

NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

RECRUITMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

VERSION 20

Manual Version Control

Version	Date	Change Description
20	04/12/2023	Pg 22 & 67 – Clarification of process if no Ministers in post (i.e. No functioning Executive in place) for endorsement of SCS post
19	01/11/2023	Page 48 paragraph 5.4, following line removed: <i>'The applicant is currently employed within the NICS at the same grade and discipline as the competition seeks to recruit (general service grades at Staff Officer and below).'</i>
18	01/01/2022	Pg 18 Addition of Guaranteed Interview Scheme for appropriate recruitment competitions Annex 10 Guaranteed Interview Scheme policy and operational guidance
17	16/03/2021	Pg, 24 & 117, Nationality. Content updated to reflect changes following EU Exit and end of transition period. References to Appointments and Marketing branch to Corporate Competitions and Policy branch. References to Departmental HR changed to NICSHR. References to CAL changed to NICSHR L&D. References to Article 6 Approval Process for Appointments to SCS updated. Pg 53, 56, 58, 63, 64, 65 and Annex 3. Revised to reflect a change within the existing process for appointing the Head of the Civil Service.
16	23/12/2016	Pg 70-75 Adoption of the Employers Guidance in Recruiting People with Conflict Related Convictions. Pg 71 Process amended to reflect the online AccessNI facility. Pg 121 Annex - NICS Risk Assessment amended to reference NSV checks and that conflict related convictions pre April 1998 fall outside of the Risk Assessment.
15	12/09/2016	Pg 20, 21,34,36,37,43,52,55,57,62,63&64. Annex 2 and 3. Additional Text added to reflect a new process that may be used for appointments to the position of Head of the Civil Service.
14	10/11/2014	Removal of the application process to transfer from HCS to NICS. Pg 10/11/14 It is the responsibility of Departments to adhere to CSC for NI Recruitment Code and NICS Policy and Procedures when making appointments outside of the NICS contract and/or making appointments by way of exceptions. Pg 18 Guidance provided on the requirement for new posts to be JEGS/JESP. Pg 20 Clarification on the lifetime of merit lists for volume competitions. Pg 24 Removal of reference to Controlled Activity due to amendments to the SVG Order (NI) 2007 Pg 25/26 Further guidance on the identification of the Competition Lead and their role. Pg 26 Guidance on identifying panel members Pg 27-30 Guidance on the new Recruitment and Selection Training. Pg 32 Ministerial involvement (and training required) to be discussed at scoping meeting along with the potential for the competition to be used to fill similar vacancies Pg 32 A completed Job Analysis must be sent to HRConnect prior to the CIM Pg

		<p>33</p> <p>Further guidance on the preparation required for CIM by all contributors to the recruitment process: Pg 35</p> <p>If Ministerial involvement in a competition this should be stated in the advertisement. Pg 41/42</p> <p>Further detail on requesting applications in different formats. Pg 44</p> <p>Online system now accepts 3700 characters. Pg 46</p> <p>All reasonable adjustment requests for tests to be referred to NISRA Pg 48</p> <p>Further guidance to panels about decisions made at sift and the Departments/Competition Lead role. HRConnect also has authority to defer a sift if it is clear preparatory work has not taken place. Pg 51</p> <p>Guidance to panels/HRConnect on applicants providing clarification on information provided at sift Pg 59/60</p> <p>Guidance on scoring mechanism to be used. Pg 61</p> <p>Guidance on the importance of timely communication with all parties when dealing with reconvene requests. Pg 61/62</p> <p>Guidance on the responsibility of panels to complete paperwork on final day of assessment. Pg 62</p> <p>Ministerial Endorsement requirements at Stage 3. Minister should not meet with lead candidate prior to appointment. Pg 63</p> <p>HRConnect will accept requests for order of merit position by telephone but will provide the information in writing. Pg 64</p> <p>Addition of link to complaints process for externally advertised competitions. Pg 66</p> <p>Note to Departments to ensure adequate time is built into the process to allow for all pre-employment checks to be completed. Pg 70</p> <p>Guidance on starting salary for existing Civil Servants who are successful in external competitions Pg 74</p> <p>Guidance on the use of fixed term contracts/potential for converting to permanency Pg 76</p> <p>Stage 4/Ministerial Endorsement Annex</p> <p>Addition of quick guide to contributor roles at Annex 2 Subsequent Annexes renumbered</p>
13	10/08/2013	<p>Pg18 Section 2.1 Clarification of process for submitting a job analysis for grading purposes.</p> <p>Pg19 Section 2.2 NICS BOARD must approve any need for a recruitment allowance for SCS competitions.</p> <p>Pg 28 Section 2.6 Amendment made to reflect the improvements to recruitment and selection training courses. There are now 3 modules rather than 5.</p> <p>Insertion of requirement to undergo refresher training at least every 24-30 months</p> <p>Pg 34 Section 3.2 and Pg 37 Section 3.3.1 Any recruitment allowance being offered for an SCS post must be detailed in advertisement and Candidate Information Booklet.</p> <p>Pgs 41, 51, 55 & 59. Declaration of any 'Conflict of Interest' at any stage of competitions.</p> <p>Pg76 Section 10.5 Current employees successful in a recruitment competition should be released to take up the new post within four weeks</p>
12	10/09/2012	<p>Changes to Disclosure and Barring. The definitions of Regulated Activity are changing from 10 September 2012. This has a direct impact on Enhanced criminal record checks. Pg 23-26</p>
11	08/05/2012	<p>General text amendments to improve clarity and ensure compliance with CSC for NI Code.</p>

10	01/11/2010	Reformatted for ease of reference for all stakeholders. There is no longer a separate section for SCS competitions; this is now integrated throughout the body of the manual. Addition of Roles and Responsibilities document, removal of annexes which are document templates used by HRConnect to avoid duplication, the guide for the recruitment panel members is now obsolete as this information is in the manual and CBI training.
9	12/10/2009	n/a

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to introduce Version 19 of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual.

The aim of this manual is to;

- Ensure adherence to the Civil Service Commissioners for NI Recruitment code;
- Ensure adherence to the NI Equality Legislation;
- Set out the context for the delivery of a recruitment and selection service to the NICS; and
- To be a reference source and to clearly define the roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders in managing and delivering NICS recruitment services.

This guide will continue to be a 'living' document, which we will regularly review to ensure it reflects best practice in recruitment and selection policies.

NICS HR

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1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

1.1 Recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) offers a diverse range of opportunities to work in the creation and delivery of government services to the people of Northern Ireland. The working environment for the vast majority of civil servants is challenging, modern, hi-tech and offers a great deal of job satisfaction, not at all like the stereotypical image of the Civil Service. Large numbers of civil servants work together in teams in a business focused and constructive working environment. Each year there is a requirement to appoint new staff to either fill existing posts or to fill new positions arising from newly developed government policies. The changing political, social and economic environment requires those already employed in the NICS to quickly adapt to change whilst also requiring new people to be recruited who have the necessary skills and experience to help deliver quality services to the people of Northern Ireland. All civil servants will now find themselves in a working environment which has been impacted by most of the strategic reform projects undertaken by the Department of Finance. Senior HR managers in the NICS recognise that the service has much to gain by the existence of both an active open recruitment approach alongside an internal promotion system which rewards the most able existing employees.

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1.2 Roles and responsibilities in the recruitment process

The policies and processes outlined in this manual are the responsibility of Resourcing Division of NICS HR of DoF. All competitions run by HRConnect on behalf of the NICS are expected to be in line with this manual and it is the responsibility of HRConnect to ensure operational compliance with this manual and the NICS Commissioners' Recruitment Code. Each participant in the recruitment and selection process must carry out their role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service

and its core values: integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. Any real or perceived conflict of interest must be declared at any stage that it arises within the selection process.

Any recruitment exercises initiated by a NICS Department/Agency outside of the HRConnect contract must also adhere to the Commissioners' Recruitment Code and NICS policy. In these circumstances it will be the responsibility of NICS HR to ensure operational compliance with this manual and the NICS Commissioners' Recruitment Code. NICS HR will seek an assurance from all Departments that systems are in place to ensure that selection for appointment is made in accordance with NICS policy and the Commissioners' Recruitment Code. When individual civil servants or external experts agree to participate in a NICS recruitment and selection exercise, they must adhere to the recruitment and selection policy and procedures outlined in this manual. HRConnect staff are responsible for providing professional HR advice and guidance to all contributors in the recruitment process.

A document outlining the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the recruitment process can be found at [Annex 1](#), there is also a short guide to the roles, responsibilities and functions of the key contributors to the recruitment and selection process that can be found at [Annex 2](#).

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1.3 The Civil Service Commissioners

The Civil Service Commissioners are appointed to uphold the principle that selection for posts in the NICS should be on the basis of merit through fair and open competition. The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 gives the Civil Service Commissioners the responsibility of maintaining the Merit Principle – that “... a person shall not be appointed to a situation in the Civil Service unless ... the selection... was made on the basis of merit in fair and open competition.”

The Commissioners' Order provides for Commissioners to publish a [Recruitment Code](#), which sets out the essential principles and procedures on which recruitment to the NICS must be based. This Code is a mandatory requirement for all those involved in recruitment

to any post within the NICS. The principles described in the Commissioners' Code form the strategic backbone of the recruitment and selection policies outlined in this manual.

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1.4 The Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code

1.4.1 Principle 1 – Appointments should be made on merit

- Merit has been and remains the core Principle on which appointments must be made. Making appointments on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition, is critically important to an effective and impartial Civil Service.
- Merit means the appointment of the best available person. No-one should be appointed to a job unless they are competent to do it and the job must be offered to the person who demonstrates that they would do it best.
- This Principle accords with the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 which gives Commissioners a statutory duty to maintain the Principle that "...a person shall not be appointed to...the Civil Service unless the selection...was made on the basis of merit in fair and open competition."
- Diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity are central to the Merit Principle and these should be embraced fully during recruitment processes.

1.4.2 Principle 2 – Appointment process should be fit for purpose

- All recruitment processes and practices adopted by the NICS should be fit for purpose, consistent with appointment on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition, and commensurate with good practice.
- This principle extends to all aspects of recruitment including defining job and person specifications, advertising the vacancy and the use of appropriate assessment processes.
- This Principle extends to all aspects of recruitment including job analysis, defining job and person specifications, advertising the vacancy and the use of appropriate assessment processes.
- Excellence in recruitment policy, management and practice is a business benefit.

- Commissioners welcome and support innovative approaches to ensuring that appointment processes deliver against the Merit Principle.

1.4.3 Principle 3 – Appointment process should be fair & applied with consistency

- Fair means that there is no bias in the assessment of candidates. Selection processes must be objective, impartial and applied consistently.
- Commissioners oppose wholly any form of unlawful discrimination, direct or indirect, active or passive and expect the NICS to adopt a vigorous approach to ensure that this does not arise;
- The NICS has an obligation to treat candidates fairly, to a consistent standard and in a consistent manner. Selection processes and the manner in which they are applied must be demonstrably fair and underpinned by real commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and equality of opportunity.

1.4.4 Principle 4 – Appointments made in an open, accountable & transparent manner

- Open means that job opportunities must be advertised publicly and potential candidates given reasonable access to information about the job and its requirements, and about the selection process.
- Confidence is enhanced by the transparency and openness of the manner with which the NICS deals with candidates at all stages of the recruitment process. Such confidence requires open and active communication on the processes to be adopted, the methods for assessment and the arrangements for constructive feedback.
- By requiring Departments and Agencies to comply with this Code, Commissioners contribute to the development of an effective and impartial Civil Service and expect this to provide assurance to the public that appointments to the NICS are made on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition.

Those with any involvement in managing the recruitment and selection of staff must ensure they have read and understand the requirements of the Recruitment Code and how the principles must be translated into operational practices. The Civil Service Commissioners

conduct audits of recruitment and selection activities across the entire NICS. The audits adopt various themes agreed by NICSHR/Commissioners each year. Adherence to these principles will also ensure a high degree of compliance with best practice outlined in the Codes of Practice of the Equality Commission. The achievement of transparency and openness will also ensure a much higher degree of customer satisfaction. Departments also need to ensure that their communication processes in recruitment are compliant with Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation.

In addition all staff involved in the management of recruitment and selection must ensure they are trained in and have knowledge of the implications of anti-discrimination legislation in respect of Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion/Politics and Sexual Orientation. This is covered in the Recruitment and Selection Legislation training module. A unified guide to promoting Equal Opportunities in Employment can be found at www.equalityni.org.

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1.5 Exceptions to appointment on merit in fair and open competition

As with any principle, there will be specific circumstances where there exist strong and compelling grounds to depart from the principle. Exceptions to the Merit Principle are rare and Departments must justify why it is not reasonably practicable to make the appointment in question in accordance with the Merit Principle. Regard should be paid to the potential for unfair treatment of those who are not given the opportunity to be considered for the appointment in question. In considering the application of Exceptions to the Merit Principle, Departments must bear in mind their continuing obligation to ensure compliance with the Commissioners' Recruitment Code and NICS policy. NICSHR (VMO) log and monitor all exceptions in real time for publication in the Annual Report. Departments must be satisfied that these appointments are justified in line with the requirements of the Commissioners' [Recruitment Code](#).

Regulation 3 of the General Regulations 2007 permits appointments to be made other than in accordance with the Merit Principle in the following circumstances:

- (a) where the person is appointed on secondment;

- (b) where the person to be appointed holds a situation in another Civil Service of the Crown;
- (c) where the person to be appointed is, or has recently been, employed on functions which have been or are being transferred to the Crown;
- (d) where the person to be appointed is of proven distinction and exceptional reasons relating to the business needs of the Civil Service provide justification for the appointment;
- (e) where the person has been selected for an appointment under Government programmes or initiatives; and
- (f) where the person has previously held a situation in the Civil Service and is being reinstated (this provision may be used only to reinstate former civil servants following a period of parliamentary candidature or membership).

Further information on the above exceptions and the rules surrounding their application can be obtained from Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch, NICSHR as well as from an examination of the Civil Service Commissioners' [Recruitment Code](#).

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1.6 Northern Ireland Civil Service Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

"The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is committed to providing equality of opportunity. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the NICS on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere in which all workers are encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated. This right is protected in many instances by legislation. In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland the NICS needs to recruit, retain and promote the best available people. Our equal opportunities policy is central to this strategy. We aim to foster a culture which encourages every member of staff to develop his

or her full potential, and which rewards achievement. Creating a working environment where individual differences are valued and respected enables all staff to give of their best and helps us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve.

The NICS seeks to maintain the confidence of the whole community. It will continue to promote equality of opportunity and fair participation within the framework of the law and will strive to achieve a workforce that is broadly representative of the society which it serves.

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and to apply this policy. Both management and Trade Union Side are fully committed to the policy and will endeavour to ensure its full implementation".

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1.7 Diversity in the NICS

The vision of Diversity, which the NICS has adopted is, "the creation of a culture that seeks, respects, values and harnesses differences."

1.7.1 As part of our commitment to equality of opportunity we offer a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for disabled applicants, where applicable. Further information on the GIS can be found in the relevant competition Candidate Information Booklet and in Annex 10 of this Manual.

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1.8 Outreach Measures

Outreach measures are those steps, over and beyond normal business, taken by Departments to effect greater communication and empathy with the public. A key objective of outreach measures is to create a welcome for all who might consider a career in the NICS. The following are examples of outreach measures in the NICS: -

- Staff may attend Careers Conventions throughout Northern Ireland. These are organised by schools/colleges providing education to 11 to 18 age group as well

as groups representing local industry. In addition, Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch staff attend other Careers Fairs organised by the Universities at each of their campuses. Staff who attend these events provide information on the large and varied career opportunities available to school and graduate leavers in Northern Ireland. Representatives from specialist areas of the NICS (e.g. Agriculturalists, Statisticians, IT Specialists etc..) also attend University Careers Fairs to promote opportunities in their particular fields;

- Initiatives to promote jobs in the NICS to young people from Northern Ireland and others at universities in Great Britain. e.g. liaise with universities careers advisers and deliver talks to interested young people;
- Provide workplace internships in which undergraduates gain work experience in NICS Departments.
- Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch prepares background information packs on career opportunities in the NICS which can be downloaded from our website at www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk. Staff attending careers events also distribute promotional material to those people who are interested in finding out more about careers in the Civil Service;
- Those seeking work placements should contact Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch who will liaise with Departments in arranging work experience placements. Further information and an application form are available at the [Work Experience](#) section of the NICS Recruitment website.
- Flyers and posters are regularly sent to various community groups alongside advertisements for volume grades. Additional marketing initiatives may be considered when necessary, e.g. radio advertising.
- When volume competitions are planned, contact is made with groups representing or providing a service to people with disabilities, as well as community based organisations which interface with ethnic minorities or foreign nationals. These contacts are to ensure as far as possible that all those who may be eligible to apply for NICS vacancies are aware of these opportunities.

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2 VACANCY INITIATION – AGREEMENT OF METHOD TO FILL

2.1 Identification of a vacancy

Once a line manager identifies a potential vacancy within their business area the line manager creates the vacancy and submits to NICS HR for consideration. NICS HR will liaise with HRConnect in relation to pools of staff available at the required grade and discipline and will decide upon the appropriate method to fill in line with the NICS Vacancy Management Policy.

For new or regraded posts line Management must liaise with NICS HR in the first instance. The grading team will provide the relevant job analysis questionnaires for completion so that a grading assessment can be conducted. The grading team should then provide the appropriate Job Evaluation Grading System (JEGS) data. For Senior Civil Service Posts, NICS HR will provide line management with a Job analysis questionnaire to complete and should be forwarded to the grading team who should arrange for the grading assessment to be conducted and passed to Pay & Reward for moderation.

Prior to the initiation of all competitions the appropriate business area should conduct a practical job analysis in consultation with the line manager, business partner and other stakeholders as appropriate. In filling positions that already exist it is still important that due consideration is given to the job analysis that has been carried out to ensure the nature of the post is still relevant and the requirements of the post remain the same. A record of the practical job analysis must be kept for audit purposes. The practical job analysis will inform the content of the Candidate Information Booklet as the duties and responsibilities and person specification should be defined as part of the job analysis. An effective practical job analysis will ensure the panel receives the correct information to enable them to define suitable and effective eligibility and shortlisting criteria. NICS HR Learning and development (NICS HR L&D) provides training modules in Strategic Resourcing and Practical Job Analysis (see section 2.7).

2.2 Approval required for Senior Civil Service (SCS) Competitions

In relation to vacancies which may arise at SCS level, the Permanent Secretary of the Department concerned discusses the options available for filling the post with the Director of NICSHR. These options include appointments from an existing competition, a sideways move, temporary promotion, trawl or by open competition. These discussions will take place in the context of workforce planning relevant to the entire NICS. When agreement is reached on the most appropriate method of filling the post, NICSHR notes the SCS management schedule which contains an overview of SCS vacancies. This schedule is an important information source used in succession planning by the Permanent Secretaries' Group (NICS BOARD). NICS BOARD approval of the proposed method of filling SCS posts is required before a competition can be launched as well as any need for a recruitment allowance for a SCS competition.

For the unique position of Head of the Civil Service (HOCS), the First Minister and deputy First Minister (FM and dFM) may be involved in discussions with the current post-holder and the Director of NICSHR to determine the process to be used i.e. external or internal competition. Further detail on roles and responsibilities when a Minister wishes to play an active role in a HOCS recruitment competition is provided in Annex 3

2.2.1 Civil Service Commissioners role in SCS Competitions

Article 6 of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 provides that any appointment to the Senior Civil Service (SCS) made through open competition requires the written approval of the Commissioners. This applies to those appointments made via open competition or by way of an exception as listed at Section 1.5. NICS policies and procedures have been designed to ensure authorisation/approval is obtained from the Commissioner chairing the competition at each key stage of the recruitment and selection process. A competition cannot proceed to the next stage until the relevant authorisation has been granted. Further detail is provided throughout this manual.

HRConnect is responsible for providing all documentation required by the Commissioners to ensure authorisation/approval is obtained.

