Candidate Information Booklet

IRC192163

Immunologist / Virologist

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 20th June 2014
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.
BACKGROUND

AFBI, the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, is one of the world's leading providers of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental and commercial organisations.

AFBI was established on 1 April 2006 as a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). It is responsible mainly for the provision of statutory and scientific programmes in the areas of agri-food, animal and plant health, fisheries and the environment, providing access to specialist expertise and providing facilities to Industry and Public Sector bodies for contracted scientific services. AFBI has a staff complement of approx. 800 people, with a budget of approximately £50million across its 7 specialised sites throughout Northern Ireland.

Location

AFBI is based at seven sites across the province, with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

The AFBI sites are located at Newforge Lane, (Belfast), Crossnacreevy, Hillsborough, Stoney Road (Stormont), Loughgall, Bushmills and Omagh.
ABOUT THE VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION

AFBI has two scientific Divisions - the Veterinary Sciences Division (VSD) and Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD). VSD currently employs approximately 280 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its five branches (Bacteriology, Chemical Surveillance, Disease Surveillance and Investigation, Immunodiagnostic and Virology).

Major programmes of work within the Division are animal health and welfare, and food safety. VSD investigates diseases of farm animals, poultry and fish and provides a specialist animal disease diagnostic service to the agricultural industry. It carries out statutory work and provides an emergency response capability on behalf of government. It also conducts underpinning research and development (R&D) on animal diseases and food safety issues relevant to the local industry. This work is funded by DARD, other government bodies and the private sector. More specifically, the Division supports government policy and industry by providing laboratory testing and scientific expertise in:

- Emergency responses and contingency planning for epizootic disease outbreaks and food-chain problems
- Targeted (active) surveillance for animal diseases, including local, national and EU disease control and eradication schemes
- Scanning (passive) surveillance for animal disease agents, including zoonotic infections
- Chemical and microbiological food surveillance
- Statutory animal disease and veterinary drug residue testing
- Underpinning R&D in animal diseases and food safety
- Provision of specialist advice to government and industry
- Technology transfer to industry

The main areas of work of the five VSD Branches include:

**Bacteriology Branch**

The Bacteriology Branch undertakes a wide programme of statutory, analytical and research work on the major bacterial pathogens of animal and public health significance. Much of this work underpins important DARD animal disease control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis. Other work areas include food-borne zoonoses, paratuberculosis, botulism and mycoplasmosis. The skill base within the Branch comprises traditional and specialist bacteriology methods, molecular diagnostics, test development, experimental infection models, immunology, genetics, experimental design, wildlife ecology and veterinary epidemiology. The Branch is recognised as a National Reference Laboratory for both *Salmonella* and *Brucella* (NRL UK-NI) and as a centre of excellence in bovine TB research (pathogenesis, immunology and epidemiology). Staff within the Branch have considerable expertise with experimental animal models and allied immunological research. Bovine tuberculosis is currently a major research focus of the Branch. R&D is quality certified to ISO9001 and statutory tests are accredited to ISO17025.
Chemical Surveillance Branch (CSB)

The Chemical Surveillance Branch encompasses an EU National Reference Laboratory for veterinary drug residues that provides screening and confirmatory analysis for a wide range of veterinary drug residues and marine biotoxins. Tests are carried out for residues of licensed veterinary drugs and illegal compounds in meat products from cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry and fish, milk and eggs, and animal feeding-stuffs. This work is supported by basic and strategic research that has resulted in the development of novel analytical methods for a wide range of compounds.

Disease Surveillance and Investigation Branch (DSiB)

The animal disease diagnostic services provided by the AFBI Stormont and Omagh laboratories safeguard animal and public health by identifying the causes of disease in submitted material and promote the competitiveness of the agri-food industry. Surveillance for notifiable, zoonotic (transmissible to humans) and emerging diseases forms an important part of this work. A comprehensive range of laboratory tests is available to assist in the diagnosis of animal disease and to provide detailed information on the health status of herds and flocks. Specialist advice on animal diseases is given to the agricultural industry and veterinary profession. A high throughput of diagnostic work allows AFBI to identify outbreaks of notifiable diseases, new or emerging diseases, changes in patterns of endemic diseases and conditions appropriate for further research. These activities underpin the animal health status of Northern Ireland. DSiB also operates the AFBI Cattle Health Scheme in Northern Ireland. Benefits of this scheme include improved disease control, improved profitability, advice on biosecurity and certification of cattle health status with regard to BVDV, IBR, L. hardjo and Johne’s disease.

