

**Candidate
Information
Booklet**

IRC222027

**Assistant Scientific Officer (ASO)
Laboratory**

**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 3rd November 2017***

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

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THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

AFBI is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial companies.

In line with AFBI's mission of "using scientific excellence to advance the local and global agri-food sector", the Institute has developed a reputation of being an influential, internationally recognised, centre for innovation in agri-food and biosciences providing high quality and locally relevant science. Our "2020 Strategy" includes plans for an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure, improved facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a new veterinary sciences building, which will give us one of the most modern laboratory and ancillary estate infrastructures of any agri-food research institute in Europe.

As the Northern Ireland government's main research and statutory testing provider in the areas of agri-food, fisheries and the environment, AFBI plays a major role in the Northern Ireland knowledge economy. AFBI's scale, relationships with a wide range of international research organisations and close links with local industry mean that it is ideally placed to carry out research that is of both global and local impact. AFBI's science is outcome-driven and aimed at solving important practical problems for a wide range of local, national and international customers in the public and private sectors. Our staff carry out world class scientific research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for a wide range of customers in the fields of animal health and welfare, sustainable agricultural systems, plant science, food innovation and safety, environmental protection, fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, and agricultural and rural economics.

AFBI was established on 1 April 2006 as a non-departmental public body and is sponsored by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). It is responsible 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 approximately 650 people, with a budget of approximately £55million. Details of AFBI's most recently published income and expenditure are available on its website under [2015/16 annual report and accounts.](#)

The Institute has two science divisions, Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences and Veterinary Sciences Divisions, which are supported by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Division.

AFBI is located on seven sites across the province, with its headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast. The AFBI sites are at Newforge Lane (1), Stoney Road, Stormont (2), Crossnacreevy (3), Hillsborough (4), Loughgall (5), Omagh (6) and Bushmills (7), along with a sea going research vessel, the RV Corystes (8).



ABOUT THE LABORATORY BASED ASO ROLE

Assistant Scientific Officers play a key role in AFBI's mission of using scientific excellence to advance the local and global agri-food sector. As such, successful applicants will join teams of scientists with long established international reputations across many disciplines and an Institute already respected as a centre for innovation in the agri-food and biosciences.

The role of a laboratory based ASO varies widely across the Institute. However, all are tasked with providing analytical support to senior scientists who may be leading programmes of work in animal and plant health, food safety and quality, environmental protection, and marine and aquatic ecosystems. The work undertaken may be statutory, in support of local industry or may form part of multi-million, multi-partner projects funded by the EU or other such funding bodies. ASOs undertake or assist in analyses, utilising long established scientific processes and procedures and also some of the latest and most sensitive technologies currently available. Methods routinely employed range from, for example, the traditional techniques applied within any standard microbiology laboratory through immunochemical techniques such as enzyme immunoassay and molecular techniques, such as polymerase chain reaction, to analysis based on the latest mass spectrometers which are capable of detection in the 0.25 parts per billion range.

Working together as part of a wider team, ASOs are vital in the provision of statutory or diagnostic testing services. Organisational skills and attention to detail are both key in terms of planning workloads to meet deadlines and ensuring sample reception, analysis and reporting is performed to the highest standards and in accordance with quality procedures. Results of testing are highly important and can for example be used to confirm disease, deny or permit export or prevent food entering the food chain.

Laboratory based ASOs may also be involved in research projects, method development or experimental trials. These roles rely on self-motivated individuals, who are able to use their own initiative to overcome analytical problems and deliver on time against milestones. The individual will often be required to assist in drafting scientific progress reports and papers and keep abreast of relevant scientific literature.

Working in AFBI will provide the opportunity to work in a varied and exciting environment which will be challenging and rewarding.

ABOUT THE VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION

VSD currently employs approximately 260 staff across its four Branches (Bacteriology, Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences, Disease Surveillance and Investigation, and Virology).