2.2.2 Ministerial Involvement in SCS Competitions

There are a very small number of SCS competitions in which a Minister may wish to have involvement. These include competitions to appoint the HOCS or the Permanent Secretary of a Department. NICS policies and procedures have been designed to ensure that all appointments, including those with Ministerial Involvement, are made on merit and are free from personal or political partiality. All such appointments are also subject to the Commissioners' approval process. Ministerial involvement in a SCS competition is normally limited to consulting in the planning stages of a recruitment exercise and/or endorsing the lead candidate. Given the unique role of the HOCS, the FM and dFM may wish to play an active role in the recruitment and selection process and NICS procedures have been designed to accommodate this. Further detail is provided in the relevant sections below and at Annex 3.

Where there are no Ministers in post to fulfil the discretionary functions available to them (e.g. in the absence of a functioning Executive or should the Executive cease to function at any point during a competition), and except where appointing legislation requires otherwise, all stages of the recruitment process to make an appointment to the position of HOCS, Permanent Secretary or other, will continue to be progressed without Ministerial involvement.

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2.2.3 The use of an Executive Search Agency in the recruitment and selection process – NICS HR approval required

Departments may use an Executive Search Agency within government procurement rules. The current contract with HRConnect can provide for the engagement of consultants and consideration should be given to using them in the first instance. Central Procurement Directorate also maintains a register of agencies that have been approved to provide recruitment consultancy services. The approval of the Head of Resourcing Division, NICS HR must be obtained before a Department enters into any contractual relationship

with an external agency. Examples of added value activities, which can be provided by external consultants, include job search, psychological assessment of candidates and professional input to the management and running of Assessment Centres. Where external agencies are being considered, the Department must provide to NICSHR a clear and well-documented business case outlining the justification for this. The recruiting Department will define the role of the Executive Search Agency in the business case submitted to NICSHR for approval. It is essential that the representative of any agency providing input to NICS recruitment and selection services has been briefed by HRConnect in NICS recruitment and selection procedures and has a clear understanding of the role of the Civil Service Commissioners and their Recruitment Code. Further information can be found in [Annex 4](#).

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2.3 Appointments from an existing competition

As referred to above NICSHR may request pools report information from HRConnect to determine if another Department holds a merit list for the required grade. NICS policy determines that any candidates on a merit list may be considered to fill any similar vacancies which may arise during the lifetime of the competition. Should a Department seek to make an appointment from an existing merit list for a SCS position, authorisation must be sought from the Civil Service Commissioners. The following issues should be considered by a Department before proceeding to make further appointments from a competition: -

- Did the recruitment literature for the competition indicate how many vacancies might be filled and was any reference made to the possibility of further vacancies being filled from the competition?;
- What time has elapsed from the date of the order of merit for the current competition? It is NICS policy that appointments will not be made from any competition where the order of merit is more than twelve months old unless there are cogent practical reasons for extending the period;
- Is the competition a high volume corporate led competition which is being used to fill general service grades across all NICS Departments? It is NICS policy that

appointments will not be made from such competitions where the order of merit is more than two years old unless there are cogent practical reasons for extending the period;

- What was the 'equality' composition of the previous competition? NICSHR can request this information from HRConnect. Is there an opportunity in running a new competition to attract a more diverse applicant pool?

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2.4 Vacancy Initiation – requirements of the position

When line managers/NICSHR complete the service request form to create a new position on HRConnect it is imperative that the following guidance is adhered to. This will ensure that the correct nationality status and level of vetting required for the post is captured.

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2.4.1 Nationality

For the purposes of this section, a 'relevant European' means:

- those who have status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS);
- those who have leave to remain in the UK granted by 31 December 2020 (where they were also eligible under the EUSS but did not need to apply because they had other leave to remain);
- those who have yet to obtain EUSS status (they have rights saved for the duration of the grace period (ending on 30 June 2021) or until an application under EUSS is determined);
- certain family members of relevant Europeans
- those who have existing leave to remain and work as a Turkish citizen (or family member) by 31 December 2020 or have applied for such leave by that time.

The vast majority of vacancies in the NICS are open to UK nationals, nationals of Commonwealth countries, nationals of the Republic of Ireland, and relevant Europeans. There are a small number of posts (known as reserved posts) to which only UK nationals are eligible

to apply. **All requirements for appointment to the NICS are outlined in [Annex 5](#) of this policy including Civil Service Nationality Rules which are set out at 2.6 of Annex 5.**

In addition to ensuring that appointees to the NICS satisfy the Civil Service Nationality Rules requirements, there is a broader requirement to ensure that those appointed do not contravene immigration legislation. For example, whilst applicants from Commonwealth Countries may satisfy Nationality requirements for appointment to Non-reserved posts in the NICS, they may additionally require a work permit or sponsorship licence to legally work in the UK. HRConnect will need to check the applicant's passport, share code or other documents (specific to each individual applicant) to confirm if he/she can legally work in the UK and it will be the responsibility of each applicant to assure NICS HR that they have the appropriate work permit/sponsorship licence before being offered a post, if one is required. Employment of persons from outside the United Kingdom or Ireland is subject to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) points based system. Comprehensive guidance on preventing illegal working and the points based system is available on the UKBA site [here](#).

The vast majority of NICS posts fall into a “non–reserved” category which broadly speaking are open to UK Nationals, Commonwealth citizens, and ‘relevant Europeans’. A reserved post means a post which constitutes employment in the public service within the meaning of section 1(6) of the Aliens’ Employment Act 1955 as amended. Posts classified as ‘reserved’ are **reserved** for UK Nationals only. Under section 1(6) of the Aliens’ Employment Act ‘a reserved post’ in NICS means a post related to security which a UK Minister considers needs to be held by a UK National.

Great care needs to be taken in assigning a ‘reserved’ status to posts and it is important that those making decisions have a sound knowledge of the above policy. Departments who wish to classify a post as ‘reserved’ must contact the Secretary of State directly for approval.

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2.4.2 Vetting

The Departmental Security Officer is responsible for the determination of the security vetting level and it is made on an individual post basis. (Baseline Standard is sufficient for the majority of posts in the NICS).

There are 4 levels of vetting as follows: -

1. **Baseline Standard (BS)** This is a check of a candidate's identity, Employment history, Nationality and Immigration Status and Criminal Record Check (CRC).

There are three levels of disclosure carried out by Access NI each representing a different level of check:-

- a. **Basic Disclosure** – This certificate will show details of all convictions considered to be unspent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978, or state that no such convictions were found;
- b. **Standard Disclosure** – This certificate will show details of spent and unspent convictions and cautions. It does not show details of cases pending; this level of vetting is required for certain positions such as, for example, Barristers. The position must be included within the scope of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1978. This legislation has been heavily amended and particular consideration should be given to the [Rehabilitation of Offenders \(Exceptions\) \(Amendments\)\(No2\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) SR 2009 No.303](#)
- c. **Enhanced Disclosure** – An enhanced disclosure contains all of the information in the Standard Disclosure as well as any other relevant information held in police records. This level is mainly for positions that involve contact with children or vulnerable adults. There are now 4 options for enhanced checks, the relevant option should be selected depending on the requirements of the position and whether the post falls under the new definition of Regulated Activity. The 4 options are as follows;
- d. Enhanced check (no Barred List check);

- e. Enhanced check and Barred List check (ISA's Children's list);
- f. Enhanced check and Barred List check (ISA's Adult's list);
- g. Enhanced check and Barred List check (ISA's Children's & Adult's list);

Further information on the above disclosures can be obtained by checking the Access NI website – www.accessni.gov.uk

The following levels of vetting 2, 3 and 4 are processed through the Defence Business Services (DBS), National Security Vetting system.

- 2. Counter Terrorist Check (CTC):** as point 1 plus check of Security Service records.
- 3. Security Check (SC):** as point 2 plus credit reference check.
- 4. Developed Vetting (DV):** as point 3 plus subject interview and field investigation.

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2.4.3 The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007

NICSHR have responsibility for ensuring that competitions to appoint staff to 'Regulated' positions correctly identify such positions to those managing their recruitment and selection and ensure the appropriate Enhanced check is carried out on all appointees before any offers of appointment are made.

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New definition of regulated activity

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 sets out the activities and work which are 'regulated activity', which a person who has been barred by the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) must not do. The scope of regulated activity has been scaled back to focus on work which involves close and unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups including children. The activities and work which are being taken

out of regulated activity (old definition) will still be eligible for enhanced AccessNI checks (but they will no longer be eligible for barred list checks).

In summary the key changes to regulated activity are:

Children

Regulated Activity:

- I. Is confined to unsupervised activities such as teaching, training, instructing, caring for, supervising children, or providing advice/guidance on well-being or driving a vehicle only for children;
- II. Includes work in a limited range of 'specified places' where there is opportunity for contact with children e.g. schools, children's homes, childcare premises, a children's hospital. It does not include supervised volunteers
- III. Includes relevant personal care (e.g. washing and dressing) or health care by or directed/supervised by a health professional.
- IV. Includes registered child minding and foster care.

Adults

Adults are no longer described as 'vulnerable'. Instead the new definition of Regulated Activity identifies the activities that, if any adult requires them, lead to that adult being considered vulnerable at that specific time. There are six categories of activities (and those working in those activities) that fall within the new definition of Regulated Activity as follows:

- I. Providing healthcare;
- II. Providing personal care
- III. Providing social care;
- IV. Assistance with general household matters;
- V. Assistance in the conduct of a person's own affairs; or
- VI. Conveying

An individual will commit an offence if he offers work to, or knowingly employs a disqualified person in a regulated position and a disqualified individual will commit an

offence if he applies for or accepts work in a regulated position. The full legal definition of regulated activity is set out in Schedule 2 to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007, as amended. Further information can be obtained from www.dhsspsni.gov.uk and www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni

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2.4.4 Rehabilitation of Offenders Legislation

It is important that the Department does not classify a post as requiring a standard or enhanced disclosure unless the position is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978. It is an offence to request sight of an individual's full criminal record if you have no legal basis to do so. Under this legislation the vast majority of offences become 'spent' after a rehabilitation period is completed and when no new and related offences occur. Working with children and vulnerable adults in regulated Activity, as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, is regarded as exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

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2.4.5 Pre-employment Health Surveillance/Fitness for Post.

NICSHR can instruct HRConnect to arrange a fitness for post assessment if required. Fitness for post assessments are carried out where, because of the nature of work, a specified and justifiable level of fitness is required in order for an individual to carry out the duties of the post. E.g. Colour Vision Tests, Diver Medical. Further information can be found in [Annex 7](#).

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2.4.7 Positive Action Advertising Statements

Equality and Diversity Branch will consider details of the post to be advertised together with an equality review of existing staff and determine if the Equality Statement to be inserted in the advertisement requires an affirmative action statement. If a positive action statement is required NICSHR will insert this in the comments box of the request for a new

competition before submitting to HRConnect. A positive action statement results from an examination, by grade, of the NICSHR database to determine if the grade to be recruited is under-represented. The positive action advertising statement particularly invites applications from the under-represented groups, but once applications have been received, ALL will be considered strictly on the basis of merit.

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2.5 Identifying Contributors

2.5.1 Identifying Competition Lead

The role of the competition lead is critical to the effectiveness of a recruitment and selection exercise and their commitment is required from identification of the vacancy to appointment. When planning a new competition NICSHR should ensure that the competition lead, who will have overall responsibility for the competition, is well informed about the requirements of the post(s) to be filled. The competition lead therefore must be an active participant in carrying out a job analysis which will inform eligibility and shortlisting criteria and should also be involved in the identification of panel members.

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2.5.2 Identifying Panel Members

When planning a new competition the employing Department must ensure the most suitable panel members are identified to facilitate the recruitment and selection process. Ideally the panel members should be one grade above the grade to be recruited with the chairperson at least two grades above. The panel should include one member experienced in HR issues and an 'expert' to assist in the particular recruitment exercise e.g. Accountant / IT Specialist. If such a person is not available, then consideration should be given to inviting colleagues from neighbouring areas/locations/organisations to assist in the competition. All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure, as far as possible, that each panel is balanced in terms of gender and community background. HRConnect will provide lists and details of trained panel members to NICSHR to assist in identifying

suitable panel members to participate in a recruitment competition; however the employing Department must be satisfied that all those participating in a recruitment exercise are suitably trained to fulfil the requirements of their role. This will provide the assurance needed to demonstrate adherence to the Recruitment Code and best practice in recruitment and selection.

In the case of volume competitions HRConnect may be required to liaise with Departments to obtain the names of officers who would be suitable to participate in a specific recruitment and selection process. Full training for their role must be arranged with the NICSHR Learning and development (NICSHR L&D) and completed prior to participating in the competition.

It is important that where prospective panel members are likely to have personal or professional knowledge of potential applicants, that great care is taken to ensure that this knowledge is not shared and does not influence the selection process in any way. Knowledge of a candidate by a panel member will not automatically preclude the person from participating as a panel member. However, if the prospective panel member has a close personal relationship with potential candidate/s, he/she should consider if he/she can fulfil their panel role in an objective and impartial way and consideration should be given to identifying an alternative panel member. Any potential conflict of interest must be made known to and recorded by HRConnect.

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2.6 Training of contributors to the Recruitment and Selection process

The delivery of Recruitment and Selection training is modularised to provide a more flexible approach and to enable attendees to receive training appropriate to their individual requirements. These courses are delivered by L&D and are as follows:

1. Strategic Recruitment Training –
withdrawn for review
2. Interview Standards and Legislation
3. Interview Panel Skills.

Each stakeholder must be trained on their specific role and responsibility at each stage of the recruitment process. Roles and responsibilities are defined at Annex 1.

1. The aim of the strategic recruitment training module is to demonstrate how focussing effort on the initial stages of recruitment leads to better results. It provides guidance aimed at staff who are involved in or are influencing recruitment and selection decisions, and who need to ensure that appropriate and effective job analysis is carried out, particularly in order to quality assure job descriptions, person specifications and candidate information booklets. The course will also ensure that staff are equipped with the necessary tools to conduct a practical job analysis, formulate job and person specifications and define effective eligibility and shortlisting criteria which are critical to job success. Each Department must ensure that they have sufficient officers trained in this module to conduct a practical job analysis, complete competition documentation and provide the quality assurance required.

2. The aim of the interview standards and legislation module is to provide contributors with information on interview standards regarding questions, marking and note taking. This is an opportunity for contributors to;

- Identify how to devise relevant questions in order to measure knowledge and skills;
- Identify how to assess evidence provided by candidates against set criteria;
- Make appropriate notes to record performance in answer to questions.

This module also provides an overview of the relevant policy, legislation (including diversity) and Civil Service Commissioners principles. This is an opportunity for contributors to;

- Identify the legislation relevant to NICS recruitment and selection;
- Identify the legislation underpinning diversity regarding NICS recruitment and selection;

- Recognise their role and responsibility as a stakeholder regarding implementation of NICS policies and legislation in NICS recruitment and selection.

3. The aim of the interview panel skills module is to provide contributors with the relevant skills to conduct recruitment and selection interviews. This is an opportunity for contributors to:

- State the skills and behaviours to be demonstrated during the recruitment interviews;
- Conduct a skills practice mock interview using generic criteria;
- Practice marking following the mock interview.

An individual's training needs must be reviewed, in consultation with their line manager and NICSHR/Training Commissioner, prior to participation in a new recruitment and selection exercise. Any training required will be actioned as a result of a self-assessment of a contributor's specific need. It is the responsibility of NICSHR to ensure that all those involved in a recruitment selection exercise are trained proportionate to their specific involvement and it is NICSHR that have the final decision as to when training may be required. As a guide formal training should be considered every 24-30 months. An individual may be involved in many recruitment selection exercises over a period and their skills may be enhanced by their activity however it should not be assumed that involvement in activity equals competence. HRConnect will note the date that the assessment of an individual's training needs was carried out.

On occasions there will be individuals who possess particular expertise/knowledge in their field of work and who because of their expertise or knowledge will be invited to participate on NICS panels. The recruiting Department will arrange any training requirements with NICSHR L&D to ensure the individual is appropriately trained to fulfil their role on the panel.

NICSHR L&D representatives will provide feedback to NICSHR where it is evident that a panel member may require further training before participating in a recruitment / selection

exercise. When reviewing the effectiveness of recruitment and selection procedures in competitions all stakeholders must give due consideration to training issues in terms of their own performance and that of others and encourage the completion and return of evaluation sheets to NICSHR L&D and feedback questionnaires to HRConnect. NICSHR will consider all comments and recommendations made to identify lessons learned which may lead to review of policy.

NICSHR, in consultation with NICSHR L&D, will regularly review the content and delivery of all training modules to ensure adherence to the Commissioners' Code and best practice in Recruitment and Selection.

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3 VACANCY INITIATION – COMPETITION PLANNING

3.1 Early involvement of Commissioners in Competition planning – Scoping meeting

All senior competitions must be chaired by a Civil Service Commissioner. At an early stage in the planning of a senior competition, NICSHR should ensure that the Civil Service Commissioners' Office nominate a Commissioner and provide contact details to the Department.

The Permanent Secretary and/or Departmental representatives should offer to have a discussion with the relevant Commissioner to scope the competition in advance of the formal Competition Initiation Meeting. This scoping meeting is intended primarily to familiarise the Commissioner with the Department and the nature of the post being advertised. An effective job analysis must be carried out by the Department prior to the scoping meeting and a draft CIB will be provided by NICSHR to aid discussion of relevant issues at the scoping meeting. Issues which may be discussed include:

- Any Ministerial involvement in the appointment – the Minister may wish to brief the Commissioner Chair if there is to be ministerial involvement. For a competition to recruit the HOCS, the First Minister and deputy First Minister (FM and dFM), or HOCS on their behalf, may brief the Commissioner chair (see Annex 3).
- The proposed selection process;
- Consideration of using external consultants or executive search agents and an overview of their proposed role;
- Consideration to using tests and/or presentation in the selection process;
- The proposed composition of the selection panel and the panel's overall competence to determine a suitable appointee;

- Training of panel;
- An overview of the post including the roles and responsibilities;
- Intended schedule/timetable for the competition;
- Any relevant information unique to the competition and/or appointment;
- Current market/field of potential candidates;
- Potential reach of advertising media;
- Circumstances which might lead to the termination of a selection process e.g. any minimum number of applications meeting the eligibility criteria.
- Potential for the competition to be used to fill similar posts identified in the future;
- If any participant in the process has any real or perceived conflict of interest to declare.

Where there is Ministerial involvement in the recruitment and selection process the Department should ensure that appropriate training is provided in line with the requirements set out in section 2.6. Any appointments from such competitions should be made on merit and free from personal or political partiality to ensure the appointee can continue to serve Ministers from different political backgrounds.

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3.2 Preparation of Candidate Information Booklet

The Candidate Information Booklet will be drafted by HRConnect upon receipt of the appropriate information input on i-recruit by the line manager/NICSHR and NICSHR. The completed job analysis for the post in question must also be forwarded to HRConnect prior to the Competition Initiation Meeting. In Senior Competitions NICSHR should draft a Candidate Information Booklet for use at the Scoping meeting. Templates are available from HRConnect.

The Candidate Information Booklet should include the following:

- a. Introduction / Foreword.
- b. Information about the employing Department setting out Departmental Values, etc.;
- c. Job Description, as informed by the job analysis, setting out role of post holder and key responsibilities;

- d. Draft eligibility and shortlisting criteria, as informed by the job analysis;
- e. Person specification, as informed by the job analysis, to include competences for the NICS grade as well as any other competences/behaviours, considered essential for effective performance in the post;
- f. Key terms and conditions including salary wording which has been approved by NICSHR and which applies to SCS posts (if applicable);

NICS policy determines that starting salaries offered should be the minimum pay point in the salary scale. There can be no exceptions to this policy in the case of competitions to recruit administrative and middle management grades regardless of any experience candidates may have gained. Very occasionally, Departments may be prepared to offer higher starting salaries to exceptional candidates. This must be made clear in the Candidate Information Booklet. In the case of SCS competitions, there may be some positions where a proven case exists to pay an allowance over and above the maximum of the salary scale to recruit or retain suitable individuals. Departments should refer to the Senior Civil Service Recruitment and Retention Allowance Policy to ensure the correct procedures are adhered.

