



Candidate Information Booklet

IRC263906

**Moored Technology and Instrument Oceanographer:
Higher Scientific Officer (HSO)**

**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 31st 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

As the Northern Ireland Government's main research and science provider in the areas of agri-food, fisheries and the environment, AFBI's science plays a crucial role in providing the underpinning statutory and analytical testing, research and development work, emergency response and expert scientific advice required to support the work of the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the wider agri-food industry.

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. 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 research, surveillance, and analytic and diagnostic testing for a wide range of funders 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 current Corporate Plan outlines our strategy and ambitions for the period 2018 to 2022. It sets out the 3 strategic outcomes we aim to deliver for society, the economy and the environment, as well as industry and customers in an ever more efficient and effective manner. The plan, demonstrates the unique multidisciplinary strength of AFBI and how we will work with partners from science, government, industry and farmers to provide a positive impact. These achievements will be underpinned by attracting and developing excellent staff and building fit for purpose physical infrastructure.

AFBI's 'Science Impacts 2020' publication outlines key outcomes from AFBI science. Notably over the past 5 years AFBI have delivered approximately four million animal, plant and food safety tests to support sales from the NI agri-food industry to the value of £3.2 billion. A key drive within AFBI is to produce high quality peer review publications while also ensuring the research conducted has impact through an active dissemination programme. Over the past 5 years, AFBI have delivered over 90 evidence and innovation projects for DAERA, approximately 400 peer review scientific publications and have secured £44m of external research grants and contracts working with partners from across 35 countries. We are also actively developing strategic alliances with other research organisation and dissemination partners to facilitate a pipeline of research from fundamental to applied and onward application to ensure the impact of AFBI Science.

In order to fulfil these outcomes for our funders and stakeholders across society, the economy and the environment, AFBI enjoys access to highly instrumented laboratory, field and ship based scientific platforms. Furthermore, we are working closely with our sponsor department to take forward an ambitious programme of capital investment in AFBI's infrastructure including a new animal health sciences building at AFBI Stormont, enhanced research farm facilities at AFBI Hillsborough and a replacement sea-going research vessel.

AFBI SITES

AFBI is located on seven sites across Northern Ireland with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

In addition AFBI has a dedicated marine research vessel, the RV Corystes, based in Port of Belfast.



1. Newforge Lane (Headquarters)
2. VSD Stormont
3. Hillsborough
4. Crossnacreevy
5. Loughgall
6. Omagh
7. Bushmills

AFBI has a current staff complement of approximately 700 people, with an annual turnover of approximately £60 million. We are currently organised across 4 divisions – Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD), Veterinary Science Division (VSD), and Finance and Corporate Affairs Division (FCAD).

ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE SCIENCES DIVISION

The Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD) is a new science division, which was established in late 2020 following a review of AFBI's organisational structure. It is comprised of two branches, which have in recent years been part of the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division.

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 deliver an integrated high impact programme of research spanning from the "soil to the sea".

There are two branches within EMSD;

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

Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch – conducts research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in marine fisheries stock assessment, coastal zone science, oceanography & limnology, marine and freshwater ecosystem health, and freshwater fisheries stock assessment.

SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SCIENCES DIVISION (SAFSD)

SAFSD currently employs scientific, technical and support staff across its five scientific based branches.

The Division is a highly multidisciplinary with a focus on livestock, plant and in general agriculture production and their interactions with the environment and the economy. This multi-disciplinary team can explore all aspects of the food supply chain taking research and scientific exploration 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 and land management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation and monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally.

SAFSD includes the following branches:-

Economics Research Branch – undertakes quantitative and qualitative socio-economic research to inform agri-food and rural policy development and industry decision making, regionally and nationally.

Livestock Production Sciences Branch – links fundamental livestock science to systems level research to deliver innovations for the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge.

Food Research Branch – delivers research in the areas of optimising eating quality and nutritional quality in meat, dairy and other food products, together with evaluating novel processes for extending shelf-life and increasing safety.