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

Bacteriology Branch

The Bacteriology Branch is located in a modern building which houses suites of laboratories at bio-containment levels 2 and 3. The Branch work programme includes statutory, analytical and research work on the major bacterial pathogens of animal and public health significance. Much of this work underpins important DAERA animal disease control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis. Other work areas include food-borne zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance and paratuberculosis. The skill base within the Branch comprises traditional and specialist bacteriology methods, molecular diagnostics, test development, experimental infection models, immunology, genetics, experimental design, wildlife ecology and veterinary epidemiology. Bovine tuberculosis and the detection and control of *Campylobacter* are currently major research focuses of the Branch.

Chemical and Immunodiagnostics Sciences Branch (CISB)

The Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences Branch undertakes a wide programme of mainly statutory work in the animal disease and chemical residues/contaminants areas. The Branch has EU National Reference Laboratory status for illegal veterinary drug residues, and provides screening and confirmatory analysis for a wide range of veterinary drug residues, marine biotoxins, pesticides, mycotoxins and heavy metals. Tests are carried out for residues in meat products from cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, shellfish and fish, milk and eggs, as well as animal feeding-stuffs. The Branch also encompasses a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) testing unit. The Branch provides DAERA and FSA with an emergency response in the event of outbreaks of major epizootic diseases, marine biotoxin incidents, and misuse of veterinary drugs, pesticides or chemical contaminants.

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. DSIB also operates the AFBI Cattle Health Scheme which provides voluntary eradication of certification disease control programmes.

Virology Branch

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

ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION

Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch

Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch (FAEB) conducts research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in support of sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources, focusing particularly on the needs of Northern Ireland. Currently, approximately 55 AFBI staff, together with contract staff and postgraduate students are based at FAEB. FAEB is particularly well resourced, a 53m marine research vessel, the *R. V. Corystes*, underpinning the marine science programme. FAEB conducts science programmes across several core areas: marine fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone science, biological oceanography and marine ecosystem health, and freshwater fisheries stock assessment. Individually and in combination, these core areas aim to sustain multidisciplinary research programmes that merit national and international recognition.

Food Research Branch

Food Research is conducted with and for the agri-food industry in Northern Ireland and across the world to underpin competitive development. Research topics include optimising eating quality and nutritional quality in meat, dairy and other food products, together with evaluating novel processes for extending shelf-life and increasing safety. Research on food is linked closely with the AFBI research on sustainable livestock systems, grassland and crop production and agri-food economics.

Agri-Environment Branch

Agri-Environment Branch (AEB) it is situated at the interface between intensive livestock production, and environmental management and regulation. Its remit is to develop and sustain nationally and internationally recognised integrated research programmes, for investigating the impacts of agricultural land use practices on soil, water and air and identifying ways of optimising land-based livestock production - focusing particularly on the needs of Northern Ireland (NI).

Agriculture Branch

The work of the Branch links fundamental science to systems level research to deliver innovations for the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge in ways that assist policy makers. An innovative approach is taken linking large-scale applied research studies, conducted on farms across Northern Ireland, to strategic research and development at AFBI Hillsborough and further to more fundamental research in partnership with other AFBI Branches and external research organisations. In addition, Agriculture Branch provides analytical services for livestock feedstuffs, manures and agri-food products for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the agri-food sector.

Grassland and Plant Science Branch

Grassland and Plant Science Branch activities underpin DAERA's policy development for long-term sustainable and profitable farming and rural development and support the requirements of the broader Agri-Food Industry in Northern Ireland. Grassland and Plant Science Branch has been recently created to amalgamate all of AFBI's grassland and plant science capability under one structure covering the following area's Grass Breeding, Grass Agronomy and Plant Health.

Agricultural and Food Economics Branch

Agricultural and Food Economics is a branch within SAFSD. It is one of the main centres in the UK and Ireland for research and knowledge transfer in the field of Agri-food Economics and Rural Development. We deliver AFBI's *Agri-food and Rural Economy* Programme which is led by Professor John Davis and grounded in the economic and social sciences. Our main role is to undertake quantitative and qualitative socio-economic research to inform agri-food and rural policy development and industry decision making, regionally and nationally.

Statistical Services Branch

Statistical Services Branch provides a Statistical Analyses and Consultation Services in support of Scientific Research Projects and Statutory work carried out by AFBI and in support DAERA.