- g. Application process including contact details. Person named as contact in Candidate Information Booklet must not be a panel member;
- h. Selection Process;
- i. Anticipated test / interview dates.
- j. Where it is known at the outset of a competition that more than one vacancy exists, or that the competition may be used to fill similar positions, then this should be clearly stated in the Candidate Information Booklet.
- k. Detail any Ministerial involvement;
- l. Detail of how the NICS Guaranteed Interview Scheme will operate (where appropriate).

The Candidate Information Booklet will be used for all recruitment to industrial and nonindustrial positions which may be permanent, temporary, full-time or part-time.

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3.3 Preparation for the Competition Initiation Meeting (CIM)

Prior to a CIM taking place the NICSHR should ensure that the necessary preparatory work has been completed to enable appropriate decisions to be made at this meeting. The HRConnect agent has the authority to defer a meeting if it is apparent this preparation has not taken place.

Once the vacancy has been initiated with HRConnect, HRConnect will issue the formal invitations to attend the meeting. All panel members are required to attend a Competition Initiation Meeting. If a panel member cannot attend the meeting, due to unforeseen circumstances, it will be the responsibility of the chairperson of the panel to be satisfied that the meeting can proceed, to brief that member on decisions reached and to obtain their consent. Whilst the formal responsibility for decisions reached at a CIM lies with the panel/panels, the role of the HRConnect representative will be to chair the meeting and to give professional advice and guidance to contributors. Where FM and dFM play an active role in the recruitment and selection process a separate CIM meeting may be arranged.

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3.3.1 Competition Initiation Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to formally agree and approve all the information in the Candidate Information Booklet and must include the following:

- Agreement of the background and duties and responsibilities of the post;
- Agreement of the **eligibility and shortlisting criteria** – these must be justifiable against the duties and responsibilities of the post. Panel members must have a clear and united understanding of the criteria and how these will be applied at the eligibility sift.
- **Application form** - This should be designed to obtain only that information required for the purposes of determining the eligibility and suitability of candidates. Date of birth should only be a requirement for the equal opportunities monitoring section of the form. Candidates should note that whilst the NICS is committed to

ensuring that applicants have a choice of submitting either hard copy or online applications it is greatly preferred that online applications are submitted. However, all applications will be considered equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or electronic;

- **Interview Criteria** - It will be necessary to consider assigning weights/scores to the criteria which reflect the relative importance of each criterion. A simple starting point to this exercise would involve assigning an even score to each criterion, e.g. 20 marks to each of 5 criteria equalling 100. Scoring candidates out of 100 provides an easy context in which to allocate marks, but panels may choose to vary this. Where a panel will be interviewing more than 20 people, it may be necessary to consider marking out of a higher score, e.g. 200, to avoid too many candidates' scores grouping in the same band, e.g. 60 to 70.

The panel may assign pass marks to individual criteria if they consider that a minimum standard in those competences is required. The implication of assigning minimum standards will be that any candidate who fails to meet the minimum standard cannot be appointed regardless of how well he/she performs in other criteria. Should a panel not assign minimum standards to all criteria then an overall pass mark must be set. Where a minimum standard has been assigned to ALL interview criteria, the overall pass mark will be the total of all minimum standards set for each criterion;

- Agreement of panel member **responsibility for asking lead questions** at interview and commitment by them to prepare draft lead questions and if appropriate indicators of performance to be shared with and agreed by colleagues at Pre Board Meeting;
- A test / presentation / case study or other assessment may be included as part of the selection process. Panels should discuss the assessment requirements and record what competences they wish to assess through each assessment and record how they intend to use the score in the overall exercise. Candidates must be advised in the Candidate Information Booklet if they will be provided with any

equipment during the assessment. Candidates should be clear on the competence/s against which each assessment will be scored.

- **Advertisement** - It is a NICS requirement that the advertisement contains location, salary and, if appropriate, if the appointment may be offered as a secondment opportunity; in senior competitions if ministerial endorsement of the candidate is required this should also be stated in the advertisement. If a recruitment allowance has been agreed in principle for a senior competition this should also be detailed;
- Consideration and agreement of **advertising media** – where and when to advertise;
- Agreed **timetable** for all stages of the competition, to include two working days for the Secretariat to provide authorisation for Stage 4;
- **Location and venue of interviews** - If there are issues with the location of the applicant pool in relation to the location of the selection process this again may be addressed at the outset of the competition planning process. HRConnect should consider all requests to carry out testing or interviews in rural areas if there is a business justification.
- Agreement on how requests for **reconvened interviews/late arrivals** will be dealt with. It should be noted that in certain circumstances there may be a requirement to reschedule due to a potential discrimination element.
- **Travel Expenses** for candidates - Where a potential pool of applicants is available it will be NICS policy to make no provision for the candidate to be reimbursed for the expense incurred when attending a test/interview. Where the Department or HRConnect anticipate that the applicant pool is outside of Northern Ireland the requirement to pay expenses may be considered and agreed at the CIM. The recruiting Department will process and fund all claims which fall into this category. Consideration will be given where necessary to refund travel expenses for

those candidates with a disability recognised under Disability Discrimination legislation.

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3.4 Eligibility Criteria

The principle objective of a recruitment competition is to attract a diverse pool of candidates whose qualifications and experience demonstrate that they have the ability to perform the duties of the post effectively. Effective job analysis will inform the development of Eligibility Criteria which must be clearly defined so that applicants completing an application form have a clear understanding of each requirement. The contributors of the recruitment competition must ensure the eligibility criteria are essential for the position to be filled. In setting eligibility criteria contributors should consider achievements and outputs as a means of determining eligibility before agreeing if a minimum period of experience is necessary. The relevant NICS Competency Framework provides a useful mechanism for setting criteria which focus on outcomes and achievements which can be objectively tested in the selection process.

In setting eligibility criteria contributors should also consider the consequences of each criterion in terms of its possible adverse impact on potential applicants from across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. For example, criteria which refer to the management of a specific budget size or management of a certain number of staff may be difficult for a candidate from the voluntary sector to meet. Similarly, a criterion specifying 5 years' experience in the last 5 years of topic x could potentially have an adverse impact on certain groups of candidates. If for example, extensive experience is deemed necessary, the Department must be able to justify this requirement and defend it if challenged.

If senior management experience is required, this should be defined along similar lines to the following:

“Senior management” level includes providing detailed advice on, or taking decisions affecting, strategic issues concerning the corporate body or organisation with which an individual is working either as an employee or advisor.

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3.5 Shortlisting Criteria

The shortlisting criteria and the order in which they will be applied must be made clear in the Candidate Information Booklet.

Shortlisting can be achieved by:

- a) Carrying out an objective evaluation of the depth and breadth of information provided by candidates against the eligibility criteria so that only those candidates who best demonstrate the criteria will be invited to interview;
- b) Requiring candidates to demonstrate (in addition to the eligibility criteria) evidence of particular effectiveness or achievement strongly related to the eligibility criteria;
- c) Requiring all eligible candidates to undertake psychometric test/assessment centre/interview.

Careful consideration is required in determining the most appropriate way to reduce the field of candidates who will be invited to interview. Increasing any period of experience required for eligibility must not be used as a shortlisting methodology as this may be contrary to Age Discrimination legislation. The competition contributors must justify objectively the reasons for using specific shortlisting criteria and these must be accurately recorded. Reducing the pool of candidates to be interviewed will not count as objective justification. Consideration should also be given at this stage as to the type of Guaranteed Interview method that will apply, if appropriate. The relevant policy and guidance is available in Annex 10 of this Manual.

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3.5.1 Shortlisting Assessment Tools

Consideration of assessment tools which may be used in each competition must be strongly influenced by an analysis of the requirements of the post. The range of assessment tools that are most commonly used in recruitment and selection are as follows: Eligibility information contained within application Forms, Interviews, Psychometric tests, Work sample tests and Assessment Centres. Further advice on assessment tools can be obtained from HRConnect. All assessments within a recruitment competition must be clearly linked to the NICS Competency Framework.

Should a panel, in consultation with NICS HR / competition lead, decide to use a test as part of the selection process, they must ensure it has been considered suitable by NISRA and, if appropriate, an expert in the specialist or technical area. When a professional competence is being tested, evidence must be provided to the Department which will allow them to determine whether the proposed test is appropriate. The test must be 'fit for purpose' and have the appropriate psychometric properties. It must be made clear in the Candidate Information Booklet how the test is to be used both in terms of the process and how its results will influence the assessment or selection of the candidates. If a test or assessment exercise is to be used, HRConnect make the administrative arrangements for the applicant testing and work closely with NISRA, if required, in managing the test process. Where a new test requires validation, NISRA should be consulted at the earliest opportunity. Consideration should also be given at this stage as to the type of Guaranteed Interview method that will apply, if appropriate. The relevant policy and guidance is available in Annex 10 of this Manual.

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3.6 Qualifications

When agreeing Candidate Information Booklets, contributors need to ensure that where professional qualifications are required as part of the selection criteria, the relevant professional bodies are listed with the level of qualification required. This must be defined clearly so that an applicant is clear on what qualification/membership of professional body is required and by what date. HRConnect must validate that candidates hold current full

membership of professional bodies prior to sift taking place. HRConnect will also investigate qualification equivalency issues. The key mechanism for determining equivalency lies in the application form where candidates are required to detail their subject title and course modules etc.. and how they meet the required criteria. Panel members should note that equivalent qualifications are not just determined by LEVEL of qualification but also by the BREADTH of content. HRConnect should seek clarification from an appropriate authority where they have queries about the equivalences of academic or other qualifications.

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3.7 Conflict of Interest

All competition participants must consider and declare any real or perceived conflict of interest which they are aware of at this stage in the selection process. The HRConnect representative should be informed immediately of any such issues and record these within the Competition Initiation Meeting Record. Further information regarding roles and responsibilities of competition participants is available in Annex 1, 2 and 3.

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3.8 Confidentiality Agreement

For competitions to recruit the HOCS, a confidentiality agreement must be signed by all participants to ensure that personal and confidential information is not disclosed to any person outside of the recruitment and selection process (see Annex 3).

3.9 Quality Assurance of decisions reached

At the end of each meeting a checklist must be completed, which the panel chairperson and NICSHR representative / competition lead will endorse as confirmation of decisions reached. This checklist requires confirmation that the recruitment and selection criteria for the competition are justifiable against the duties and responsibilities of the post. It will also provide a formal record of all of the key planning decisions for the competition.

HRConnect will complete amendments to the Application Form, Candidate Information Booklet and Advertisement as agreed at the CIM. Finalised documents will be sent to the Competition Lead and panel within the agreed timetable.

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4 SOURCE AND SELECT – PRE-ADVERTISING

4.1 Preparation of Advertisement

All vacancies of non-industrial posts to be advertised will be included in corporate advertising arrangements in the agreed corporate template. Casual and industrial posts advertised in Jobcentres need not be formatted in corporate banner. Copy text should be kept to the bare minimum.

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4.2 Stage 1 Authorisation to Advertise SCS competitions

Prior to advertising any Senior Civil Service competition authorisation must be given by the Civil Service Commissioner chairing the panel. HRConnect prepare all relevant documentation and forward to the Commissioner for authorisation. Once authorisation has been received the advertisement can go to press. Contributors should ensure that sufficient time is built into the process to enable authorisation to be actioned

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4.3 Advertising of vacancies

It is the current policy of the Northern Ireland Civil Service that vacancies to be filled by external competition are publicly advertised in the three Northern Ireland daily newspapers i.e. Thursdays in the Irish News and the Newsletter and Fridays in the Nijobfinder supplement of the Belfast Telegraph. All vacancies are also published on the [NICS Recruitment](#) website. All non-SCS vacancies are also advertised on [Jobcentre Online](#).

Departments may also advertise temporary positions in local [Jobs and Benefits Offices](#) and HRConnect should ensure that the location/s chosen to advertise is/are likely to result in applications broadly representative of the entire community.

The key objective in advertising vacancies is to encourage applications, representative of the entire community, maximising the chances of appointing the best possible person and as a result contributing to improved business performance. Competition documents may be available in alternative formats on request. For example, arrangements are in place to enable candidates to complete applications in larger print if they have a visual disability. Other adjustments should also be considered to ensure that applicants with disabilities have a 'level playing field' in completing their applications.

Advertising also serves to communicate an image of the Northern Ireland Civil Service as a corporate entity, which is why advertisements must adhere to the agreed corporate template. Any text to be included in advertisements must adhere to correct grammatical protocol in which the full title, phrase etc. is spelt out in full before an acronym is used.

Vacancies for NICS Departments are now carried as a composite advertisement. Where only one advertisement is to be carried in a week, HRConnect will consider with the Department if it is appropriate to carry one advertisement within the composite banner. Departments are required to meet their own advertising costs. The main body of the corporate advertisement will contain the standard equal opportunities welcoming statement as follows 'The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an equal opportunities employer'. In addition, each advertisement within the composite framework may contain a Positive Action statement particularly welcoming applications from an underrepresented equality group. It will also contain the following statement; 'Further appointments may be made from this competition should NICS positions become vacant which has similar duties and responsibilities.' This statement may only be removed if the position being advertised is a unique single position.

When advertising senior competitions it may be appropriate to include additional text in the advertisement. NICS HR approval is required for advertisements containing additional text or being advertised in other media than those agreed above. When NICS are

advertising more than one senior post, the advertisement for each competition will appear in a composite advertisement to ensure best value for money and maximise the marketing potential of the advertisement.

All advertisements **must** be approved and with the advertising agent before 4 pm on the Wednesday of the week previous to advertising. Failure to meet this deadline will delay the competition advertising by one week.

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5 SOURCE AND SELECT – APPLICATION PROCESSING

5.1 Commissioners' Code

Principles 2 and 3 of the Commissioners' Code have particular application to the management and processing of applications for vacancies. The selection criteria agreed at the Competition Initiation Meeting may be fair but it is equally important that the operational policies and arrangements to apply the criteria do not have an adverse effect on any group of candidates.

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5.2 Completion of Application Forms

Applications can only be accepted on the agreed application form. Information provided to candidates should make it clear that information provided through additional sheets, CVs etc. will not be accepted. In addition, the same amount of space will be available to all candidates to demonstrate each criterion.

Applications will be acceptable by:

- Post;
- The online facility;
- Hand delivery to HRConnect.

Applications must be received by the time and date stated on the advertisement. It is important that applications are received by the time and date stated and that those applications which do not meet this requirement are excluded from the competition. All SCS competitions will request that the applicant must submit an organisational chart to HRConnect, either by email or hard copy; these must also be received by the closing date for applications.

It is important to remember that the entire responsibility for ensuring an application is received on time lies with the applicant. It is important that all applications for any competition are treated the same.

When completing an application using the online facility there is a maximum of 3700 characters that may be used in demonstrating eligibility/shortlisting requirements. Those completing hard copy applications will also be required to demonstrate their ability within the same limits as set for the online facility.

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5.3 Initial screening of applications received

All application forms received will be checked and processed after the closing deadline has passed. It may be noted that applications which are received well within the closing date have not been completed correctly. In such circumstances these should simply be tabbed as 'queries' and no attempt should be made to contact the applicant until after the closing date for applications. This policy will ensure that ALL candidates are treated equally with those who submit incorrectly completed applications forms early in an advertising period **NOT** receiving any advantage over incorrectly completed forms received closer to the closing date. Should HRConnect receive more than one application from an applicant only the latest application received will be forwarded to the panel for consideration.

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5.4 Formal screening of application forms

Formal screening of application forms consists of a check to determine that the application form has been completed fully, and meets nationality requirements.

Part-completed application forms should NOT be sent back to the applicant for completion nor should applicants be contacted to provide details which were omitted from the application form.

An application is incomplete if:

- The Equal Opportunities Form is not complete. It is NICS policy that all applicants must complete and return the Equal Opportunities Form;

An application should normally be rejected if:

- The applicant does not satisfy the nationality requirement for the post;
- The applicant was previously dismissed or medically retired from the NICS;
- The applicant is currently employed in the NICS in a temporary position and has applied for a further temporary position;
- Staff who are employed on permanent contracts within the NICS are not eligible to apply for temporary posts for any grade within the NICS;
- The applicant is a current NICS partial retiree;
- It is illegible.

Applications, which do not pass the above formal screening, will not be progressed further and the relevant applicants will be informed that their application is invalid. HRConnect will advise applicants of any decision to exclude them and the basis of this decision and will offer them an opportunity to provide any information they consider to be supportive of their applications being accepted. Information provided by candidates to HRConnect requesting a review of any decision to exclude them on any of the grounds listed above will be forwarded with recommendation/s to Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch which will decide if applications should be accepted.

Applications should NOT be rejected if the National Insurance Number has been omitted. Applicants from outside the United Kingdom do not have National Insurance Numbers in the same format as in the United Kingdom.

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5.5 Determining the need for reasonable adjustments in the administration of aptitude tests / interview

All candidates will be given an opportunity to state on their application form if they consider that an adjustment is required at test, interview or taking up appointment. Requests for adjustments at test must be referred to the appropriate professional expert. HRConnect will manage all other requests for reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment and selection process, referring more complex cases to NICSHR as appropriate. Any adjustment must be in the context of an expectation that the adjustment will enable the candidate to compete on a level playing field with other candidates.

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6 SOURCE AND SELECT – SIFT PROCESS

6.1 Commissioners' Code

It is important that those processes used to determine candidates' eligibility, to shortlist candidates and to test and interview candidates are reasonable and fair. The selection criteria agreed at the CIM may be entirely fair but it is equally important that the operational policies and arrangements to apply the criteria do not have a discriminatory effect on any group of candidates. The Commissioners' Principle 3, "Appointment Process should be fair and applied with consistency" underpins all operational policies in determining if candidates meet eligibility or shortlisting criteria.

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6.2 Sift documentation

The following documentation should be included in the sift pack and must be copied to each person attending the sift meeting;

- Employment History and Eligibility / Shortlisting criteria;
- Candidate Information Booklet;
- Decision Matrix;
- Failed Sift Record Form;
- Sample Candidate Interview Assessment Booklet;
- Sample Mark Frame (Chairperson only).

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6.3 Sifting applications

HRConnect should ensure that only that information which is required to determine eligibility or shortlisting is provided to panels i.e. employment history as well as those sections of the form which outline how each candidate has satisfied the eligibility and shortlisting criteria. There must be NO possibility of the **panel**, which is managing the

selection of candidates having access to equal opportunities monitoring information of candidates. If such an event were to occur the competition would have to be declared invalid.

It is the role of HRConnect to chair the sift meeting and provide professional advice in relation to NICS policy and procedures. The panel, and ultimately the panel chairperson, must ensure that decisions reached adhere to NICS policy and procedures. The panel must provide clear and meaningful reasons and rationale when making sift decisions which the HRConnect agent should record. This information will subsequently be used to advise applicants of sift decisions therefore it is important that the panel justify the decisions made. Whilst NICS HR / competition lead have no role in the management of sifts they retain overall responsibility for the recruitment and selection exercise.

The sifting of applications refers to the formal consideration of anonymised applications to determine if they (a) meet the eligibility criteria and, if appropriate, (b) meet the shortlisting criteria. Shortlisting refers only to that part of the process where it has already been established that candidates meet the eligibility criteria and where consideration is being given to applying additional criteria so that only the most suitable candidates will be invited to interview. Any criteria used to shortlist candidates, along with the order in which shortlisting criteria will be applied, must have been made clear in the Candidate Information Booklet.

A decision matrix should be prepared which identifies candidates by candidate number and which lists each of the eligibility and shortlisting criteria. In preparation for the sift meeting, panel members should remind themselves of the eligibility and shortlisting criteria. Panel members must individually consider each application against each eligibility/shortlisting criteria before attending the sift meeting. The HRConnect agent has the authority to defer a meeting if it is apparent this preparation has not taken place.

The sift panel will then determine the eligibility of each applicant against the eligibility criteria based only on the relevant information provided in the application form and record their decision on the matrix. Where the panel decision is that the candidate has not demonstrated a criterion, the reason for this must be agreed by the panel and recorded by

HRConnect in a way which is meaningful and which will be communicated to the applicant. The HRConnect representative chairing the sift has a responsibility to share any concern he/she may have in terms of decisions reached particularly regarding consistency in how each applicant has been treated.

