

Recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Annual Report 2024



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ONE INTRODUCTION

This report is published by People and Organisational Development ('People and OD') on behalf of all Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) departments and agencies. It details recruitment activity across NICS departments and agencies during the period 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.

The People and OD function serves as the policy owner for all Civil Service HR policies (including pay and industrial relations policy); develops People Strategy and strategic interventions across the NICS to foster a collaborative and skilled workforce focused on achieving outcomes and delivering for all; and offers strategic HR policy advice and support to the Civil Service Board, the nine Executive departments, and the Public Prosecution Service.

NICSHR provides a comprehensive range of human resource services to government departments, including recruitment, employee relations, occupational health, grading, and pensions.

Recruitment to the NICS is regulated by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland ('Commissioners'). Under the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 ('the 1999 Order'), Commissioners have a statutory duty to ensure that appointments to the NICS are made on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition known as the 'Merit Principle'.

Commissioners play a vital role in ensuring that recruitment decisions are made impartially, without influence from personal or political patronage. They operate independently of the Government and the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

This report is published in compliance with Article 4(5) of the 1999 Order which provides that Commissioners may require the publication of information, as specified by them, relating to recruitment and to the use of permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle.

The NICS is committed to the principle of selection for appointment on merit, in fair and open competition, and takes proactive measures to ensure equality of opportunity to all. Recruitment, selection and appointment activities are managed in accordance with the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland Recruitment Code ('Recruitment Code') and in line with best practice set out in the Code of Practice of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI).

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) produces and publishes annual NICS recruitment statistics. Its report “Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 2024” (‘the NISRA Report’) summarises applications for, and appointments from, NICS recruitment competitions across various equality categories. Further analysis is presented in the NISRA Report relating to the various stages of recruitment competitions between application and appointment. The report covers competitions which closed to further activity during the period 01 January 2024 and 31 December 2024. The NISRA Report is published on NISRA’s website and can be accessed through the following link: [Analysis of NICS Recruitment Competitions 2024 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#).

Previous recruitment annual reports can be found here: [Annual Reports \(nigov.net\)](#).

TWO EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

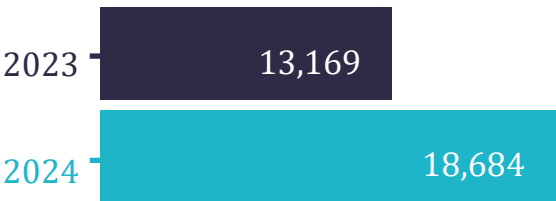
In 2024 NICSHR continued to manage recruitment in accordance with the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland Recruitment Code.

The level of recruitment activity in the NICS increased in 2024, with 141 competitions externally advertised compared to 112 in 2023, reflecting a 26% increase. The number of applications received for NICS competitions in 2024 also saw a substantial rise, totalling 18,684 compared to 13,169 in 2023, representing a 42% increase.

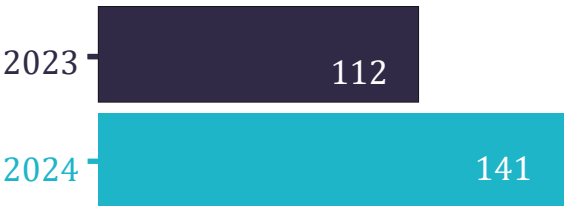
External recruitment activity increased in 2024 to fill key roles, attract a broader applicant pool, support workforce diversification, and enable succession planning. Other reasons for increased external recruitment activity include re-running competitions due to insufficient applicant interest or low numbers of successful candidates; and additional staffing resources required for work aligned to Ministerial priorities, such as the Windsor Framework in DAERA.

Additionally, the general service AO competition has contributed to the increase in applications received, with approximately 10,000 applications submitted for this competition in 2024.

No. of Applications



No. of Competitions



No. of External Competition Merit List Extension

In 2024, efforts continued to promote the extensive range of career opportunities within the NICS. These initiatives aimed to attract applications from a diverse pool of candidates through a combination of advertising, communications, engagement, and outreach activities.

Following the successful JobStart pilot in 2022, the NICS launched the next phase in February 2024. This phase offers 26 young people at risk of long-term unemployment nine-month paid placements across the NICS. Participants who complete their placement and receive a positive assessment will be offered permanent positions as exceptions to the Merit Principle. All appointments will be made in early 2025.

THREE

KEY DEVELOPMENTS, NEW INITIATIVES AND IMPROVEMENTS TO SERVICES IN 2024



Review of recruitment policy and development of new initiatives

Throughout 2024, the NICS and Commissioners collaborated through the Recruitment and Selection Development Group to shape our recruitment strategy within the NICS. This included a review of related recruitment policies and the formulation of new initiatives.

In 2024, the People and OD function conducted an audit of HR policies. This audit focused on: (i) benchmarking to assess how our HR policies compare with those of other Civil Service jurisdictions and organisations; and (ii) distributing an HR policy survey to gather feedback from staff and stakeholders regarding their experience with existing HR policies, identifying strengths, areas for improvement, and prioritising policies for review and/or development.

The insights collected informed the development of a prioritised HR Policy Renewal Plan designed to ensure that policies reflect best practices, are clear, concise, and easily accessible. Key policy areas identified for review and currently under development include the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual, as well as a new Employee Mobility policy.

Additionally, the People and OD function developed and launched a new Apprenticeship policy and supporting guidance in December 2024. This policy establishes a framework to support the growth and advancement of apprenticeships within the NICS.

Integr8

In 2024, work on the Integr8 Programme continued. Integr8 is an NICS-wide initiative aimed at modernising and integrating NICS Finance and HR services by redesigning processes, structures, roles, and data to ensure efficiency, adaptability, and customer focus. This programme will affect how civil servants, suppliers, job applicants, and many partner bodies interact with the Finance and HR functions of the NICS.

The Integr8 Programme is currently in its Core Design phase, which includes 'Co-Design.' This involves collaboration with experienced Finance, HR, and Service staff to ensure that future services meet the needs of the NICS. Co-Design workshops

began in September 2024 and will continue throughout the Core Design phase, which is expected to conclude in Summer 2025.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

The NICS implemented a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) in January 2022 for external competitions, where appropriate, to support the employment of disabled individuals. The GIS ensures that disabled applicants who meet the minimum eligibility criteria are offered an interview, though it does not guarantee employment.

An evaluation of the GIS has been conducted for external competitions that closed to applications during 2022, with ongoing evaluations for 2023 and 2024.

The findings from the 2022 evaluation indicate that the uptake of GIS by disabled applicants was low, suggesting a need for further efforts to promote the availability of GIS and to encourage applications from disabled individuals.

JobStart Scheme

The Department for Communities (DfC), in its role supporting people who are unemployed and at risk of long-term unemployment and/or furthest from employment, operate a statutory scheme known as 'JobStart'. The scheme which launched in 2021 was designed to help young people at risk of long-term unemployment, aged 16 to 24 years, move into the job market by offering six and nine month paid job opportunities with a range of employers across Northern Ireland.

The NICS successfully participated in the JobStart pilot (Phase One), providing 15 young disabled people paid work placements, with nine participants who successfully completed their placement in DfC being made a permanent offer of appointment by way of exception to the Merit Principle.

In February 2024, the NICS participated in Phase 2 of the JobStart Scheme offering 26 participants under the Specialist Pathways groups (i.e. groups including young disabled people; those not in education, employment or training (NEET); care experienced, those engaged with the criminal justice system, and those at risk of falling into paramilitary activity or coercive control) nine month paid placement in the NICS commencing between April and July 2024.

During 2024, Commissioners' approval was sought under Regulation 3(e) of the Recruitment Code, to allow participants who successfully complete their placement and achieve positive line manager assessment to be offered a permanent appointment by way of exception to the Merit Principle. Commissioners granted approval and it is anticipated that permanent appointments will be made in the first quarter of 2025.

Department for Infrastructure Skills Academy – Trainee Civil Engineering Assistant

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) launched a Trainee Civil Engineer (TCEA) Skills Academy in July 2024, offering full-time and part-time pathways for 48 participants.

The Academy attracted 237 applications in total, with 140 applicants and 97 applicants applying for full-time and part-time courses respectively.

Participants selected to join the Skills Academy received an introduction to Civil Engineering and were able to learn and develop skills and knowledge across surveying, construction, traffic management, health & safety, personal development, teamwork and collaboration, communication and IT essentials.

Participants on the Skills Academy were provided pre-recruitment training by Belfast Met and the DfI Training Centre, which, if successfully completed, guaranteed participants an interview for a permanent post in the NICS as a Trainee Civil Engineering Assistant (TCEA) providing a pathway to a career in civil engineering.

Pre-recruitment Skills Academy training started in August 2024 and was completed by end of November with recruitment interviews held at the completion of each training cohort.

Of the 48 places available, 17 full-time participants took up post in December 2024. Part-time participants will be appointed in January 2025.

NICS People Strategy 2025-30

In 2024, the development of the new five-year Civil Service People Strategy started through three phases: Discovery (research and benchmarking); Design (consultation and engagement); and Deliver (agreement on final strategy), with the goal of launching the People Strategy in April 2025.

Engagement and consultation with various partners and stakeholders progressed in 2024 during the Deliver phase, nearing completion. The strategy will require endorsement from the Civil Service Board and approval from Ministers before its planned launch in April 2025.

SCS Recruitment

A new style of application form for SCS recruitment was piloted in three recruitment competitions during 2024.

Key changes included the introduction of a 1500-word personal statement, replacing separate text boxes for each of the eligibility criteria, to reduce repetition and enable candidates to demonstrate their fitness for a role in a more engaging and personalised way. Provision for candidates to succinctly highlight their key responsibilities and achievements for previous roles was also introduced. It is intended to introduce the new application process for all SCS competitions during 2025.

A new approach to candidate assessment was also piloted during the Permanent Secretary recruitment competition in 2024. In addition to psychometric testing and an interview with an independent occupational psychologist, a staff engagement exercise, where shortlisted candidates were observed interacting with a group of NICS staff, from a range of grades and departments, was introduced as part of the selection process.