JOB DESCRIPTION

There are currently a number of full-time positions throughout AFBI 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.

Salary

The salary for the post will be within the range £19,811 - £22,514, within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided performance appraisals demonstrate that the employee fully meet the requirements of the post.

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. Some of the posts may include some evening and weekend working. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

On occasions there may be a requirement to work outside normal hours which will attract the appropriate pay and allowances.

Location

The successful applicants may be employed within any of the various locations within the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute i.e. Newforge Lane, Stormont, Crossnacreevy, Hillsborough, Loughgall, Omagh, and Bushmills.

Although it is expected that the majority of vacancies will arise in the Belfast area successful candidates should be prepared to serve where the vacancies arise.

Successful candidates will only receive one offer of appointment from this competition. If you refuse an offer of employment for any reason, you will be withdrawn from the competition.

Travel

The post may entail some travel throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and the successful candidate will require access to form of transport that will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

Training

Appropriate training will be provided, where required, to enable the successful candidates to carry out the full range of assigned duties.

Probation

The post holder will serve 12 months probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a formal review will be conducted to confirm if the appointee has met the performance requirements of the post.

Further Information

Further Information about the post may be obtained from Philip White. Telephone: 028 9025 5060 or Email: philip.white@afbini.gov.uk.

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

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Scientific and Technical

- Receipt, recording and preparation of samples for examination and analysis;
- Carrying out analytical tests and recording results and experimental data;
- Preparation of laboratory reagents;
- Delivering results in line with instructions accurately and within expected deadlines;
- Making appropriate records as work proceeds and ensuring results are accurately recorded;
- Ensuring results are validated through carrying out appropriate quality checks;
- Completing all work in line with AFBI accepted quality standards and both technical and scientific operating procedures (ISO9001/17025);
- Perform all procedures in accordance with standard operating procedures and scientific protocols;
- Operate complex and expensive scientific instrumentation;
- Temperature monitoring and respond to alarms or report when out of specification;
- Removal, labelling and disposal of samples and all other clinical waste.

Handling and Management of documents/electronic files

- Comply with AFBI policies;
- Assist in the preparation of Standard Operating Procedure's (SOP's);
- Operate IT hardware such as PC's, keyboard and printers. Input data to computerized database. Generate reports and computerized data and maintain accurate written or electronic records;
- Ensure that all paper records are completed and filed correctly; and
- Archive storage of documentation.

Communication

- Communication with work colleagues recognising when issues/events need to be referred to a line manager;
- Communicate with other colleagues and Branches as required; and
- Take an active part in, and contribute to team meetings.

Stock management

- Requisition of consumables as required; and
- Assist in the stock maintenance of appropriate consumables, using best practice in stock control to facilitate minimal wastage.

Quality and service improvement

- Report and escalate incidents and supply information required for investigation;
- Make suggestions for change and assist in improvement initiatives to service, product or process;
- Participate in the development, validation and introduction into routine use of new techniques/processes/equipment;
- Effectively participate in audits; and
- Use initiative and precedent in dealing with day to day problems.

Team working and development

- Work as a member of a team, valuing the contribution of others and forming co-operative working relationships with all colleagues;
- Demonstrate work tasks and related procedures to new members of the team, other staff, visitors and students;
- Train colleagues in the use of IT systems;
- Contribute to the personal objective setting in development reviews taking responsibility for own continuing personal development;
- Organise own workload as required; and
- Adherence to Health and Safety and other legislative requirements and maintenance of a safe and effective working environment.

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

Applicants should be aware that they may also be expected to deal with blood samples and/or tissue samples which may be contaminated with transmissible diseases. AFBI goes to great lengths to ensure that the health and safety of its workforce is safeguarded and appropriate training will be given to staff dealing with such samples.

AFBI is required to ensure that there is full compliance with all relevant Health and Safety legislation with regard to the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and of others who may be affected by its operations.

Applicants should be aware that in all posts the job requirement may involve working with biological samples from animals, plants or other organisms.

Applicants should be aware that in some of the posts the job requirement may involve the occasional wearing of face masks and as such will be required to undergo face fit testing.