For HOCS recruitment competitions the selection panel will be responsible for the eligibility/shortlisting sift decisions (see Annex 3).

Panel members will from time to time know the candidates concerned, despite the absence of names on the decision matrix. The candidate may even work for the panel member who may have a deeper day-to-day knowledge of him/her and there will be a temptation to use this information in either a positive or negative way in determining his/her eligibility. It is vitally important that this does not happen and that any personal information panel members may have about candidates is kept strictly confidential. It should not be shared with panel colleagues. Only that information contained in the application form should influence the decision of the panel – remember the Principle – “Appointment processes should be fair and applied with consistency.” Panellists are asked to advise HRConnect if an applicant is known to them so that a record may be made.

Panel members will be provided with two parts of the application form (a) the candidate's employment history and (b) the section/s demonstrating the eligibility/shortlisting criteria. Application forms are designed so that applicants can fully demonstrate how they meet each eligibility/shortlisting criterion. Each eligibility/shortlisting criterion will have been carefully defined in order to address the needs of the competition. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to demonstrate each criterion in the section of the form that specifically addresses that criterion.

To ensure that the decision reached by a selection panel to reject any candidate is proper, it is recommended that, before the conclusion of the sift meeting, panel members validate, where possible, any information provided as evidence in the eligibility/shortlisting criteria with that provided in the candidate's employment history.

The application form should also be reviewed and panel members should consider whether a criterion is satisfied by information given elsewhere in the application form.

It is important to note that, where the NICS Guaranteed Interview Scheme is offered as part of the competition, disabled applicants choosing to apply under the Scheme will not be subject to shortlisting. They will proceed to interview provided they meet the minimum essential criteria at sift stage. The panel should not be asked to consider their application further if the minimum essential criteria are met.

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6.3.1 Shortlisting methodologies

Shortlisting cannot be used unless the criteria to be used are clearly spelt out in the Candidate Information Booklet. The decision as to whether the panel will shortlist to determine the most suitable candidates to be invited to the next stage of the selection process will be the responsibility of each panel. The following should be important considerations in whether or not to apply shortlisting:-

- Panels should pay particular regard to a candidate's personal role in the examples given;
- Deciding to progress ALL eligible candidates is more likely to have a positive impact on diversity issues;
- Shortlisting criteria must be related to selecting those candidates best fitted to carry out the duties of the post - it cannot be justified solely on reducing the numbers to progress to the next stage;
- Panels must be able to objectively justify the application of shortlisting criteria.

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6.3.2 Conflict of interest

Once all eligibility and shortlisting decisions (if applicable) have been agreed, all competition participants must consider and declare any real or perceived conflict of interest which they are aware of at this stage in the selection process. The HRConnect

representative should be informed immediately of any such issues and record these within the Sift Quality Assurance section of the Assessment Sift Matrix. Further information regarding roles and responsibilities of competition participants at this stage is available in Annex 1, 2 and 3.

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6.4 Feedback to candidates

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to the Civil Service Commissioners' principles that (a) appointments should be made on merit, (b) the appointment process should be fit for purpose, (c) the appointment process should be fair and applied with consistency and (d) appointments will be made in an open, accountable and transparent manner.

In keeping with above principles, ALL Candidate Information Booklets in respect of ALL NICS vacancies should contain the following statement:

'The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.'

ALL feedback requests must be in writing (email requests are acceptable) and will be managed by HRConnect. Requests for feedback should be acknowledged within 2 working days and a formal response provided within 15 working days. Where it is not possible to meet this deadline, the candidate should be advised in a 'holding' letter when to expect a considered response. HRConnect will liaise with panel members, if necessary, in obtaining their input to a query raised by a candidate. Whilst the onus is on the applicant to provide full detail in their application from on how he/she meets the eligibility/shortlisting criteria, there may be occasions when an applicant provides clarification or amplification of the information already supplied. HRConnect should provide the panel with any such

information so that the panel can be satisfied that a well informed decision has been made. HRConnect will ensure that the response which issues to the candidate addresses all the issues raised within the original query. Where a panel have decided that a candidate has failed to demonstrate a criterion, the explanation given should provide reference to the specific criterion requirement and to the specific weakness in the evidence provided by the candidate.

Feedback requests for ALL candidates will be managed in the same way regardless of whether the candidate is internal or external to the NICS. Panel members must not provide feedback, informal or otherwise to internal candidates who may work in their branch or organisation.

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6.5 Stage 2 Authorisation for SCS competitions - authorisation to issue the invitations to interview and first and second assessments, if appropriate.

For senior competitions HRConnect must prepare all relevant documentation after the eligibility sift meeting and issue to the Commissioner chairing the panel. Candidates must not be advised of the outcome of the eligibility sift until the Commissioner has granted authorisation. Contributors should ensure that sufficient time is built into the process to enable authorisation to be actioned.

If there is Ministerial involvement in a SCS competition, the Minister may have agreed with the Commissioner Chair that he/she may brief shortlisted candidates. If this is the case the briefing will be contained to setting out the Minister's expectation of the role and its responsibilities and this will be overseen by the relevant Civil Service Commissioner.

In the case of a HOCS recruitment competition where there is a two stage interview process, there will be two Stage 2 authorisation requests sent to the Commissioner chairing the panel. The first Stage 2 request will allow the competition to progress to the 1st interview stage and the final Stage 2 authorisation request will be sought prior to proceeding to invite all suitable candidates to the final interview (see Annex 3).

7 SOURCE AND SELECT – INTERVIEW PLANNING

7.1 Pre-Board Meeting

The most opportune time for panels to formally plan their interviews is immediately following the sift meeting. At this stage panel members will know the number of candidates to be interviewed. Panels should already have agreed responsibility for lead questions designed to test each criterion at the CIM but the Pre-Board meeting is when full professional planning of the interviews takes place.

All interview assessments are criteria based. This means that candidates are required to demonstrate their ability or competence in a structured interview. The same lead questions must be asked of all candidates and the panel chairperson should ensure that approximately the same time is allocated to each candidate.

Lead questions for the interview should be designed to enable candidates to demonstrate through examples of behaviours they have exhibited, the competences required for the post. If, for example, the criterion to be tested requires leadership experience, then the lead question should provide each candidate with an opportunity to give examples of how they have demonstrated leadership qualities. Supplementary or follow up questions do not have to be documented in advance as they will follow from the initial responses of candidates but typically these will attempt to clarify the context of experience outlined and the level of difficulty experienced.

It will not always be possible or even appropriate for candidates to provide examples from their working life which demonstrate the competence required. In such cases, it is the behaviours that matter and the panel member should design questions that enable the candidate to demonstrate the skills required in a more flexible context such as in higher education, voluntary capacity etc..

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7.2 Agreement of Lead Questions

At the Pre-Board meeting, panel members formally agree lead questions for each of the criteria. However, panel members will agree at the CIM the criteria on which they will ask lead questions and they must have these questions prepared in advance of the formal pre-board meeting so that duplication in questioning may be addressed. Panel members must also agree indicators of positive performance. Many competitions have a specialist or professional element e.g. scientific, legal, accountancy, or technical posts. The panel member/s who will ask lead questions on this, must him/herself have recognised competence in this area and there will be a particular responsibility for this person to ensure that his/her panel colleagues have a good understanding of the lead question and of the responses expected. All agreed lead questions and indicators of performance should be given to the HRConnect representative at Pre-Board meeting.

For HOCS recruitment competitions the selection panel will be responsible for agreeing lead questions for the first interview and agreeing the assessment standard that must be met at the pre board meeting. Prior to the 2nd stage interview the selection panel will attend a further pre-board meeting and agree lead questions, weightings etc. in line with normal procedure (see Annex 3).

In planning their lead questions and indicators of performance, panels may wish to refer to the relevant [NICS Competency Framework](#) on the Recruitment website

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7.3 Conflict of Interest

All competition participants must consider and declare any real or perceived conflict of interest which they are aware of at this stage in the selection process. The HRConnect representative should be informed immediately of any such issues and record these within the Sift Quality Assurance Pre-Board Issues Matrix. Further information regarding roles and responsibilities of competition participants at this stage is available in Annexes 1, 2 and 3.

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7.4 Policy on multiple panels

There will be occasions when a number of panels will be required to manage a large number of interviews. It is essential that all panel members involved in interviewing for the same competition are briefed in the management of the interviews and that they all use the same lead questions and score candidates from the same performance indicators. The ideal way to do this is to ensure that all panels are briefed together. The responsibility for compiling any overall 'order of merit' from a number of merit lists will rest with HRConnect.

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7.5 Invitation to interview

Those applicants who satisfy the eligibility/shortlisting criteria should be invited to attend for test/interview/assessment. The selection process designed for a competition may consist of a combination of assessment events, e.g. two interviews or a test and interview. A timetable should be drafted and invitations normally issued 10 working days in advance of the test/interview/assessment date. The invitation to test/interview/assessment should advise candidates to bring to the event sufficient documentation to meet the requirement to validate their Nationality and Immigration status, Identity and address as well as any original certificates required to confirm their possession of eligibility qualifications. The invitation must provide the date, time and venue for the test /interview/assessment.

8 SOURCE AND SELECT – ASSESSMENT STAGE

8.1 Management of test / interview / assessment

HRConnect staff facilitate all test sessions, interviews or assessment and need to ensure that the process is fair and applied with consistency. They also need to have an awareness of the implications of current fair employment and equal opportunities legislation. HRConnect have responsibility for booking rooms, ensuring rooms are arranged appropriately including relevant materials e.g. flipchart (if required), providing water for candidates, greeting candidates and organising preparation time for candidates if required. Candidates invited to interview are required to bring formal documents which will enable both their legal entitlement to work in the NICS and UK and the vetting requirements of the Baseline Personnel Security Standard to be corroborated. For the purpose of fair and open competition, both internal and external applicants must also provide the necessary documentation to verify his/her eligibility for the competition. Verification of all candidate documentation should, as far as possible, be carried out when candidates attend test, interview or assessment.

The verification process is carried out by HRConnect and must not be carried out by selection panel members. In competitions where candidates must have membership of a professional body, HRConnect will have verified their membership prior to sift, but, as in all competitions, original certificates must also be verified by HRConnect at the first assessment event. All original qualification certificates and identity documents must be brought to test/interview/assessment along with a photocopy; the photocopy must be marked 'original seen and returned', and the originals returned to the candidate. All candidates must complete and sign a pro forma in view of the HRConnect representative. HRConnect will immediately check this signature against the photographic identification also provided. The copies of documentation are scanned to the applicant's record on HRConnect. Any candidate for whom it has not been possible to validate formal

qualifications must have these validated as a pre-employment check before any offer of appointment can be made.

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8.2 Guidance to panels

The aim of the interview, and indeed the whole selection process, is to appoint the best person to the job, as defined by the selection criteria. To help ensure that this outcome is attained, interviewers need to be aware of the need for the appointment process to be fair and applied with consistency. They also need to have an awareness of the implications of current fair employment and equal opportunities legislation. Interviewers must ensure that all candidates are given the same chance to demonstrate their abilities. In pursuit of this objective, interviewers must ensure that each candidate is assessed against the established criteria, and that the pre-defined lead questions are asked of all candidates.

Candidates will not be permitted to use any notes they may have prepared in responding to panel members' questions. Interviewers may of course need to probe candidates further for job-related information and this can be achieved by asking objective supplementary questions in order to establish clearly the relevant facts. However, interviewers must ensure that such questions are kept objective and relevant to the job because, if not, they can undermine a candidate's confidence that he/she has been, or will be treated fairly. Interviewers may also need to ascertain if candidates can meet special conditions of employment such as on-call, overtime, unsocial hours etc.. This is only permissible where such conditions have been clearly stipulated within the Candidate Information Booklet. Interviewers seeking such information should ensure that the relevant information is obtained objectively and consistently by asking the same job-related question of every candidate.

One of the standards set by NICS is that candidates are seen within 10 minutes of the time stated on their invitation to interview. Should a candidate arrive late for his/her interview, the panel will have to decide on the course of action to take, depending upon the circumstances. The panel may decide: -

- to see the interviewee immediately, providing this does not impact on the interview time of the next applicant;
- to re-schedule the interview;
- not to see the applicant.

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8.3 Pre Interview Conflict of Interest

Upon receipt of the list of candidates scheduled for interview, each panel member must consider and declare any real or perceived conflict of interest which they are aware of at this stage in the selection process. Panel members will from time to time know the candidates concerned. The candidate may even work for the panel member who may have a deeper day-to-day knowledge of him/her and there will be a temptation to use this information in either a positive or negative way in scoring the interview. It is vitally important that this does not happen and that any personal information panel members may have about candidates is kept strictly confidential. It should not be shared with panel colleagues. Panellists are asked to advise HRConnect if an applicant is known to them so that a record may be made

The Pre Interview Conflict of Interest Form must be completed by each panel member and returned to HRConnect outlining any potential issues. Should any further Conflict of Interest arise, HRConnect should be informed immediately. Further information regarding roles and responsibilities of competition participants at this stage is available in Annex 1, 2 and 3.

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8.4 During the interview

All interviewers must ensure that they: -

- a. treat each candidate equally and fairly and that they fully cover their own specific criteria with each candidate;

- b. ensure that all notes taken are legible and relate only to the questions and answers used during the interview. These notes will be provided to candidates who request feedback on their performance at interview;
- c. keep to the time allocation agreed at the pre-board meeting;
- d. assess each candidate against all of the established criteria listed on their copy of the Candidate Interview Assessment Booklet and register a score in the Marks Awarded column for each of those criteria on completion of the interview. For HOCS recruitment competitions the selection panel will not score candidates at the 1st stage interview but will determine if they meet/do not meet the pre-agreed standard. The Candidate Interview Assessment Booklet designed for this interview will reflect the agreed process. In the 2nd stage interview candidates will be scored and all marks awarded must be recorded.
- e. following the individual marking of the candidate, the panel should then through consensus, reach and record in the 'Panel Agreed Marks' column, a mark for each criterion listed. If there is a variance of more than two marks between the panel member's personal score and the panel agreed score, the justification for the agreed mark should be recorded by the panel member. The total of the agreed marks will indicate the panel's overall performance mark for the candidate and this should also be recorded on the Candidate Interview Assessment Booklet.

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8.4.1 Chairperson's responsibilities

The Chairperson must also ensure that: -

- He/she welcomes each candidate, verifies that the candidate is the correct person and explains the interview process;
- each candidate is tested against the established criteria in a fair and equitable manner;

- that interviewees are not permitted to refer to notes in responding to interview questions;
- as far as possible, the same period of time is provided to each candidate and that '*time in and time out*' is accurately recorded on the copy of the Candidate Interview Assessment Booklet by the chairperson. (If a candidate's time has extended significantly beyond the 'norm' for other candidates, the chairperson MUST provide an explanation for this);
- if applicable, record reason(s) for variation in the length of interview;
- no two candidates are held on an identical 'overall performance mark as agreed by panel' and that all candidates are placed in an order of merit; in the case of a HOCS recruitment competition the panel chairperson will also ensure that all candidates are listed accurately as having met or not met the required standard at 1st interview stage.
- a Candidate Interview Performance Summary Sheet is also available as an aide to the panel chairperson, if required.
- should two or more candidates obtain an identical overall performance mark and a differentiation has to be made between those candidates, the reasons justifying the decision must be clearly stated in the 'Justification for Overall Performance Mark' section on the Chairperson's copy of the Candidate Interview Assessment Booklet. When differentiating between candidates numerical data must be used i.e. should 3 candidates achieve a score of 60 – they must be assigned unique scores – such as 60, 60.5 and 60.75 – with 60.75 being the highest score. Panels must not use a, b or c nor should they use 60.1, 60.2, 60.3, for example, to indicate that 60.1 is the top candidate as 60.3 is a higher numerical score. panel members have completed in full, and signed and dated, their Candidate Interview Assessment Booklets;
- the Mark Frame showing all candidates in order of merit has been completed, signed and dated and;
- all notes (regardless how minor) and all HRConnect documentation are returned at the end of the interviews.

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8.4.2 Closing remarks

At the end of the interview the Chairperson should provide candidates with an opportunity to add any brief comments. Candidates may use this opportunity to ask questions. The following points may be of use when answering candidates' questions: -

- A response to applicants concerning the outcome of their interview will be issued by HRConnect;
- Interview panels cannot discuss starting salary or conditions of service or location of post, as these are the responsibility of the employing Department;
- Successful candidates are subject to pre-employment checks including, Verification of Qualifications, Vetting etc.;
- Should a candidate have a range of questions for which there is insufficient time to reply, the candidate should be advised to forward the questions to HRConnect for response.

Finally, the chairperson of an interview panel should ensure that the panel is professional and courteous at all times. It may well be the case that the acceptance of a future offer of appointment (by the best candidate) will be influenced by how the interviewee perceived the interviewing panel.

Should FM and dFM choose to play an active role in the recruitment and selection process for HOCS they may jointly meet with candidates prior to 2nd stage interviews with the selection panel. This will entail structured conversations based on the criteria for the post. An independent note taker may also be present.

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8.5 Request for panel to be reconvened

Where possible the Candidate Information Booklet should provide anticipated dates for interview, however, there will be occasions when people who have applied for posts will not be able to attend on these dates. The panel should be informed of this at the earliest stage and it is for the panel to decide if they are prepared to reconvene and consider other

applicants. It should be noted that in certain circumstances there may be a requirement to agree to reschedule an interview due to a potential discrimination element. HRConnect will provide appropriate advice and guidance to the panel when required.

The panel will notify HRConnect of its decision regarding whether or not the interview is to be reconvened. HRConnect, in turn, must communicate this decision to the candidate immediately.

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8.6 Order of Merit

In single panel competitions the mark frame will list successful candidates in order of merit, each with a unique mark. The unsuccessful candidates and 'did not attend' candidates will also be listed in the appropriate columns. All candidates should be notified of the outcome at the same time.

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8.6.1 Validation of Order of Merit

The chairperson must check all candidate papers returned by interview panel and ensure that merit order assigned is correct, that criterion scores have been added correctly and that discrete merit scores have been assigned to each successful candidate. There is no requirement for discrete scores to be allocated to unsuccessful candidates. The Conflict of Interest section must also be complete advising of any issues declared by participants during the interview process. Sufficient time should be allocated at the end of the assessment to ensure all paperwork is completed accurately. It is not good practice for assessment papers to be taken out of the assessment venue once interviews have been completed therefore it is essential that the chairperson takes responsibility to ensure all panellists' paperwork is completed prior to the panel leaving the interview / assessment venue. The HRConnect agent will carry out a quality check of all the paperwork submitted by the panel at the end of the assessment exercise. This will ensure that results issue to candidates in a timely manner.

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8.6.2 Stage 3 Authorisation to Notify Successful Candidates (for SCS competitions)

For senior competitions HRConnect must forward all the relevant documentation to the Commissioner chairing the panel after interviews are complete. Stage 3 authorisation must be obtained prior to interview results issuing. Contributors should ensure that sufficient time is built into the process to enable authorisation to be actioned.

In competitions requiring Ministerial endorsement of the lead candidate, Stage 3 Authorisation must be sought from the Commissioner chairing the panel before the name of the lead candidate is referred to the Minister. The Minister should not meet the candidate prior to appointment.

Where there are no Ministers in post to fulfil the endorsement of the lead candidate, and except where appointing legislation requires otherwise, the appointment will continue to be progressed without Ministerial involvement.

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8.7 Feedback from panel members to candidates

Panel members must **not** offer feedback to candidates after interviews have been completed.

Panel members, including the Chairperson, must **not** contact successful or unsuccessful candidates after the interview to inform them of the result. Notification of the results of an interview, and any resultant feedback to candidates, will be undertaken by HRConnect in writing. HRConnect will advise the NICS HR / competition lead at the time 'interview result' letters are being issued.

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8.7.1 Procedure for providing feedback

The Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code states that we must ensure there is a commitment for open, timely and effective communication to candidates, including clear and meaningful feedback in alternative formats when requested by candidates.

(i) To protect the confidentiality of a candidate's application, requests for feedback from candidates should be in writing, either by letter, fax or email. Telephone requests from a candidate about their personal position on the order of merit will be accepted by HRConnect, however, the information will be provided to the candidate in writing.