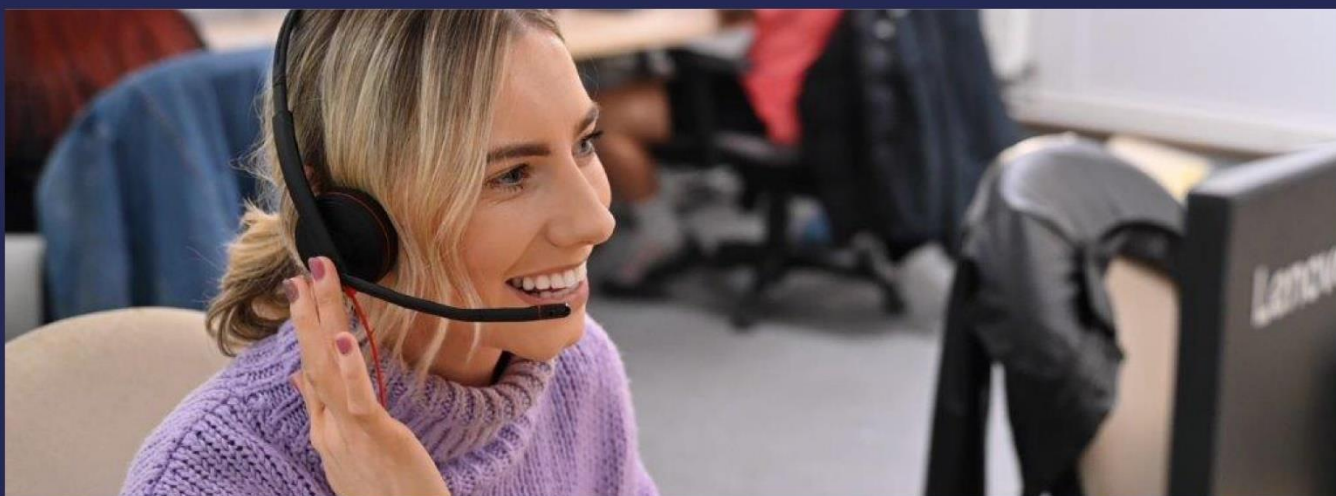
This was designed to provide additional insight into each candidate. Post-competition evaluation feedback highlighted that the candidates enjoyed and valued this opportunity to engage beyond the formal interview process and for external candidates it provided an opportunity to get a better feel for the NICS. The panel welcomed the additional insight into each candidate which highlighted areas to be explored further at interview and provided additional information to support their decision-making.

Open Data NI

During 2024, NICS continued to publish data on the Open Data NI portal (opendatani.gov.uk) following the completion of each stage of the selection process of NICS volume recruitment competitions. The data published includes the breakdown of applicants at each stage of the competition under the following headings:

- gender;
- community background;
- age;
- declared disability;
- ethnic background;
- sexual orientation; and
- NICS employment history.

FOUR RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY



Recruitment activity

During the reporting period all recruitment competitions for NICS departments were managed by HRConnect. A list of competitions that closed for applications during 2024 can be found at **Appendix 1**.

Over the period 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024 a total of 141 recruitment competitions were advertised attracting a total of 18,684 valid applications.

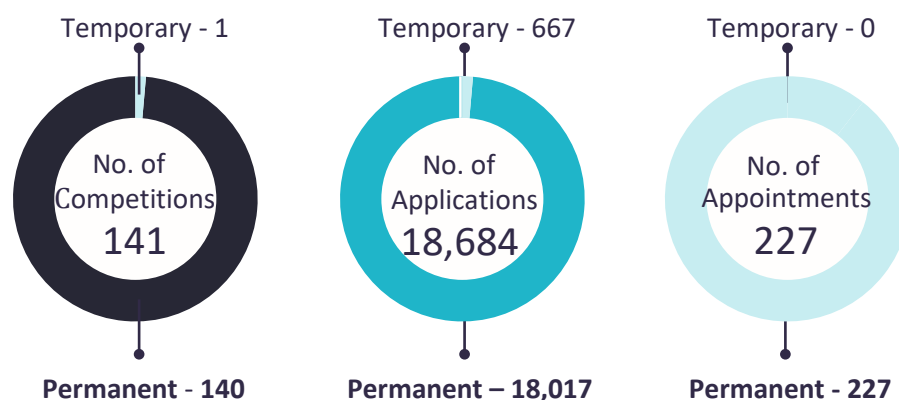
The table below shows the breakdown of these competitions including applications received and appointments made. The figures included in the table have been provided by NISRA and NICS HR.

Type of Competition	Permanent		Temporary	
	SCS ¹	Below SCS	All Grades	Total
No. of competitions	16	124	1 ²	141
No. of applications	314	17,703	667	18,684
No. of appointments	14	213	0 ³	227

1 SCS – Senior Civil Service

2 Refers to the NICS 2025/26 student placement competition launched in October 2024. Appointments from this competition will be made in 2025.

3 Appointments from the NICS 2024/25 student placement competition are not included as this competition was advertised and closed to applications in October 2023 (which is outside the reporting period). Ninety-eight candidates accepted appointments during 2024. For further information, please refer to page 17.



For comparison purposes, 19 internal competitions (promotions and trawls) were run during the same period. The table below shows details of internal competitions and appointments.

Type of Competition	Internal SCS	Internal Below SCS	Total
No. of competitions	0	19	19
No. of appointments	0	52	52

Senior Civil Service Competitions

The approach to SCS recruitment competitions throughout 2024 continued to demonstrate our commitment to attracting the widest applicant pool.

A total of 20 SCS competitions were delivered in 2024, with 14 appointments made. In accordance with Article 6 of the 1999 Order, all SCS appointments were approved by Commissioners, who in addition to exercising their authorisation and approval function at all stages of the competitions, chaired the selection panel of each competition.

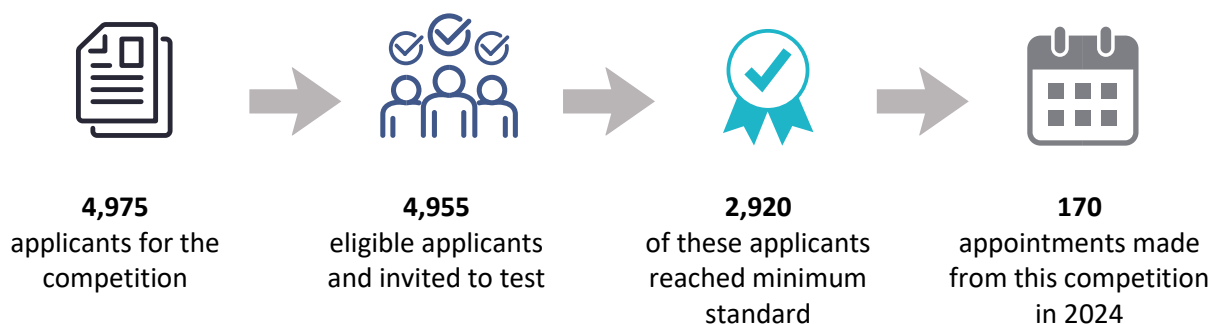
2022 Staff Officer and Deputy Principal competitions

The selection process for these competitions consisted of online assessments, an online presentation and interview. Both competitions attracted a high volume of applicants.

In 2024, 92 appointments were made from the Deputy Principal (DP) competition and 170 appointments made from the Staff Officer (SO) competition.

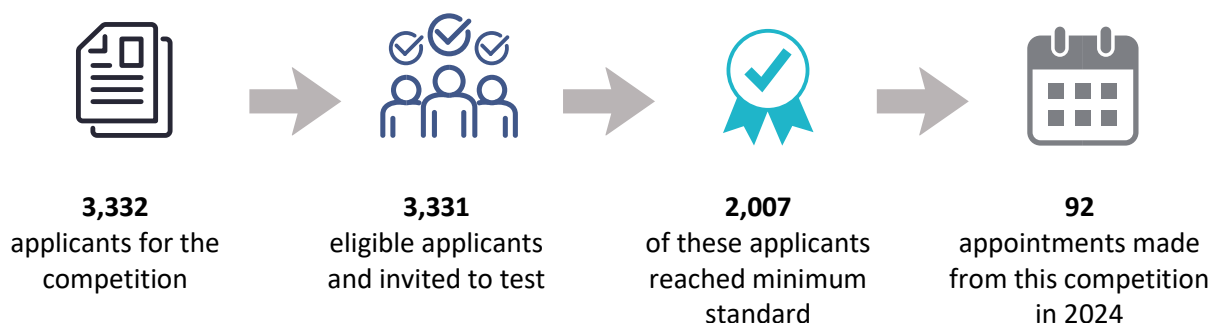
Appointments from both competitions will continue to be made during 2025.

STAFF OFFICER COMPETITION



An analysis of applicants, for each stage of the SO recruitment and selection process can be found on Open Data NI at [\(IRC275969 - Staff Officer\)](#).

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL COMPETITION



An analysis of applicants, for each stage of the DP recruitment and selection process can be found on Open Data NI at [\(IRC277837 - Deputy Principal\)](#).

Executive Officers

The Executive Officer Grade 2 (EO2) and Executive Officer Grade 1 (EO1) competitions, both of which launched in 2021, attracted a high volume of applicants (over 11,000 applications were received for each competition).

In 2024, 279 appointments were made from the EO1 competition and 351 appointments made from the EO2 competition.

Appointments from both competitions will continue to be made during 2025.

An analysis of applicants for each stage of the recruitment and selection process can be found on Open Data NI, for EO2 at ([IRC265817 - Executive Officer 2](#)) and EO1 at ([IRC265807 - Executive Officer 1](#)).

Administrative Officer

The Administrative Officer (AO) competition launched in December 2019 and vacancies continued to be filled from this competition merit list, with 72 appointments made in 2024.

An analysis of applicants for each stage of the recruitment and selection process can be found on Open Data NI at ([IRC240709 - Administrative Officer](#)).

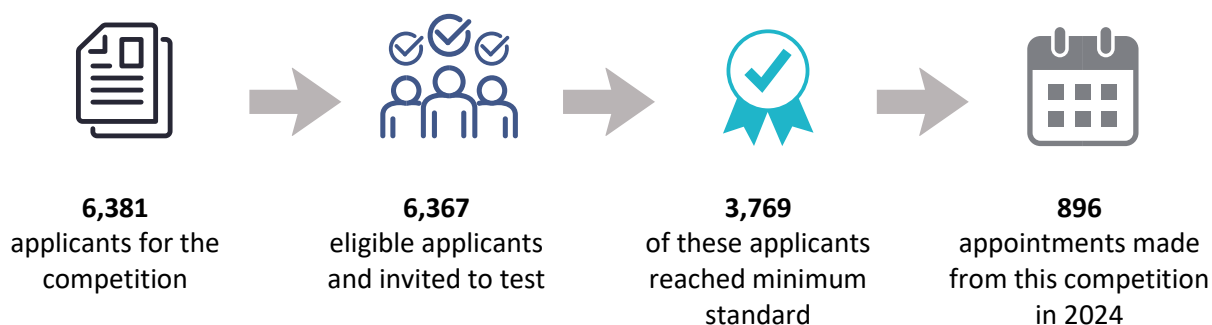
2023 DfC Administrative Officer Alternative Working Pattern

The DfC Alternative Working Pattern Administrative Officer competition launched in December 2023 and attracted 6,381 applications. The selection process for this competition consisted of online aptitude tests and a pre-recorded interview.