ELIGIBILITY AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

STAGE 1 - APTITUDE TEST – ALL APPLICANTS

Following the submission of your application, the first stage of the assessment process will be the completion of an aptitude test that is designed to assess some of the skills that are required for the post of Assistant Scientific Officer in AFBI.

Applicants will receive an email inviting them to the test session within 2 weeks of the closing date for applications. Please check your email and junk mail folders during this time to ensure you receive the email.

It is anticipated that the testing will take place in Belfast on **Thursday 30th November 2017**. Please note that you will be provided with a test date during this week and reschedule requests cannot be accommodated.

In order to gain admittance to the test, applicants must bring appropriate photographic identification (passport, driving licence, etc).

Assessments will then be marked and the top performing applicants will proceed to the next stage.

STAGE 2 – ELIGIBILITY SIFT

Following the aptitude test, the top scoring applicants will be assessed against the eligibility criteria listed below. A sift of the application forms will be carried out by the appointed selection panel to assess each applicant against the eligibility criteria. The selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each criterion on the basis of the evidence provided on their application form.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications have:

1. GCE 'A' level passes (A to E) or equivalent, in 2 separate subjects, one of which must be biology or chemistry; and
2. GCSE/GCE 'O' level grades A, B or C in English and Maths.

Relevant or equivalent qualifications: 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. 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, information proving equivalency, 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.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-assessments.

SHORTLISTING

Applicants should be aware that after the eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criteria will be applied:

1. (a) A 3rd level Qualification in a science related discipline.

OR

- (b) 12 months experience in a Laboratory which must include experience of each of the following areas:
 - i. Carrying out analytical tests and recording results using a range of scientific techniques;
 - ii. Carrying out a range of complex scientific duties and a description of the outcome that was achieved;
 - iii. Delivering results accurately and within strict deadlines; and
 - iv. Experience of working in a team to achieve a goal and description of personal contribution.

FURTHER SHORTLISTING

In the event that further shortlisting is required the shortlisting criteria above will be **combined** so that only candidates who can demonstrate that they hold **both** a 3rd level Qualification in a science related discipline **and** 12 months experience in a Laboratory which has included experience of each of the areas listed at i, ii, iii and iv above will be considered eligible to proceed.

Additionally, AFBI may decide to further limit the number of applicants it invites for interview in a proportionate manner. In this instance those candidates who have met the requirements and have **both** a 3rd level Qualification in a science related discipline **and** 12 months experience in a Laboratory which has included experience of each of the areas listed at i, ii, iii and iv above will have the evidence provided in relation to the experience element of the criterion 1(b) assessed on a scored basis. All applicants who meet the minimum score set will be listed in merit order according to their total score and the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

STAGE 3 – INTERVIEW

The final assessment stage will consist of a competency based interview based on the key competencies for the NICS Administrative Officer grade to which the Assistant Scientific Officer grade within AFBI is analogous. See page 17 for further interview details.

Please note:

- You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in Part 2 of your application form, giving length of experience examples and dates as required.
- It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.
- AFBI 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, in Part 2 of your application form, the selection panel will reject your application.
- ONLY the details provided by you in Part 2 of 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.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

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 1 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

What is the NICS competency framework?

The competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results. Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters as set out in the link below. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course.

This position is analogous to Administrative Officer in the NICS. Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk.

It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of the assessment / interview criteria as outlined below. You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 1 of the relevant competence areas.

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

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

1. Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Demonstrates the required level of scientific knowledge and skills.
- Applies knowledge and skills in undertaking a range of analytical tests and other scientific procedures.
- Develops professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet work objectives and improve performance.

Marks Available: 40 Pass mark: 24

2. Collaborating and Partnering

- Proactively contribute to the work of the whole team.
- Get to know fellow team members/colleagues and understand their viewpoints and preferences.
- Seek help when needed in order to complete own work effectively.
- Be open to taking on different roles.
- Try to see issues from others' perspectives and check understanding.
- Listen to the views of others and show sensitivity towards others.

