 Upper Queen Street,
 BELFAST,
 BT1 6FD
 Tel: 02890572370;
 Email: – CHR_Equality@dfpni.gov.uk

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

As women are currently known to be under represented at this grade across the NICS, applications from women would be particularly welcome.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

COMMUNICATION

Changes to Your Information

You should ensure that HRConnect is informed immediately of any changes that impact on your application or changes to the information provided in your application form, including changes to your contact details.

Arrangements for Issue of Communication to You

HRConnect, the NICS' HR services provider, will be your main point of contact during the running of the selection process. HRConnect will seek to limit hard copy mail and issue as many competition communications as possible by email. You should therefore check your email account to make sure you do not miss any important communications in relation to this competition. In addition you may be contacted directly by GatenbySanderson regarding arrangements for the selection process. In such cases you will be advised in advance that GatenbySanderson will be contacting you.

HRConnect Contact Details

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect at the address below or by:

Email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

Tel: 0800 1 300 330

Fax: 028 9024 1665

Address: HRConnect
PO Box 1089
2nd Floor
The Metro Building
6-9 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 9EW

**THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

NATIONALITY AND VETTING

Nationality Requirements

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom. You must be either:

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

Within the nationality requirement:

(a) 'UK national' means a person who is a British citizen (including persons from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man), a British subject under Part IV of the British Nationality Act 1981 having the right of abode in the UK or a British Dependent Territories citizen acquiring his/her citizenship from connection with Gibraltar.

(b) 'Commonwealth citizen' means any person who has the status of a Commonwealth citizen under the British Nationality Act 1981, not covered by the 'UK national' definition above. This includes British Dependent Territories citizens (other than Gibraltarians), British Overseas citizens, and from 1986 those persons in the category British National (Overseas).

(c) 'British Protected Person' means a member of any class of persons declared to be British Protected Persons by Order in Council under the British Nationality Act 1981, or by virtue of the Solomon Islands Act 1978.

(d) 'EEA National' means a national of one of the following countries:

Austria	France	Liechtenstein	**Romania
Belgium	Germany	Lithuania	Slovakia
**Bulgaria	Greece	Luxembourg	Slovenia
Cyprus	Hungary	Malta	Spain
Czech Republic	Iceland	Netherlands	Sweden
Denmark	Ireland	Norway	United Kingdom
Estonia	Italy	Poland	
Finland	Latvia	Portugal	

N.B. nationals from Switzerland also have the same free movement and employment rights.

** Non-exempt Bulgarian and Romanian nationals are required to be registered under the Worker Authorisation Scheme prior to appointment. Guidance on this can be obtained from the Home Office website www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

(e) 'Family member of an EEA or Swiss national' means:

the national's spouse*; or

a direct descendant (child, grandchild etc.) of that national or his/her spouse who is under 21 years of age or is their dependent; or

a dependent relative in the ascending line (parent, grandparent etc) of the EEA or Swiss national or his/her spouse.

* 'Spouse' does not include a party to a marriage of convenience and in the case of EEA or Swiss national vocational students; family members are restricted to spouses and dependent children only.

Further guidance on nationality can be obtained from the Home Office Website, www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Vetting Procedures

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For the majority of Senior Civil Service posts in the NICS the level of vetting required is the Baseline Personnel Security 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.

HRConnect will contact you and organise for a criminal record check to be carried out by AccessNI. The category of AccessNI check required for most of these posts is a basic disclosure.

A small number of posts may require the following checks:

2. Counter Terrorist Check (CTC): as point 1 plus check of Security Service records; or

3. Security Check (SC): as at point 2 plus credit reference check.

HRConnect will contact you and organise for CTC and SC checks to be carried out by Defence Business Services (DBS), National Security Vetting.

Please note

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978. You should not be 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 recruitment decision is made.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS

CSC NI

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

AN INTRODUCTION

Ensuring appointment on merit
And safeguarding ethics

WHO ARE WE?