In 2024, 896 appointments were made from this competition.

Appointments from this competition will continue to be made during 2025.

DFC ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER ALTERNATIVE WORKING PATTERN COMPETITION



2024/25 NICS Student Placement competition

In October 2023, the 2024/25 Student Placement competition was launched to fill approximately 150 student placements (for up to 51 weeks) across various NICS

departments during the 2024/25 academic year. These placements offer students the chance to gain experience with the NICS, develop skills, and obtain practical experience in a professional work setting.

There were twenty-two categories of placement available, and candidates were invited to select up to two categories. The competition received 587 applications; 534 candidates passed the eligibility screening and were invited to interview. Three hundred and five candidates were deemed suitable for appointment, with 98 appointments having been made during 2024.

A NICS recruitment competition for student placements for the 2025/26 academic year launched in October 2024, attracting 667 applications. Appointments from this competition will be made during 2025.

Graduate Management Programme

The NICS Graduate Management Programme (GMP) was created by the People and OD function and started in September 2022, receiving 2,916 applications. This four-year accelerated leadership development programme was designed for graduates with potential to become senior leaders.

Candidates went through a detailed selection process including online tests, an assessment day featuring a written exercise, group activity, presentation, and interview. The top 100 candidates from the online tests were invited to the assessment centre.

Between February and April 2023, 36 successful candidates were placed in various departments within the NICS. They began the programme at Staff Officer grade and continue following a structured schedule of six-month and twelve-month placements to gain varied experience and skills across different roles aimed at developing leadership potential.

In 2024, the graduates transitioned to their Year 2 placements, involving departmental changes and new responsibilities to expand their Civil Service experience. NICS senior leaders delivered learning and development sessions on various topics to enhance graduates' knowledge and skills. Year 3 placements will start in February 2025.

Northern Ireland Prison Service competitions

During 2024 the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) appointed successful applicants from recruitment competitions commenced in previous years and launched three new volume recruitment competitions for three of its business-critical roles: Custody Prison Officer (CPO), Prisoner Custody Officer 30 Hour (Escort) and Night Custody Officer (NCO).

A total of 84 operational/uniformed grade appointments were made from NIPS external recruitment competitions during 2024.

Custody Prison Officer

Further appointments from the 2021, 2022 and 2023 Custody Prison Officer (CPO) recruitment competitions were made throughout 2024. One appointment was made from the 2021 CPO competition. Two appointments were made from the 2022 CPO competition, and 10 appointments were made from the 2023 CPO competition.

To maintain supply at this grade, a new CPO external recruitment competition was launched in October 2024.

The selection & assessment process was re-designed to include: online aptitude tests; a physical fitness assessment; a live skills & behaviours assessment as well as an extended 12-week induction training assessment. All of these elements form part of the assessment process.

In respect of the October 2024 CPO recruitment competition there were:

- a total of 729 applicants;
- 323 of these applicants completed the two online aptitude tests;
- 236 of these applicants were successful at online aptitude tests;
- 174 of these applicants were successful at physical fitness testing; and
- 88 of these applicants were successful at skills & behaviours assessment.

No appointments were made during 2024 as pre-appointment checks are ongoing for all 88 candidates who passed the skills & behaviours assessment.

Night Custody Officer

Twenty-five appointments were made from the 2023 NCO recruitment competition during 2024.

To maintain supply at this grade, a new NCO external recruitment competition was launched in April 2024.

In respect of the April 2024 NCO recruitment competition there were:

- a total of 238 applicants;
- 109 of these applicants completed the two online aptitude tests;
- 81 of those reached the minimum standard at test stage; and
- 53 candidates passed the interview.

A total of 15 appointments were made from the 2024 NCO recruitment competition during 2024.

Prisoner Custody Officer (PCO) 40 Hour Driver/Escort

Twenty-one appointments were made from the 2023 PCO 40 Hour Driver/Escort recruitment competition during 2024.

Prisoner Custody Officer 30 Hour Escort (Court based)

Nine appointments were made from the 2023 PCO 30 Hour recruitment competition during 2024.

To maintain supply at this grade a new recruitment competition was launched in April 2024. Eligible candidates were required to hold a UK Car Driving Licence, with no more than three penalty points and not to have been disqualified in the

previous four years. All candidates who passed the driving licence sift were invited to sit two online aptitude tests to be able to proceed to interview stage.

In respect of the April 2024 PCO 30 Hour recruitment competition there were:

- a total of 265 applicants;
- 101 applicants completed the two online aptitude tests;
- 74 of those reached minimum standard at online test stage; and
- 42 candidates passed the interview.

One appointment was made from the 2024 PCO 30 Hour recruitment competition during 2024.

Analysis of professional and specialist recruitment

The NICS continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which includes submission of an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return and a tri-annual Article 55 Review to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), both of which assess the composition of the NICS workforce and its applicants and appointees.

In addition, equality monitoring is undertaken on a quarterly basis for competitions which closed to further activity (i.e. no further appointments made) in the preceding quarter and includes those for professional and specialist roles. Monitoring is undertaken at three key stages of the selection process (application; invited to interview; and successful at interview) to determine if equality groups are fairly represented.

The analysis of the applicant pool composition spans a range of equality categories including age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation etc, across the three stages of the selection process. It includes a comparison of the equality composition (gender and community background) of the applicant pool against the potential applicant pool (i.e. relevant comparator in the NI economically active population from 2011 Census data as 2021 data is currently not yet available); assesses how applicants learned about the post; and details the lifespan of the competition and any outreach activity undertaken.

Analysis of the competitions which closed to appointments in 2024 (113 competitions) is complete. The findings from the individual competition analysis and from other equality monitoring undertaken (e.g. the latest NICS Workforce Review) will inform a programme of targeted outreach activity to address any areas of under-representation in the NICS workforce and applicant pools.

Action taken to date to attract candidates and diversify the NICS workforce composition has resulted in positive changes - workforce data at 1 January 2024 indicates that:

- the historic trend of under-representation of women in senior leadership roles is reversing - 43.8% of senior civil servants were female in comparison to 42.8% in 2023 and 11.3% in 2000;
- the number of civil servants declaring a disability rose from 5.7% in 2023 to 6.1% in 2024;
- the number of minority ethnic colleagues rose from 0.5% in 2023 to 0.6% in 2024; and
- the number of colleagues who identify as LGBTQ+ remained static at 5.9%, this has however continued to increase in recent years (3.3% in 2019).

Equality data is missing for staff in the areas of disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity therefore the figures may be higher. To help address the gaps in data, a communications campaign was launched in November 2023 to increase declaration rates of equality data to help provide an evidence base to monitor progress and inform future actions. This campaign has helped reduce the level of missing data from January 2023 to January 2024, with a reduction of 2% for disability data and 7% for sexual orientation data. Actions will continue to be taken to increase data completion rates.

Summary of applications received and updated appointment figures

Appendix 2 of this report contains updated data tables for 2024 and internal competition data for 2022, 2023 and 2024. These are extracts from the NISRA report. For ease of comparison:

- **table 1** shows a summary of eligible applications by equality group received for competitions which closed to further activity during 2024;

- **table 2** provides a summary of eligible applicants by equality group who were invited to interview, passed interview and appointed for competitions which closed to further activity during 2024; and
- **table 3** gives a summary of competition and appointment figures for internal competitions (promotions and trawls only) for 2022, 2023 and 2024 for comparison purposes.

While these tables are useful in that they give an overall view of the application and appointment rates by equality group, the figures contained may be heavily influenced by the type of competition advertised during the reporting period. For example, some competitions historically attract more applications from one equality group than another e.g. more females than males or Protestants than Catholics or vice versa. All competitions are now analysed at the close of the competition to identify trends at each stage of a competition. This analysis helps inform future competition plans.

Recruitment related complaints

HRConnect received 356 complaints relating to external competitions during 2024. Complaints allocated by competition lead department are shown below.

Department	Number of Complaints 2024
Department of Finance (DoF)	112*
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	3
Department of Education (DE)	0
Department for Communities (DfC)	224
Department for the Economy (DfE)	0
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	8
Department of Justice (DoJ)	9
The Executive Office (TEO)	0
Department of Health (DoH)	0
Public Prosecution Service (PPS)	0
TOTAL	356

*This figure includes complaints for corporate NICS wide competitions

During 2024 appointments continued to be made from the Executive Officer competitions which launched during 2021, and the DP and SO competitions which launched during 2022. Sixty complaints were received from applicants for these competitions. Two hundred and nineteen complaints were received from applicants for the Administrative Officer – DFC Alternative Work Pattern competition that launched in December 2023.

A number of complaints received related to technical issues during the application process, including problems submitting applications and receiving error messages. There were a number of complaints received in respect of problems experienced during video interviews for AO competitions. Many complainants expressed concerns that feedback provided after interviews and tests was insufficient or unclear and impacted their understanding of the results.

Complaints are managed in accordance with the complaints procedure for externally advertised competitions. Lessons learned from complaint investigations are, as appropriate, shared with our service provider, HR Connect and/or the Resourcing team in NICSHR and the People and OD function.

Extension to Merit Lists

Merit lists from external competitions are normally valid for 12 months, and up to two years for an internal competition. Any extension beyond these timeframes requires a case to be made by the department and approval given by NICSHR.

Details of approved merit list extensions, including the cogent and practical reasons for extending each list during 2024 are provided in **Appendix 3**.

Agency workers in the NICS

Temporary recruitment agency workers are used to fill vacancies required for urgent business needs, for example to temporarily fill vacant posts until staff are recruited permanently, cover maternity leave and long-term sickness absence. Agency workers can also be used to support time limited projects or contractual work.

The number of agency workers temporarily assigned to the NICS increased by approximately 20% from the previous year i.e. 4,409 in 2024 compared to 3,662 in 2023. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), who absorb the cost of agency workers for work carried out on their behalf, account for approximately 45% of all agency workers in the NICS.

A combination of factors over several years has resulted in an increase in the use of agency workers, such as a temporary pause on the recruitment of permanent staff, the need to meet DWP targets; ongoing pressures from EU Exit, particularly the Windsor Framework requirements, and a number of reprioritisation exercises due to the budgetary situation.

Over 150 NICS recruitment competitions are currently underway, to assist with a reduction in the reliance on recruitment agency workers. NICS HR are currently managing a range of recruitment competitions (200+) that will aim to create a supply of permanent staff to assist Departments to reduce the volume of agency workers in NICS.