Marks Available: 20 Pass mark: 12

3. Making Effective Decisions

- Make and record effective decisions following the appropriate decision making criteria, framework or guidance.
- Ask questions when unsure what to do.
- Undertake appropriate analysis to support decisions or recommendations.
- Investigate and respond to gaps, errors and irregularities in information.
- Speak up to clarify decisions and query those constructively.
- Think through the implications of own decisions before confirming how to approach a problem/issue.

Marks Available: 10

4. Managing a Quality Service

- Communicate in a way that meets and anticipates the customer's requirements and gives a favourable impression of AFBI.
- Act to prevent problems, reporting issues where necessary.
- Gain the knowledge needed to follow the relevant legislation, policies, procedures and rules that apply to the job.
- Take ownership of issues, focus on providing the right solution and keep customers and delivery partners up to date with progress.

Marks Available: 10

5. Changing and improving

- Review working practices and come up with ideas to improve the way things are done.
- Learn new procedures, seek to exploit new technologies and help colleagues to do the same.
- Co-operate with and be open to the possibilities of change and consider ways to implement and adapt to change in own work role.
- Be constructive in raising issues with managers about implemented changes and the impact these are having on the service.
- Respond effectively to emergencies.

Marks Available: 10

6. Delivering at Pace

- Work in an organised manner using own knowledge and expertise to deliver on time and to standard.
- Work with enthusiasm to get the job done.
- Take responsibility for the quality of own work and keep manager informed of how the work is progressing.
- Remain focused on delivery.
- Maintain consistent performance.
- Participate in quality assurance of products or services.

Marks Available: 10

Total marks available: 100

Overall pass mark: 60

COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS

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

INTERVIEWS

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in Belfast from week commencing 29th January 2018.

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

A competence-based interview does however require you to:

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

In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:

- Situation – briefly outline the situation;
- Task – what was your objective, what were you trying to achieve;
- Action – what did you actually do, what was your unique contribution;
- Result – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competences. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Merit Principle

Appointments to AFBI are made under the ‘merit principle’, where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Making your application

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility/shortlisting criteria.

Guidance for Applicants

- 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.

Transgender Requirements

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact HRConnect. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

Further appointments from this competition

Where a further position in AFBI is identified which is considered broadly similar to that outlined in this candidate information booklet, consideration will be given to filling the position from this competition. The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to one year.

Disability Requirements

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are

being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form

Please note, this form is regarded as part of your application and failure to complete and return it will result in disqualification.

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement to which AFBI adheres please refer to page 28.

Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and females as these groups are currently under-represented within AFBI.

AFBI is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

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

Assessment Information

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility/shortlisting criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

Employment Requirements

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

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

Advice on entitlement to work may be obtained from the Home Office website, www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Nationality Requirements

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

Vetting Procedures

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

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

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

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI. 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/>. Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment. Failure to complete the application form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

Order of Merit

The selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment. The selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. The order of merit is valid for one year.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Pensions

New entrants who join the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme.

Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:

www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni

or

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

Civil Service Pensions
Waterside House
75 Duke Street
Londonderry
BT47 6FP
Tel: 02871 319000
Email: cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk

Feedback

AFBI is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

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

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

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Policy Statement

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below:

"The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) has a strong and clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the NICS on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere where they are treated with dignity and respect. We aim to provide opportunities for all sections of the community and continue to strive to create an inclusive working environment in which difference is recognised and valued. Bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and giving each person the opportunity to contribute their skills and experience will help us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve".

We all want to work in an harmonious workplace where we feel valued, respected and included, irrespective of gender, including gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, race/ethnic origin, religious belief or political opinion, disability, having or not having dependants, sexual orientation and age.

In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to attract, recruit, develop and retain the very best people at all levels. Our approach is based on three key principles:-

Equality – we promote equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups of people.

Diversity – we accept each person as an individual. Our success is built on our ability to embrace diversity – and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together we will deliver the best possible service for our staff, customers and stakeholders.

Inclusion – we create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted, but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with, and adheres to NICS values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and to apply this policy. Both Management and Trade Union Side are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Equality monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information that is relevant to and necessary for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between different categories of persons. This section sets out what information is collected, the reasons for doing so and what it is used for.

You should note that the Monitoring Form is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return it will result in disqualification. The Monitoring Form will be processed separately and neither the form nor the details contained in it will be available to those considering your application.