(ii) Factual information should be provided to the candidate in writing, in the format requested, drawing upon the documentation held on the selection panel's deliberations and taking account particularly of the selection and assessment criteria specified for the post(s) in question. Depending on what the candidate wishes to know, we may include the following information:

- the number of candidates who attended for interview;
- the number of successful candidates;
- the candidate's interview score and his/her position in the order of merit;
- the number of vacancies declared / filled.

Copies of the candidate interview assessment booklet will be provided to candidates on request however on some occasions the questions will not be provided if there is a possibility of further interviews. No attempt should be made to paraphrase comments made by the panel members which accompany the assessment decisions they have made in respect of individual candidates.

In relation to ad hoc requests HRConnect should liaise with the NICSHR representative to discuss the request received. When a Department is considering what information can be released, due consideration must be given to the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Should HRConnect receive a Freedom of Information / Data Protection request this should be sent to the employing Department's Information Management Team.

If at any time after the interview a candidate seeks a feedback interview with a member of the selection panel to discuss his/her performance, the policy is to decline such requests and instead to seek to deal with any concerns in writing. The role of Executive Search consultants should not be extended to providing feedback to candidates. ALL feedback must be managed by HRConnect and will only be provided following requests from candidates.

8.7.2 Customer Satisfaction Surveys

All contributors in a recruitment and selection exercise are encouraged to provide feedback on their assessment of the competition. Customer Surveys will be sent by HRConnect to candidates, panel members and competition leads. The sample size will depend on the type of competition and all surveys will be sent within 5 working days of the effective completion date of the competition.

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8.8 Complaints

The [Complaints Procedure](#) for externally advertised competitions is available on the NICS Recruitment website.

Applicants who consider that they have suffered detriment as a result of decisions taken in recruitment / selection exercises may write to HRConnect. It is important in responding to such complaints that applicants are advised that selection decisions by panels cannot be 'appealed'. Appeals by their nature tend to involve a review of processes / decisions

by a person or body different from that which took the decision and this is not possible regarding the decision taken by selection panels. Applicants who indicate that they wish to complain about a decision should be advised that the issue they raised will be forwarded to the department, competition lead or panel so that a review of the decision can take place. Some issues can only be addressed by the panel members and therefore will need to be copied directly to them for response and copied to Competition Lead for information and/or input if required. HRConnect will, however, provide draft input to responses for department/competition lead/panel members' consideration to assist the management of reviews wherever possible.

HRConnect will also manage and provide the necessary draft responses in respect of complaints from the Ombudsman's office, legal cases, and complaints received by senior managers of any NICS Department.

It is NICS policy that, when a complaint has been fully investigated, applicants are provided with contact details of the Equality Commission should they wish to make a complaint of unlawful discrimination. Contact details for the Equality Commission are as follows:

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
Phone 028 90 500600

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9 PRE - PLACEMENT VERIFICATION – PRE - EMPLOYMENT CHECKS

Pre- employment checks are an integral part of the recruitment and selection process therefore Departments must ensure that sufficient time is allocated to enable all checks to be finalised before offers of appointment are made.

9.1 Baseline Personal Security Standard (BPSS)

9.1.1 Confirmation of Candidate Identity

A final quality assurance check should be carried out by HRConnect to ensure all identification documents have been received. The signatures on Driving Licences, Passports or other identification documents must match that on the application form and/or specimen signature provided at testing/interview/assessment. HRConnect may also complete a check that the candidate's national insurance number and date of birth match those in the National Insurance Prefix list ([See Annex 8](#)).

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9.1.2 Criminal Record Check (CRC)

A criminal record check is an essential element of the **BPSS** which all appointees for NICS competitions must satisfy **prior** to taking up their appointments. Candidates currently serving in the NICS do not require a criminal record check except where the new position applied for requires a higher level of vetting than the candidate holds. This check will be managed by HRConnect.

Criminal record information, also referred to as disclosure information, is obtained via AccessNI. AccessNI is a Criminal History Disclosure Service within the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland. AccessNI operates within Part V of the Police Act 1997 and issues three types of disclosure, Basic, Standard and Enhanced. The level of disclosure required for a post will have been determined at the start of the recruitment process.

A CRC is only actioned for those candidates found suitable at assessment who are being **considered** for appointment. This will be determined from the order of merit completed by the panel. Applicants should not regard a request to complete an Access NI application form as a guarantee that they will be offered a position. It may be necessary to complete vetting formalities for more candidates than the number of vacancies as a contingency for candidates who withdraw from a competition. HRConnect will contact an applicant who is being considered for appointment with details on how to complete the AccessNI online application process. Applicants are also advised that the AccessNI disclosure certificate will be returned directly to them and if it displays any disclosure information such as criminal convictions it should be forwarded to HRConnect along with a personal Statement of Disclosure. If the certificate does not contain any disclosure information it does not need to be forwarded to HRConnect. HRConnect will be able to confirm from the online system that no information has been disclosed and will proceed with the application.

NICSHR will consider the information stated on the AccessNI disclosure certificate against the NICS Risk Assessment Form ([See Annex 9](#)). The Risk Assessment Form provides a standard model against which all unspent offences are assessed. (The only exception to this is for conflict-related offences that pre-date the Good Friday Agreement please see section 9.1.5 for further detail on this). If the conviction does not fall under any of the categories listed, NICSHR will advise HRConnect to proceed with the application.

When the results of an AccessNI check reveal unspent convictions which fall under any of the four categories listed on the NICS Risk Assessment Form, a panel within NICSHR will meet to discuss further and agree the way forward. The convictions are considered alongside the statement of disclosure and any other relevant information received from the applicant. A statement of disclosure is an opportunity for the applicant to outline any special circumstances which he/she feels should be considered before any decision to appoint/not appoint is made. The statement of disclosure provided by the applicant is a very important part of the decision making process and all applicants with criminal convictions are encouraged to provide one. Further advice regarding statements of disclosure can be obtained by contacting the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) website. There is a section on this website

giving advice on disclosure information. It also includes frequently asked questions on looking for work and tips on preparing a statement of disclosure.

NICSHR will consider all disclosure information and all information provided by the candidate prior to making a decision on whether offences should preclude candidates from appointment. The following criteria will be considered;

- Nature and gravity of conviction;
- Is the conviction a conflict-related offence relating to activities pre April 1998;
- Material relevance of conviction to post applied for;
- Age of the individual at the time of the offence;
- Length of time since the last offence;
- Repeat Offences;
- Severity of penalty imposed by court;

NICSHR will also consider the following should the applicant choose to take the opportunity to provide information in this regard:

- Circumstances surrounding conviction;
- Mitigating circumstances;
- How the individual feels about the conviction/s;
- Rehabilitation and contribution to society;
- Statements of character;
- Any other information provided by the candidate which tends to suggest that the convictions are not representative of the overall character of the candidate.

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9.1.3 Standard and Enhanced Disclosure

Where the position to be filled requires a standard or enhanced disclosure check, this is also processed by HRConnect through AccessNI. The process detailed at 9.1.2 also

applies to standard and enhanced disclosure checks. The date the decision is made will be recorded against the applicant record.

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9.1.4 Higher levels of Vetting – i.e. Counter Terrorist Check (CTC), Security Clearance (SC) and Developed Vetting (DV)

For those positions requiring a higher level of vetting, HRConnect will liaise with the Defence Business Services National Security Vetting (DBS NSV) in obtaining such clearances. All elements of the higher level check will be completed by the Defence Vetting Agency including the Criminal Record Check. It will be important that before this action is initiated, that letters advising candidates of their 'status' in the competition have been issued. HRConnect will then contact the applicant with an activation email to set up an account with DBS to progress the check. The decision making process for the criminal record element of NSV checks is as outlined in section 9.1.2 above. In addition to this DBS carry out additional checks relevant to the level of clearance (CTC, SC or DV) and provide a recommendation to NICSHR. Further detail on these checks can be found at the following link www.gov.uk/government/organisations/united-kingdom-security-vetting.

The date the decision is made and the expiry date of the clearance is recorded against the applicant record on HRConnect.

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9.1.5 Conflict- Related Convictions

As of 28 September 2016 the NICS has adopted the best practice guidelines documented in the Employers Guidance entitled "Recruiting people with Conflict-Related Convictions" A copy of this guidance is available at [Employers' guidance on recruiting people with conflict-related convictions](#). As per the Guidance;

- 1) A conflict-related conviction will only be relevant in exceptional circumstances;
- 2) In refusing employment, the onus of proof rests with NICSHR to show material relevance;

- 3) To be relevant, the conviction must be manifestly incompatible with the position in question;
- 4) The seriousness of the offence is not enough to make a conviction materially relevant;
- 5) To be relevant, the conviction must be manifestly incompatible with the position in question.

The basic principle of this guidance is that any conviction for a conflict-related offence that pre-dates the Good Friday Agreement (April 1998) should not be taken into account unless it is materially relevant to the employment being sought. In considering conflict related offences prior to April 1998, NICSHR will not take these into account if they are not materially relevant to the post applied for. However, if it is determined that a conviction is, or could be, materially relevant and/or is manifestly incompatible with the post applied for then an offer of employment will not be made. This may occur with regard to, as noted in the Guidance Principles, *'existing legislative obligations and any new guidance which may be developed from time to time as a consequence of the introduction of a new system of employment-related criminal record checks'*. A decision to reject an applicant will be communicated in writing to the applicant.

Should the applicant disagree with NICSHR's decision then a meeting will be arranged in which the applicant may provide their views and any other supporting evidence regarding the conviction and its relevance to the post. Under the Guidance Principles *'the candidate may bring along a representative to that meeting and may supply supporting evidence in regard his/her case that the conviction is not materially relevant. The applicant should be given the opportunity to make his/her views known regarding the conviction and its relevance, or otherwise, to the post'*.

After that meeting has been held NICSHR will inform the applicant of the outcome and should this outcome not be satisfactory to the applicant they may refer the matter to the non-statutory Employers Guidance on Recruiting People with Conflict-Related Convictions Review Panel.

9.1.6 Retention of Information

Information received regarding criminal records is destroyed when a final recruitment decision is taken. Such information is not retained by HRConnect or NICSHR. The outcome and date that the decision has been made on any check processed will be recorded on the applicant's record on HRConnect.

9.1.7 Applications from outside the UK

AccessNI is unable to obtain overseas criminal records or other relevant information as part of the Disclosure service. A person who has recently moved to the UK may not appear on any of the records searched by AccessNI. Many countries, including most other European Union (EU) countries, allow their citizens to obtain certificates of good conduct or extracts from their criminal records; HRConnect should consider if it is appropriate to request this from a candidate who has recently moved to the UK. HRConnect may also wish to contact the country's representative in the United Kingdom. Contact details for those countries that have a representative in the United Kingdom can be found on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website www.fco.gov.uk or telephone 020 7008 1500. If necessary, HRConnect may refer the case to Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch who will consider and evaluate the risks involved should this circumstance arise.

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9.2 Qualifications

Any outstanding cases where it has not been possible to validate essential candidate qualifications must be completed prior to an offer being made.

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9.3 Candidates with disabilities who may require reasonable adjustments in appointment

In many cases, candidates with disabilities will have competed successfully in the selection process without recourse to adjustments. The application form, however, gives

candidates the opportunity to provide any details on adjustments that may be required in taking up appointment. HRConnect will liaise with a candidate to determine any reasonable adjustments required in the workplace. Straightforward cases will be managed by HRConnect in liaison with Departments whilst requests which are more complex will be referred to CCPB. Further advice and guidance may also be sought from organisations such as the Royal National Institute of Blind People, Action for Hearing Loss and the Disability Advisory Service of the Department for Communities. Letters of offer of appointment will remind candidates that they must advise HRConnect of any reasonable adjustments they consider necessary to take up their appointments.

HRConnect will consider with NICS HR and if necessary, Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch, if candidates' requests can be implemented.

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9.4 Existing NI Civil Servants successful in an external competition

Current civil servants are subject to the terms and conditions of the NICS policies governing conduct and discipline as set out in the HR Handbook.

HRConnect will check the disciplinary records of all current NI Civil Servants prior to the offer of an appointment. Should an existing civil servant have a disciplinary sanction imposed on them by their current employing department, which precludes him or her temporarily from promotion, then this will be taken into consideration when making appointments from an external competition. This will include a check on those candidates who were existing civil servants at the time of application, to ensure that any recent dismissals are also actioned appropriately.

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9.5 Work permit / Certificate of Sponsorship

It is for the employing department in consultation with HRConnect to obtain the necessary documents, when appropriate, to ensure an applicant's legal right to work in the UK.

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9.6 Reporting Details

NICSHR should provide the reporting details when the vacancy is created on iRecruit, if possible. If HRConnect do not have the reporting details, to include date, time, location and person to report to, then a request for these will be made to NICSHR who should provide the required details within 1 day to enable an offer of appointment to be made.

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9.7 Starting Salaries

Where the candidate is external to the NICS, HRConnect will provide details of the starting salary in the offer of appointment. NICS policy determines that starting salaries offered should be the minimum pay point in the salary scale. Very occasionally, Departments may be prepared to offer higher starting salaries to exceptional candidates. This must have been made clear in the Candidate Information Booklet. The decision to award a higher starting salary can only be made by the recruiting Department - the selection panel will play no part in the determination of starting salary for new appointees. Existing civil servants successful in an external competition will have their starting salary calculated based on the appropriate NICS terms e.g. promotion, regrading or downgrading. The starting salary will be detailed in the offer of appointment. Should a Department require further guidance on pay related issues they should contact NICSHR – Human Resources Policy, Pay and Pensions Division.

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10 PRE-PLACEMENT VERIFICATION – OFFER OF APPOINTMENT

10.1 Offer letter

It is vital that the offer of appointment includes the correct terms and conditions of appointment. HRConnect should agree starting terms with the relevant NICSHR who must agree reporting details with the relevant business area before any offer letter is issued.

This will enable proper induction arrangements to be put in place. The offer letter must include: (as applicable)

- the name of the post being offered;
- whether it is full-time, part-time, fixed term, etc.;
- the employing Department;
- reporting instructions and starting salary;
- BACS paragraph;
- Annual leave allowance;
- Official Secrets paragraph;
- Probationary period;
- Mobility paragraph (if required);
- Date of criminal record check;
- Instructions for return slip;
- Instructions to new entrants to bring P45;
- Pensions paragraph; and
- Any allowances payable.

HRConnect will attach to the offer a Pensions Questionnaire which the appointee will be required to complete and return to Pensions Branch of DoF.

Candidates should be asked to complete and return their acceptance slip to arrive no later than 5 working days before the specified reporting date. It is particularly important that the terms and conditions outlined in an offer of appointment are very carefully quality assured because once the candidate accepts the offer; this becomes the legal contract with that candidate. If it is not received by then, contact the candidate to ascertain the position. A candidate should not commence employment without signing and returning the acceptance slip.

If the candidate requests a change to the reporting date, the relevant Department should be consulted immediately. The candidate should be advised whether or not the new date is acceptable and, if acceptable, invited to complete the reply slip with the revised date

and return it as soon as possible. HRConnect must advise the Department on receipt of the acceptance slip.

Letters of offer of appointment require those to whom offers are made to confirm that they have not received any criminal convictions since the date of the CRC outlined in their letters. In addition, in accepting offers of appointment, appointees are required to advise HRConnect of any convictions they have had in jurisdictions outside the UK and of any pending charges which have not yet been dealt with by the Courts. Information received from candidates will be copied to Corporate Competitions and Policy Branch as to what impact, if any, this new information may have. A contract of employment with any candidate who fails to advise HRConnect of a criminal conviction or a pending charge prior to being appointed will not be considered valid.

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10.2 Permanent Positions

It is NICS policy that, except in very exceptional circumstances, candidates will only receive one offer of appointment from a competition which, if not accepted, will result in the candidate being withdrawn from the competition.

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10.3 Temporary Positions

The NICS advertise specific competitions to fill temporary vacancies. By their nature these posts must be filled urgently and candidate availability to start work at short notice is often required. Candidates may be contacted by telephone/email in merit order to determine their availability. Candidates who are not able to accept immediate temporary positions will be retained on merit lists and will be considered for subsequent temporary vacancies which occur within the lifetime of a competition.

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10.4 Fixed Term Positions

Offers of appointment on a fixed term basis should only be considered by Departments when it is expected that the work will be completed in less than 4 years. The Department must also ensure that the contract is not extended beyond 4 years as fixed term contracts may be automatically converted to contracts of indefinite length after this period. At the time of advertising a post the Departments should consider if there is a potential for permanent employment, and if this is deemed to be likely, this should be stated in the Candidate Information Booklet. However, the absence of such a provision does not automatically preclude a fixed term employee being offered an opportunity for a permanent position, unless there is objective justification not to.

The Fixed Term Employee (Preventing Less Favourable Treatment Regulations (NI) 2002) include specific rights for a fixed term employee not to be treated less favourably than a permanent employee in relation to securing permanent employment within the organisation. Should a permanent position arise within the NICS which a Department deems to be suitable for a fixed term employee then there is no bar on the fixed term employee being made permanent given that he/she would have been initially recruited in fair and open competition. Departments must, however, give due consideration to the potential applicant pool and if a real risk exists in not offering the opportunity to compete for the post in question to as wide a pool as possible.

Any change in relation to employment status which has not been communicated to candidates as an opportunity in the competition documentation will require justification by the employing Department. For SCS appointments Commissioners' approval is also required.

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10.5 Internal / External Candidates

Where the successful candidate is a permanent employee, HRConnect will advise both the candidate's current NICSHR and the new one (if different) of the candidate's success. HRConnect will liaise with both NICSHR and agree the start date and terms and conditions of the appointment. It is expected that staff should be released within four weeks.

HRConnect will issue to the candidate an 'in-post' offer. Successful candidates in external competitions who hold temporary positions in the NICS receive 'external' offers of appointment. There is no requirement for such candidates to resign from the temporary position before taking up a permanent post. HRConnect will consider specific requests to appoint in-post temporary staff to their current Departments where this is consistent with the merit principle and the greater business interests of the NICS.

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10.6 Vacancies in more than one Department

Where a competition is advertised to fill vacancies in more than one Agency / Department and candidates had been invited in their applications to indicate those Agencies / Departments they wished to be considered for, it is NICS policy that where the top candidate had indicated a wish to be considered for more than one vacancy, he or she should be given the choice of Agency / Department he / she is assigned to. The same principle should apply to the assignment of further candidates to vacancies in the competition. Where the competition is a Corporate led one (in which applicants had not been invited in their applications to indicate those posts they wished to be considered for) it will be the responsibility of NICS HR to determine which posts candidates will be assigned to and successful candidates will not have a choice of Agency / Department to which they are assigned. The selection panel has no role in assigning candidates to Departments. Where the successful candidate is an existing civil servant, HRConnect, with advice from NICS HR will prepare an offer of appointment advising the appointee of the terms and conditions of the new post.

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10.7 Stage 4 Approval for SCS competitions

For senior competitions HRConnect must forward all the relevant documentation to the Commissioners' Office after all the pre-employment checks are complete and an offer is ready to issue. Stage 4 approval must be obtained prior to an offer of appointment issuing to the successful candidate. Contributors should ensure that sufficient time is built into the process to enable approval to be received.

In competitions requiring Ministerial endorsement - once the Minister has endorsed the lead candidate, the decision should be recorded and shared with the Commissioners' Office to enable Stage 4 approval to be granted. If the Minister does not endorse the lead candidate the Minister must detail his reasons in writing to the Department. The Department is then responsible for informing the Commissioners that the competition has been terminated and the new proposals for filling the post.

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10.8 Transferring from Home Civil Service to Northern Ireland Civil Service

Members of the Home Civil Service (HCS) who are successful in a NICS competition and who take up their appointment immediately (not counting weekend), will have their previous service taken into account when calculating annual leave entitlement. With reference to Pension Benefits, if members of the HCS are successful in an open competition for a permanent post in the NICS their pension choices would be: (a) providing that they resigned from their HCS employment and the gap in service is no more than 28 days, and they undertake to transfer their service from the Home Civil Service scheme to the Northern Ireland Civil Service scheme they would be allowed to join the same scheme they were a member of in their HCS employment, (b) if their break is more than 28 days they would be treated as a new entrant for pension purposes and be eligible to join either the Nuvos arrangement or the Partnership Pension Account. Members of the HCS who are successful in a NICS open competition will be treated as new appointees for pay purposes and will start on the minimum pay point of the salary scale except where there are sound and justifiable business reasons for awarding a higher salary e.g. to meet recruitment and retention difficulties.