Following the launch of the DfC Alternative Working Pattern AO competition in December 2023, the number of agency workers recruited at the AO grade reduced by 8.3% from 3,449 in June 2024 to 3,160 in October 2024. However, due to increased business area demand for temporary resources at the AO grade from October to December 2024 the number of agency workers recruited at the AO grade subsequently increased by 12.7% to 3,562.

Alongside this, an external AO competition was launched in August 2024 to fill AO vacancies across the NICS. The merit list for this competition is anticipated in May 2025.

The following table provides a breakdown of all recruitment agency workers temporarily assigned to the NICS and includes a separate DWP analysis. All figures are as of 31 December 2024.

NICS Recruitment Agency Workers (headcount) at 31 December 2024 split by:

- Full Time (FTE 1.0) / Part Time (FTE <1.0); and
- NICS/DWP funding.

NICS/DWP Funding	Full Time	Part Time	Grand Total
NICS	2,351	57	2,408
DWP	2,001	0	2,001
Total	4,352	57	4,409

FIVE

EXCEPTIONS TO THE MERIT PRINCIPLE



Exceptions to Merit Principle

Regulation 3 of the Commissioners' General Regulations 2007 sets out the circumstances in which the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition shall not apply.

The purpose of exceptions is to provide flexibility where it can be justified to meet the business needs of the NICS. Commissioners monitor and scrutinise any request to make an appointment by way of exception to merit in order to be satisfied that it is not reasonably practicable for the appointment to be made in line with the merit principle.

Appointments made by Departments under Regulation 3 during the reporting period can be found in the following table:

Appointments made by Exception to Merit – 1 January to 31 December 2023		
Reg 3 -	Categories of exception to appointment on merit	
(a)	Secondment Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Department of Education (DE) Department for the Economy (DfE) Department of Health (DoH) Department of Justice (DoJ) The Executive Office (TEO) Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Department of Finance (DoF) Department for Communities (DfC)	4 12 5 8 1 1 4 0 0
(b)	Transfer from another Civil Service of the Crown	0
(c)	Transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred	13
(d)	Exceptional needs of the NICS The Executive Office	1
(e)	Selected for an appointment under Government programmes or initiatives	0
(f)	Reinstatement	0
TOTAL		49

Most of the appointments made by exception to merit during 2024 are under regulation 3(a) – secondment. Thirty-five people were appointed to the NICS via secondment. A further 13 appointments were made under regulation 3(c) – transfer of persons employed on functions being transferred. These individuals were appointed to the NICS through Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE).

SIX

RECRUITMENT RELATED ASSURANCES



Formal procedures are in place to ensure that recruitment to the NICS is in accordance with the four principles set out in the Recruitment Code. Policies and procedures are subject to internal monitoring and are reviewed regularly, taking account of good practice and any changes in legislation.

For the period 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024, the framework in place to provide recruitment assurances to Commissioners included:

- a. **a review of four external competitions** which identified one area of non-compliance where the Panel Chair did not sign off the Competition Initiation Meeting ('CIM') notes during the competition planning stage and prior to the competition launch;
- b. **real time monitoring of exceptional appointments and extensions to merit lists is in place.** All inward secondments to NICS Departments made via NICSHR as an exception to the merit principle are recorded on the Exceptional Appointments Register. All extensions to Merit Principle exceptions are arranged via NICSHR and recorded on the Appointments Register. All extensions to merit lists both external and internal are recorded at the point of being actioned. Data on all such extensions is readily available;
- c. **assurance statements signed by HRConnect and competition leads when running an external competition have been provided.** HRConnect has confirmed that assurance statements have been processed in accordance with established procedures by HRConnect representatives and NICS competition leads for all external competitions delivered in the 2024 calendar year;
- d. **annual assurances from Grade 7s within the NICSHR Resourcing Team and the People and OD function for SCS have been completed.** One area of non-compliance by NICSHR was identified in relation to the recording of appointments made under Regulation 3 Exception to Merit Principle on the HR Connect system;
- e. **annual confirmation has been received from each Permanent Secretary / Accounting Officer that all appointments to their department have been managed by NICSHR and/or the People and OD function** to provide assurance that appointments to NICS departments have been made by NICSHR and/or the People and OD function in line with NICS policy and procedures;

-
- f. annual assurance from the People and OD function has been completed** to provide an equality analysis of the 113 competitions closed to appointments in 2024. The analysis included a comparison between the actual applicant pool and the relevant comparator in the Northern Ireland economically active population (i.e. potential applicant pool) for each competition across a range of equality categories. Findings will be considered by the NICSHR Resourcing Team for consideration when designing and planning future competitions; and
 - g. a suite of evidence has been collated by the People and OD function and provided to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance (DoF)**, who has written to the Chair of the Commissioners confirming that all appointments during the reporting period have been made in line with NICS recruitment policy and procedures and in accordance with the Recruitment Code.

SEVEN AUDITS



NICS Commissioners NI Audits

Commissioners have a duty to conduct independent audits of NICS recruitment policies, procedures and practices to be assured that these are operating in line with the requirements and principles of the [Recruitment Code](#).

This audit activity is in addition to the assurance given by the DoF Permanent Secretary following consideration of the evidence provided by the People and OD function, NICS HR, HRConnect, and departmental Permanent Secretaries.

The following paragraphs summarise the audits that have taken place during 2024. The NICS remains committed to positive and regular engagement with the Commissioners on the topics included in their Audit and Review Plan.

The 2024/25 Commissioners audit plan covered two aspects of recruitment for audit:

- audit of Article 6 compliance; and
- review of NICS Appointments below SCS made under Regulation 3(a) of the 2007 General Regulations ('Review of Secondments').

Review of NICS Appointments below SCS made under Regulation 3(a) of the 2007 General Regulations ('Review of Secondments')

This audit aimed to review appointments made to the NICS below SCS as an exception to the Merit Principle under Regulation 3(a) of the 2007 General Regulations, and to ensure compliance with the Recruitment Code and Commissioners' Audit Framework.

The findings indicated that there was variation among departments in the application of the Recruitment Code requirements. Although several audit samples of business cases demonstrated that departmental officials had reviewed and applied both the Recruitment Code, the NICS Secondment Policy and Secondment Guidance (both of which were designed to support compliance with the Recruitment Code), this approach was not uniform across all sampled departments.

As a result, the findings provided inadequate evidence to assure Commissioners that the Recruitment Code requirements had been fully adhered to in relation to appointments made below SCS under Regulation 3(a) (secondments).

NICSHR has proposed actions such as ensuring business cases are on the correct template and authorised at G5 level, pursuing business cases for inward secondees, and adapting the business case template to align with the four CSC Recruitment Code principles.

Compliance audits of Article 6 approval process

Article 6 of the 1999 Order states that appointments to the SCS cannot be made without the written approval of Commissioners. To comply with Article 6, Commissioners chair all SCS open competitions, with each competition subject to the Article 6 approval process comprising four approval stages and a final panel chair statement.

The audit of the Article 6 approval process examines a number of competitions to determine whether or not the assurances provided to the Commissioners at each stage of the Article 6 process are in order.

Commissioners carried out two audits of the Article 6 Approval Process during 2024.

The first audit found that all assurances were in order and that the Article 6 approval process was operating in accordance with Commissioners' requirements. A second audit identified one area of non-compliance where a panel member verbally informed the Panel Chair of their inability to attend the CIM meeting, but no written record was kept. Commissioners made several recommendations for improvement, regarding procedures to be followed if a panel member is unable to attend a CIM; approval of sift and pre-board matrices; and accuracy of Candidate Interview Assessment Booklets. These recommendations will be taken forward in 2025.

EIGHT

PROMOTION OF CAREERS IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE



Promoting careers in the NICS - advertising, marketing and outreach activities

Throughout 2024, efforts continued to be made to promote the range of career opportunities in the NICS and to attract a diverse applicant pool through a combination of advertising, communications and outreach activity, including attendance at schools and university careers fairs.

Advertising, marketing and communications

Advertising campaigns using a mix of print media, digital and social media (e.g. Facebook and Instagram) channels along with radio advertising (Spotify, radio and podcasts) were used to support NICS recruitment competitions such as the NICS Administrative Officer competition, NICS Student Placement programmes and Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Trainee Civil Engineering Skills Academy during 2024. Advertising messaging highlighted the important role the NICS plays in making a positive difference to the lives of the people it serves.

Outreach and engagement

During 2024, there was engagement with the education sector and participation in events with other employers to promote the NICS' commitment to diversity and inclusion. Efforts focused on showing prospective applicants the range of work undertaken by civil servants and the variety of career opportunities available, including:

- outreach sessions with the disability and minority ethnic sectors in conjunction with Northern Ireland Union for Supported Employment and the NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion to promote the Administrative Officer recruitment competition and DfI Skills Academy;
- participation in Belfast Pride, Black History Expo and Belfast Mela to promote the NICS as an inclusive employer;
- participation in careers fairs and activities with local schools and Queen's University Belfast (QUB);

- participation in events such as the Chief Executive Forum’s “Women in Leadership” conference; 2024 CIPD NI Annual Conference; Diversity Mark Annual Summit; Local Government Equality and Diversity workshop; and a study visit with delegates of the Mind the Gap Project; and
- publication of communications to mark International Day of Women and Girls in Science and International Girls in ICT Day to celebrate female civil servants in these professions, alongside participation in a range of careers fairs and activities with local universities including Queen’s University Belfast (QUB), Ulster University and The Open University.

Queen’s University Belfast Internship Programme 2023/24

School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics

The People and OD function collaborated with QUB to provide work experience opportunities for undergraduate students from the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics within NICS departments. The aim is to offer a learning environment that incorporates a hybrid of workplace-based and remote working, enabling students to apply and develop the knowledge and skills gained in their initial university years, and to help prepare them prepare for further study and/or career pursuits.

The internship module enables final year students to spend three days per week, for 12 weeks, at one of several participating public institutions to engage in workplace-based learning. The scheme also includes a placement module option with less commitment required, with students spending one-and-a-half days per week, for 12 weeks, with the host organisation. The types of projects for this module are similar to those for the internship, although more restricted in scope and depth. Both modules enable students to earn academic credit as formal elements of their degree.

The 2024/25 QUB School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics programme received five project bids from five departments for which five students were assigned by QUB during the academic year.

The table below shows the breakdown of internships (I) and placements (P) in which students participated by department:

NICS Department	Semester 1 (Sep – Dec 2024)	Semester 2 (Jan – Mar 2025)	Total
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	1 (1I)	-	1
Department for the Economy (DfE)	-	2 (2P)	2
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	1 (1P)	-	1
Department of Justice (DoJ)	1 (1P)	-	1
Total	3	2	5

QUB School of Biological Sciences Placement Scheme

The People and OD function continued to work with QUB to facilitate unpaid work placements within NICS Departments for 2025/26 for students taking a range of undergraduate BSc and postgraduate MSc courses.