Monitoring equality and diversity in the workforce enables the NICS to examine how our employment policies and processes are working and to identify areas where these appear to be impacting disproportionately on certain groups of staff.

Legislative Context

This section explains the reasons for gathering this information by setting out the legislative background.

Gender

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of his or her sex. Information on gender is also provided in the annual statutory monitoring the, as required by the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally.

Age

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 make it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on grounds of age. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different ages and age groups.

Community Background

The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The Order also requires the NICS to submit an annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This takes the form of a statistical return, providing information on the gender and community background composition of all people working in the NICS at the 1st January each year.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief and political opinion. Following guidance issued in July 2007 by the Equality Commission for NI the NICS has decided to use “community background” information as a proxy for political opinion.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) provides protection for disabled persons against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The DDA defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

Physical Impairment: this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs etc) caused through illness by accident or from birth. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease.

Mental Impairment: this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability, and social functioning.

Substantial: put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carryout normal day to day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

Long-term adverse effect: the effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one. A person with a life expectancy of less than 12 months is of course covered if the effect is likely to last for the whole of that time.

A normal day to day activity: this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something so individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

What sort of effect must there be?

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech; hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; ability to take part in normal social interaction and form social relationships; or perception of risk of physical danger.

What happens if the effects are reduced by medication or other treatment?

Broadly speaking, the effects that matter are those that would be present if there was no medication or treatment taking place. The exception is people who wear spectacles or contact lenses when what matters is the effect that remain while the spectacles or contact lenses are being used.

Are there any types of condition covered by special provisions in the DDA?

Yes, because some people with particular conditions might not otherwise be counted as disabled. These are provisions covering:

Recurring or fluctuating conditions such as arthritis, where the effects can sometimes be less than substantial , which are treated as continuing to have a substantial adverse effect so long as that effect is likely to recur;

Conditions which progressively deteriorate, such as motor neuron disease, which count as having a substantial effect from the first time they have any effect at all on ability to carryout normal day to day activities even if it is not substantial, so long as there is eventually likely to be a substantial adverse effect; and

People with cancer, HIV, or multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled people from the point of diagnosis, regardless of whether or not they have any symptoms.

Are any conditions not covered?

Yes, the following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:

Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from the substance being medically prescribed);

Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition;

Tendency to set fires, or steal, or physically or sexually abuse other persons;

Exhibitionism and voyeurism;

Severe disfigurements consisting of tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing are not treated as having substantial adverse effects.

What if someone has recovered from a disability?

Much of the DDA also applies to people who have had a disability in the past (for example, someone who was disabled by mental ill health) but have now fully recovered. People who were registered disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (NI) 1945 both on 12 January 1995 and 2 December 1996 will be regarded as having had a disability in the past if they do not in any case fall within the definition of the DDA.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without.

Race

The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial group(s).

Sexual Orientation

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) Order 2003 makes it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. In order to monitor the effectiveness of NICS policies information is gathered on sexual orientation. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation.

Marital Status

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended), makes it unlawful to discriminate against married persons and civil partners in employment. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different marital status.

Dependants Status

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions in NI, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without.

Confidentiality of Monitoring Information

The following general principles will be applied to all individual monitoring information:-

- individual monitoring information will be afforded a high degree of confidentiality;
- misuse of monitoring information will be viewed as a disciplinary offence; and
- individual monitoring information will only be disclosed to members of staff or officials of a trade union, members of which are employed in the NICS, if it is necessary to do so for the appropriate discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the above internal safeguards on the protection of equality monitoring information generally, the confidentiality of community background monitoring information is protected through Regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (FETO). These make it a criminal offence, subject to specific exceptions, for an employer or employee to disclose information on the community background of an individual which has been obtained, or is used, for the purpose of monitoring under FETO.

As with other forms of personal data, the obtaining, use, storage and disclosure of monitoring information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Monitoring information is held on computer and is protected by a high level of security. Access to this data is restricted to those NICS staff, employees of HRConnect and Trade Union officials whose duties make it necessary for them to have it. Misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.