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ANNEX 1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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VACANCY INITIATION				
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify vacancy to be filled by open competition¹ 		NICSHR ²		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Job Analysis and forward to HRConnect 		NICSHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain NICSHR approval to run competition. NICS Board approval required for SCS competitions. 		NICSHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an Executive Search Agency is to be used submit business case to NICSHR Head of Resourcing to obtain approval³ 		NICSHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriate panel members, arrange training if required 		NICSHR		

¹ It is **essential** that before the vacancy initiation process begins that NICSHR, the competition lead and the appropriate line manager/business area carry out a job analysis and develop a draft job specification and person specification to inform the content of the CIB.

² Where NICSHR is identified as the responsible body it is accepted that this may be the line manager / competition lead / business area or another member of the department.

³ The Executive Search Agency should be invited to all relevant competition events. Further guidance is available in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise Scoping Meeting with Commissioner Chair, Perm Sec or senior colleague and provide attendees with initial draft copy of Candidate Information Booklet (SCS Only) 		NICSHR		
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ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate/approve competition on system and forward to HRConnect 		NICSHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue invitations to attend Competition Initiation Meeting along with appropriate competition documentation 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair and provide leadership in the management of the competition initiation meeting by providing professional advice on recruitment and selection operational policy issues 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree lead question responsibility, weightings and indicators, in respect of each interview criterion, with panel colleagues. 				Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree timetable for competition 				Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice on any issues relating to specific terms and conditions, allowances etc. 		NICSHR		

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest declared by any participant and document action taken 	ALL	ALL	ALL	ALL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a record of all decisions reached at meeting on the Competition Initiation Meeting record. Panel to provide justification for decision 			HRC	

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide written consent to checklist outlined by HRConnect representative – HRConnect rep to record this and obtain competition lead and panel chairperson signature. 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note all changes made to competition literature and copy finalised documents to competition lead and panel within agreed timetable 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition Lead and panel chairperson to sign and return competition documentation to HRConnect 		NICSHR		Panel Chairperson

SOURCE AND SELECT				
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICS HR	HRCConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRCConnect complete formalities for Commissioners Stage 1 authorisation (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Stage 1 authorisation (SCS only) 	Commissioner chairing the panel			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage advertising formalities of competition after authorisation granted by Commissioners 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare all applications for eligibility/shortlisting sift and issue to panel members together with invitations to attend sift meeting 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend sift and pre-board meeting 			HRC	Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair sift meeting in line with NICS policy and procedures 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which candidates satisfy the eligibility criteria and provide meaningful explanations for those candidates who have failed to satisfy eligibility criteria 				Full Panel

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest declared by any participant and document action taken 	ALL	ALL	ALL	ALL
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SOURCE AND SELECT				
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICS HR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record panel decisions on candidate matrix including explanations where candidates failed to satisfy any criterion – this also applies to shortlisting decisions made 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine if shortlisting criteria should be applied 				Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete checklist of decisions in respect of eligibility/shortlisting decisions 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair Pre-Board meeting in which pre-prepared lead questions, indicators, weightings etc. are agreed – HRC to record decisions made 			HRC	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree interview arrangements e.g. how candidate is greeted, order in which questions are asked, timings for each question, how interview is concluded etc. 				Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind panel of the need to fully complete interview documentation and to provide an order of merit in which each candidate is assigned a discrete interview score 			HRC	

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICSHR	HRCConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest declared by any participant and document action taken 	ALL	ALL	ALL	ALL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete checklist iro pre-board meeting and ensure that candidate matrix is signed by chairperson 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and issue documentation for Stage 2 Commissioner authorisation (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage 2 Authorisation (SCS only) 	Commissioner chairing the panel			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All candidates are advised of outcomes with eligible/shortlisted candidates invited to interview. For SCS competitions this must only occur after Stage 2 authorisation has been granted. 			HRC	

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• Candidate papers issued to panel members			HRC	
• Consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest declared by any participant and document action taken	ALL	ALL	ALL	ALL
• Management of interview facility. This includes booking rooms, providing tea/coffee/water, greeting candidates, checking identity and qualifications where required etc.			HRC	
• Upon receipt of candidate list, consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest and document of the Pre Interview Conflict of Interest Form				Full panel
• Carry out interviews in line with training received and NICS Policy and Procedures				Full panel

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record commencement and departure time for each interviewee 				Panel Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide leadership to panel colleagues in ensuring adherence to NICS policy and procedures 				Panel Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine if panel are prepared to re-convene in respect of any candidates who advised that they could not attend scheduled assessment event. 				Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the mark frame (including the Conflict of Interest section) and all candidate papers are fully completed in accordance with NICS policy and procedures and returned to HRConnect on same day assessment event is completed. 				Panel Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality check all documentation for accuracy 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the Declaration of Compliance form. 		Competition Lead	HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete HRC Resourcing Service Customer Survey and forward to HRConnect 	Commissioner chairing the panel	NICSHR	HRC	Panel Chairperson

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and issue documentation for Stage 3 Commissioners' Secretariat authorisation (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage 3 authorisation (SCS only) 	Commissioner chairing the panel			

PRE-PLACEMENT VERIFICATION AND OFFER				
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue letters to candidates advising of outcome + attaching documentation required for pre-appointment formalities. For SCS competitions this must only occur after Stage 3 authorisation has been granted. 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete all formalities and prepare letter of offer of appointment 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and issue documentation for Stage 4 Commissioners' Secretariat approval (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage 4 approval. (SCS only) 	Commissioner chairing the panel			

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue letter of offer of appointment to successful candidate. • For SCS competitions this must only occur after Stage 4 approval has been granted. 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an Executive Search Agency has been utilised, submit an Evaluation Report, and completed feedback sheet to NICSHR⁴ 		NICSHR		

⁴

Further guidance on the feedback required for the use of an Executive Search Agency is available in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

ANNEX 2 SHORT GUIDE TO THE ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Departmental Contributors

Minister (if involved in a SCS competition)	NICSHR (NICSHR)	Competition Lead	Business Area
<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code in all operational practices.</p> <p>Attend Recruitment and Selection training.</p> <p>May wish to brief Commissioner chairing the SCS competition.</p> <p>May wish to brief selection panel and/or shortlisted candidates in an SCS competition overseen by the relevant Civil Service Commissioner.</p> <p>May wish to endorse the lead candidate.</p> <p>Declare and inform HRConnect any real or perceived conflict of interest.</p> <p>If the Minister does not endorse the lead candidate the Minister must detail his reasons in writing to the Department.</p> <p>Provide feedback to NICSHR/HRConnect on the competition process/outcomes/</p>	<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Must provide returns to NICSHR when requested to provide an assurance that all appointments, including exceptions, are made in line with NICS Policy and the CSC for NI Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Receive details from business area on vacancy to be filled. Consider filling the vacancy from an existing list, if appropriate.</p> <p>Must contribute to Practical Job Analysis.</p> <p>Consider appropriate outreach measures.</p> <p>Obtain NICSHR approval to run the competition.</p> <p>If an executive search agency is to be used provide a business case to CHR.</p> <p>Consider requirements of position and ensure HRConnect are aware of these i.e. the security clearance level required for the post, by forwarding the data via the HRConnect system.</p> <p>Must identify most suitable panel members.</p> <p>Must complete an assessment of each individual panel members training needs.</p> <p>Contact Commissioners' Secretariat to allocate a Commissioner chair in SCS competitions and arrange scoping meeting. A draft CIB and completed Job Analysis must be available for scoping meeting.</p> <p>Arrange training for Minister if he/she is to have an involvement in SCS recruitment competition.</p> <p>Conduct job analysis and retain for audit purposes</p> <p>Ensure all preparatory work has been completed prior to Competition Initiation Meeting.</p> <p>Attend CIM and agree decisions reached.</p> <p>Declare and document any real or perceived conflict of interest.</p> <p>Should ensure they are content with all final competition documents.</p> <p>Provide advice on any issues relating to specific terms and conditions.</p> <p>Ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the competition timetable to allow all pre employment checks to be finalised before an offer of appointment is made.</p> <p>Has no operational role in the eligibility sift but retains overall responsibility for the recruitment and selection exercise.</p> <p>Be aware of, and contribute to if necessary, all requests for review/complaints, ad-hoc requests for information etc. arising from the process.</p> <p>Must liaise with HRConnect in arranging any reasonable adjustments in the workplace.</p>	<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Has overall responsibility for the competition.</p> <p>Must contribute to Practical Job Analysis.</p> <p>Must ensure all preparatory work has been completed prior to Competition Initiation Meeting (CIM)</p> <p>Must attend CIM and agree decisions reached – eligibility/shortlisting, questions etc..</p> <p>Provide written agreement to decisions made at CIM.</p> <p>To approve all finalised competition documents prior to advertising.</p> <p>Ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the competition timetable to allow all pre-employment checks to be finalised before an offer of appointment is made.</p> <p>Provide advice on any issues relating to specific terms and conditions.</p> <p>Has no operational role in the eligibility sift but retains overall responsibility for the recruitment and selection exercise.</p> <p>Must be aware of and provide input where required to any reviews of sift decisions/complaints etc..</p> <p>Be aware of, and contribute to if necessary, all requests for review/complaints or ad hoc requests for information etc. arising from the process.</p>	<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Identify vacancy, complete appropriate job evaluation questionnaire.</p> <p>Consider filling the post from an existing list, if appropriate, in consultation with NICSHR.</p> <p>Contribute to Practical Job Analysis.</p> <p>Consider requirements of position in consultation with NICSHR.</p> <p>Be aware of, and contribute to if necessary, all requests for review/complaints etc. arising from the process.</p> <p>Provide feedback to HRConnect on the competition process/outcomes/are as for improvement etc.</p>

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<p>areas for improvement etc.</p> <p>In HOCS competitions FM and dFM may participate in the recruitment and selection process and co-chair the panel.</p>	<p>Provide reporting details to HRConnect. Provide starting salary, if necessary. E.g. when a higher salary has been negotiated.</p> <p>In SCS competitions where there is Ministerial involvement and the Minister does not endorse the lead candidate, NICSHR must inform the Commissioners of this and the new proposals for filling the post.</p> <p>Provide feedback to NICSHR on the use of an executive search agency, if appropriate. Provide feedback to HRConnect on the competition process/outcomes/areas for improvement etc.</p>	<p>Once the merit list is compiled complete and return the Declaration of Compliance form.</p> <p>Provide feedback to HRConnect on the competition process / outcomes / areas for improvement etc.</p> <p>Upon competition closure, complete and return the Declaration of Compliance form.</p>	
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NICSHR Contributors**Civil Service
Commissioners for NI****NICSHR LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT**

<u>NICSHR Resourcing</u>	<u>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)</u>	<u>Civil Service Commissioners</u>	<u>NICSHR L&D</u>
<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Must obtain an assurance from all Departments that systems are in place to ensure that selection for appointment is made in accordance with the above. Consider appropriate outreach measures in volume competitions in line with DoF Diversity and Inclusion Plan. Contribute to Practical Job Analysis. (if appropriate – i.e. volume competitions)</p> <p>Approve all competitions. (NICS BOARD to agree any SCS competitions)</p> <p>Approve the use of executive search agencies on receipt of business case from NICSHR.</p> <p>Consider need for PAA statement. (Equality and Diversity Branch)</p> <p>For corporate – led competitions, ensure all preparatory work has been completed prior to Competition Initiation Meeting.</p> <p>Attend CIM and agree decisions reached.</p> <p>Approve exceptional advertising.</p> <p>Provide advice and guidance to HRConnect on complex reasonable adjustment queries.</p> <p>Consider any candidates with convictions which may preclude them from appointment and relay decision to HRConnect.</p> <p>Review Recruitment and Selection Training with L&D</p> <p>Consider the feedback received from all contributors to the recruitment and selection process and identify areas for policy/procedure improvement.</p>	<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Manage all reasonable adjustment requests for aptitude tests. NISRA should determine adjustment required and advise HRConnect.</p> <p>Provide feedback to HRConnect on the competition Process/outcomes/areas for improvement etc.</p> <p>Provide Annual NICS Recruitment Statistics for publication.</p>	<p>Under the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, Commissioners have a statutory duty to ensure that appointments to the NICS are made on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition and provide a determinate view as to whether the Merit Principle has been upheld.</p> <p>Adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Nominate a Commissioner to Chair SCS competitions.</p> <p>Attend Scoping meeting for SCS competitions.</p> <p>Attend briefing with Minister, if required.</p> <p>Oversee any Ministerial briefing to selection panel and/or shortlisted candidates.</p> <p>Grant Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4 authorisation for Senior Competitions</p> <p>Provide feedback to HRConnect on the competition process/outcomes/areas for improvement etc.</p>	<p>Conduct Recruitment and Selection Training. Modules outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic Recruitment Training 2. Interview Standards and Legislation 3. Interview Panel Skills. <p>Review Recruitment and Selection Training with NICSHR colleagues. Provide feedback to NICSHR colleagues in relation to training.</p>

Panel Contributors**HRConnect**

<u>Panel Members</u>	<u>Panel Chairperson</u>	<u>HRConnect</u>
<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Contribute to Practical Job Analysis, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complete an assessment of own training needs and consult with NICS HR.</p> <p>Make any conflict of interest known to HRConnect.</p> <p>Attend CIM and agree decisions reached.</p> <p>Declare and document any real or perceived conflict of interest throughout all stages of the selection process</p> <p>Agree responsibility for lead questions.</p> <p>Agree interview timetable.</p> <p>The panel, and ultimately the panel chairperson, must ensure that the decisions made at sift are accurate and in line with NICS policy and procedures.</p> <p>Must prepare for the sift by considering each application prior to the sift meeting and provide meaningful explanations for those</p>	<p>A panel chairperson, in addition to the tasks of a panel member, must also:</p> <p>Take responsibility to ensure that all decisions reached by the panel are in line with NICS Policy and Procedures.</p> <p>If a panel colleague is unable to attend the CIM it is the chairperson's responsibility to brief their colleague on decisions reached and obtain their agreement.</p> <p>Provide written agreement to decisions made at CIM.</p> <p>Declare and document any real or perceived conflict of interest throughout all stages of the selection process</p> <p>To approve all finalised competition documents prior to advertising.</p> <p>Take responsibility for the management of the interview - ensure lead questions are asked of all</p>	<p>Must adhere to NICS Policy & Procedures ensuring compliance with CSC for NI Recruitment Code in all operational practices.</p> <p>Must provide professional HR advice and guidance to all contributors.</p> <p>Must create position/competition in line with NICS HR requirements.</p> <p>Assist Departments in identifying panel members.</p> <p>Draft Candidate Information Booklet.</p> <p>Issue invitations to Competition Initiation Meeting with draft documentation.</p> <p>Chair the CIM, obtain agreement from all contributors, and provide advice and guidance Ask participants to declare any real or perceived conflict of interest and record responses.</p> <p>Complete a record of all decisions made.</p> <p>Obtain Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4 authorisation for Senior Competitions.</p> <p>Ensure competition is advertised in line with NICS policy and decisions made at CIM. Manage all requests for reasonable adjustment, referring to CHR when necessary. Issue invitations to sift.</p> <p>Prepare all applications for sift.</p> <p>Validate membership of professional bodies prior to sift.</p> <p>Chair the sift meeting and provide professional advice in relation to NICS policy and procedures.</p> <p>Record all sifts decisions. HRConnect have authority to defer sift if a panel is not prepared.</p> <p>HRConnect will deal with any requests for feedback.</p> <p>Issue invitations to interview.</p> <p>Issue candidate papers and Pre Interview Conflict of interest Form to all panel members.</p> <p>Check candidate documentation to verify an individual's legal entitlement to work in the NICS and UK and to ensure all checks are carried out in line with the Baseline Personnel Security Standard.</p> <p>Verify candidate qualifications at first assessment event.</p> <p>Manage all assessment events.</p> <p>Liaise with panel members and candidates in dealing with reconvene requests.</p> <p>Quality check all papers submitted after an assessment event.</p> <p>Once the merit list is compiled complete the Declaration of Compliance form.</p>

<p>candidates who have failed to meet eligibility/shortlisting. Determine if shortlisting is to be applied. Must provide input to any reviews of sift decisions/complaints etc.. Must not provide feedback, informal or otherwise to any candidates. Conduct the interview in a professional manner, ensuring adherence to NICS policy and recruitment and selection training. Liaise with HRConnect in dealing with any requests for an interview to be reconvened. Must provide input to any requests for Review/complaints arising from an interview. Provide feedback to HRConnect on the competition process/outcomes/areas for improvement etc.</p>	<p>candidates, same time is allocated to each candidate. Record commencement and departure time of each interviewee. Ensure all panel members have completed paperwork correctly, compile order of merit and return all documentation to HRConnect at the end of the assessment event. Complete HRConnect Resourcing Customer Survey</p>	<p>Process all requests for feedback, liaising with panel members and competition lead/NICSHR as appropriate. Discuss all ad hoc requests for information with NICSHR/Competition Lead. Forward any Freedom of Information requests to a Department's Information Management Team. Process all requests for reviews/complaints, forward to appropriate contributor for input, always including competition lead for information. HRConnect will provide draft input to responses to assist panel members/NICSHR/Competition Lead. HRConnect will also manage and provide the necessary draft responses in respect of complaints from the Ombudsman's office, legal cases, and complaints received by senior managers of any NICS Department. Process all pre-employment checks. Forward information to NICSHR (CCPB) should a decision be required on a candidate's suitability for employment in the NICS. Liaise with any candidate's requiring an adjustment in the workplace to enable them to accept an appointment. Issue offers of appointment. Liaise with Department re requests to amend start date. Liaise with current and new employing Department if applicant is internal in relation to start date. Provide feedback on the competition process/outcomes/areas for improvement etc.. Provide management information on competitions when requested Upon competition closure, complete the Declaration of Compliance form.</p>
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ANNEX 3 HOCS SELECTION PROCESS – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

VACANCY INITIATION					
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	Department / NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify vacancy to be filled by open competition⁴ 			Department/NICSHR ⁵		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Job Analysis 			Department/NICSHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICSHR to obtain agreement from HOCS on the method to fill. HOCS will consult with FM and dFM prior to making decision. Director of 			NICSHR		

⁴ It is **essential** that before the vacancy initiation process begins that the appropriate line manager/business area alongside NICSHR carry out a job analysis and develop a draft job specification and person specification to inform the content of the CIB.