The undergraduate placement options include:

- a placement module which allows third year undergraduate students to spend five days per week, for a minimum of 14 weeks with an NICS department between June and September 2025; and
- a professional studies option which allows third year undergraduates to be placed for up to five days per week, for a minimum of 40 weeks or 1,400 hours between September 2025 and August 2026.

The postgraduate placement modules focus on applying theory to practice whilst completing an academically assessed research project, which is a tangible piece of work in support of both student learning and the organisation's work.

The 2024/25 QUB School of Biological Sciences Placement Scheme received five project bids from four departments for which five students were assigned by QUB during the academic year.

The table below shows the breakdown of undergraduate BSc and postgraduate MSc courses in which students participated by department:

NICS Department	BSc (Jun – Sep 2024)	MSc (Apr – Jun 2024)	Total
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	2	-	2
Department for the Economy (DfE)	-	1	1
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	1	-	1
Department of Justice (DoJ)	-	1	1
Total	3	2	5

University of Cambridge MPhil in Public Policy Work Placement Programme 2024/25

The NICS was approached by the University of Cambridge seeking work placements for a small number of students from their graduate MPhil in Public Policy (MPP) programme.

The Cambridge MPP is an interdisciplinary graduate degree intended for individuals who are developing, or hope to develop, careers as leaders in policy formulation and implementation, within local or national government, in the not-for-profit sector, with a non-government organisation or within the private sector. The placement is structured so that the student is on site with a business area for four weeks between mid-March and mid-April 2025 with remaining time spent at university finalising the project. Placements can be hosted in a hybrid / blended way with a combination of workplace and remote activity.

The 2024/25 University of Cambridge MPhil in Public Policy Work Placement Programme received one project bid from one department with one student assigned by Cambridge during the academic year:

NICS Department	Mar – Apr 2025	Total
The Executive Office (TEO)	1	1
Total	1	1

Work experience opportunities

The NICS work experience scheme welcomed applications from a range of individuals, including students in schools, Further Education Colleges, and universities, as well as those not in education, with the aim of providing meaningful work experience opportunities to all. The NICS acknowledges the importance of offering career insights to individuals making career choices and through the work experience scheme aims to highlight the wide variety of careers available in the NICS, encouraging participants to consider a future career in the NICS. From 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024, 171 applications for work experience placements were received. The People and OD function worked in partnership with all departments to facilitate 128 placements as shown in the table below.

Scheme information is available on the NICS Recruitment website under [Work Experience](#).

NICS Department	Number of Applications	Number of Placements Agreed
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	37	29
Economy (DfE)	15	13
Education (DE)	1	0
Communities (DfC)	27	18
Infrastructure (DfI)	12	8
Finance (DoF)	26	18
Health (DoH)	5	3
Justice (DoJ)	32	25
The Executive Office (TEO)	16	14
Total	171	128

NICS Apprenticeships

As part of our commitment to expanding entry routes into the NICS to help attract a more diverse range of applicants, including young people and those facing barriers to employment, The People and OD function launched a new Apprenticeship policy and accompanying guidance during 2024.

Six apprenticeship competitions were launched in 2024, with 40 appointments accepted by 31 December 2024.

Information on NICS apprenticeships is available on NICS Recruitment website under [Apprenticeships \(nigov.net\)](https://nigov.net/apprenticeships).

ICT Level 1 Apprentice Scheme

The ICT Level 1 Apprentice Scheme is an Apprenticeships NI work-based training programme with Belfast Metropolitan College. Apprentices undertake training at Level 3 on the Apprenticeships NI frameworks in IT and Telecoms, specialising in either Network Infrastructure (which includes Cyber Security) or Software Development.

2023 Competition

The scheme attracted 199 applications, with 45 candidates successful at interview. Fourteen appointments were made in 2023, with an additional eight appointments made during 2024.

2024 competition

The ICT Level 1 Apprentice competition was advertised in May 2024. As part of the selection process, all applicants were required to complete an aptitude test. There were 187 applications received; 74 candidates passed the test and 62 passed the sift. Twenty-four out of 35 candidates invited to interview were successful, with seven appointments made during 2024.

ICT Higher Level Apprenticeship Level 2

The ICT Higher Level Apprenticeship Level 2 is an apprenticeships work-based training programme with Belfast Metropolitan College. The apprentices are enrolled on the Level 5 apprenticeship programme, studying 'Software and Cloud Development'. The Level 5 qualification is validated by The Open University.

The ICT Higher Level Apprenticeship Level 2 competition was advertised in May 2024. As part of the selection process, all applicants were required to complete an aptitude test. There were 221 applications received; 90 candidates passed the test and 79 passed the sift. Ten out of 32 candidates invited to interview were successful, with one appointment made during 2024.

Civil Engineering Apprentice Scheme

The Civil Engineering Level 1 Apprenticeship Scheme is a structured programme of education and training operated to enable apprentices to obtain a Civil Engineering qualification and gain a wide experience of work in Roads and Rivers throughout Northern Ireland.

Apprentices undertake a two-year part-time Level 3 BTEC Civil Engineering course at a Northern Ireland based Further Education College. Apprentices study to obtain a Level 3 qualification and work towards obtaining a professional qualification as an Engineering Technician with the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE).

The Civil Engineering apprenticeship competition was advertised in June 2024 attracting 164 applications. Twenty-eight out of 48 candidates invited to interview were successful, with 25 appointments made during 2024.

Mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship

The Mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship involves part time study at a Northern Ireland based further education college supported by NICS to achieve a Level 5 Mechanical Engineering qualification.

The Mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship was advertised in June 2024, attracting 87 applications. Three out of 18 candidates were successful at interview, with three appointments made during 2024.

Electrical Engineering Apprenticeship

The Electrical Engineering Apprenticeship involves undertaking part-time study at a Northern Ireland based further education college supported by the NICS to achieve a Level 5 Electrical Engineering qualification.

The Electrical Engineering Apprenticeship was advertised in June 2024, attracting 128 applications. Five out of 15 candidates were successful at interview, with three appointments made during 2024.

Industrial 1 Vehicle and Plant Fitter Apprentice

The Industrial 1 Vehicle and Plant Fitter Apprentice Scheme is a work-based training programme that takes place at a Northern Ireland based Further Education College. Apprentices undertake the NVQ Heavy Fleet Maintenance qualification, studying both Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (Heavy Vehicle).

In June 2024, an Industrial 1 Apprentice Vehicle and Plant Fitter Apprentice competition was advertised. The scheme attracted 37 applications with 19 candidates invited to interview. Twelve candidates were successful at interview, with one appointment made during 2024.

JobStart Scheme

In February 2024, the NICS participated in Phase 2 of JobStart, a scheme aimed at providing opportunities to young people furthest from employment. Twenty-six participants were offered nine-month paid placement in the NICS commencing between April and July 2024. Commissioners' approval was sought under Regulation 3(e) of the Recruitment Code, to allow participants who successfully complete their placement and achieve positive line manager assessment to be offered a permanent appointment by way of exception to the Merit Principle. Commissioners granted approval and it is anticipated that permanent appointments will be made in the first quarter of 2025.

NINE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



NICS Diversity and Inclusion

The NICS is committed to being a diverse and inclusive employer, and to creating an inclusive workplace culture where everyone can fully participate, perform at their best and reach their potential.

The NICS Diversity Champions Network was established in 2015 and continues to drive diversity and inclusion across the service. It includes senior colleagues as designated Diversity Champions for each of the nine Ministerial NICS departments and Public Prosecutions Service, as well as four thematic leads for gender, race and ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+.

Diversity and inclusion remains a strategic priority for the NICS. The diversity and inclusion programme of work continues to be delivered through the annual NICS Diversity Action Plan (DAP) developed by the Diversity Champions Network in collaboration with the People and OD function and staff networks.

Implementation of the DAP is overseen by the leadership of the NICS Board, the Diversity Champions Network, staff networks and the People and OD function as well as through partnership working with other stakeholder organisations. Progress against the DAP is monitored and reported on a quarterly basis by the Diversity Champions Network with an annual progress report provided to the NICS Board.

Visibility of the diversity and inclusion agenda at the most senior levels of the organisation has been fundamental in driving progress, delivering the DAP and helping to embed inclusion and diversity across the service.

Interventions will continue to be developed and implemented to support the NICS diversity and inclusion agenda as a key strand of the NICS People Strategy 2025-2030.

Diversity Action Plan 2024/25

The [Diversity Action Plan 2024-25](#) was published in May 2024. It recognises the importance of intersectionality and sets out priorities on a cross-cutting basis as well as specific thematic actions in the areas of gender, disability, LGBTQ+ and race and ethnicity.

Under the plan, the three pillars of focus for 2024/25 were:

- (i) embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across the Service by deepening knowledge and understanding of diversity and inclusion;
- (ii) health and wellbeing to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing, raise awareness and understanding of issues and the support available with the launch of a new Health and Wellbeing Framework; and
- (iii) employability skills and Service opportunities to those furthest removed from the labour market, alongside a programme of outreach to showcase the work the Civil Service does.

Gender / LGBTQ+ / Disability / Race & Ethnicity

Diversity and inclusion initiatives are delivered on a service wide and departmental basis and have the commitment and support of senior civil servants. To ensure senior leaders demonstrate and are accountable for visible inclusive leadership and behaviours, all senior civil servants have a diversity and inclusion related performance objective.

In 2024, the NICS strengthened its links with the education sector and delivered a programme of outreach activity with the aim of attracting as diverse an applicant pool as possible (See Section eight).

As many issues around lack of inclusion can relate to a lack of knowledge and understanding, a concerted effort was made in 2024 to increase knowledge and understanding of diversity issues to ensure a supportive and inclusive NICS workplace culture, which included:

- delivery of a programme of disability awareness training and webinars on LGBTQ+ awareness and cultural competencies;
- completion of an LGBTQ+ pilot Reverse Mentoring Programme and Women's Mentoring programme;
- launch of a [Neurodiversity Toolkit for Line Managers](#); [Guide to Supporting Carers](#); and [Inclusive Language Guide](#); and

- promotion of the JAM ('Just A Minute') Card training – which resulted in the Civil Service being accredited as a JAM Card friendly organisation with 17,000 staff having completed the JAM Card training by August 2024.

The NICS also participated in events to celebrate diversity including National Inclusion Week, Belfast Mela, Pride, Carers Week, International Men's Day, International Women's Day, Black History Month, International Day for Persons with Disabilities and International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

As part of the NICS' commitment to providing support to those experiencing, or at risk of, domestic and/or sexual abuse, it signed the White Ribbon Charter to end violence against women and supports the Safe Place Campaign Pledge: never to commit, condone or stay silent about domestic violence or abuse. To fulfil these commitments, it delivered training to increase the number of Safe Place Advocates across the Service in addition to 600+ Department for Communities staff in "Supporting Customers affected by Domestic Abuse" alongside internal communications to all staff signposting to sources of support.