Immunodiagnostic Branch (IDB)

A large volume of serological testing is carried out in IDB on behalf of DARD and industry customers. This work includes serological testing in support of DARD’s brucellosis eradication programme, surveillance for exotic diseases such as enzootic bovine leucosis and highly pathogenic avian influenza, equine viral serology, avian viral and Mycoplasma serology, and tests required for the export/import of animals. The Branch also maintains contingency plans for outbreaks of major epizootic diseases and encompasses a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) testing unit.
Virology Branch

The work of Virology Branch aims to improve the diagnosis and control of viral diseases (pigs, poultry, cattle, sheep and aquaculture), in support of DARD policy objectives aimed at improving the 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 Virology Branch also has responsibility for the molecular confirmation of major infectious / epizootic diseases in animals and provides a range of support services to other branches such as tissue culture and the animal services unit. 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 includes DARD, commercial companies, research councils, and the EU.

Virology Work Area
AFBI has an international reputation for its research work on viral diseases in key food production animals, the development of molecular and serological tests, 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 DARD and externally-funded work with an emphasis in supporting the economic performance of farming through the scientific understanding and control of animal diseases.

The virology branch has secured substantial external (for example EU 4, 5, 6 & 7, BBSRC, commercial, INI and other non-DARD income) 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, Poland, Sweden, Spain, Germany, Italy, China, USA, Chile, Denmark, Canada, Norway, India, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere, and allows NI to benefit from the latest international research findings. Recent external funders include the EU, Invest Northern Ireland, Chilean Government, DAFM / Stimulus and multiple international commercial companies.

Viral genetic strain variation, pathogenesis and immunology research
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 productions 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 early work include the identification of new viruses such as porcine circoviruses, salmon pancreas disease, chicken astroviruses and porcine bocaviruses. 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 a range 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.
JOB DESCRIPTION

This post is in the Virology Branch within AFBI-Stormont. The post-holder will undertake duties as an immunologist with respect to viruses within a Virology Research Unit (the present position is anticipated to be in the bovine / ruminant virology group, but may involve work in other species and with other pathogens). There is currently a research focus on vaccines against respiratory pathogens and immune factors associated with protection in the developing immune system in calves. Therefore there will be a strong emphasis on immunological techniques for assessment of T-cell and B-cell immune responses. The work involves local, national and international research collaborations in virology and the post-holder will be expected to support and develop the work in the unit for the benefit of Agriculture in the EU, the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Sector, including the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland (DARD) and local stakeholders. The post will involve academic research, applied research and working closely with industry for the development of new approaches to the control of production diseases in dairy and beef production systems.

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

The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

Salary

The salary for the post will be within the range £28,500 - £31,135, within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

Annual Leave

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

Working Hours

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

Location

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Stormont, Stoney Road, Belfast but may be expected to work at other AFBI sites in Northern Ireland as required.
Travel

The post will entail some travel within Ireland, the United Kingdom and internationally in order to attend project meetings and relevant scientific conferences and for this reason the successful applicant will require access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

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 to determine if the posting will be made permanent.

Further Information

Further information about the post may be obtained from Dr Michael McMenamy on +44 (0) 28 9052 5864

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

- Run a Virology Research Unit currently working on vaccine immunology with responsibility for staff, laboratory facilities and instrumentation, laboratory health and safety and laboratory budgets
- Develop and manage immunological assays and instrumentation (such as flow cytometry)
- Training and development of staff in new and relevant techniques in immunology (e.g. diagnostic and vaccine immunology).
- Support the delivery of virology research portfolio for veterinary vaccines and animal health studies.
- Support the planning of animal work and sample collection
- Preparation of scientific papers and supporting information for research grant applications
- Support for PhD students and post-doctoral researchers
- Presentation of work at project meetings and scientific conferences
- Meeting with commercial pharmaceutical companies and primary producers involved in animal health / dairy and beef farming and to communicate the scientific findings arising from the research programmes
- The post-holder will also be expected to contribute to the overall virology programme of research and support management within the branch.
- The post-holder will be required to successfully complete a Home Office approved Personal Licence training course and Project Licence course (with examinations) for work with animals. Relevant training will be provided.

Applicants should be aware that they will also be expected to deal with blood samples and/or tissue samples which may be contaminated with transmissible diseases and be involved directly in working with live animals. The candidate will also be expected to handle and collect samples from animals. AFBI goes to great lengths to ensure that the health and safety of its workforce is not put at risk and appropriate protective clothing and training will be given to staff dealing with such samples.

