

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**

**IRC237943**

**Assistant Statistician**

**Northern Ireland Statistics and  
Research Agency (NISRA)**

**Department of Finance  
(DoF)**

**Completed Application Forms  
must be submitted to  
HRConnect no later than 12  
noon (UK time) on  
**Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019****

**Please retain a copy of this  
booklet for your reference  
throughout the selection  
process.**

***Northern Ireland Statistics and  
Research Agency (NISRA)***

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**www.nisra.gov.uk  
NISRA Facebook**

**Communication between HRConnect and you**

HRConnect will electronically issue as many competition communications as possible. You should therefore check your email account, including junk mail folder, 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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## **FOREWORD**

### **A note from the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency**

NISRA is an organisation of around 300 statisticians and 130 administrative staff. We work across all Government Departments and many other public bodies. We record births, deaths and marriages and carry out all of the major household and business surveys in Northern Ireland including the Census of Population. Whether the issue be one of health, education, transport or the labour market, we have teams conducting statistical analysis and social research in those areas.

Our information base is impressive and our goals span data collection, analysis, interpretation and commentary. Government at all levels need to justify public expenditure on policies that are effective and efficient. NISRA provides much of the evidence required for the policy formulation, development and evaluation necessary for this. Producing and qualifying such information presents many challenges but our job is to meet these and ensure the supply of high quality, timely information.

We are looking for professionals who can develop careers in data collection, analysis and interpretation. You will have opportunities for training and development, both personal and professional.

If you are a motivated person who can demonstrate that a career in official statistics or research is your passion we would very much like to hear from you.

**Siobhan Carey**  
**Chief Executive**

## BACKGROUND

### **About the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)**

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency is an Executive Agency of the Department of Finance (DoF).

NISRA provides statistics, research and registration services and is responsible for taking the Census of Population.

NISRA's core purpose is:

- to provide a high quality, cost effective registration, statistical and research service that informs the policy and democratic processes; and
- to provide a window on Northern Ireland's society and its economy by providing evidence to inform decision-making.

Around 430 staff work in NISRA along with approximately 300 field staff. More than half of the 430 staff are statisticians and social researchers (all of whom are graded as Statisticians). The remainder are administrators or IT staff. Statisticians are drawn from a range of academic disciplines including: maths, statistics, psychology, geography, computing, data science, engineering etc. NISRA staff work primarily in Government Departments but are also located in other Agencies, Non Departmental Public Bodies and local councils.

Although career management of staff in NISRA is centred in the DoF, staff can expect to work in a number of different Departments throughout their career. The jobs on offer will normally be based in Greater Belfast including Bangor area, although there may be a small number of vacancies that are based throughout Northern Ireland.

Assistant Statisticians will have the opportunity to participate in training and development activities starting with a programme of induction and continuing throughout their careers, in accordance with business needs.

Information about NISRA can be obtained on the Agency's website at [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk) and on Facebook and Twitter at;

<https://www.facebook.com/nisra.gov.uk/>

<https://twitter.com/nisra>

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The work that Assistant Statisticians do depends on where they are posted, but may include some of the following:

Data Acquisition through:

- Survey work – including questionnaire and sample design
- Administrative data
- Scoping new and innovative data sources
- Evaluations and focus groups

Data Analysis and Research including:

- Data validation and statistical disclosure control
- Descriptive and inferential analysis of data and research
- Statistical modelling and forecasting
- Exploration of new data science techniques
- Geographical Information Systems

Effective Presentation and Dissemination of Data and Research findings using:

- Statistical and Research publications
- Infographics and innovative data visualisation tools
- Reports to brief policy makers
- Submissions to Ministers
- Presentations to a range of audiences
- Assembly/Parliamentary questions and ad-hoc queries

**The above list is not exhaustive but gives a good indication of the main duties of the post. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time according to business needs.**

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

There are a number of full-time posts available. Successful candidates will become employees of the Department of Finance (DoF).

Further appointments may be made from this competition should NICS positions become vacant which require the same eligibility criteria and have similar duties and responsibilities.

### **Location**

Successful applicants will normally be based in Greater Belfast including Bangor area. There may be a small number of vacancies that are based throughout Northern Ireland.

### **Salary**

Salary will be in the range £30,149 - £31,760 (under review), within which pay progression will be performance related. Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale. If the candidate is an existing NICS civil servant normal pay on promotion/re-grading terms will apply.

### **Pensions**

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at [www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni)

### **Holidays**

In addition to public and privilege holidays, currently 12 days, the annual leave allowance will be 25 days, rising to 30 days after 5 years' service.

### **Hours of Work**

The normal conditioned hours of work are full-time: 42 hours per week which includes a 1 hour meal break (37 hours net) Monday to Friday. Most offices work flexi-time.

