



Candidate Information Booklet

IRC263668

Geophysics & Coastal Processes: Senior Scientific Officer (SSO)

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Monday 3rd May 2021.

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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BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

AFBI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by DAERA and a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial companies.

In line with AFBI's vision of "Advancing the local and global agri-food sectors through scientific excellence." the Institute seeks to be an influential, internationally recognised, centre for research and scientific services in the agri-food and marine sectors, providing high quality and locally relevant science. Our current Corporate Plan for 2018-22 sets out our aims to deliver for society, the economy and the environment, and to meet the needs of customers and partners in an ever more efficient and effective manner. To achieve these aims, our Corporate Plan also outlines how we, with the support of our sponsoring department, plan to invest in our people and infrastructure to provide innovative, efficient and effective service delivery. These plans include an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure including a new animal health sciences building at AFBI Stormont, improved research farm facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a replacement sea-going research vessel.

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 universities and industry mean that it is ideally placed to carry out research that has 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 funders 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's main work areas are aimed at leading improvements in the agri-food industry; protecting animal, plant and human health; and enhancing the natural and marine environments. We have a staff complement of approximately 650 people, with an annual turnover of approximately £60 million. 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.

AFBI SITES ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND



AFBI has 7 sites across Northern Ireland

- Newforge Lane (Headquarters)
- Stormont
- Hillsborough
- Crossnacreevy
- Loughgall
- Omagh
- Bushmills

In addition a 53 m dedicated marine research vessel RV Corystes based in Port of Belfast.

AFBI's science activities are organised across 3 divisions – Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) and Veterinary Science Division (VSD) with Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD) delivering on Business needs.

ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION (EMSD)

EMSD is a new science division, which has been established following a review of AFBI's organisational structure. It comprises of two areas, which have in recent years been part of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division. The areas of work which will fall within EMSD currently have approximately 120 scientific, technical and support staff.

The decision to establish this new division reflects the increasing importance and amount of scientific work undertaken by AFBI in the agri-environment, marine and aquatic ecosystems areas. The division will focus on evidence based science, which is key to addressing the significant environmental challenges whilst ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and the future prosperity of the agri-food sector. The division is in a unique position to delivery on a high impact and quality integrated programme of research spanning from the soil to the sea.

Key actors within EMSD represent:

Agri-Environment Branch - which interfaces between intensive livestock production, and environmental management and regulation which includes the impacts of agricultural land use practices on soil, water and air and identify ways of optimising land-based livestock production.

Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch who conduct research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in the area of marine fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone science, biological oceanography, marine ecosystem health, and freshwater fisheries stock assessment.

AFBI's other science and Finance and Corporate Affairs divisions are as follows:-

SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)

SAFSD is a highly multidisciplinary division with a key focus on livestock, plants and in general agriculture production and the quality of food it produces. The Division has a key focus, on the impact of food production on the environment and the economy. This multi-disciplinary team spans all aspects of the food supply chain taking research from the soil through to the plant, the animal and the resultant food quality and nutritional value, while also working with colleagues at VSD to ensure animal health and food safety is optimised. A key element of the work also examines quantitative and qualitative socio-economic impacts.

SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock, land management and environmental management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation as well as monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally. A key drive within SAFSD is to produce high quality peer review publications while also ensuring the research conducted has impact through an active dissemination programme.

VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)

VSD currently employs approximately 260 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff and is predominantly based at Stoney Road, Belfast with a smaller disease surveillance centre based at Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

The Division undertakes an integrated programme of statutory, disease surveillance, emergency response and R&D work on the diseases of major animal and human health significance along with significant programmes of work on the chemical and microbiological safety of food. The work supports government policy and disease eradication and control programmes in areas such as bovine tuberculosis, food-borne zoonotic infections and transboundary diseases. One of the key roles of the Division is in delivering a laboratory response to local, national and international emergencies involving animal diseases, and food and feed contamination incidents.

VSD also provides a disease investigation service covering all of the major farm animal species and fish, and provides commercial laboratory services in support of industry led disease eradication and control programmes. The work of the Division is underpinned by research and development (R&D) on animal diseases and food safety issues relevant to the local industry.

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION

The Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD) currently employs approximately circa 100 staff across its Branches. The Division is based primarily at AFBI headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast but with staff deployed at some of the larger sites.

