

Northern Ireland Civil Service

Work Experience Policy and Guidance for Users

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1. Introduction

It is the aim of the NICS to have a workforce which is broadly representative of the population of Northern Ireland. In order to achieve this aim we recognise that it is important that individuals considering careers choices have an opportunity to learn as much as possible about the opportunities that exist in the NICS. By offering opportunities to participate in work experience/work shadowing we hope to promote the NICS as a career of choice.

Whilst the majority of jobs in the NICS are of an administrative or management nature, there are a great diversity of other jobs across scientific, technological, professional, legal, medical, engineering and IT related areas. Information on jobs in the NICS which are currently advertised is available on www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk.

More information regarding the Departments and work carried out by each is available at http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/gov.htm?WT.mc_id=NIDBar-depts

2. Indemnity Insurance

For unpaid work experience, the application form includes a proof of indemnity section which should be completed by the school/university or supporting organisation prior to the application being considered. Indemnity forms provided by the individual's school or organisation will also be accepted.

Where indemnity is not available for an individual seeking an unpaid work placement the Department should assess the risk of potential personal injury, damage to property or other loss in light of the nature and location of the work. Where such risk is insignificant an application for an unpaid work placement should be accepted. No individual accepted for a work placement should be unsupervised and any risks should be managed in the same way as for other employees.

3. Types of work placements which may be facilitated

There are a number of routes through which work placements within the NICS can be facilitated. The following is an outline of the different routes on offer and the process involved;

3.1 Applications made via NICS HR

These opportunities are **unpaid work experience only** and are coordinated by NICS HR on behalf of NICS departments. The application form captures information regarding the individual applicant, allows them to outline their career plans / interests and which department they would be most interested in attending for placement. The applications also provide the individual with the opportunity to outline any health conditions or special requirements that should be considered prior to placement.

Applications received by NICS HR will be forwarded to the specified department(s) for consideration. Where there is no preferred department listed, NICS HR will contact the department(s) determined most suitable to the desired experience to request consideration of the application.

It will not always be possible to provide placements but the NICS will endeavour to secure placements in response to all requests which are received. Whilst individuals undertaking work placements in administrative posts will generally have the opportunity to carry out some of the tasks of positions, there will be placements where this will not be possible. In such cases the emphasis will be on work shadowing where the individual will be observing the post-holder carrying out the duties of the post in question.

Application forms for work placements listed under a-d below are available online at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk under the Work Experience Quick Link.

(a) Work experience placements of young people who are in years 11/12 or 13/14 of full time education;

Students under 18 years of age who participate in short work experience placements will not require formal vetting but those NICS branches which provide the placements will be required to ensure that access to confidential databases/information is strictly supervised. Students on short work placements will not have a login facility to NICS databases.

The normal duration for work experience placements is one week.

Security checks for staff that will be mentoring or supervising placement individuals are not required however; it is not advisable to structure a placement where any member of staff could be on a one to one situation with a young person during a work placement.

(b) Students in further and higher education;

As at (a); however these may include applications to attend for placement on a 1 – 2 day basis over a number of weeks in line with the courses studied. Basic Access NI criminal record checks may be required where there is a higher level of access to systems and information.

(c) Non-UK student opportunities.

These exchange placements are sponsored by the EU, primarily under the Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus programmes. Participants are typically graduates coming from a wide variety of vocational/educational backgrounds. They choose to do an international placement in order to gain professional experience to develop their English language skills and to broaden their horizons.

They stay typically between 8 and 20 weeks and work placements are **unpaid**. The EU covers participants' accommodation, travel costs and provides for food/transport costs.

Non-UK applicants must enclose an acceptable Criminal Record Check from their country with their application to ensure security requirements of the NICS are met.

(d) Work placements for people with a disability

The NICS has made a commitment to work with external disability organisations to develop structured work placement programmes to make sure that people with disabilities can gain real work opportunities and experience within the NICS to improve their opportunities of securing future employment. All departments therefore will be expected to offer such opportunities, and to work with the respective individuals and a designated Employment Officer from the disability organisation.

A work placement is a planned period of work based learning or experience. The NICS recognises that for people with disabilities, work placements can be a key to access the world of work from which they might otherwise be excluded. Therefore work experience and work placement are excellent interventions to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to gain experience and skills in work which may lead to employment in the future.

