



## **Candidate Information Booklet**

**IRC241826**

**Higher Scientific Officer**

**Virus Molecular Diagnostics 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 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**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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## ABOUT 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.

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 AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE**

AFBI is an internationally-facing multidisciplinary scientific organisation, based at seven locations in Northern Ireland. In line with our mission of “using scientific excellence to advance the local and global agri-food sector”, the Institute has developed a reputation for being an influential, internationally-recognised, centre for innovation in agri-food and biosciences, providing high quality and locally-relevant science to all of its customers. 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.

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The Institute has two science divisions, Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) and Veterinary Sciences Division (VSD), which are organised into a number of specialist scientific Branches that are supported by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Division.

## **VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)**

VSD currently employs approximately 250 staff across its four Branches.

The main areas of work of VSD Branches are outlined below.

### **AFBI Emergency Response**

One of the key roles of AFBI is in delivering a laboratory response to local, national and international emergencies involving animal and plant diseases, and food and feed contamination incidents. This is in support of government and industry, and encompasses both AFBI Divisions. The AFBI response, which transcends normal branch and divisional boundaries, includes contingency planning and exercising, horizon scanning, research and development of laboratory methods, incident response and management, as well as expert scientific advice to government and industry.

### **Bacteriology**

The VSD Bacteriology 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 Immunodiagnosics Sciences**

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 the Food Standards Agency 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**

The animal disease diagnostic services provided by the AFBI Stormont and Omagh laboratories VSD's Disease Surveillance and Investigation Branch (DSIB) 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**

The work of 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.

## VIROLOGY WORK AREA

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

The Virology Branch has secured substantial external 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, the EU and USA elsewhere, and allows NI to benefit from the latest international research findings. Recent external funders include the EU, BBSRC, USDA, Innovate UK, Invest Northern Ireland, DAFM/Stimulus and international commercial companies.

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 production 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 previous work include the identification of new viruses such as porcine circoviruses, salmon pancreas disease, chicken astroviruses and porcine bocaviruses. Next generation sequencing technology is increasingly being applied for virus identification. 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 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.

The Branch also includes a Viral Molecular Diagnostic work area, which undertakes the molecular identification and sequencing for a number of epizootic and emerging viral pathogens such as influenza, Newcastle Disease and porcine epidemic diarrhoea viruses. The work provides an essential emergency response capability for DAERA and NI agri-food industry, allowing

the identification of outbreaks of notifiable diseases, new or emerging diseases, and those appropriate for further research.

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

There is currently one full time position to be filled. This post will be on a permanent basis. 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**

Salary will be within the range £ 30,149 - £ 31,760 (under review) within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale except for existing AFBI staff for whom starting salary may be determined by either promotion or re-grading terms if these are more favourable.

Consideration may be given to starting at a higher point on the salary scale for applicants with additional relevant experience and/or qualifications. The relevance and extent of the additional experience will be determined by AFBI at the time of offer of appointment.

### **Annual Leave**

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days.

### **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. AFBI operates a flexi working system. The postholder will from time to time be required to work outside their normal conditioned hours, where it is necessary, to fulfil the demands of the post.

### **Location**

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI VSD, Stormont Co. Antrim BT4 3SD

### **Travel**

The post may entail some travel throughout the UK and Ireland 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. You may also be required to travel internationally on occasion.

### **Probationary Period**

The post holder will serve 12 months probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment.

## **Further Information**

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may telephone Philip White on 028 9025 5060.

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

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The post holder will report to Dr Michael McMenemy, Head of the Virus Molecular Diagnostics laboratory.

The post-holder's duties will be to manage all aspects of the laboratory molecular work associated with the statutory testing for emergency response and associated commercial work for virus molecular diagnostics. The post-holder will also be required to have a role in emergency planning and emergency response molecular virology testing in preparedness for a major viral epizootic disease outbreak. This will involve close collaboration with DAERA, stakeholders and national and international reference laboratories to ensure that the most appropriate technologies and capabilities are in place to support Northern Ireland agriculture. There may also be other *ad hoc* duties in addition to those listed.

The post-holder will be responsible for:

### **1. Act as Deputy Technical Manager for ISO 17025 accreditation**

The post-holder will be required to maintain ISO 17025 quality certification including the production of relevant reports and liaising with DAERA to deliver the Assigned Work Programme.