Brian Rowntree, CBE (Chairperson)
Vilma Patterson, MBE
Dr Raymond Mullan, OBE
Marian Matchett, CBE
Jim Scholes

LOCATION

Our Office is in Stormont House.
The full address is:

Stormont House
Room 105
Stormont Estate,
Belfast
BT4 3SH

OPENING HOURS

The Office is open from 9.00am to 5.00pm,
Monday to Friday, except Public and Bank Holidays.

How to contact us

- write to us at the address at the top of the page
- telephone us on **028 9052 3599**
- visit us at www.nicscommissioners.org

WHAT ARE WE HERE TO DO?

Civil Service Commissioners are appointed by the Crown to uphold the principle that selection for appointment to posts in the Civil Service should be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

WHERE DO WE GET OUR AUTHORITY FROM?

Commissioners derived their responsibilities from prerogative Orders made by the Secretary of State. Our authority currently derives from the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

We do it by:

- making General Regulations.
- publishing and maintaining a Recruitment Code setting out the essential principles and procedures on which recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service must be based. Departments and Agencies must follow this Code. A copy is available online at: www.nicscommissioners.org
- it is inevitable that occasions will arise when special circumstances lead to Departments needing to depart from the Merit Principle. The Commissioners have set out the circumstances in which they are prepared to look at requests to depart from the Merit Principle. These 'exceptions' must be notified to, and in some instances approved by, the Commissioners before an appointment can be made.
- auditing recruitment policies and practices followed by Departments and Agencies in making appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Each year, the Commissioners decide on a particular aspect of recruitment to examine in detail (an audit) and request management consultants to carry out independent investigations on their behalf. The results of these audits are published in the Commissioners' Annual Report.
- requiring Departments and Agencies to publish information about their recruitment activity.
- approving procedures for appointment, through open competition, to the Senior Civil Service in Northern Ireland.
- hearing and determining appeals under the Northern Ireland Civil Service Code of Ethics. Under the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999, we have been assigned the role of providing an independent appeals mechanism for Northern Ireland civil servants. The Code of Ethics sets out the constitutional framework within which civil servants work and the values they are expected to uphold. Details of the number and nature of the appeals received by the Commissioners are published each year in our Annual Report.

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

If you have ever applied for a post in the Northern Ireland Civil Service, you can be assured that, whether or not you were successful, the Department or Agency was obliged to make that appointment in accordance with directions for good practice set out by the Commissioners.

We are concerned that civil servants are not fully aware of the appeals mechanism under the Code of Ethics. We would strongly encourage any civil servant who believes that he or she has been asked to act in a way which

- is illegal, improper or unethical;**
- is in breach of constitutional convention or a professional code;**
- may involve a possible maladministration; or**
- is otherwise inconsistent with the Code**

to report the matter in accordance with procedures laid down in the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pay and Conditions Code or Departmental guidance.

Where the matter has been reported in the appropriate manner and a civil servant believes the response does not represent a reasonable response to his or her concerns, s/he may report the matter in writing to the Civil Service Commissioners.

COMPETENCY BASED SELECTION – GENERAL GUIDANCE

Competency based selection is designed to test a candidate's experience and skills in the competencies required across the range of jobs at the grade being recruited. Candidates will be advised of the competencies set out in the Competency Framework or provided with details of where to obtain a copy of the Framework.

This competency based approach requires you to:

- Focus exclusively on your ability to fulfill the competencies required for effective performance in the job role/s; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competencies.

If this is your first experience of competency based selection, bear in mind that it does not require you to:

- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competency being assessed.

A competency based question set out in an application form or asked at a telephone or face to face interview does however require you to:

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

In responding to a competency based question you should seek to:

- Use an example that best illustrates your skills and abilities in the competency area being assessed.

You may also find it useful to have a clear structure for the evidence you wish to use 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.

At assessment centre you will be assessed by a number of trained assessors across a range of exercises. Each exercise will assess specific competencies and each competency will be assessed twice. In preparation for attendance at an assessment centre you may wish to:

- Consider the information you have about the job role;
- Familiarise yourself with each competency and consider how you might demonstrate the relevant behaviours.