Applications for these work placements are available online at www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk under the Work Experience Quick Link. These will be submitted to NICSHR on behalf of individuals by a recognised disability organisation which is willing to provide appropriate support, guidance and assistance to the individual during their period of work placement and also to staff who will be directly working with the individual. The aim is to ensure that the work placement is a positive and developmental experience for all concerned.

Before the individual commences any such work placement, a designated Employment Officer from the disability organisation must meet with local management in the business area identified for the work placement to discuss issues such as the work placement job role, reasonable adjustments, work pattern, any training required by staff in advance and the role of the Employment Officer during the work placement period. Further guidance for departments, a process map, FAQs and a pre placement checklist are also available on the NICS Recruitment website.

As with all work experience/work placement opportunities, NICSHR or Departments are not expected to fund any external support provided to the individual, nor can a permanent job be offered as a result of an individual completing a period of work placement with a Department. However, in line with its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), Departments would be expected to consider any reasonable adjustments which are required by the individual, to enable them to maximise the benefits of their work placement opportunity. Associated costs should be met by the supporting organisation.

(e) Unpaid Internships arranged through Colleges or University;

An internship is a period of work experience arranged by a university in which the intern will be placed in a government Department. The period of the placement is likely to mirror a university semester and the placement will be in a Department

which is providing a function directly related to the nature of the degree course being provided by the university and being undertaken by the student.

3.2 AccessNI Security checks for Work Placements

For placements of more than 4 weeks or where access to systems or sensitive information is required the individual may be asked to provide a basic AccessNI clearance certificate.

More information on how to apply for a clearance certificate can be found on the AccessNI website: www.accessni.gov.uk.

3.3 Applications made directly to Departments

(a) Paid Opportunities advertised by Departments

Some Departments provide one year sandwich placements for students undertaking degree courses which are vocational based. These placements are publicly advertised and the successful students become paid employees for the period of their placements. Students employed as NICS sandwich year students will require formal vetting by AccessNI.

Sandwich year or sandwich period placements are advertised as required by departments. All opportunities are advertised on the NICS recruitment website www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk, which is updated every Monday. Advertisements also appear in the 3 local newspapers the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News and the Newsletter.

Applications can be submitted through the website once the position is advertised or hard copy applications can be requested from HRConnect.

(b) Department specific work experience requests made by universities or other colleges of higher education;

Some NICS Departments have well established links with universities etc. in which students are offered placements, usually in a specialist area related to the course they are undertaking. Departments should continue to make placements through these existing lists links.

(c) Civil Servant Exchange Programmes

Extract from the Cabinet Office website advises – “The UK does have agreements with some other EU and Commonwealth countries for the exchange of each other’s civil servants, but experience suggests that it is usually easier for individuals, or their departments, to arrange something bilaterally with the overseas counterpart or target ministry in the country concerned. Involvement by the centre usually adds delay, whereas departments tend already to have the contacts and the goodwill needed to arrange a secondment.”

3.4 Ad hoc requests

Applications can also be submitted by or on behalf of individuals who are not associated with an educational organisation or training scheme. These applications can be submitted either through NICS HR or directly to departments and will be considered on a case by case basis.

3.5 Opportunities managed by the Department for Communities

(a) Programme Led Apprenticeships

This is a two year programme which involves work placements of one day a week in a NICS Department. The placements are arranged by training suppliers and requires the training supplier to have adequate insurance which will indemnify their apprentices placed within the Public Sector. Students undertaking NICS programme led apprenticeships will require vetting basic check by AccessNI.

(b) European Social Fund projects

The Department for Communities manages the European Social Fund (ESF) for Northern Ireland. A number of the local projects supported by ESF are delivered by specialist disability organisations and provide employability skills training, vocational qualifications, as well as work placement opportunities for people with a disability. Disability organisations who are delivering a local ESF project, and who have participants on their project who would be suited to the work placements being offered by the NICS, should submit an application to NICS HR on behalf of those individuals. A work placement cannot be guaranteed for all applicants and where an application is being considered, the procedures described at Section 3.1 (d) would apply in all instances.

4. Reporting of work placements

NICS HR will be reporting annually on all work placement opportunities provided by NICS Departments.