Grassland and Plant Science Branch – underpins DAERA's policy development on plant health and deliver scientific advances in areas such as grass breeding, testing and agronomy, plant health and land management.

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

VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)

VSD currently employs veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its four branches. The Division 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.

VSD includes the following branches:-

Bacteriology Branch – undertakes 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 food-borne zoonoses.

Chemical and Immunodiagnostic Sciences Branch – includes chemical analysis for a wide range of veterinary drug residues, marine biotoxins, pesticides, mycotoxins and heavy metals as well as immunodiagnostic testing in support of a number of disease control programmes including brucellosis, transboundary diseases, import/export testing and TSE.

Disease Surveillance and Investigation Branch – undertakes a programme of scanning (passive) disease surveillance on behalf of DAERA and provides commercial laboratory services in support of industry led disease eradication and control programmes.

Virology Branch – aims to improve the diagnosis and control of viral diseases of farmed animals (pigs, poultry, cattle, sheep and aquaculture). The Branch also has responsibility for the molecular confirmation of major infectious / epizootic diseases in animals.

FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION (FCAD)

FCAD 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.

FCAD includes the following branches:-

Corporate Communications Branch – is responsible for all of AFBI’s internal and external communications. It support scientists to ensure their message is impactful by running a press office (including social media and photography), events management, and print and digital publishing to the AFBI intranet and internet.

Estate Management and Emergency Planning Branch – has responsibility for delivering estate / property management services across the AFBI occupied estate as leased from DAERA, including emergency planning capability for the Institute in terms of incident and business continuity management.

Health & Safety Branch – has an advisory function to the organisation, providing guidance and assistance to those with responsibility for implementing the health and safety policy within AFBI, and also to assist with health and safety queries from individuals.

Finance & Procurement Branch – is responsible for the delivery of all finance related functions in support of AFBI’s 3 Divisions and Executive Management Team. This includes financial planning, budgeting and accounting and business planning and financial systems. The Branch provides a stores service on the Newforge and Stormont sites and also provides procurement advice.

Governance & Performance Branch – provides support and advice on a range of corporate and information governance matters including organisational performance management, risk management, business planning, audit and assurance, insurance & indemnities, data protection, freedom of information, environmental information regulations and records management.

Human Resources Branch – delivers a range of services to support the Institute in the functions of learning & development, equality, performance management, workforce planning and employee relations. The team are extremely focused on providing support to staff and line managers in ensuring they have what they need to meet wider business plan objectives.

Information Systems Branch – provides comprehensive line-of-business IT infrastructure and application support. This service is offered in conjunction with the support for common IT services provided by IT Assist, Department of Finance (DoF) and Enterprise Shared Services (ESS). The Branch also develops

bespoke software solutions for internal and external clients to the benefit of the agri-food industry. Through development of these systems, ISB forms quality partnerships which leads to further collaboration between AFBI and industry bodies. ISB's operations are guided by AFBI's IT Strategic Plan which seeks to ensure that IT continues to work as a strategic enabler for the Institute.

Research Support Office – has recently been developed to enhance AFBI's success in maximising the benefit from relevant external funding and commercialisation opportunities, including the provision of support and guidance to AFBI staff during the development stage of funding applications. The unit facilitates horizon scanning, seeking to ensure that management and scientific colleagues are kept informed of emerging opportunities. In addition, it supports colleagues through the administrative process involved in winning and then managing grant funded projects.

The Research Support Office will drive engagement with a broad range of partners from Government to industrial and commercial clients, resulting in increased external income generation. It is responsible for: identifying and developing potential research and enterprise incomes sources, promoting these opportunities to relevant colleagues, supporting staff in preparing grant and commercial applications, managing the application/tendering/contracting process and providing post-award support (including on such issues as reporting and auditing). The team will also provide a critical role in support the Institutes submission to the Research Excellence Framework and other similar initiatives.