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

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

1. A degree in immunology, virology or microbiology or a highly related biological scientific discipline

AND

2. At least 2 years post-graduate laboratory experience in the application of immunological methods and assays (eg, B-cell, T-cell or innate cell assays);

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 following shortlisting criteria will be used:

1. Have a post-graduate qualification (e.g. MSc or PhD) relevant to the post.

2. Evidence of relevant peer-reviewed publications and other research outputs.*

*Candidates must demonstrate how they meet shortlisting criterion 2 and also submit a fully cited bibliography of all publications. Candidates can provide this bibliographic information within the application form itself, or if necessary, it can be sent by the closing date for applications as a separate attachment to:

E-mail: orgcharts@hrconnect.nigov.net

OR

External Resourcing
HRConnect
PO Box 1089
2nd Floor, The Metro Building
6-9 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 9EW

The bibliography should be marked with the relevant competition reference number (IRC192163) and your full name.

Where a bibliography is not provided by the closing date, the application form will be treated as incomplete, and will not be forwarded to the selection panel for consideration.
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.
- The panel may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.
PERSON SPECIFICATION

CORE COMPETENCES

The Core Competence Framework, which is grade specific, describes what people need to do in order to be effective at work. It is not enough to just have the knowledge and skills to do our jobs. Competence is about what people actually do, it is about how you apply or demonstrate the knowledge and skills whilst carrying out your tasks. Demonstrated competence is observable and measurable.

Higher Scientific Officer is analogous to the Staff Officer in the NICS. Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through the following link: www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk.

COMPETITION PROCESS

In addition to satisfying the above eligibility (and, if appropriate, shortlisting) criteria, applicants will also be expected to demonstrate the following selection criteria/competences on the application form and at interview:

1. PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
   - Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance, demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current developments and best practice in immunology, virology and vaccination for the control of infectious diseases.
   - Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation, manipulation, analysis and interpretation of scientific data.
   - Applies knowledge and skills in drafting substantial sections of scientific papers and technical reports.

Marks available: 40  Pass mark: 25

2. POLICY/STRATEGY
   - Contribute to the implementation of policy (such as laboratory accreditation, H&S).
   - Contribute to the formulation of strategy to guide the work of the organisation for future competitive research grant applications.
   - Develop plans which contribute to the implementation of the organisation’s strategy.

Marks available: 5
3. SERVICES

- Maintain and improve service delivery of research in immunology and virology to laboratory quality standards.
- Contribute to the planning and implementation of changes in services and systems to meet customer needs (R&D project delivery).

Marks available: 15 Pass mark: 8

4. RESOURCES

- Contribute to the assessment of resource needs for the delivery of veterinary immunology and virology.
- Recommend, plan, monitor, evaluate and control the use of resources in R&D projects and bid for relevant scientific resources.

Marks available: 10

5. PEOPLE

- Develop teams and individuals to encourage innovation, improve performance and meet business objectives and evolving technologies.
- Plan, allocate, monitor and evaluate work carried out by teams, individuals and self.
- Create, maintain and enhance effective working relationships.
- Assess own development needs and develop self to improve job performance and fulfil future potential.
- Contribute to the selection of personnel.

Marks available: 15 Pass Mark 8

6. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

- Identify, organise, evaluate and communicate laboratory scientific information to meet research project customer needs.
- Analyse information to solve problems and make decisions. Identify and adopt communication style and methods to influence and gain the commitment of others.

Marks available: 10
7. PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Supports the delivery of immunology and virology research projects.
- Supports the evaluation of the success of a scientific R&D Project.

Marks available: 5

Total Marks available: 100
Overall Pass Mark: 60

Only evidence presented against each specific criterion will be considered when deciding eligibility against that criterion.

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 HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast during week commencing 4th August 2014.
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

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat 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.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write “I” statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- 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

- 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.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted. Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1st class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is also the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to
HRConnect. HRConnect will not accept any application where they are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.

- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- 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.

**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 22

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

Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics as this group is currently underrepresented within AFBI.

**AFBI IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER.**

**Assessment Information**

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment brings 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 Veterinary Research Officer - Epidemiology posts in the AFBI the level of vetting is a Baseline Standard. For this check you will be required to provide the following:
a) Your passport **OR**
b) A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) **AND** your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).
c) Other acceptable documents are listed on [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).
d) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI. 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.