In recognition of the invaluable role staff networks play in promoting inclusion, encouraging active allyship, and providing a sense of belonging and support for colleagues, the NICS staff networks (LGBTQ+, disability, race and ethnicity, women and Student Network) were supported to maintain and grow. Joint network activities were delivered to celebrate National Day for Staff Networks and National Inclusion Week. In February 2024, a new Cancer Support Network formally launched to coincide with World Cancer Awareness Day. The network will support colleagues with a cancer diagnosis and those supporting a loved one. A student network to support the new 2024/25 cohort of student placements in the NICS was established in December 2024.

To support industrial staff in DfI and DAERA who wish to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, a pilot Essential Skills Programme was launched with modules in digital skills and literacy delivered in 2024.

Key actions delivered in each of the specific diversity themes include:

Disability

The NICS is committed to the employment of disabled people and operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) which applies to all external NICS recruitment competitions (at any grade and any discipline) where appropriate, and ensures

that a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. For more information on the GIS please refer to the [“Information for disabled applicants”](#) section of the NICS recruitment website.

The NICS has a designated Disability Champion who is supported by the NICS Disability Working Group, which is a consultative group who work to promote disability equality and inclusion across the service. The Group comprises representatives from the disability sector, trade union side, the People and OD function, the Disability Staff Network and colleagues from a range of NICS disability policy branches. A range of actions were taken to promote NICS career opportunities to the disability sector during 2024, including positive action advertising, targeted advertising and outreach information sessions. As a lead partner of Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI), the NICS continues to have a permanent presence on the EFDNI Jobs Bulletin Board which is an online career opportunities service circulated to disability organisations.

In 2024, the NICS participated as an employer in Phase Two of the JobStart Scheme, offering work placement opportunities to 16-24 year olds who are job ready. The NICS targeted “Specialist Pathways” groups which includes young disabled people; those not in education, employment or training (NEET); care experienced, those engaged with the criminal justice system, and those at risk of falling into paramilitary activity or coercive control. Twenty-six individuals commenced a work placement.

A programme of disability awareness training was delivered in conjunction with EFDNI, this included Disability Positive training for staff which allowed participants to attain the Disability Positive accreditation.

To promote awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace, a series of internal communications supported by online awareness sessions were delivered to mark Dyslexia Awareness Week and ADHD Awareness Month and a [Neurodiversity Line Manager’s Toolkit](#) was launched as part of Autism Awareness Month.

The NICS progressed the review of its reasonable adjustment process to ensure line managers are equipped with relevant knowledge and skills; and that the organisation provides an effective reasonable adjustment process for users which complies with obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, reflects best practice, and supports service delivery/business needs. A new reasonable adjustment policy and guidance have been developed and co-designed with

stakeholders including colleagues with lived experience. Ministerial approval of the new policy and consultation with CTUS will be progressed in 2025/26.

LGBTQ+

The NICS has continued to implement initiatives to support LGBTQ+ Inclusion and be a LGBTQ+ inclusive employer.

Under the 2024 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, the NICS was awarded the Stonewall Silver Employer Award and the NICS LGBTQ+ Staff Network received the Stonewall UK Network Group of the Year. The award reflects the exceptional commitment and efforts of the NICS LGBTQ+ Staff Network to champion LGBTQ+ inclusion and drive meaningful change in our workplaces.

During 2024, the LGBTQ+ Staff Network evaluated its pilot Reverse Mentoring Programme and began preparations for a second phase. To further raise awareness and understanding across the organisation, the network also arranged a number of events, communications and initiatives focusing on relevant health, wellbeing and lived experiences of colleagues.

Pride 2024 led by the NICS LGBTQ+ Staff Network was celebrated by the NICS with a series of internal and external communications and events, and participation at the Belfast Pride Village provided a valuable opportunity to promote the NICS as a diverse and inclusive employer and highlight the range of careers available and the public services it delivers. Senior leaders including the Head of the Civil Service and several Permanent Secretaries participated in Belfast Pride.

Gender

As a Silver Diversity Mark accredited employer, the NICS continues to take action to support gender diversity; to seek to remove barriers to female progression; and promote equal representation at every level of the NICS.

Female representation at senior levels continued to improve in 2024, rising to 43.8% compared to 11.3% in 2000.

The Women's Network continues to grow, in 2024 it led on activities to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) and delivered a pilot Women's Mentoring Programme to support the career development of female civil servants.

In addition to IWD, the NICS celebrated International Men's Day and Menopause Awareness Month. An event was held to mark Menopause Awareness Month with colleagues sharing their lived experience and highlighting the available sources of support for colleagues experiencing menopause symptoms including the NICS Menopause Policy and accompanying e-learning and departmental menopause circles.

Race & Ethnicity

On International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in March 2024, the NICS signed the Business in the Community's [Race at Work Charter](#) in support of its commitment to racial equality and wider strategy on diversity and inclusion. The Race at Work Charter aims to tackle ethnic disparities in the workplace by providing employers seven commitments to improve equality of opportunity for people from minority ethnic backgrounds in the workplace.

A range of activities to encourage and promote NICS career opportunities to minority ethnic groups were delivered during the year, including positive action advertising; targeted advertising and outreach information sessions (see section eight). The NICS also participated in Black History Expo to promote Civil Service careers and its public services.

In summer 2024, DoF, as a Friend of Mela, once again supported the annual Belfast Mela. Mela offered an important in-person opportunity for the NICS, as an employer and service provider, to engage with minority ethnic communities and the public, and promote the wide range of careers available and public services.

The Race and Ethnicity Network continues to build its presence across the Service and delivered a programme of events and communications throughout 2024. This included collaboration with [JoinHer Network](#) and the wider minority ethnic sector to promote opportunity, recognition and inclusion with learning opportunities created through webinars with lived experienced speakers and facilitators, covering a range of topics as developed and led by the minority ethnic sector as part of Black History Month.

During the period of social unrest in the summer the NICS supported colleagues affected, working closely with the NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion and Staff Network signposting to source of support and reaffirming its commitment to champion racial equality and inclusion.

TEN CONCLUSION

This Annual Report reviews recruitment activity in the NICS from 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024, following Article 4(5) of the 1999 Order and Appendix C of the Recruitment Code.

The People and OD function, along with NICS HR, are developing an evidence-based framework to support the DoF Permanent Secretary's assurance to the Commissioners' Chair that NICS appointments are based on merit per the Recruitment Code.

As we look ahead to 2025, the People and OD function's focus will be on the introduction of the new NICS five-year People Strategy in April. This Strategy aims to address both current and future challenges, with a focus on:

- **Skills and Capacity:** ensuring our workforce is equipped with the skills and capabilities to meet current and future demands;
- **Experience and Environment:** creating a positive and supportive work environment that enhances the overall experience of the workforce; and
- **Leadership and Inclusion:** fostering a culture of strong leadership, inclusivity, and diversity to drive better outcomes for our workforce and the public we serve.

A key initiative of the Strategy will be to simplify and streamline recruitment to close capacity and capability gaps.

In addition, the HR Policy Renewal Plan will be included as a key initiative in the Strategy; the People and OD function will review existing policies and create new ones that are efficient, practical, accessible, and aligned with best practices to support a diverse and inclusive Civil Service.

The People and OD function and NICS HR teams will collaborate with the Integr8 HR Team to create processes that ensure NICS' resourcing aligns with the new Oracle technology solution. The Co-Design workshops are expected to conclude by Summer 2025.

Appendix 1 – Recruitment competitions closed for applications during 2024

Reference	Title
IRC293734	Curatorial C (Grade 7)
IRC296260	Industrial 1 - Store Person
IRC296261	ICT Level 3 - Operations
IRC296525	Personal Secretary
IRC296565	Strangford Ferry Rathkeltair HPTO (CEA)
IRC297036	YJA Youth Conference Coordinator
IRC297059	Night Support Worker
IRC297180	Grade 7 Psychologist Forensic
IRC297182	Senior Scientific Officer - Quality Manager
IRC297880	Vehicle Examiner (Technical Grade 1)
IRC297977	Curatorial Grade C
IRC298082	NICS Health & Safety Officer Executive Officer 1
IRC298083	NICS Health & Safety Advisor Staff Officer
IRC298084	NICS Senior Health & Safety Advisor Deputy Principal
IRC298214	Grade 6, Head of Building Standards
IRC298215	Grade 6, Head of Office Estates
IRC298228	Senior Public Prosecutor, PPS
IRC298338	Assistant Economist
IRC298487	Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group Grade 3
IRC298565	Deputy Registrar General Grade 6
IRC298627	Senior Scientific Officer
IRC298730	SPTO Estates Manager
IRC298794	Work Psychology Services Higher Psychologist
IRC298834	HED State Care Operations Dunluce PTO Warden
IRC298951	Supporting People Group Deputy Secretary
IRC299057	Grade 7 Head of Communications
IRC299080	ICT Level 3 - Software Developers
IRC299335	Assistant Statistician
IRC299586	Industrial 2 - Portal Operations
IRC299668	Public Health Chief Environmental Health Officer Grade 5
IRC300237	DP Economist
IRC300306	HPTO (Architect Assistant)
IRC300469	Portal Operations NI Protocol Larne Inspector Group 4

Reference	Title
IRC300476	LPS Head of Rating Policy Division
IRC300675	Engaged Communities Deputy Secretary
IRC300786	Grade 7 Finance Project Workstream Lead - Integr8
IRC300787	Organisation Design and Development Director (Grade 6)
IRC300808	Business Change Director (Grade 6)
IRC300861	ICT 7 Senior Digital Delivery Managers NICS
IRC300928	Senior IT Manager (ICT Level 7)
IRC301185	YJA Youth Justice Practitioner
IRC301290	Medical Officer OHS (Grade 6)
IRC301294	HPTO Operations & Testing DVA
IRC301317	Marketing & Communications Officer (SO)
IRC301322	HPTO Senior Health and Safety Officer - DVA
IRC301432	Agricultural Inspector Group 1
IRC301565	Director of EU Relations Branch
IRC301754	SPTO Building & Fabric Designer
IRC301792	NED Countryside Coast & Landscapes HScO
IRC301862	EO1 Court Clerk
IRC302233	Civil Engineering Apprentice Level 3
IRC302235	NICSHR Grade 5
IRC302314	Senior Occupational Health Nurse
IRC302315	Medical Officer OHS Grade 6
IRC302316	Senior Occupational Health Technician
IRC302317	Occupational Health Technician
IRC302474	Night Custody Officer
IRC302475	PCO Escort
IRC302479	Director of Health Estates
IRC302550	Graduate Trainee Civil Engineer
IRC302898	Vehicle & Plant Fitter Apprentice Industrial 1
IRC302899	ICT Level 2
IRC302901	Strangford Ferry Shift Manager
IRC302927	ICT Apprentice Level 1
IRC302987	Trainee Graduate Procurement Officer External Competition
IRC303028	Forest Officer III
IRC303101	Strangford Purser