FISHERIES AND AQUATICS ECOSYSTEMS BRANCH

Within the Environment and Marine Sciences Division (EMSD), the Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch (FAEB) is one of the three national marine and freshwater science laboratories in the United Kingdom delivering scientific services and advice to the government on marine and aquatic matters. The branch conducts research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in support of the sustainable management of productive, healthy and biodiverse marine and freshwater ecosystems, including its fishery and aquatic resources with a particular focus on the needs of Northern Ireland in a regional and international context.

Delivery of the work programme depends on our team which comprises over 63 core permanent staff working together with contract staff, temporary staff and students. Our physical infrastructure is well resourced, with the 53m, 1,100 t marine research vessel R.V. *Corystes*, and the DAERA facilities at the River Bush Salmon Station being key assets.

FAEB conducts science programmes across several core areas:-

- Marine Fisheries
- Marine Ecology
- Oceanography & Limnology
- Freshwater Fisheries

Individually and in combination, these core areas aim to foster multidisciplinary research programmes that merit both national and international recognition, attract scientific collaborations, and develop novel science. Collectively the work programme provides evidence-based research to develop science that informs policy, addresses emerging scientific questions and supports an ecosystem-based approach to the sustainable management of Northern Ireland's aquatic resources. The strategic importance of the integration of knowledge about fish stocks, their environment and underlying processes that underpin production and sustainability is crucial to the mission of FAEB in meeting the needs of DAERA and the wider national and international strategies, as only through this approach can the emerging scientific and societal challenges be addressed.

The Oceanography and Limnology group aims to provide evidence-based research to develop an ecosystem-based approach to the management of Northern Ireland's freshwater, coastal and regional waters. This is approached through a variety of themes such as coastal and freshwater monitoring; chemistry, biogeochemistry and water quality; integrated catchment modelling; and water resource management. The group collects data using the AFBI research vessel *Corystes*, data recovered from deployed instrumentation and moorings, and other survey methods to develop the science that informs policy and supports the management of the aquatic environment.

This is a technical scientific post, with the post holder working as an integral part of the oceanography and limnology team undertaking marine and aquatic environmental science and monitoring. The purpose of the post is to ensure that AFBI meets, maintains and develops its long-term ecosystem monitoring

objectives for policy and external customers. A central requirement of the post is to coordinate the marine observation programme (especially moored platforms and at-sea monitoring), working closely with the marine chemistry and oceanography leads. This role will ensure data flow from environmental monitoring to assessments is streamlined and fit for purpose. This will involve equipment preparation and calibration seagoing operations for the deployment and recovery of marine observation equipment, and the processing, analysis and quality assurance of the acquired scientific data.

The work will require travel and will include working at sea in all weather conditions, during unsocial hours and at weekends. Working at sea typically requires people to carry out physically demanding work and the handling of marine organisms – the postholder must be able to cope with adverse conditions at sea working in close proximity with others as part of a motivated and enthusiastic team.

JOB DESCRIPTION

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

Salary

The salary for the post will be within the range £31,137 - £32,800 within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

Annual Leave

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

Working Hours

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours, however the duties will include some evening/night and weekend working and working on small boats. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

Location

The successful candidate will normally be based at AFBI Headquarters, Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX. They may also be expected to work at other AFBI sites in Northern Ireland as required. The successful candidate will be required to work at sea in inclement conditions for up to 60 days per year on trips of up to two weeks duration on vessels engaged in specific scientific studies.

Travel

The post may entail some travel throughout Northern Ireland, the UK and Europe, and for this reason the successful applicant will be able to travel and will also require access to a form of transport which 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

The successful candidate will be asked to complete a health declaration questionnaire and may be invited to attend a medical examination to confirm that they are fit to carry out the physical duties of the post.