The Division supports the AFBI Chief Executive and Executive management team (EMT) in securing and deploying the financial, people and infrastructure resources of AFBI. The Division has a key role in ensuring that AFBI is an efficient, effective, sustainable and accountable organisation with high standards of governance

The Division currently has five senior post holders reporting to the Director of Finance & Corporate Affairs namely Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Affairs, Head of Corporate Communications, Head of Human Resources and Head of Research Support. This senior team has the responsibility for leading and providing the support services across the Institute.

FISHERIES AND AQUATICS ECOSYSTEMS BRANCH

Within the Environment and Marine Division, 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 63 AFBI staff, together with contract staff and postgraduate students are based at FAEB. FAEB is well resourced and supported by a 53m marine research vessel, the *R. V. Corystes*, underpinning the marine science programme.

FAEB conducts science programmes across several core areas:

- Marine Fisheries
- Marine Ecology
- Oceanography and Limnology
- Freshwater Fisheries

Individually and in combination, these core areas aim to sustain multidisciplinary research programmes that merit national and international recognition. The successful candidate will work within the Oceanography and Limnology group of FAEB.

The Oceanography and Limnology programme aims to provide evidence-based science to develop ecosystem-based approaches to the management of Northern Ireland's coastal and regional waters, freshwater catchments and the water utility sector. This is delivered through a number of research themes in areas such as coastal oceanography, limnology, aquatic chemistry, water quality monitoring, and modelling. The group collects data to develop science to inform policy and support the management of the marine and aquatic environments using the AFBI research vessel *Corystes* and other platforms, including data recovered from *in situ* sensors deployed at sea, lakes and rivers.

This is an exciting opportunity to influence and develop our coastal science programme and to expand AFBI's national and international portfolio of projects. This is a scientific post; the post holder will work as a project leader in the Oceanography and Limnology programme at FAEB on Geophysics and Coastal processes and will be expected to be an active scientist in the field of marine environment monitoring and research. The post requires a dynamic scientist with exemplary numeracy and experience of working with complex data from observational and modelling programmes and the ability to work with coding, modelling and machine learning applications. The post will contribute significantly to AFBI's key theme of "Enhancing the marine and natural environments" in acknowledgement of the climate change pressures in the coastal environment, and the developing policy requirements. The most up to date regional climatic predictions (UKCP18) for the region identify a number of potential physical impacts that will affect the coastal and marine communities and environment in Northern Ireland. The programme comprises a diverse group of scientists who provide high quality oceanographic observations, technical support, data interpretation, and scientific advice to a comprehensive portfolio of UK and international customers, including the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and its

agencies. The post holder will work closely with the leads for marine habitats, oceanography, limnology and chemistry to aid the development of new programmes and proposals. The role requires an experienced, horizon scanning marine scientist who can join an established team and develop AFBI's portfolio of oceanographic services and activities.

The work will require travel and will also include working at sea in all weather conditions, during unsocial hours, and at weekends. Typically working at sea requires people to carry out physically demanding work and manual handling, including the handling of marine organisms, putting up with adverse conditions at sea for long periods of time (motion sickness) and working in close proximity with others (i.e. shared sleeping quarters).

The post is to address a number of developing DAERA policy priorities and environmental challenges related to coastal erosion, emerging pollutants and climate change pressures.

JOB DESCRIPTION

There is currently one full-time, Senior Scientific Officer, permanent position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further vacancies (permanent and/or fixed term) which may arise. The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

Salary

The salary for the post will be within the range £38,017- £41,799, within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff 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.

In exceptional circumstances only, 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, increasing to 30 after five year's satisfactory service.

Working Hours

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

Location

The successful candidate will normally be based at AFBI Newforge, Belfast BT9 5PX. They may also be expected to work at other AFBI sites as required. The successful candidate will be required to work at sea in inclement conditions within a team of scientists for up to approximately 30 days per year, on trips of up to two weeks duration on research and chartered vessels engaged in scientific studies.

Travel

The post will entail some travel throughout the UK, Ireland and internationally and for this reason the successful applicant will require access to a 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 candidate to carry out the full range of assigned duties. The candidate will be required to successfully undertake a personal sea survival course before any appointment can be confirmed.

Medical

It will be a condition of appointment that the post holders must hold an ENG 1 seafarers medical certificate, or be able to pass a seagoing medical ENG 1 examination.