⁵ Where the department is identified as the responsible body it is accepted that this may be the line manager / competition lead / business area or another member of the department. ⁷ The Executive Search Agency should be invited to all relevant competition events. Further guidance is available in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

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NICSHR will advise on current resourcing considerations.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an Executive Search Agency is to be used submit business case to Head of Resourcing, NICSHR, to obtain approval⁷ 			NICSHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICSHR will liaise with HOCS to Identify appropriate panel members and will ensure ALL are appropriately trained. 			NICSHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise Scoping Meeting with Commissioner Chair and HOCS. FM and dFM may wish to brief Commissioner Chair, or HOCS may do this on their behalf. Provide attendees with 			NICSHR		

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initial draft copy of Candidate Information Booklet.					
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ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	Department / NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Scoping Meeting and sign a confidentiality agreement. 	FM and dFM	Commissioner Chair	Competition Lead		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete vacancy creation form and forward to HRConnect together with draft CIB. 			Department		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue invitations to attend Competition Initiation Meeting along with appropriate competition documentation. 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair and provide leadership in the management of the competition initiation meeting by providing professional advice on recruitment and selection operational policy issues 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Competition Initiation Meeting 		Commissioner Chair	NICSHR Competition Leads	HRC	Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign confidentiality agreement 				HRC	Panel

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree lead question responsibility and standard to be met for 1st interview. Agree weightings and indicators, in respect of each interview criterion for second interview 					Panel responsible for eligibility sift and 1st and 2nd interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree timetable for competition 					Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice on any issues relating to specific terms and conditions, recruitment allowances etc.. 			NICSHR		
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the role of FM and dFM is explicit in the Candidate Information Booklet. 			NICSHR	HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest declared by any participant and document action taken. 	FM and dFM	Commissioner Chair	NICSHR	HRC	Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a record of all decisions reached on the Competition Initiation Meeting record. Panel to provide justification for decisions. 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide written consent to checklist outlined by HRConnect representative – HRConnect to record this and obtain competition lead and the signature of Panel Chairperson/s. 				HRC	

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• Note all changes made to competition literature and copy finalised documents to panel chairs within agreed timetable				HRC	
• Competition Lead and panel chairs to sign and return competition documentation to HRConnect			NICSHR		Panel Chairperson

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SOURCE AND SELECT					
3 ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel
• HRConnect complete formalities for Stage 1 authorisation.				HRC	
• Grant Stage 1 approval.		Commissioner chairing the panel			
• Manage advertising formalities of competition after approval has been granted by the Commissioner chairing the panel				HRC	
• Prepare all applications for eligibility/shortlisting sift and issue to panel members together with invitations to attend sift meeting				HRC	
• Attend sift and pre-board meeting				HRC	Full Panel
• Chair sift meeting in line with NICS policy and procedures				HRC	
• Determine which candidates satisfy the eligibility criteria and provide meaningful explanations for those candidates who have failed to satisfy eligibility criteria					Full Panel
• Consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest declared by any participant and document action taken	FM and dFM		NICSHR/CHR	HRC	Full Panel

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SOURCE AND SELECT					
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record panel decisions on candidate matrix including explanations where candidates failed to satisfy any criterion – this also applies to shortlisting decisions made 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine if shortlisting criteria should be applied 					Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete checklist of decisions in respect of eligibility/shortlisting decisions 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair Pre-Board meeting in which pre-prepared lead questions and positive indicators, are formally agreed – HRC to record decisions made 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree interview arrangements e.g. how candidate is greeted, order in which questions are asked, timings for each question, how interview is concluded etc.. 					Full Panel

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind panel of the need to fully complete interview documentation and to clearly indicate if the candidate has met or not met the standard. 				HRC	
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ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete pre-board meeting checklist and ensure that candidate matrix is signed by Panel Chairperson. 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and issue documentation for Stage 2 Commissioner authorisation. 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage 2 Authorisation – to allow progression to 1st stage interview. 		Commissioner chairing the panel			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All candidates are advised of outcomes with eligible/shortlisted candidates invited to interview. This must only occur after Stage 2 authorisation has been granted. 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate papers issued to Panel members 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On receipt of candidate list, consider and record any real or perceived conflict of interest and document on the Pre-Interview Conflict of Interest Form 					Full Panel

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of interview facility. This includes booking rooms, providing tea/coffee/water, greeting candidates, checking identity and qualifications where required etc.. 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out 1st stage interviews in line with training received. 					Full Panel

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record commencement and departure time for each interviewee. 					Panel Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide leadership to panel colleagues in ensuring adherence to NICS policy and procedures. 					Panel Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine if panel are prepared to re-convene in respect of any candidates who advised that they could not attend scheduled assessment event. 					Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the mark frame (including the Conflict of Interest section) and all candidate papers are fully completed and returned to HRConnect on the day of the assessment event. 					Panel Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality check all documentation for accuracy 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and issue documentation for Stage 2 Commissioner authorisation. 				HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage 2 Authorisation – to allow progression to 2nd interview (process followed as per above) 		Commissioner chairing the panel			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind panel of the need to fully complete interview documentation and to provide an order of merit in which each candidate is assigned a discrete interview score. 				HRC	

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• Complete the Declaration of Compliance form			Competition Leads NICSHR	HRC	
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PRE-PLACEMENT VERIFICATION AND OFFER					
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY				
	First Minister / deputy First Minister	Civil Service Commissioners	NICSHR	HRConnect	Panel
• Complete and issue documentation for Stage 3 authorisation.				HRC	
• Grant Stage 3 Authorisation		Commissioner chairing the panel			
• Issue letters to candidates advising of outcome and attach documentation required for pre-appointment formalities. • This must only occur after Stage 3 authorisation has been granted.				HRC	

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• Complete all formalities and prepare letter of offer of appointment				HRC	
• Complete and issue documentation for Stage 4 Commissioners' Secretariat approval				HRC	
• Grant Stage 4 approval.		Commissioner chairing the panel			
• Issue letter of offer of appointment to successful candidate. • This must only occur after Stage 4 approval has been granted.				HRC	
• If an Executive Search Agency has been utilised, submit an Evaluation Report, and completed feedback sheet to CHR ⁸			NICSHR		
• Complete HRConnect Resourcing Service Customer Survey			NICSHR		All Panel

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Further guidance on the feedback required for the use of an Executive Search Agency is available in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

ANNEX 4 PROTOCOL FOR THE USE OF CONSULTANTS IN SCS EXTERNAL COMPETITIONS

Use of consultants

1. The use of external consultants in senior competitions is becoming a more regular feature. The purpose of this Protocol is to assist Departments in deciding the nature and extent of their role.

Role of consultants

2. The use of consultants must be justified by the circumstances of the competition, the specialist or technical nature of the post or the particularly challenging nature of the duties and responsibilities of the post. It is important from the outset to be clear about the extent of the role of consultants. For example, their role may be limited to searching for suitable applicants where it would not be expected that the best pool of candidates will apply through advertising alone. Potential candidates may be open to considering new challenges and it is in this context that consultants in the form of Executive Search Agencies may be successful in attracting applications which would not otherwise be received.
3. The role of consultants is to add value to, or complement, those parts of the recruitment and selection process which are already delivered by HRConnect. It is particularly relevant that a Department which is considering the use of consultants should discuss their proposed role in a scoping meeting between the Permanent Secretary and the chairing Civil Service Commissioner. This will enable the Commissioner to express a view on the role identified for the consultants.

Procedures for employing consultants

4. Departments considering the use of consultants in a senior competition must involve a number of other parties in the process. Firstly, Departments must seek the approval of the

Head of NICSHR Resourcing. A business case must be submitted justifying why consultants are required together with an outline of their anticipated role. Secondly, where consultants are to be used as Executive Search Agencies to attract candidates, approval must also be obtained from the Civil Service Commissioners' Office. Departments must not enter into any contractual relationship with consultants as Executive Search Agencies until the approval of both NICSHR and the Commissioners' Office has been obtained.

5. Where a Department wishes to extend the use of consultants beyond the candidate search role, this should be made clear from the outset and the business case submitted to NICSHR for approval must provide justification for this.
6. Departments must observe NICS procurement policy in how they identify and select consultants as well as in the contractual arrangements agreed. Consultants will be identified from the Cabinet Office 'call off' list held by Central Procurement Directorate of DoF. Departments should consider experience, expertise and cost in determining which consultants should be appointed.
7. When a Department has obtained permission to use consultants, their specific role and functions, including the objectives to be achieved within the timetable of the competition, will be clear from the outset.

The competition process

8. Consultants to be used in senior competitions must be briefed by HRConnect on NICS recruitment and selection procedures and the Commissioners' Code. This briefing should take place prior to the Competition Initiation Meeting.

Competition Initiation Meeting

9. The consultants will attend the Competition Initiation Meeting and will be expected to provide guidance to the panel in the context of ensuring that the advertising channels and recruitment and selection processes agreed for the competition will maximise the opportunity to attract a balanced pool of applicants and appoint the best candidate. The consultants will therefore have an opportunity to recommend to panel members

improvements in the planning of the new competition. The consultants will also provide the panel with an outline of the search strategy they intend to adopt.

10. The consultants should be named as the contact point for candidate enquiries in the Candidate Information Booklet. Formal subsequent communications between the consultants and the panel should be channeled through the contractual NICS HR and HRConnect advised accordingly.

Candidate Information Booklet

11. Following the Competition Initiation Meeting it will be the responsibility of HRConnect to carry out any amendments to the candidate information booklet or other changes agreed by the panel. If necessary, HRConnect will copy all revised drafts to NICS HR for consideration by panel members and consultants. HRConnect will carry out any further amendments agreed by panel members and provide a final proof to NICS HR for 'signing off' by Competition Lead and the panel chairperson (Commissioner). The Candidate Information Booklet agreed for the competition should advise candidates of the full role that consultants will play in any competition
12. All senior competitions must be accessible through the NICS recruitment website and all electronic applications must be completed through this site. Consultants will also wish to advertise the vacancy on their own website and it will be the responsibility of HRConnect to copy the agreed advertisement and candidate information booklet to the consultants. These will be in the corporate format agreed for the NICS. The placing of the advertisement in the media will be the responsibility of HRConnect. All completed applications must be submitted directly to HRConnect.
13. HRConnect will advise consultants of the name and contact number of the member of the HRConnect web team who will provide information on completed electronic and hard copy applications as they are received. Where it has been agreed at a Competition Initiation Meeting that the consultants will provide a candidate assessment report to the panel, HRConnect will scan all applications received and email these to the consultants as they are received. This arrangement will enable consultants to monitor responses to the search initiatives they have undertaken.

14. As the deadline for completion of applications draws closer, consultants will wish to ensure that everything possible has been done to encourage applications from people with whom they have established contact. It is important, however, that consultants do not contact prospective applicants at a time when an application cannot reasonably be completed to meet the deadline or indeed when the deadline has already been passed. All applications received by HRConnect after the closing time/date will be rejected.

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ANNEX 5 REQUIREMENTS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE NICS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Under the Civil Service (NI) Order 1999, the Department of Finance (“the Department”) may make regulations or give directions prescribing the requirements for appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).
- 1.2 On foot of that power, the Department hereby gives the following directions, by way of prescribing requirements for appointment to the NICS in respect of age, health, character, ability and nationality. All previous such regulations or directions are cancelled forthwith.
- 1.3 These requirements must be satisfied by every person appointed into the NICS, and therefore apply to all appointments of whatever kind and whether made through open competition or otherwise.

2 The Eligibility Requirements

2.1 VETTING

- 2.1.1 Every position in the NICS carries a security vetting level which is determined by the individual Departmental Security Officer. There are four different levels of security vetting and the appointee must satisfy the necessary standard for the post

2.2 AGE

- 2.2.1 All applicants for NICS posts must have reached their 16th birthday.

2.3 HEALTH AND REGULARITY OF ATTENDANCE

- 2.3.1 Every person appointed to the NICS must be fit to carry out the duties of the post, and be capable of giving regular and effective service.
- 2.3.2 This may be assessed by asking candidates to provide a medical statement and/or seeking relevant information e.g. by employer’s reference.
- 2.3.3 Where the health and/or regularity of attendance of a candidate is in doubt, medical advice may be sought where appropriate e.g. from the Occupational Health Service.
- 2.3.4 In assessing candidates with disabilities, account must be given to any reasonable adjustments which might be made to enable the person to perform the duties in an effective and safe manner.

2.4 CHARACTER

- 2.4.1 A person must **not** be appointed to the NICS where there is a significant risk that he or she would represent a threat to the people, assets or information which the Service has a duty to protect.
- 2.4.2 To enable this assessment to be made, as a minimum, candidates who are liable to be appointed must complete an application for a criminal record check at the appropriate level which meets the requirements of the post.
- 2.4.3 NICS positions which fall under legislation to protect children and vulnerable adults require candidates to satisfy additional vetting requirements before they can be appointed.
- 2.4.4 The Department will provide advice or guidance on the treatment of unspent or relevant convictions on receipt of any 'statement of disclosure' made.
- 2.4.5 This assessment is separate from and additional to any Vetting Requirement sought for the purpose of protecting national security.

2.5 ABILITY

- 2.5.1 Every person appointed to the NICS must have the ability to perform effectively the duties of the post. This will generally be assessed during recruitment with reference to selection criteria, which should be job-related and defensible and may be in the form of academic, professional or technical qualifications, relevant experience, skills or other qualities, performance in tests or at assessment centres, performance at interview, appropriate references or any combination of these.
- 2.5.2 Note that it is NICS policy that, for a candidate with a disability (within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995), any requirement for qualifications may be waived if a test is part of the selection process and can be used to determine ability to perform the duties of the post in question.

2.6 NATIONALITY

- 2.6.1 To comply with relevant UK law, the following restrictions must be observed.
- 2.6.2 Every person appointed to a "reserved" post **must** be either:
- (i) a UK National; or

- (ii) an Irish or non-UK Commonwealth citizen who was in post* in the NICS on 31 May 1996, or was appointed from a competition with a closing date on or before 31 May 1996, and who has remained in the NICS since that time.

* Under powers in the GB Civil Service Order in 1996 the Civil Service Management Code was amended to provide that Commonwealth citizens and Irish citizens could not be employed in reserved posts.

2.6.3 Every person appointed to a post which is not a “reserved” post must be a:

- i. UK national; or
- ii. National of a Commonwealth country; or
- iii. National of the Republic of Ireland; or
- iv. EEA nationals with (or eligible for) status under the EU Settlement Scheme; or
- v. Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals working in the Civil Service; or
- vi. Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals who have built up the right to work in the Civil Service; or
- vii. Certain family members of the relevant EEA & Turkish national

2.6.4 Within the nationality requirement: -

- (a) “reserved post” means a post which constitutes employment in the public service within the meaning of section 1(6) of the Aliens Employment Act 1955.
- (b) “UK national” means a person who is a British citizen (including persons from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man), a British subject under part IV of the British Nationality Act 1981 having the right of abode in the UK, or a British Dependent Territories citizen acquiring their citizenship from connection with Gibraltar.
- (c) “Commonwealth citizen” means any person who has the status of a Commonwealth citizen under the British Nationality Act 1981, not covered by the “UK national” definition above. This includes British Dependent Territories citizens (other than Gibraltarians), British Overseas citizens and, from 1986, those persons in the category British National (Overseas).

3 Conclusion

3.1 Checks and assessments of all the above requirements will be completed before an appointment is made.

Debbie Sherlock, NICSHR, March 2021

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ANNEX 6 CIVIL SERVICE (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1999

ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Civil Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1999

In exercise of the powers conferred on me by Letters Patent of Her Majesty dated 20th December 1973 and of all other powers enabling me in that behalf, I hereby make the following Order:-

Title and commencement

1. This Order may be cited as the Civil Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and shall come into operation forthwith.

Revocation

2. The Civil Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (“the 1996 Order”)(a) and the Civil Service (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (“the 1998 Order”)(b) are hereby revoked.

Interpretation

3.- (1) The Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 (c) shall apply to this Order as if this Order were an enactment, and for the purposes of that Act, as applied by this paragraph, the 1996 Order shall be deemed to be an enactment revoked by this Order.

(2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), any reference in an instrument or other document to a provision of the 1996 Order to which there is a corresponding provision in this Order shall be construed as a reference to that corresponding provision in this Order.

(3) In this Order, except where otherwise expressly provided -
“the 1996 Order” shall be construed in accordance with Article 2;

“civil service” means any person serving in a situation in the Civil Service;

“the Civil Service” means the Northern Ireland Civil Service;

“the Department” means the Department of Finance;

“enactment” has the meaning assigned to it by section 1(b) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954.

Functions of the Department

4. – (1) The Department shall continue to be responsible for the general management and control of the Civil Service.

(2) The Department may make regulations or give directions -

- (a) with respect to the number and grading of posts in the Civil Service and the employment of persons therein, including regulations or directions with respect to remuneration, expenses, allowances, or other conditions of service, classification or re-classification of civil servants;
- (b) with respect to the conduct of civil servants, including the making of the Code of ethics;

- (a) The 1996 Order was printed in the Belfast Gazette on 20th December 1996
- (b) The 1998 Order was printed in the Belfast Gazette on 31st July 1998
- (c) 1954 c. 33 (N.I.)
- (c) relating to the recruitment of persons to situations in the Civil Service, including regulations or directions prescribing the requirements for appointment to such situations.
- (3) The Department may investigate, or provide for the investigation of, matters relevant to the determination by the Department of the remuneration, conditions of service, classification or re-classification of civil servants, or such classes of civil servants as it may designate, and may establish advisory or joint councils or committees.
- (4) The Department shall exercise its power under paragraph (2)(c) in a manner consistent with Article 3(1)(a) of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

Northern Ireland Office
2nd March 1999

Marjorie Mowlam
One of Her Majesty's
Principal Secretaries of State

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order.)

The Civil Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, as amended, made provision for the responsibilities, in relation to the Northern Ireland Civil Service ("the Civil Service"), of both the Department of Finance ("the Department") and the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland. This Order revokes the Civil Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, and re-enacts those of their provisions which relate to the functions of the Department.

The principal provision of this Order is Article 4, which provides that the Department shall continue to be responsible for the general management and control of the Civil Service, and empowers the Department to make regulations or give directions relating to the employment and conditions of service of persons in the Civil Service, including regulations or directions prescribing the requirements for appointment to situations in the Civil Service and the making of a Code of ethics.

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ANNEX 7 PRE-EMPLOYMENT HEALTH SURVEILLANCE/FITNESS FOR POST BACKGROUND

OHS carry out a range of health surveillance and fitness for post assessments. OHS Health surveillance programmes are underpinned by legislation and exist where risk assessment has identified a hazard with the potential to harm health and where there is a related surveillance programme with the potential to identify early the impact on health.

Fitness for post assessments are carried out where because of the nature of work a specified and justifiable level of fitness is required in order for an individual to carry out the duties of the post.

Careful consideration and justification needs to be given by employing departments/agencies as to the need for a health surveillance or fitness for post assessment.

For some of the assessments ongoing review is required throughout the client's tenure in post. Following each assessment where appropriate OHS will advise on fitness to continue with the duties of the post, adjustment required and a review date. It is for the employing department/agency to act on this advice.

OHS HEALTH SURVEILLANCE/FITNESS FOR POST PROGRAMMES

A short explanation with examples of associated jobs is offered for the health surveillance and fitness for post assessments carried out by the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Occupational Health Service (OHS).

Colour Vision Test

An assessment of an individual's ability to identify colour accurately (e.g. Electrician, Mapper).

Audiometry

The health surveillance programme operates as per the recommendations of The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005. The programme involves regular screening, which commences pre-employment, of “at-risk” workers identified by their employers through risk assessment as being regularly exposed to hazardous noise levels (e.g. Roadworker using jack hammer, Forestry worker using chainsaw).

Brucellosis

Health screening for staff being recruited to work with animal livestock (e.g. Veterinary Officer).

Tuberculosis

A health protection programme for staff due to be placed in employment involving potential exposure to Tuberculosis (e.g. Veterinary Officer, Laboratory Staff).

Divers Medical

A specialist medical assessment for personnel engaging in diving as part of their employment (e.g. Marine Biologist)

Drivers Medical

A medical examination programme for staff regularly engaged in driving duties. Details of the programme including definition of driver contained within the “Policy for the Medical Examination of Drivers Employed by Northern Ireland Government Departments” (e.g. Roadworker driving departmental vehicle).

Hand Arm Vibration Assessment

The programme operates in line with the recommendation of The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005. A health surveillance programme which involves regular screening of “atrisk” workers identified by their employers through risk assessment as being regularly exposed to hazardous vibration from the use of hand-held tools and other similar equipment (e.g. Roadworker using jack hammer, Forestry worker using chainsaw).

Food Handlers Assessment

The food handling assessment programme carried out in line with the recommendations of the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995, which

place an obligation on all food businesses to conduct their business in such a way so as to prevent food contamination (e.g. Catering Staff).

Confined Space Assessment (Category A)

Standards of fitness for those who need to use Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) in confined space work. Category A relates to fitness to wear a working set for use when a particular task has to be undertaken within a confined space during which the employee may be exposed to inhaled fumes (e.g. Culvert Worker)

Confined Space Assessment (Category B)

Standards of fitness for those who need to use Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) in confined space work. Category B relates to fitness to use an emergency escape set to exit from a confined space where dangerous fumes are present (as identified by the gas alarm) (e.g. Culvert Worker)

Confined Space Assessment (Chlorine)

Standards of fitness for those who need to use Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) in confined space work. Chlorine relates to fitness to wear a working set for use when exchanging a chlorine drum where the employee may be exposed to inhaled fumes (e.g. Water Service staff where duties involve exchanging chlorine cylinders).