### **2. Act as suite manager for a Biological Containment Level 3 laboratory**

Ensure compliance with health & safety, biocontainment and related requirements in the Biological Containment Level 3 laboratory facility.

### **3. Laboratory Work**

Carry out PCR and DNA sequencing methodologies related to emergency response and other commercial or research work.

### **4. Finances/procurement**

To ensure that all reporting is completed on time, and that financial records are maintained and handled in a fully auditable manner, compliant with AFBI procedures. To carry out procurement of consumables and capital equipment.

### **5. Establish and maintain linkages with other research groups**

To establish and maintain linkages with the National Reference laboratories in the UK and the European Reference laboratories to ensure that the most appropriate technologies and capabilities are in place to support Northern Ireland agriculture.

## **6. To undertake continuous professional development**

To maintain an up-to-date knowledge of scientific literature in relevant areas and to demonstrate personal development in all relevant areas of managing, staff, Health and Safety and resources.

## **7. To fulfil other duties**

The post holder will be required to fulfil any other duties and responsibilities as determined by management that fall within the remit of the post. The job description is not intended to be rigid and inflexible. Rather, it should be regarded as working guidelines within which the post holder will work.

**Please note that the above does not constitute an exhaustive list of duties and the successful candidate will be required to take on additional functions as directed by management.**

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

- 1a) A primary degree in microbiology, veterinary medicine, molecular biology, food science, biological science, or other relevant science discipline.

**OR**

- 1b) A primary degree in a non-scientific discipline plus at least 3 years' experience in microbiology, veterinary medicine, molecular biology, food science, biological science, or other relevant science discipline.

**AND**

- 2) A minimum of 2 years' experience in the operating of an ISO17025 accredited quality system for molecular work including real time PCR and evidence of having contributed to the development of protocols and the quality system.

**AND**

- 3) A minimum of 2 years' experience in the management of staff and consumable resources.

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.

In providing evidence for each of eligibility it will be essential that candidates draw upon specific examples of work they have undertaken to illustrate the extent to which they possess the experience and skills required. It will not be sufficient simply to list the duties and responsibilities of posts held.

## 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 in the order listed:

- 1) Excellent communication skills and proven ability to write and present scientific reports.
- 2) Practical experience of managing high throughput testing.
- 3) Experience in using sequence analysis software and Excel computer software for management of large data sets.
- 4) Be a named author of at least one scientific publication.

## FURTHER SHORTLISTING

In the event that further shortlisting is required the selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each of criteria on a scored basis, with a minimum score set for each criterion. Only those applicants assessed as meeting all essential criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

However, in the case of a high volume of applicants AFBI may decide to limit the number of applicants it invites for interview in a proportionate manner. In this instance all applicants who meet the essential requirements will be listed in merit order according to their total score and the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

### **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.**
- **Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk)**

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

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

Higher Scientific Officer is analogous to Staff Officer Grade in the NICS.

### **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. 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 through [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 the assessment / interview criteria as outlined below.**

## 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

- Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance; demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of animal virus molecular diagnostics and emergency response for epizootic and newly emerging viral diseases.
- Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation, manipulation, analysis and interpretation of scientific data.
- Applies knowledge and skills in writing scientific and technical reports and presenting to stakeholders.

**Marks available: 60**

**Minimum standard: 36**

### 2. Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well reasoned, justifiable decisions.

**Marks Available: 10**

### 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: 10**

### 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 AFBI, 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: 10**

## **5. 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. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times.

**Marks Available: 20      Minimum standard 12**

**Total marks available: 110**

**Overall pass mark: 66 (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 AFBI Newforge, Belfast during week commencing Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### **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.

### **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 24.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit. Applications are particularly welcomed from Roman Catholics and Females as these groups are currently under-represented 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](http://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](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.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is a criminal offence for anyone who is included on a barred list to work or seek work, in regulated activity.

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. 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.

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

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni/index/new-members.htm>

or

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

Civil Service Pensions  
Waterside House  
75 Duke Street  
Londonderry  
BT47 6FP  
Tel: 02871 319000  
Email: [cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto: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  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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](mailto: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 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; 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 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.

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.