



Candidate Information Booklet

IRC285851

**Higher Scientific Officer
Chemical Surveillance Branch (CSB)**

**Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

Completed Application Forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time)
on Friday 25th November 2022

**Agri-Food and Biosciences
Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

Communication between HRConnect and you

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

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ABOUT THE AGRI-FOOD AND BIOSCIENCES INSTITUTE

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 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 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.

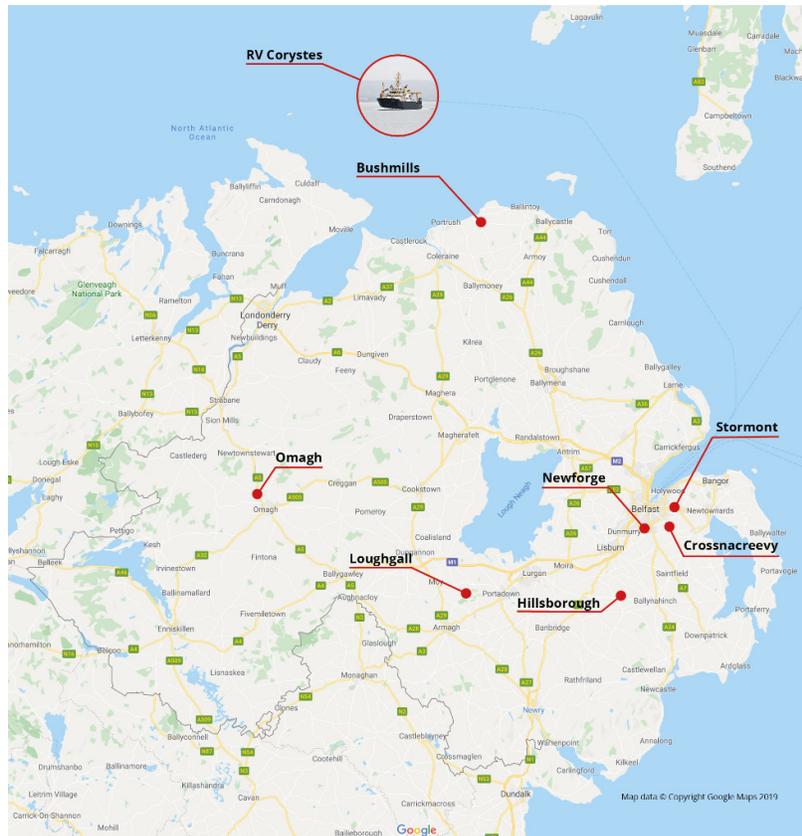
AFBI's 'Science Impacts 2020' publication outlines key outcomes from AFBI science. Notably over the past 5 years AFBI have delivered approximately four million animal, plant and food safety tests to support sales from the NI agri-food industry to the value of £3.2 billion. A key drive within AFBI is 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).

VETERINARY SCIENCES DIVISION (VSD)

VSD currently employs approximately 260 veterinary, scientific, technical and support staff across its five Branches (Bacteriology, Chemical Surveillance, Immunodiagnostics, Disease Surveillance and Investigation, and Virology). The Division is predominantly based at Stoney Road, Belfast with a smaller disease surveillance centre based at Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

The Division is highly multidisciplinary undertaking 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 major programmes of work on the chemical and microbiological safety of food. The work supports government policy, trade guarantees, as well as 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. The Division has good collaborative links to the other AFBI science Division, SAFSD.

VSD staff have access to a wide range of state of the art equipment and there are ongoing plans to further develop the building infrastructure at the Stormont site.

Chemical Surveillance Branch (CSB)

The main remit of the Chemical Surveillance Branch is to provide DAERA, FSA and industry with testing, specialist advice and R&D in the areas of veterinary drug residues, chemical contaminants and marine biotoxins. The work of the branch is funded both by government and commercial sources. The Branch delivers the National Surveillance Plan for Veterinary Medicines as well as programmes on abattoir surveillance, targeted surveillance, feedingstuffs and marine biotoxin monitoring programmes.

The Branch has UK National Reference Laboratory status for illegal veterinary drug residues and marine biotoxins and is an EU Official Control Laboratory. It has national and international recognition in the fields of veterinary drug residue analysis and mass spectrometry. The majority of the analysis delivered by the branch is accredited to ISO/IEC 17025:2017.

The Branch undertakes both screening and confirmatory analysis of chemical residues from a range of tissue matrices including meat products from cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, shellfish and fish, milk and eggs, as well as animal feeding-stuffs. This statutory analytical work is supported by basic and strategic research that has resulted in the development of novel analytical methods for a wide range of compounds. A key element of the branch work is to deliver an emergency response capability for DAERA, FSA and industry to deal with food or feed contamination incidents or misuse of veterinary drugs, pesticides or chemical contaminants.