Reference	Title
IRC303118	Graduate Trainee Work Psychologist
IRC303131	Assistant Director DPP Grade 5
IRC303169	Administrative Officer (AO)
IRC303201	P&OD Grade G5
IRC303235	HPTO Site Manager NI Prison Service
IRC303236	HPTO Building Maintenance, Building & Fabric Officer
IRC303249	Electronics Technician Scientific Officer
IRC303350	Trainee Chartered Accountant (EO1)
IRC303442	Electrical Engineering Apprentice
IRC303464	Mechanical Engineering Apprentice
IRC303475	Forensic Engineer/Forensic Collision Investigator
IRC303807	Digital Director Roles
IRC303915	SPTO Electrical Engineering Assistant (EEA)
IRC303998	Assistant Secretary Grade 5 Strategic Policy Division DoF
IRC304004	NIPS Maghaberry General Office EO2
IRC304130	ICT 6 Digital Delivery Manager
IRC304131	ICT 6 Cyber Security Advisor
IRC304148	ICT 6
IRC304149	ICT 6 Software Development
IRC304270	Fees Manager Grade 7
IRC304272	YJA Care Worker EO2
IRC304273	Enforcement Officer
IRC304502	Assistant Statistician
IRC304536	SPTO Procurement Operations Officer
IRC304537	SPTO Senior Architectural Assistant
IRC304585	PPTO Property Maintenance Team Lead
IRC304586	HPTO Building Maintenance Officer Electrical
IRC304693	PPTO Client Advisor/Project Manager
IRC304694	HPTO Structural Engineering Assistant
IRC304806	Head of Plant Health Division, Grade 6
IRC304807	Head of Forestry Division
IRC304850	Pharmaceutical Officer
IRC304895	Grade 7 Energy Group
IRC304914	NICTS Facilities & Workplace Management PPTO

Reference	Title
IRC304936	Area Inspector
IRC304945	Grade 6 Assistant Director, DOF Pensions Division, DE Teachers Pay and Pensions
IRC304959	Grade 6 Climate Change Science and Innovation
IRC305567	DfC, Social Security Policy and Legislation Command
IRC305569	DNA Technical Section Head - Senior Scientific Officer
IRC305642	Graduate Trainee Architectural Assistant (RIBA 3)
IRC305643	Graduate Trainee Mechanical Engineer
IRC305926	Graduate Trainee Electrical Engineer
IRC305932	Finance Director
IRC305939	Trainee Meat Inspector
IRC306064	PPS, Information & Disclosure Manager Grade 7
IRC306074	Head of Regulatory Divergence Co-ordination
IRC306311	HED Heritage Development SPTO Architect
IRC306386	Grade 7 Departmental Security Officer
IRC306387	DP Information Officer
IRC306441	Senior Professional Technical Officer (Building Regulations Advisor)
IRC306450	CPD Graduate Trainee Quantity Surveyor
IRC306587	Industrial 1 Road Worker
IRC306607	Curatorial Grade F
IRC306609	Assistant Valuer
IRC306701	DfI Trainee Civil Engineering Assistant Skills Academy – AA
IRC306765	PTO Marine Maintenance Supervisor
IRC306783	Higher Professional and Technical Officer (HPTO) Health & Safety Advisor
IRC306788	Senior Construction Health & Safety Advisor (SPTO)
IRC306933	Legislative Counsel - Senior Civil Service (Grade 5)
IRC307122	Driving Examiner (EO2)
IRC307510	Student Placement
IRC307646	Chief Digital Information Officer
IRC307654	PTO Area Foreperson
IRC307655	Head of Internal Audit
IRC307673	Deputy Principal Legal Officer
IRC307703	Curatorial Grade E Archaeologist
IRC307704	HPTO Electrical Clerk of Works

Reference	Title
IRC307753	LRNI Operations Deputy Principal
IRC307950	HPTO Civil Engineering Assistant
IRC308000	PPTO Civil Engineer
IRC308012	Grade 7 Accountant
IRC308341	NIPS Custody Prison Officer
IRC308566	Trainee H&S Inspector Occupational Health & Hygiene Group HSENI
IRC308568	Trainee H&S Inspector HSENI Inspector 2

Appendix 2 – Summary of eligible applications and updated appointment figures

Table 1 – Summary of eligible applications by Equality Group for competitions which closed to activity during 2024

Equality Category	Description	Non SCS Permanent Jobs	SCS Permanent Jobs	Temporary Jobs	Total
Overall	Total	22,536	75	492	23,103
Gender	Male	11,265	38	236	11,539
	Female	11,271	37	256	11,564
Community Background [1]	Protestant	9,915	30	170	10,115
	Catholic	10,221	37	229	10,487
	Not Determined	2,399	8	93	2,500
Ethnicity [2]	White	22,010	73	464	22,547
	Minority Ethnic Groups	525	2	28	555
Disability	With a declared disability	1,767	6	35	1,808
	Without a declared disability	20,769	69	457	21,295
Age-group [3]	16-24	4,813	0	470	5,283
	25-34	8,554	1	15	8,570
	35-44	5,314	31	4	5,349
	45-54	3,026	35	2	3,063
	55-64	777	7	0	784
	65+	5	1	0	6
Sexual Orientation [4]	Different sex	20,831	70	445	21,346
	Both sexes	715	0	32	747
	same sex	945	5	15	965
NICS employment history [5]	Current	4,733	56	2	4,791
	Previous	1,941	5	4	1,950
	None	15,759	13	486	16,258

[1] For all Permanent Jobs, Community Background is missing for 1 Eligible applicant.

[2] For all Permanent Jobs, Ethnicity is missing for 1 Eligible applicant.

[3] For all Permanent Jobs, Age group is missing for 47 Eligible applicants. For Temporary Jobs, Age group is missing for 1 Eligible applicant.

[4] For all Permanent Jobs, Sexual Orientation is missing for 45 Eligible applicants.

[5] For all Permanent Jobs, Employment History is missing for 104 Eligible applicants.

Table 2 – Summary of eligible applicants, invited to interview, passed interview & appointed by Equality Group for competitions which closed to activity during 2024

Equality Category	Description	Eligible Applicants	Invited to Interview	Passed Interview	Appointed
Overall	Total	23,103	8,058	5,607	3,249
Gender	Male	11,539	4,324	2,923	1,740
	Female	11,564	3,734	2,684	1,509
Community Background (1)	Protestant	10,115	3,645	2,555	1,421
	Catholic	10,487	3,533	2,468	1,522
	Not Determined	2,500	879	583	306
Ethnicity (2)	White	22,547	7,885	5,499	3,185
	Minority Ethnic Groups	555	172	107	64
Disability	With a declared disability	1,808	618	426	*
	Without a declared disability	21,295	7,440	5,181	*
Age-group (3)	16-24	5,283	1,681	1,210	649
	25-34	8,570	2,713	2,177	1,189
	35-44	5,349	2,013	1,345	825
	45-54	3,063	1,334	732	489
	55-64	784	296	129	88
	65+	6	6	2	0
Sexual Orientation (4)	Different sex	21,346	7,461	5,133	2,981
	Both sexes	747	266	218	*
	same sex	965	309	237	*
NICS employment history (5)	Current	4,791	2,842	1,728	1,392
	Previous	1,950	596	447	222
	None	16,258	4,575	3,407	1,619

* Figure suppressed to prevent identification of individual applicant.

(1) Community Background is missing for 1 Eligible applicant, 1 applicant who was Invited to Interview and 1 applicant who Passed Interview.

(2) Ethnicity is missing for 1 Eligible applicant, 1 applicant who was Invited to Interview and 1 applicant who Passed Interview.

(3) Age-group is missing for 47 Eligible applicants, 14 applicants who were Invite to Interview, 11 applicants who Passed Interview, and 8 Appointees.

(4) Sexual Orientation is missing for 45 Eligible applicants, 22 applicants who were Invited to Interview, 19 applicants who Passed Interview and 13 Appointees.

(5) Employment History is missing for 104 Eligible applicants, 45 applicants who were Invited to Interview, 25 applicants who Passed Interview and 16 Appointees.

Table 3 – Summary of competition and appointment figures for internal competitions (promotions and trawls only) at all NICS grades for the years 2022 - 2024

	2022		2023		2024	
	No. of Competitions	No. of Appointments	No. of Competitions	No. of Appointments	No. of Appointments	No. of Competitions
Internal SCS Competitions	2	2	1	0	0	0
Internal Competitions below SCS	11	81	22	42	52	19
Total	13	83	23	42	52	19

Note: Includes Trawls and Promotion Boards with a closing date for applications in the relevant year.
Appointments refer to staff promoted by 31 December 2024. Further appointments could be made from some of these competitions.

Appendix 3 – Extensions to Merit List 2024

EXTERNAL COMPETITIONS (Merit list extended for 33 competitions)

EO1 GENERAL SERVICE VOLUME – IRC265807				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
2 nd Request	31 Dec 2023	30 Jun 2024	589	100+
3 rd Request	30 Jun 2024	31 Dec 2024	740	100+

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 31 August 2023, with the first extension request made in 2023.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO2 GENERAL SERVICE VOLUME – IRC265817				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
2 nd Request	31 Dec 2023	30 Jun 2024	685	100+
3 rd Request	30 Jun 2024	31 Dec 2024	1024	100+

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 09 August 2023, with the first extension request made in 2023.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

AO GENERAL SERVICE VOLUME – IRC240709				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
5 th Request	31 Dec 2023	31 Mar 2024	1536	100+
6 th Request	31 Mar 2024	30 Sep 2024	1595	10+

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 01 October 2022, with the first extension request made in 2022. The second, third and fourth extension requests were made in 2023.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

SO GENERAL SERVICE VOLUME – IRC275969				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	19 Aug 2024	31 Mar 2025	492	100+

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 19 August 2024.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

DP GENERAL SERVICE VOLUME – IRC277837				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	14 Nov 2024	31 Mar 2025	288	100+

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 14 November 2024.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

SO – MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT – IRC273952				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	20 Feb 2024	20 Mar 2024	2	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 20 February 2024. Extending the merit list was required to allow time for candidate to take up post in March 2024.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

SO – ASSISTANT STATISTICIAN – IRC273939				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
4 th Request	08 Jan 2024	07 May 2024	51	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 09 June 2023. The first, second and third extension requests were made in 2023. The fourth extension was required to allow a deferred start date for one candidate whose required notice period was three months, and for the business area to submit a further vacancy.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – SCIENTIFIC OFFICER – IRC275900				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
3 rd Request	25 Feb 2024	25 Mar 2024	12	4
4 th Request	25 Mar 2024	25 Sep 2024	13	3
5 th Request	25 Sep 2024	25 Dec 2024	16	2
6 th Request	25 Dec 2024	25 Mar 2025	17	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 25 July 2023, with the first and second extension requests made in 2023. The third extension was required to allow candidate to take up post after Counter Terrorism Check (CTC) was gained. A fourth extension was required as three vacancies were submitted and approval given due to the backlog of competitions. The fifth extension was required to allow CTC to be completed, offers of appointment made and candidates appointed. The sixth extension was required to ensure CTC could be completed, offer of appointment made and candidate appointed.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO2 – TRAFFIC EXAMINER – IRC282442				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	29 Jan 2024	30 Apr 2024	4	1
2 nd Request	30 Apr 2024	30 Jul 2024	5	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 29 January 2024. The first extension was required to enable successful candidates to complete pre-placement checks, offers of appointment to be made and for candidate to be appointed. The second extension was required as two further vacancies were submitted before 30 April 2024, and candidates would not be appointed before then. This was approved due to budgetary pressures and backlog of competitions.