The post holder will be required to participate in scientific surveys on board the AFBI research vessel and from time to time on other vessels. It will be a condition of appointment that the post holder 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 telephone Workforce Planning on 02890255588 or email at: 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 a Senior Scientific Officer and the main duties of the post will be:

1. Field and technical work

- Support the oceanography and ecosystem health programmes cruise work, acting as scientist in charge on the ship when required, with responsibility for oceanographic instrument operation, calibration and maintenance on-board the RV Corystes.
- To be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Oceanographic moorings, instrumentation and data flow from moored and underway instruments.
- To support the delivery of moored water quality instruments at key moorings around NI.
- To work with the technical support team to ensure equipment is repaired, pro-actively maintained, prepared and loaded in advance of servicing and survey work.
- To assist in completion of other fieldwork exercises required by the branch.
- To aid colleagues from other areas of FAEB to complete their specific duties when necessary, including working at sea on small vessels and overnight surveys on board larger vessels.

2. Laboratory work

- To ensure quality assured instrument calibrations on deployment and recovery of moorings are in place.
- To ensure instrument calibrations are maintained according to project requirements.
- To work with the technical support team to ensure instrumentation is serviced, repaired and prepared for field deployment.
- Ensure samples for laboratory analysis are processed as per Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on return to the laboratory (this can be at sea, or back on land), delegating & managing appropriate staff where required.
- To process oceanographic data and manage its upload and curation within institutional databases, and ensure metadata from sample logs, instrument log books and QA database are updated.
- To ensure good quality working practice in compliance with COSHH and lab safety regulations.
- To ensure that all systems and operations are compliant with ISO9001 audit criteria.
- Ability to develop, modify and maintain SOP and ensure that all systems and operations are compliant with ISO9001 audit criteria.

3. To manage staff and resources

The post holder will manage support staff and other staff as appropriate to maximise their efficiency and to facilitate their personal and professional development. The post holder will take an active role in researching

technologies and solutions to problems with deploying and maintaining observation equipment. The post holder will also support the procurement of components and consumables for the marine observation programme.

4. To fulfil other duties

The post holder will be required to maintain and/or develop scientific procedures (SOPs) to ensure effective operational resilience and compliance with our ISO 9001 certification. The post holder will 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, but should be regarded as working guidelines within which the post will work, promoting both personal and professional development opportunities.

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 marine organisms. The post holder will be required to be sufficiently fit to work on a moving platform for prolonged periods of time.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

- 1a. A Degree in environmental science, aquatic science or a related discipline and a minimum of two years' demonstrable post graduate experience of planning and executing environmental fieldwork under limited supervision.

OR

- 1b. A 3rd level qualification (equivalent to A Level) in a science based subject and a minimum of five years' demonstrable post qualification experience of planning and executing environmental fieldwork under limited supervision.

AND

2. A minimum of two years' post graduate/qualification experience in scientific data management – to include familiarity and competence with electronic data using spreadsheets and database packages.
3. Experience of instrument calibration procedures and external quality systems.
4. Have full driving licence that enables them to undertake the responsibilities of the role.

SHORTLISTING

In addition applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the Panel will carry out an objective evaluation of the breadth and depth of information provided by candidates in response to eligibility criterion 1 (experience element) - 3. This will be completed on a scored basis. Only the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

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.

Please note:

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

PERSON SPECIFICATION

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

What is the NICS competency framework?

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

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

It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the competency framework as this forms the basis of the assessment / interview criteria as outlined below. You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 3 of the relevant competence areas.

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

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

1. Professional Knowledge and Skills

- 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 and best practice.
- 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: 60 Pass mark: 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: 20 Pass mark: 12

3. Collaborating and Partnering

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

Marks Available 10

4. 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

5. Changing and Improving

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

Marks Available: 10

6. Managing a Quality Service

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches appropriately and effectively to support service delivery.

Marks Available: 10

Total marks available: 120

Overall pass mark: 72

COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS

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

INTERVIEWS

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast during week commencing Monday 28th June 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.