A sea survival course also must be successfully undertaken before any appointment can be confirmed.

Probationary Period

The post holder will serve 12 months' probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a formal review will be conducted to determine if the posting will be made permanent.

Further Information

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may contact AFBHR by email Workforceplanning@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.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The post holder will report to the Oceanography and Limnology Programme leader (Principal Scientific Officer – Grade 7). The successful candidate must be able and willing to undertake duties with the requirements detailed below, and must be able to work independently where required. The main duties of the post include the following:

1. Initiation and delivery of research and development programmes

The key focus of this strategic recruitment is to develop our science excellence in support of national policy, and to lead our science in physical coastal processes and climate change related impacts in the coastal environment. The post holder will develop programmes in areas of climate change adaptation/mitigation, ecosystem understanding and the interactions between freshwater and marine systems by working closely with the project leads within the group (including disciplines such as aquatic chemistry, oceanography, limnology and modelling). The post holder will deliver activity that supports the multidisciplinary research approach within the branch and AFBI.

The post holder will be a project leader within the Oceanography and Limnology group who will support the growth and development of FAEB science to ensure its future fitness-for-purpose. To reflect the increasing use of technology, autonomy and data telemetry in the sector, the post holder must be capable of managing autonomous observation technologies and maintaining their data flows as well as working with remote sensing data and model outputs. The post holder must be highly numerate and be able to manage data to the required data and meta-data standards.

They will be actively engaged with an operational sampling programme which includes the collection and processing of samples to ensure that data flow from both automated instrumentation and laboratory activities is maintained. The successful candidate may be expected to spend time at sea on board the AFBI research vessel when required to deliver the required programme.

The post-holder will develop and propose research projects that enhance the outputs, function and management of our oceanography and limnology activity, and link with our Habitats research to couple our understanding the physical and biological systems. This research should assist in the development of policy and management strategies by Government Departments and the need for compliance with legislation relevant to. He/she should also endeavour to attract outside funding to the Branch.

The post-holder will supervise and participate in these projects and ensure that deliverables are met and the conclusions are communicated to appropriate stakeholders. The post-holder will be expected to initiate data collection, analysis, interpret outputs and prepare reports arising from the projects, and publish findings in high quality scientific journals.

The post holder will be required to build and maintain relationships with internal and external customers and monitor delivery performance from the bench through to the expected outputs, whether it be scientific advice, new capabilities, test results or research findings.

2. To deliver specialist advice and secure funding

The post will require an applied and in depth knowledge of marine environmental science, policy, and UK/European legislation primarily concerned with the marine environment. There will be opportunities to contribute to our work in our growing portfolio of externally funded research as well as contributing significantly to the development of national and international funding opportunities and research proposals.

3. Manage staff and resources

To provide leadership and manage research staff, technical staff and other staff as appropriate, in compliance with all relevant AFBI health and safety and staff management practices. To oversee the management of all aspects of facilities and equipment used by the FAEB and ensure all resources are utilised to greatest effect and properly maintained.

The post holder will take an active role in developing highly competent scientists and will provide mentoring and technical developmental support to the analytical team members and postgraduate students. The post holder will also contribute to the development of innovations in AFBI projects, advise on science capability needs and contribute towards workforce planning.

4. Establish and maintain linkages with other research groups

To establish and maintain linkages with other research groups and oceanographic partnerships in the UK, and Ireland and internationally to ensure that where possible, research is carried out collaboratively and that AFBI's research is widely recognised.

5. Manage internal and external analytical quality control systems

The post holder will need to liaise with the technical teams to ensure oceanographic equipment is calibrated, serviced and fit for purpose. A key aspect of the post will be to ensure that quality assurance management systems and operations are maintained to be compliant with ISO9001 audit criteria, and that data flows are managed to the required MEDIN data standards.

6. To undertake data interpretation, the publication of results and report writing

To oversee and carry out the accurate collation of research data, appropriate statistical analyses, data interpretation and publication of results in peer-reviewed scientific journals. To prepare reports (e.g. press articles and other material) as required to ensure effective technology transfer of relevant results,

and to meet the contractual requirements of research programmes. To communicate the outcomes of research projects to stakeholders and to the scientific community, and to provide a lead to policy on issues arising from research programmes, when appropriate. This will necessitate the job holder having written skills of a high standard.