Extending the merit list is considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – CAREERS ADVISER – IRC277690				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
2 nd Request	08 Jan 2024	04 Mar 2024	5	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 18 October 2023, with the first extension request made in 2023. The second extension request was granted as candidate who accepted the offer of appointment asked to defer the start date to 04 March 2024.

Given the difficulties in attracting and recruiting qualified careers advisers, extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

AA – INDUSTRIAL 1 RIVER WORKER – IRC284873				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	07 Feb 2024	08 May 2024	5	4

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 07 February 2024. The first extension request was made to enable successful candidates to complete OHS medicals, offers of appointment to be made and for candidates to be appointed.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

AA – INDUSTRIAL ROAD WORKER 1 – IRC276805				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
3 rd Request	12 Feb 2024	12 May 2024	16	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 12 August 2023, with the first and second extension requests made in 2023. The third extension was to enable successful candidates to complete OHS medicals so offer of appointments could be made and allow time for candidates to take up post.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

AO – INDUSTRIAL 2 SENIOR CRAFT (WELDER) – IRC282739				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	15 Feb 2024	16 May 2024	2	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 15 February 2024. The first extension request was made to enable the successful candidate who had just completed their OHS medical to be made an offer of appointment and take up appointment.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

SO – FRAUD MANAGER – IRC287486				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	09 Mar 2024	09 Jun 2024	4	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 09 March 2024. The first extension request was made as a vacancy had been received and it allowed time for offer of appointment to be made and candidate to take up appointment.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

AO – ASSISTANT SCIENTIFIC OFFICER – IRC285578				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	02 Mar 2024	02 May 2024	5	1
2 nd Request	02 May 2024	03 Aug 2024	5	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 02 March 2024. The first extension request was made to ensure the successful candidate was in post by the closing date. The second extension request was approved to manage the backlog of competitions.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds taking into account the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

G6 – SENIOR PRINCIPAL STATISTICIAN – IRC281895				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
2 nd Request	07 Mar 2024	07 Sep 2024	7	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 07 December 2023, with the first extension request made in 2023. The second extension request was approved by the Permanent Secretary.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – CONTRACTS MANAGER – IRC287258				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	03 Apr 2024	03 Jul 2024	4	3

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 03 April 2024. The first extension request was granted as three new vacancies were declared.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

SO – FRAUD INVESTIGATOR – IRC287410				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	19 Mar 2024	19 Jun 2024	2	3
2 nd Request	19 Jun 2024	19 Oct 2024	2	3

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 19 March 2024. The first extension request was approved to allow a candidate to get Security Check clearance, receive their offer and take up post. The second extension

request was approved to allow a candidate on a career break to return and take up post, whilst also allowing time for completion of other candidates' Security Check clearance.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – SCIENTIFIC OFFICER – IRC270955				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
4 th Request	25 Mar 2024	25 Apr 2024	36	5
5 th Request	25 Apr 2024	25 May 2024	37	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 25 May 2023, with the first, second and third extension requests made in 2023. The fourth and fifth extensions were approved due to vacancies being submitted and several candidates declining their offers of appointment, meaning appointments have not been made throughout the lifetime of the competition. There were a number of declared vacancies to be filled and time needed to ensure pre-placement checks were completed and candidates appointed into post.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

G7 – HEAD OF OPERATIONS BRANCH ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME UNIT – IRC288345				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	28 Jun 2024	28 Sep 2024	1	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 28 June 2024. The first extension request was approved because a vacancy was received before the competition closed.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

DP – SENIOR SCIENTIFIC OFFICER – IRC288676				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	1 st Request	29 Jun 2024	29 Sep 2024	4
2 nd Request	2 nd Request	29 Sep 2024	28 Dec 2024	8

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 29 June 2024. The first extension request was approved to allow another five appointments to be made on top of the original appointments (nine in total). This allowed five more candidates to take up post before closing. The second extension was approved due to the critical need to fill post Ministerial priorities in Windsor Framework and Lough Neagh, therefore DAERA agreed to pay additional costs above the nine appointments made.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – INSPECTOR GROUP 2 FOOD TECHNOLOGY TECHNICIAN – IRC293192				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	29 Jun 2024	29 Dec 2024	0	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 29 June 2024. The first extension request was made due to a backlog with Occupational Health Service, and to allow time to pre-place, issue offers of appointment and for candidates to take up post.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – INSPECTOR GROUP 2 – IRC292727				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	26 Jul 2024	04 Nov 2024	27	14
2 nd Request	04 Nov 2024	31 Dec 2024	33	9

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 26 July 2024. The first extension request was made to allow a number of candidates to take up post, including a candidate on maternity leave who had a deferred start date. The second extension was permitted to allow the final nine candidates to receive offers and take up post.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – FRAUD INVESTIGATOR – IRC285575				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	03 Aug 2024	03 Feb 2025	14	8

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 03 August 2024. The first extension request was granted as eight vacancies were already with HRConnect and all required CTC clearance. Time was needed for offers of appointment to be made and for candidates to take up post.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

SO – REPORTING OFFICER, CHEMISTRY STREAM HIGHER SCIENTIFIC OFFICER – IRC293613				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	09 Oct 2024	09 Jan 2025	1	3

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 09 October 2024. The first extension request was made to allow time for CTC clearance to come through and place candidate in post. The second extension request was made as a candidate declined post, so a second extension was approved to allow time for the same offer to be made to the next candidate.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – DVA PTO DEPUTY CENTRE MANAGER – IRC293442				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	17 Aug 2024	17 Nov 2024	6	3

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 17 August 2024. The first extension request was made as there were three vacancies declared.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

INDUSTRIAL 2 – SKILLED OPERATIVE, PLANT OPERATOR – IRC293793				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	13 Aug 2024	13 Nov 2024	4	1
2 nd Request	13 Nov 2024	13 Feb 2025	4	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 13 August 2024. The first and second extension requests were made due to delays with OHS.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

INDUSTRIAL 2 – SKILLED OPERATIVE, HANDYPERSON – IRC293794				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	04 Sep 2024	04 Dec 2024	5	1
2 nd Request	04 Dec 2024	04 Mar 2025	5	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 04 September 2024. The first and second extension requests were made due to delays with OHS.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – PTO M&E ASSISTANT FLEET WORKSHOP – IRC293040				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	09 Oct 2024	09 Jan 2025	4	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 09 October 2024. The first extension request was made because a vacancy was declared and time is needed to allow candidate to take up post.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

AO – ASSISTANT SCIENTIFIC OFFICER – IRC295106				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	18 Dec 2024	18 Mar 2025	11	7

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 18 December 2024. The first extension request was made as CTC clearance was required for remaining candidates and would not have been completed to allow appointment before the original closing date.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

SO – HPTO ESTATES OFFICER – IRC296284				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	10 Dec 2024	10 Mar 2025	3	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 10 December 2024. The first extension request was made as CTC clearance is required for remaining candidates and they would not be in post by the original closing date.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

EO1 – PTO ESTATES OFFICER – IRC 296285				
Extension Request	Previous closing date	New extended closing date	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 ST Request	19 Dec 2024	19 Mar 2025	1	2

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 19 December 2024. The first extension request was made as CTC clearance is required for remaining candidates and they would not be in post by the original closing date.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

INDUSTRIAL 2 – RANGERS – IRC 295482				
Extension Request	Previous closing date	New extended closing date	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 ST Request	28 Dec 2024	28 Mar 2025	4	5

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 28 December 2024. The first extension request was made following OHS delays and funding issues for further vacancies.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

INTERNAL COMPETITIONS (Merit list extended for 4 competitions)

EO1 – DIARY SECRETARY – IRC 266631				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	04 Jan 2024	31 Jan 2024	4	1
2 nd Request	31 Jan 2024	29 Mar 2024	4	1
3 rd Request	29 Mar 2024	12 Apr 2024	5	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 04 January 2024. The first, second and third extension requests were made as two remaining candidates would not be in post before the closing date due to budgetary constraints causing a delay filling in the vacancy.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

G7 – DEPARTMENTAL MINISTERIAL PRIVATE SECRETARIES – IRC 273960				
Extension Request	Previous closing dates	New extended closing dates	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 st Request	17 Apr 2024	17 Jul 2024	7	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 17 April 2024. The first extension request was made to enable the final candidate to be appointed.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

G7 – STATISTICIAN – IRC 265008				
Extension Request	Previous closing date	New extended closing date	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
2 nd Request	17 Jan 2024	13 Mar 2024	20	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 17 October 2023, with the first extension request made in 2023. The second extension request was made as a vacancy was declared for the final candidate and they would not be appointed by the previous closing date. A new competition would have incurred additional funding in times of significant budgetary pressures.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.

NIPS SENIOR OFFICER DOG HANDLER INSTRUCTOR				
Extension Request	Previous closing date	New extended closing date	No. appointments before extension	Anticipated number appointments after extension
1 ST Request	13 Feb 2024	11 Aug 2024	3	1

Cogent and practical reasons for extending the merit list

Original merit list closing date was 13 February 2024. The first extension request was made following further Senior Officer Dog Handler Instructor vacancy that would arise beyond the date of the original merit list expiry date.

Extending the merit list was considered appropriate on value for money and business need grounds having regard to the anticipated number of vacancies, costs and timescales involved in running a new competition.



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