At present the Branch is located in containment level (CL) 2 and 3 accommodation on the Stoney Road site but that the activities in CL2 will relocate to the new Animal Health Sciences Building which is planned for the Stoney Road site and due to be completed in 2024/25.

BACKGROUND TO THE POST

The Chemical Surveillance Branch consists of approximately 50 staff located at the Stoney Road site with an annual budget of approximately £2.5 million. It is envisaged that the Branch will be relocated from its current accommodation to the Animal Health Sciences Building which is planned for the Stoney Road site and due to be completed in 2024/25.

The main remit of the Branch is to provide DAERA, FSA and industry with testing, specialist advice and R&D in the areas of veterinary drug residues, chemical contaminants and marine biotoxins. This work is particularly important in the context of EU Exit and the Northern Ireland Protocol and is funded both by government and commercial sources. The Branch delivers the National Residue Control Plan for Veterinary Medicines as well as programmes on pesticide residues, and marine biotoxins.

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The Branch undertakes both screening and confirmatory analysis of chemical residues from a range of matrices including meat products from cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, shellfish and fish, milk and eggs, as well as animal feedingstuffs. This statutory analytical work is supported by research activities that has resulted in the development of novel analytical methods for a wide range of compounds.

The main programmes delivered by the branch are as follows:

Statutory testing of food of animal origin for veterinary drug residues

CSB is responsible for delivering testing and assistance to DAERA for the testing requirements laid out in Official Controls Regulation (OCR) (EU) 2017/625 and associated Northern Ireland Regulations. There are three separate schemes currently within this programme:

- i) National Residues Control Plan (veterinary drug residues and environmental contaminants)
- ii) Meat Inspection
- iii) RISK – targeted surveillance agreed by AFBI and DAERA

Statutory feedingstuffs testing

This programme encompasses the detection and quantification of antimicrobials (including anticoccidials and prescription-only medicines) in animal feedingstuffs prescribed under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2011, Schedule 5.

Compulsory analytical constituents declaration on feed

Fulfilling EU testing requirements for nutritional additives, laid out in Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 on additives for use in animal nutrition and complying with national legislation - The Animal Feed Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

Undesirable substances – heavy metals, mycotoxins and pesticides

Fulfilling EU testing requirements for undesirable substances, laid out in Directive 2002/32/EC on undesirable substances in animal feed and comply with national legislation - The Animal Feed Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

Pesticides in products of animal origin

Fulfilling EU testing requirements for pesticides in products of animal origin according to the agreed multiannual control programme laid out in Council Directive EC/2015/595 and agreed with Chemical Regulations Directorate, HSE UK.

Marine biotoxins surveillance

The statutory surveillance programme is funded by FSA and provides essential public health monitoring for the major marine biotoxins in Northern Ireland shellfish.

Emergency response capability

An important element of the branch work is to deliver an emergency response capability for DAERA, FSA and industry to deal with food or feed contamination incidents or misuse of veterinary drugs, pesticides or chemical contaminants.

Statutory Method Development

The statutory programmes for the Branch are supported by a method development team, particularly focussing on mass spectrometry. Multi-analyte methods are in widespread use and the portfolio is being expanded. The method development function also supports emergency response for new contaminants. The Branch holds Flexible Scope Accreditation, enabling rapid deployment of newly accredited methods.

Research and Development

The Branch is active in R&D, collaborating locally, nationally and internationally in the areas of analytical chemistry techniques, methods and field studies. The units within the Branch have a track record of high quality peer reviewed publications in high impact journals.

Advice and representation

Staff from the Branch provide specialist advice and support to DAERA and FSA both for policy development and field investigations. Senior members of the Branch are actively involved with the project management board, the Residues Action Group, bringing together all of the public sector groups involved with delivery of the National Surveillance Plan and veterinary drug residues monitoring.

The Branch is very well supported with state-of-the-art equipment, including a range of high sensitivity mass spectrometers (both LC and GC-MS), biosensors and inductively coupled plasma spectrometers (ICP-OES, ICP-MS).

KEY DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES

The post holder will report to the Laboratory Manager of the Chemical Confirmatory Unit. Key responsibilities of the post include:

1. To assist in management, optimisation and troubleshooting of existing multi-analyte liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) test methods employed within the Branch's confirmatory unit, ensuring that these are fit-for-purpose and operating within validation parameters.
2. To assist in ensuring the scope of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accreditation for the Branch's confirmatory unit activities is compliant with national and international requirements, as well as facilitating internal and external accreditation audits.
3. To support the expansion of the scope of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accreditation and manage the development, validation, implementation and extension of multi-analyte LC-MS-based methods in accordance with current food and feed legislation, including the processing of complex datasets and preparation of validation dossiers for accreditation under Flexible Scope.
4. To assist in the delivery of a complex statutory and/or commercial testing programme to achieve the goals of the Branch.
5. To contribute to development, management and delivery of research projects both internally and externally funded.
6. To manage staff within the Branch's confirmatory unit, in compliance with all relevant AFBI health and safety, quality assurance, work-force management and governance practices.
7. To maintain an up-to-date knowledge of relevant legislation, scientific literature and scientific developments in the veterinary drug residue and/or chemical contaminant area and to demonstrate personal development in all relevant areas of managing scientific programmes, staff and resources.
8. To produce high quality scientific papers for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals, to prepare reports (e.g. press articles, quarterly/annual reports, industry reports, and other material) as required under statutory programmes or external contracts to ensure effective technology transfer of relevant results. In addition they will be required to communicate the outcomes of analysis and or research to industry, stakeholders and to the scientific community at meetings and conferences when appropriate.
9. To assist in maintaining, and build upon, linkages with other relevant laboratories in the UK, Republic of Ireland and internationally to ensure an awareness of emerging issues in the contaminant field and to contribute to establishing collaboration across veterinary drug residue, chemical contaminant and associated areas.

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.

The successful applicant will be required to travel locally, nationally or internationally in order to perform the duties of the post. They will also be required to occasionally work outside of normal office hours including weekends.

The above is not meant to be an exhaustive or prescriptive list but to provide a good indication of the main duties of the post. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time according to business needs.

JOB DESCRIPTION

There is currently one full time Higher Scientific Officer position to be filled. This post will be on a permanent basis. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further permanent vacancies which may arise. The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

Salary

Salary will be within the range £32,328 – £33,459 which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

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

Pensions

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension's package. Further details of this can be found on page 23 of this booklet.

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 occasion the duties may include some evening/ weekend working where associated payment or time in lieu would be confirmed in advance. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

Location

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Stormont, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SD, however, they may, on occasion, also be expected to work at other sites in Northern Ireland as required.

Travel

The post will entail travel locally, nationally and internationally and for this reason the successful applicant will require access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

Probation

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

Further Information

Applicants wishing to learn more about the post before deciding to apply may email workforceplanning@afbini.gov.uk.

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

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

- 1a. A PhD in a relevant scientific discipline related to chemistry, biology or mathematics.

OR

- 1b. A degree in a relevant scientific discipline related to chemistry, biology or mathematics plus 1 year postgraduate laboratory experience.

OR

- 1c. A level 3 qualification (equivalent to A Level) in science based subject plus 4 years post qualification laboratory experience.

AND

2. A minimum of 2 years experience in the last 5 years of working in the area of mass spectrometry; demonstrating practical experience in each of the following:

- Development, validation, implementation and extension of LC-MS-based methods for a detection of small molecules e.g. veterinary drug residues and/or chemical contaminants in various test matrices;
- Troubleshooting LC-MS platform related problems;
- Conducting and managing laboratory analysis employing LC-MS-based platforms;
- Analysing and interpreting LC-MS data.

AND

3. A minimum of 1 years' experience in the last 5 years of successful management of both staff and resources.

AND

4. Authorship of peer reviewed publications and/or other scientific contributions (e.g. conference proceedings, thesis/dissertation)*.

Relevant and Equivalent qualifications: Applications will be considered from applicants with formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated or within another relevant subject area. Candidates should provide as much information as possible on their application form to demonstrate to the panel that their qualification is at an equivalent level or within a relevant subject area. This should include the type of qualification, details of all modules studied, percentage scores obtained and any other information deemed necessary so that a well-informed decision can be made.

***Scientific publications and other research outputs:** Candidates must provide evidence of eligibility criterion 4 by submitting a fully cited bibliography of all refereed and non-refereed publications, presentations to national/international scientific conferences, committee representations and details of competitive funding awards.

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 (IRC?), competition title and your full name.

SHORTLISTING

In the event that further shortlisting is required the selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each criterion on a scored basis for criteria 2 (experience element) – 4 with a minimum score set for each criterion. Only those applicants assessed as meeting all essential criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

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

Please note:

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

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. 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. You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 3 of the relevant competence areas.

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate at interview the following selection criteria/competences:

1. Professional Knowledge & Skills

Demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current developments and best practice in the detection of chemical contaminants. Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance. Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation, manipulation, analysis and interpretation of scientific data. Applies knowledge and skills in writing scientific papers and technical reports.

Marks available: 60

Minimum standard: 36

2. Making Effective Decisions

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

Marks available: 10

3. Leading and Communicating

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

Marks available: 10

Minimum standard: 6

4. Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times.

Marks available: 10

5. 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 to support service delivery.

Marks available: 10 Minimum standard: 6

Total marks available: 100

Overall pass mark: 60 (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 VSD, Stormont, Belfast during Week Commencing Monday 9th January 2023.

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 25.

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.