7. 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 research programmes, staff and resources.

8. Student supervision

The post holder should seek postgraduate research projects through internal and external funding routes, and will be encouraged and supported to supervise and co-supervise postgraduate students involved in research programmes.

9. 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.

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

Working on board vessels will be a physically demanding job with significant manual handling and the handling of aquatic organisms. The post holder will be required to be sufficiently fit to work on a moving platform for prolonged periods of time and, and as part of a team.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants **must** demonstrate in their application form and at interview that they possess the following criteria, by the closing date:

1. A honours degree (at least 2:2) in marine geology, oceanography, geological science, marine science or relevant physical or natural scientific discipline; and
2. At least 3 years' post qualification research experience, gained in the last 5 years of marine science; and
3. At least 1 years' post qualification experience, gained within the last 5 years of initiating and conducting innovative scientific studies in marine or aquatic science, and to statistically analyse and interpret the results; and
4. Successful delivery of at least one paper in a peer-reviewed scientific journal* and proven ability to deliver oral scientific presentations.

* Candidates must provide evidence of criterion 4 by submitting a fully cited bibliography (authors, paper title, journal title, volume and page numbers) of **all** publications. Candidates can provide this information within the application form itself, or if necessary, it can be sent by the closing date for applications as a separate attachment to: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

The bibliography should be marked with the relevant competition reference number (IRC263668), competition title and your full name.

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 these eligibility criteria 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 criterion will be applied in the order listed:

1. Experience in the use of remote sensing data and/or the analysis of data using machine learning;
2. Post-graduate qualifications in marine geology, oceanography, geological science, marine science or relevant physical or natural scientific discipline;
3. Membership of a relevant professional body.

Please note:

- **You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required.**
- **It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.**
- **The panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.**
- **If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.**
- **ONLY the details provided by you in your application form (the employment history and eligibility criteria) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post.**
- **The panel may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.**
- **Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk**

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 4 for the purposes of personal and professional development.

Senior Scientific Officer is analogous to Deputy Principal 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

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:

Presentation

Candidates will be required to deliver a presentation, lasting no more than 7 minutes, the subject of which will be provided to candidates in the invitation to interview letter.

Candidates should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview and no preparation time will be provided on the day of interview. Your presentation should be delivered via PowerPoint and you will be asked to submit it to HRConnect by a specific date prior to your interview. Full details will be provided should you be invited to interview.

Following the presentation, the panel may elect to ask questions on the presentation. In addition, the panel will ask a further competence based questions and it will contribute to the overall mark for this competence.

The presentation will be used to assess the '**Professional Knowledge and Skills**' competencies.

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 current developments in environmental chemistry and analytical instrumentation.
- 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.

Marks Available: 40 Pass mark: 24

2. Making Effective Decisions

Demonstrate the ability to analyse information and observe patterns and trends in a wide range of relevant and credible information sources, being able to draw objective conclusions from it and recognise the implication/risks to advice or policy. Prioritise activities to meet work area objectives and identify data gaps and relevant data sources.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

3. Managing a Quality Service

Demonstrates the ability to manage operations and activities to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of customer needs and requirements. Being organised and manage their time and activities of team to set priorities and to deliver a high quality and efficient service.

Marks Available: 20 Minimum Standard: 12

4. Collaborating and Partnering

Create and maintain positive, professional and collaborative working relationships with a range of people within the environmental chemistry field to support delivery of policy and business objectives and goals.

Marks Available 10

6. Delivering Value for Money

Demonstrate the ability to identify and bid for resources; manage resource use efficiently, effectively and economically to delivery services to customers, while maintaining the quality of the service delivery.

Marks Available: 10

7. Leading and Communicating

Demonstrates ability to develop teams and individuals to enhance performance and meet business objectives, Communicates in a way that is clear concise, timely and relevant to the audience.

Marks Available: 10

**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 Lane, Belfast during week commencing Monday 31st May 2021.

Candidates should note that due to current circumstances with COVID 19, social distancing measures will be put in place. If this is not possible the use of video technology may be used as an alternative.

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

- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed 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.
- State clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. State "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

You can apply online at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 through Experian. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. 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. Further information regarding policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the vetting process is available at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk under Useful Information.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni

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 Civil Service Pensions (Northern Ireland) website at:

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/civil-service-pensions-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

Contact details:

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect 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 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.