### **Travel**

The successful candidates may be required to travel throughout Northern Ireland, and on occasion, within Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

### **Vetting**

Successful candidates will be required to be cleared to Basic Check level. Some vacancies will require candidates to be cleared to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC), Security Check (SC) or Developed Vetting (DV) levels.

## **Probation**

Confirmation of appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of 1 year. If performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory the appointment may be terminated.

## **Career Development**

The NICS is committed to career development and offers attractive career prospects across a wide variety of roles and professions. Career development is an integral part of the performance management system. Personal Development Plans identify learning and development needs with a view to enhancing skills and capabilities. NI Civil Servants have access to a wide range of internal job opportunities, including secondments with external organisations and are encouraged and supported in proactively managing their career.

## **Conflict of Interest**

It is a basic requirement of all Civil Servants that their private activities should not bring them into conflict with their official duties.

Conflict of Interest is not limited to the individual's own private, financial or other interests, as family, friends and associates may also have dealings which affect the Department's business directly or indirectly. Therefore to avoid any conflict or potential conflict and to demonstrate impartiality to the public at all times, an officer must not, without prior approval, engage in any activity which could be considered to be in conflict with official business.

## **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply should contact Deirdre Houston or Jacquie Hyvart, by email at [Deirdre.Houston@finance-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Deirdre.Houston@finance-ni.gsi.gov.uk) or [Jacquie.Hyvart@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:Jacquie.Hyvart@nisra.gov.uk) or telephone 028 9038 8450.

If you have any questions about the competition process, or require any documentation in an alternative format, you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email: [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must currently possess, or expect to obtain by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019:

1. At least an upper second class honours degree [2.1] that included at least one module in statistics, data analysis or social science research methods\*;

**OR**

2. At least an upper second class honours degree [2.1] and a Royal Statistical Society award of at least Certificate level\*\*;

**OR**

3. A postgraduate degree that included at least one module in statistics, data analysis or social science research methods \*\*\*.

\*Applicants applying under criteria 1 **must** provide in their application form details of **all** their modules taken in their degree(s). These modules may be used to determine the extent of the candidate's statistics, data analysis or social science research methods.

\*\*Applicants applying under criteria 2 **must** provide in their application form details of their degree and of their Royal Statistical Society Award of at least Certificate level.

\*\*\*Applicants applying under criteria 3 **must** provide in their application form details of their primary degree and all their modules taken in their postgraduate degree. These modules may be used to determine the extent of the candidate's statistics, data analysis or social science research methods.

**The Panel will not make assumptions from the title of your qualification. If this information is not included in your application form the panel may not be able to determine that you meet the eligibility requirements and your application may be rejected.**

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/will be 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 and how it is equivalent, so that a well-informed decision can be made.

You will be required to provide documentary evidence of your qualifications prior to placement so please ensure you have these readily available.

**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 selection 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.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be explored 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.
- 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.
- 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. Please do not include your name in the employment history or eligibility criteria sections.
- The NICS Competency framework can be accessed via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Assessment for this competition will comprise of 3 parts;

1. Test – 75 % of overall assessment score
2. Eligibility Sift
2. Competence Based Interview – 25% of overall assessment score

### 1. TEST

HRConnect will invite ALL candidates to test which will take place in Belfast, during **week commencing** 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019. You will be provided with a specific date during this week. Please note that it is unlikely that other test dates will be available, therefore candidates will need to make themselves available for their allocated test date.

The test will include:

- a verbal ability test;
- a numeracy test;
- a test of basic statistical and research concepts.

Examples of test questions for the verbal ability and statistics and research concepts will be provided with the invitation to attend the tests. Practice questions for the numeracy test will be completed on the day of the assessment.

Only those who meet the required pass mark in each of the 3 tests in addition to the eligibility requirements may progress to interview. The panel reserve the right to sift only the top scoring candidates from the test.

The overall test score will constitute 75% of the overall available mark, and will be added to the interview score to produce a merit order list.

### 2. SIFT

The application forms for the top scoring candidates in the assessment test will go forward to the selection panel to be assessed against the eligibility criteria as outlined on page 8.

### **3. COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEW**

Those candidates who proceed to the interview stage of the assessment process will complete a scenario based assessment and a competence based interview. The overall score will constitute 25% of the overall available mark, and will be added to the test score to produce a merit order list.

#### **NICS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

The selection process will assess candidates against the NICS competency framework at level 3.

The NICS competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results.

Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten competencies, which are grouped into three clusters. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service competency framework can be accessed via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

**It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of selection process. Should you require assistance in accessing the competency framework please contact HRConnect.**

#### **SCENARIO BASED ASSESSMENT**

Immediately prior to interview, candidates will be provided with a scenario and questions relating to it. Candidates will be required to present their responses to the interview panel, lasting no longer than 5 minutes. The scenario and questions will be provided to candidates when they report for interview and they will be given 30 minutes to read through and prepare their responses.

Flip chart paper and writing materials will be provided for candidates' use in the preparation room. No personal documentation may be brought into the preparation room. The only notes candidates will be permitted to bring into the interview room will be those prepared in the preparation room. Candidates are permitted to use their notes to present their responses to the panel. However, they will be asked to leave these with the panel at the end of the interview, for disposal.

The scenario based assessment will be used to assess the **Making Effective Decisions** competency.

**Marks available: 40**

## **INTERVIEW CRITERIA**

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

### **1. Changing and Improving**

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. It is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways.

**Marks available: 20**

### **2. Delivering at Pace**

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

**Marks available: 20**

### **3. Leading and Communicating**

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens.

**Marks available: 20**

### **4. Collaborating and Partnering**

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the NICS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

**Marks available: 20**

**Total marks available – 120**

**Overall Pass mark – 72**

## **COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS**

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

Panel members may also use supplementary questions following each lead question to clarify and fully understand answers to the lead questions.

No notes, personal documentation or mobile devices may be brought into the interview room.

Following the interview candidates should not discuss the content of the scenario based assessment, or the interview questions, with other candidates.

## **INTERVIEWS**

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in Belfast during late May and June 2019.

## **AVAILABILITY**

Please note that this competition is being run to a tight schedule and changes to the timetable will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

### APPLICATION FORM

Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before making your application and retain a copy for your reference. 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. **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.

#### **Please note:**

- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, hard copy application packs are available on request. All applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- 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, unless it is specifically requested in the application form and Candidate Information Booklet.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date and time.
- 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.
- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- When completing the online application, your information is saved as you move through the pages. You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button. Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- 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.
- You must click SUBMIT once you have finished your online application. You will receive an acknowledgement email. Please contact HRConnect if you do not receive an acknowledgement email within 24 hrs.

### **Help with making your application**

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office - contact details are available on NIDirect: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices-jobcentres-and-social-security-offices>

You can also get advice or assistance from local disability employment organisations. To find out more about local disability employment organisations contact Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), an umbrella group for individuals and organisations promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to access and maintain employment, email [info@niuse.org.uk](mailto:info@niuse.org.uk), tel. 0044 (0)28 71 377709, text phone 0044 (0) 28 71 372077

## **GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

### **INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

**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 to demonstrate the range of behaviours associated with the competences being assessed. 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.

For professional and technical posts, questions may be framed in the context of professional elements of the post.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **The Merit Principle**

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

Further information on the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at [www.nicscommissioners.org](http://www.nicscommissioners.org).

### **NICSHR Privacy Notice**

NICSHR are committed to protecting your privacy. HRConnect manage job applications on behalf of NICSHR, in line with the NICSHR privacy notice available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk)

### **Offers of Employment**

Candidates will only receive one offer of appointment which, if not accepted, will generally result in withdrawal from the competition.

### **Changes in personal circumstances and contact details**

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances. It is important that HRConnect have up to date contact details.

### **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.

### **Merit List**

**HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed.** It is presently intended that the merit list for this competition should remain extant for a period of two years. However you should be aware that circumstances may arise in the future where it will be necessary to extend the currency of the merit list for a further period. The merit list will only be extended where cogent practical reasons for doing so arise.

## **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.

## **Documentation**

Identification documents to satisfy the Nationality and Security requirements of the post will be required. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

For posts which require qualifications - You will be required to supply documentary evidence of your qualifications prior to letters of appointment being issued to successful candidates.

You should ensure that the required documents are readily available.

## **Right to Work and Nationality Requirements**

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom and satisfy the Nationality requirements for appointment to the NICS. Applicants must be either:

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

Further guidance on Nationality requirements is available via [www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk).

## **Security**

### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post in the NICS 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) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

Further information regarding the Baseline Personnel Security Standard, including other acceptable documents is available via [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

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.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni).

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.

Some vacancies will require candidates to be cleared to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC), Security Check (SC) or Developed Vetting (DV) levels.

- 2. Counter Terrorist Check (CTC): as point 1 plus check of Security Service records.
- 3. Security Check (SC): as point 2 plus credit reference check.
- 4. Developed Vetting (DV): as point 3 plus subject interview and field investigation.

### **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

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

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal

Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to the DoF website [www.finance-ni.gov.uk](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk).

**The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**

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

### **Feedback**

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken 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**