Electrofishing

A fitness for post assessment for staff involved in electrofishing duties. The work involves carrying battery packs/electrodes and wading into rivers to stun and collect fish (e.g. Rivers Agency staff involved in monitoring fish quality).

Lead Surveillance

Biological analysis for staff “at risk” of exposure to hazardous levels of lead in the workplace (e.g. Forensic Science staff involved in handling guns/bullets).

Night Worker Assessment

Health assessment as per European Working Time Directive. Employer to identify individuals who need to be assessed (e.g. Night patrol/security staff).

Working Alone In Remote Rural Settings

A health assessment for employees who regularly operate alone in remote, rural settings. These employees work in rough hilly terrain and have received specialist survival training. To qualify for the programme the following must apply:

Work alone in remote rural setting

Remote setting implies at least five miles from base station/vehicle/road/house.

Rough terrain (usually hilly)

Risk assessment has identified individual as a qualifying employee.

(e.g. Agriculture Staff involved in countryside preservation) Have
or be due to receive specialist survival training.

Respiratory Surveillance

A health surveillance programme for individuals exposed to respiratory irritants in the workplace.

A risk assessment has identified the irritant (e.g. Laboratory staff working with small furry animals).

Avian Influenza

A health protection programme for staff required to deal with an outbreak of Avian Influenza in either wild birds or domestic poultry (e.g. Agriculture Staff involved in collecting suspect poultry/wild bird blood samples and laboratory staff involved in processing samples).

Seafaring Assessment

A fitness assessment for staff required to carry out the duties of their post on, and to remain on board a seafaring vessel (e.g. Agriculture scientific staff involved in collecting sea/lough samples).

Boatmaster's Licence

The programme operates for:

- A. A Boatmaster's Licence for use on a non-seagoing local passenger boat. B. A RYA Certificate or Boatmaster's Licence for operation under the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) Small Commercial Vessel Code, or Large Yacht Code in Area Categories 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 (i.e. up to 60 miles from shore);

- C. Crew members on seagoing local passenger boats, and

- D. Those working on vessels operating under the MCA Small Commercial Vessels or Large Yachts codes of Practice in Areas Categories 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 (i.e., up to 60 miles from shore)
(e.g. Marine skipper/captain)

Rabies Vaccination

A vaccination programme for staff with potential exposure to the rabies virus in the course of their day to day work (e.g. Bat handlers)

Hepatitis B Vaccination

A vaccination programme for staff with potential exposure to Hepatitis B, a blood borne virus, in the workplace (e.g. Prison Hospital Staff).

It is hoped that the guidance will facilitate decision making at pre-employment stage in relation to the need for health surveillance or fitness for post assessment. Departmental health and safety staff should be consulted where uncertainty arises.

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ANNEX 8 NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER (NINO) RECORD CHECK

National Insurance numbers (NINOs) can be acquired fraudulently and the value of providing one as a sole means of identification or as a wholly reliable indicator of entitlement to work in the UK is questionable. They should not, therefore, be viewed in isolation as part of the Baseline Personnel Security Standard. Temporary numbers beginning with TN or ending in a letter from E to Z inclusive are not acceptable.

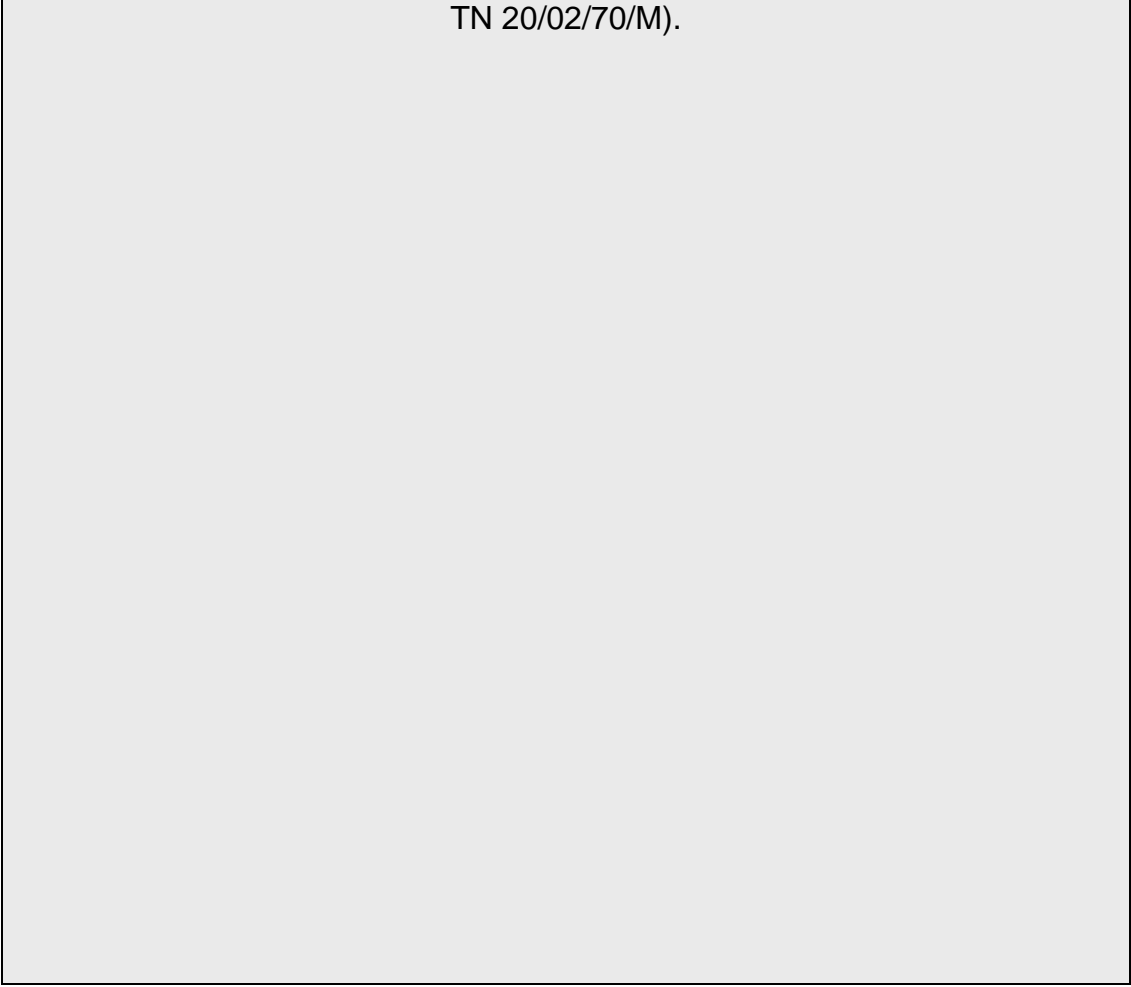
In the case of British Citizens a NINO is generally issued at the age of 15 years 9 months, so the prefix (first two letters of the NINO) should correspond to the year in which the individual reached that age. For other nationalities, it may be possible to check the year of issue and validate this against employment history. The NINO prefix list below gives a general indication of the year of issue, but there may be occasional anomalies.

NINO PREFIX LIST

ZA ZB ZE 1948-49	YZ 1972-74	JE 1991 APRIL
ZH ZK 1949-50	WA 1973-74	JG 1992 MARCH
ZL 1950	WB WE 1974-75 J	H 1992 JUNE
ZN 1950-51	WK 1975-76	JK 1992 JULY
ZP 1951-53	WL 1976-77	JL 1992 AUGUST
ZR 1952-54	WM 1977-78	JM JN 1992 SEPT
ZS 1954-55	WP 1978	JP 1992 OCTOBER
ZT 1954-56	NA 1978 APRIL	JR 1992 NOVEMBER
ZW 1955-57	NB 1979 FEBRUARY	JS 1992 DECEMBER
1956-61	NE 1980 FEBRUARY	JT 1993 JANUARY
1957-59	NH 1980 NOVEMBER	JW 1993 FEBRUARY
YA YB YE 1959-62	NL 1981 NOVEMBER	JX 1993 MAY
YH 1961-63	NM 1981 DECEMBER	JZ 1994 MAY
YK 1962-63	NP 1982 OCTOBER	PA 1995 MAY
YL 1963-64	NR 1983 OCTOBER	PB 1996 JUNE
YM 1964-65	NS 1984 DECEMBER	PC 1997 JULY
YP 1965-67	NW 1985 DECEMBER	PE 1998 AUGUST
YR 1965-68	NX 1986 OCTOBER	PG 2000 JANUARY
YS 1967-69	NY 1987 OCTOBER	PH 2001 JULY
YT 1967-71	NZ 1988 MAY	PJ 2003 FEBRUARY
YW 1969-74	JA 1988 OCTOBER	PK 2004 NOVEMBER
YX 1970-71	JB 1990 JANUARY	YY 1971-74
	JC 1990 JULY	

The format for temporary numbers is: TN Date/Month/ Year Male/Female (i.e.

TN 20/02/70/M).



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ANNEX 9 NICS RISK ASSESSMENT

In making appointments to the NICS the following guidelines must be adhered to:

	Generally Reject
1	Convictions demonstrating a propensity to violent, destructive, or abusive behaviour.
2	Convictions demonstrating serious negligence causing death or injury to others.
3	Convictions demonstrating dishonesty.
4	Convictions for motoring offences which are directly related to the post applied for or where the individual has been convicted on more than one occasion for the same offence.

*These guidelines must be **applied in line with current law on rehabilitation of offenders**. The vast majority of convictions will usually become “**spent**” after a prescribed period. Spent convictions can only legally be taken into account for certain ‘excepted’ posts e.g. those involving substantial access to children or vulnerable persons.*

*Employing departments or agencies may apply **enhanced standards or additional checks** for particular posts where they can justify and defend it e.g. for posts involving contact with young people (see above); driving test work where particular offences or penalty point levels may cause concern or otherwise, for example, in posts which involve driving duties and where any reasonable person would be likely to conclude that a particular conviction indicates a significant risk or is incompatible with the duties of a particular post. Any specific additional requirements should be decided upon, at latest, prior to the vacancy being advertised.*

*A candidate should not normally be appointed if he/she has repeated, or has been convicted on more than one occasion for an offence. All candidates who have convictions which could preclude them from appointment must be invited to provide **a statement of disclosure** before any decision on his/her suitability is made.*

Convictions which cannot be ‘spent’ – Applicants with convictions which cannot be ‘spent’ should not be automatically rejected. All information available will be considered.

In-post Candidates – In-post candidates with criminal convictions which would preclude them from being appointed to an externally advertised competition are required to advise their NICSHR of such convictions and may be subject to internal disciplinary proceedings.

Pending charges or convictions– *In accepting offers of appointment, candidates are required to advise of any convictions they have had in jurisdictions outside the United Kingdom and of any pending charges which have not yet been dealt with by the Courts. Failure to advise of any pending charge or conviction, including those outside of the United Kingdom, will invalidate the offer of appointment.*

National Security Vetting

Checks carried out for the purposes of National Security Vetting i.e. CTC, SC or DV will detail any criminal convictions held. These criminal convictions will be assessed against this risk assessment but there are a number of other checks which Defence Business Services will carry out relevant to the level of clearance required. DBS will make a recommendation on whether clearance should be granted.

Please note: These guidelines do not apply to conflict-related offences which pre-date the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998

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ANNEX 10 NICS GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME

Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)

Introduction

1. The GIS will apply to all NICS external recruitment activity where minimum essential criteria and some form of shortlisting apply.
2. The definition of disability for the purposes of this policy is set out at **Appendix 1**.
3. As part of our commitment to the employment of disabled people, the NICS operates a positive action measure in its recruitment and selection processes that aims to encourage disabled people to apply for jobs and to address potential barriers to their recruitment. The measure is known as a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS).
4. This policy document sets out how the GIS will operate in the NICS and should be read in conjunction with the supporting guidance documents and frequently asked questions.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) Policy

5. The positive action measure under the GIS does not guarantee a job, but rather enhances the access of disabled applicants to the interview stage of a recruitment selection process, where they will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, talents and abilities. All applicants continue to be assessed and marked on merit.
6. The aim of this policy is to guarantee greater access for disabled applicants to the interview stage of a recruitment competition. Where appropriate, all those who meet the definition of disability set out in **Appendix 1** can choose to have their application considered under the GIS, which will provide a greater chance of proceeding to interview.
7. From an operational perspective, it is necessary to take account of the variety of recruitment processes in an organisation as large and as diverse as the NICS, as this will impact on how the GIS will operate.

8. All GIS applicants who have demonstrated they meet the minimum essential criteria (as determined from the information provided on their application) will proceed to the next stage of selection without being subject to additional criteria or assessment for the purposes of shortlisting where:
 - minimum essential criteria are identified, which all applicants (including those applying through the GIS) must meet;
 - the numbers involved make it possible, within the timescales allowed in the competition timeline, to give a guarantee of an interview to all GIS applicants who meet the minimum essential criteria.
9. However it may not be possible to guarantee an interview in the following circumstances:
 - the competition does not require minimum essential eligibility criteria; or
 - minimum essential eligibility criteria are assessed by use of a test / assessment for all applicants in large volume or corporate competitions and the numbers of those who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria are too high to guarantee an interview to all, so a limited number of interviews are offered on merit order based on test/assessment score.
10. In cases where an aptitude test is used to assess minimum essential eligibility and where the numbers involved make it impractical to interview all those who pass the test, a limited number of interviews is offered in merit order, based on test score. A positive action measure will be applied to ensure that the proportion of GIS applicants who proceed to interview in this way reflects the proportion who passed the test. For example, if 10% of all those who pass the minimum essential criteria test are GIS applicants, then at least 10% of those who proceed to interview will be GIS applicants, with remaining interviewees selected solely on the basis of their score in the test.
11. It may be that the appropriate proportion of GIS applicants proceeding to interview is achieved automatically through merit order based on test score but, where this is not the case, a sufficient number of GIS applicants will proceed to interview to ensure the quota is met, even if this means by-passing non-disabled applicants in merit order.

12. The planning for a competition should include consideration of how the GIS arrangements will apply in that competition. In particular, those designing the competition should be mindful of the potential numbers of applicants, potential GIS applicants and the panel(s) ability to assess and interview in the planned timescales. The relevant Candidate Information Booklet (CIB) should provide information on the GIS arrangements that will operate.
13. The operation of a GIS in the NICS will be reviewed annually to ensure there remains a sound evidence base for the scheme as a continued positive action measure.

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ANNEX 10 - NICS GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME**Appendix 1****Definition of Disability**

The Disability Discrimination Act defines disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term (i.e. has lasted, or likely to last, overall for at least twelve months) adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Physical impairment: this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs, etc.) caused through illness, by accident or from birth. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease. An impairment may have effects that are fluctuating or recurring (such as rheumatoid arthritis, epilepsy) or progressive (such as motor neurone disease).

Mental impairment: this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability and social functioning.

Substantial: put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

Long-term adverse effect: the effect has to have lasted, or be expected to last, 12 months or more, and the effect must be a detrimental one.

A normal day-to-day activity: this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis, such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television.

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA:

- mobility;
- manual dexterity;
- physical coordination;
- continence;
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- speech, hearing or eyesight;
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand;
- perception of risk or physical danger; or
- ability to take part in normal social interaction or in forming social relationships e.g. autism spectrum conditions.

The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 made some changes to the definition of disability and ensured that people with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis are deemed to be covered by DDA as soon as they are diagnosed.

ANNEX 10 - NICS GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR COMPETITION DESIGN STAGE

A) Minimum eligibility criteria established through testing (e.g. 2019 AO recruitment)

Competition design includes:

1. Aptitude test
2. Formal Screening of applications
3. Invigilated test
4. Interview

- All applicants, including GIS applicants, will be required to undertake the aptitude test to assess minimum essential criteria. As normal, reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates will be made to support them, as appropriate in each case.
- If the invigilated test is also part of the assessment of minimum essential criteria, it will apply to all applicants. If it is not possible to interview all those who pass both tests, the number of those interviewed will comprise the same proportion of GIS applicants as were successful in both tests
- If the invigilated test is not part of the assessment of minimum essential criteria, it will be waived for GIS applicants. If it is not possible to interview all those who pass the aptitude test, the number GIS applicants interviewed will comprise the same proportion of GIS applicants among all those successful in the aptitude test.

B) Eligibility and shortlisting criteria exists (no testing stage prior to interview)

Competition design includes:

1. Eligibility sift
2. Shortlisting
3. Interview (may include Q&A and a test/assessment)

- Disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role and declare that they wish to be considered under the GIS, must be invited to interview (including the test exercise).
- The shortlisting stage will not be required for GIS applicants as they have already demonstrated that they meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria at sifting

C) Eligibility and shortlisting criteria exists (testing stage prior to interview).

Competition design includes:

1. Eligibility sift
2. Shortlisting
3. Testing / Assessment
4. Interview

- Applications will be sifted for minimum essential eligibility.
- If the testing / assessment stage IS assessing applicants' ability to meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria, ALL applicants, including GIS applicants must undertake this stage and meet the required score to be invited to interview. Any required reasonable adjustments will be implemented for disabled applicants.
- If the testing / assessment stage is NOT assessing applicants' ability to meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria, GIS applicants will have already demonstrated at the sifting stage that they meet this and the testing stage will be waived. GIS applicants should be offered an interview.

D) Eligibility and shortlisting criteria exists (high volume competitions such as 2019 SO/DP)

Competition design includes:

1. Online assessment
2. Eligibility sift
3. Assessment Centre (including interview)

- All applicants must complete the online assessment stage, if this assesses ability to meet essential eligibility criteria. Those who achieve the required score will proceed to the sifting stage.

If the online assessment does NOT assess ability to meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria, GIS applicants will not be required to complete this stage but will automatically proceed to sifting stage. GIS applicants who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria at the sifting stage will be invited to the assessment centre. where the final assessment centre stage is an interview, the proportion of those interviewed who are GIS should be the same as the proportion of GIS applicants among all those considered to have met the minimum essential criteria.

ANNEX 10 - NICS GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR POSSIBLE COMPETITION TYPES

Example	Step 1- Design	Step 2 - Sift	Step 3 - Outcome	GIS Yes/No
1	Minimum essential criteria only (e.g. qualification/experience).	Must pass Step 1 to move to interview.	Everyone passing Step 1 progresses to interview.	No (there is no shortlisting to bypass)
2	Minimum essential criteria includes qualification/experience and passing an aptitude test) (not high volume).	Must pass both elements at Step 1 to be invited to interview.	Everyone passing both at Step 1 progresses to interview (decided at competition design stage).	No (there is no shortlisting to bypass)
3	Minimum essential criteria includes qualification/experience and passing test (high volume).	Limited number who pass both elements at Step 1 invited to interview based on highest test score.	A proportion ⁶ of GIS candidates passing Step 1 (including test) progress to interview even if bypassing others in test score order.	Yes (Proportionate GIS applies as test scores are used as a form of shortlisting)
4	Minimum essential criteria and shortlisting used.	Shortlisting applied to those who meet minimum essential criteria to reduce numbers proceeding to interview.	GIS applicants need only pass minimum essential criteria. They by-pass shortlisting and move on directly to interview.	Yes (by-passing shortlisting)
5	Minimum essential criteria used. Additional testing as part of next stage assessment, not as shortlisting.	Additional assessment/test plus interview used to arrive at final merit order.	Everyone passing Step 1 is invited to undertake Step 2.	No (no shortlisting to by-pass)
6	Minimum essential criteria used. Additional testing used as shortlisting. Final stage interview.	Additional testing offered to those meeting minimum essential criteria to reduce numbers proceeding to interview.	GIS applicants need only pass minimum essential criteria. Bypass additional testing and move to interview.	Yes (by-passing shortlisting test)

⁶ The proportion will be determined based on all those who pass Step 1 test and will be used to set the number of GIS applicants taken to interview. For example, if 1,000 people pass the test and 100 of those (10%) are GIS applicants, 10% of the total you plan to interview must also be GIS applicants. That 10% would be identified based on highest test score. HRC will calculate and invite the appropriate numbers to interview.