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: [http://www.accessni.gov.uk/](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. This can be downloaded from the AccessNI website. Guidance notes of the completion of the form are also included on the website. 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 above 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, the (PCSPS (NI)) – NUVOS arrangement. Pension is an important part of the reward package for civil servants and, on average, employers pay more than 18% of pay towards pension costs. As well as providing you with an easy and secure way to help you provide for your retirement, the PCSPS (NI) also provides dependants and ill health benefits.

We offer all new employees the choice of either:

- Nuvos - a high quality, index-linked defined benefit pension scheme that currently has a 3.5% member contribution rate. Your employing Department also makes contributions; or

- Partnership in a stakeholder type money purchase arrangement with an employer contribution. The employer basic contribution is based on your age, and this is paid regardless of whether you choose to contribute. You do not have to contribute if you do not wish to, but if you do your employing Department will match your contributions up to an additional 3% of pay. Your employing Department will also pay a further contribution, of 0.8% of pay, to the PCSPS (NI) to cover you for Death in Service benefits.

If you previously worked for an employer covered by the PCSPS (NI) arrangements, different conditions may apply. If you already have a PCSPS (NI) pension in payment, you should be aware that the pension scheme rules prevent members from receiving more by way of pay and pension combined on re-employment than they were earning as salary before they retired. This is called “abatement”. If you want to know more about how this may affect you, please contact Civil Service Pensions at:

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

If you left the NICS with an early retirement, severance or redundancy package then your existing benefits may be affected if you accept this post. If your service was enhanced (increased) when you left then you will not be able to build up benefits in the defined benefit scheme during the period that is covered by the enhancement included in your existing benefits. If you opt to join the Partnership arrangement, employer contributions will not be payable for this enhancement period but you will be able to contribute if you wish. If you are receiving a pension or annual compensation payment then this may be reduced during your re-employment. If you received a top-up payment under the early
severance temporary arrangements then your pay may be reduced during your re-employment. If you want to know more about this, please contact Civil Service Pensions.

You may be able to transfer a pension with your current or a previous employer into the PCSPS (NI). Information on Transfers In can be found in the New Entrant Pack which you should receive on taking up employment.

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

Please apply online or post your hardcopy completed application form to the HRConnect Recruitment Team:

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

NOTE: Late applications or applications received by fax or email will not be accepted.

Contact details:

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

Email: Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net
Tel: 0800 1 300 330
Fax: 028 9024 1665
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Policy Statement

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equal Opportunities Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below.

“The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is committed to providing equality of opportunity. 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 in which all workers are encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated. This right is protected in many instances by legislation.

In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to recruit, retain and promote the best available people. Our equal opportunities policy is central to this strategy. We aim to foster a culture which encourages every member of staff to develop his or her full potential and which rewards achievement. Creating a working environment where individual differences are valued and respected enables all staff to give of their best and helps us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve.

The NICS seeks to maintain the confidence of the whole community. It will continue to promote equality of opportunity and fair participation within the framework of the law and will strive to achieve a workforce that is broadly representative of the society which it serves.

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.

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 necessary to enable the completion of the annual statutory monitoring return, 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 age.

Community Background
The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The information requested in the Community Background section of the monitoring form is required in connection with the requirements of the above Order and to enable the completion of the annual statutory monitoring return to the Equality Commission for NI.

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
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. 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.
Substantial: put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out 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; 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.

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.

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 & Dependants
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 and between persons with dependants and persons without.

Use of Monitoring Information
Monitoring information is used to enable the NICS to assess the effectiveness of its EO policies and to determine the impact (if any) of various policies and procedures on different categories of staff. In addition to this internal focus community background and gender information on both staff and applicants is used to complete the annual statutory monitoring return to the Equality Commission.
Confidentiality of Monitoring Information
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.

The confidentiality of community background information is also protected through regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) 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 used for the purposes of monitoring under FETO.

The release of an individual’s monitoring information is permitted by legislation as part of prospective or actual proceedings under equality legislation, e.g. where another individual has made a complaint of alleged discrimination.

Many people from all backgrounds in Northern Ireland and beyond are interested in the profile of the NICS workforce and the candidates who apply for jobs. For this reason the NICS regularly publishes data in the form of statistical summaries, graphs etc. On occasions it may also be necessary to use monitoring information to answer questions from Assembly Members, MPs and MEPs or to respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act. In all cases where information is made public, the format of presentation will be such that it will not be possible to identify any individual’s information.