



NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

RECRUITMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

VERSION 11

Manual Version Control

Version	Date	Change Description
10	12/10/09	n/a
11	1/11/10	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.

INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to introduce the eleventh edition of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual.

You will note the significant changes in the format and functionality of this manual; these changes have been implemented to allow relevant and timely access to recruitment information at various stages throughout the process. Each section or subsection can be accessed by clicking the relevant link on the table of contents.

The aim of this manual is to;

- Ensure adherence to the Civil Service Commissioners' 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 and consult with you to ensure it reflects best practice in recruitment and selection policies.

Appointments and Marketing Branch – Corporate 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 rapidly 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 and Personnel. 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.

1.2 Roles and responsibilities in the recruitment process

The policies and processes outlined in this manual are the responsibility of Resourcing Division of Corporate HR of DFP. All competitions run by HRConnect on behalf of the NICS are expected to be in line with this guidance and it is the responsibility of HRConnect to ensure operational compliance with this guidance. When individual civil servants or external experts agree to undertake the duties of panel membership in NICS competitions, they automatically accept the recruitment and selection procedures outlined in this manual. It is the responsibility of a panel chairperson to provide leadership in ensuring that those events in which the panel participates comply with the

policies and procedures outlined in this manual. HRConnect staff are responsible for providing professional HR advice and guidance to panel members. Any issues of policy clarification should be referred by the panel chairperson to HRConnect who will liaise with Appointments and Marketing Branch of Resourcing Division, if necessary, in providing guidance on the issue/s raised. Appointments and Marketing Branch will meet members of HRConnect on a frequent basis and review service delivery issues with a view to ensuring that all stakeholders are entirely clear on NICS policy. In addition to performing the role of upholding the principle that selection for posts in the NICS should be on the basis of merit through fair and open competition, Civil Service Commissioners provide an operational role in the chairing of panels for external recruitment senior competitions and in authorising the competition at various stages of the recruitment process.

A document outlining the roles and responsibilities' of each stakeholder in the recruitment process can be found at [Annex 1](#).

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. A copy of the Code can be accessed via www.nicscommissioners.org. 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.

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 recruitment must be made. The Commissioners believe that operation of the Merit Principle is critically important to an effective Civil Service;
- This accords with the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 which gives the Commissioners responsibility for maintaining the Merit 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;”
- Merit embraces issues of diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity, and recruitment processes should fully embrace those concepts.

1.4.2 Principle 2 – Appointment process should be fit for purpose

- All recruitment processes and practices adopted by the Northern Ireland Civil Service should be consistent with the Merit Principle and commensurate with best practice. The Commissioners welcome and support innovative, dynamic approaches to ensuring that appointment processes deliver against the Merit Principle;
- This extends to all aspects of recruitment including defining job specifications, advertising the vacancy and the assessment mechanisms used;
- The Commissioners believe that excellence in recruitment policy, management and practice is a business benefit and sits with the NICS' vision of being a leading edge organisation. At the same time it is recognised that processes must operate in an efficient manner.

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

- The Commissioners oppose wholly any form of unlawful discrimination, direct or indirect, active or passive. It is expected that the NICS will adopt a vigorous approach to ensuring 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 equality of opportunity.

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

- The Commissioners wish to see confidence within the community at large, including special interest groups and candidates, in recruitment processes for appointments to the NICS;
- They believe firmly that 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. This includes open and active communication on the process to be adopted, the basis for assessment and comprehensive feedback.

Those with any involvement in managing the recruitment and selection of staff must ensure they have read and have a full appreciation of the Recruitment Code and how the principles should be translated into operational practices. The Civil Service Commissioners engage consultants to carry out annual audits of recruitment and selection activities across the entire NICS. The audits adopt various themes agreed by the Permanent Secretary/Commissioners group each year. There is little doubt that 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 as a core part of the Criteria Based Interviewing course. A unified guide to promoting Equal Opportunities in Employment can be found at www.equalityni.org.

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 should be rare and Departments must justify why it is not reasonably practicable to make the appointment in question in accordance with the Merit Principle. In considering the application of Exceptions to the Merit Principle, Departments should bear in mind their continuing obligation to ensure compliance with relevant employment and equality legislation, when carrying out their selection and appointment procedures. 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.

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

- Appointment on secondment;
- *Transfers of persons into the NICS where the person holds a situation in another civil service of the Crown;
- Transfers of persons into the NICS where the person is employed on functions being transferred to the Crown;
- Where the person to be appointed is of proven distinction and for exceptional reasons, justified by the needs of the NICS;
- Appointments made under Government initiatives/programmes;
- Reinstatement of a former civil servant following a period of parliamentary candidature or membership.

Further information on the above exceptions and the rules surrounding their application can be obtained from Appointments and Marketing branch as well as from an examination of the Civil Service Commissioners Code. It is clear that the number of appointments to be made under the above Regulation is likely to be extremely small.

*Requests for “transfer” to the NICS from another civil service of the Crown will only be considered by Appointments and Marketing Branch in the context of the business needs of the NICS. “Transfers” will only be approved in very exceptional cases and where it is not reasonably practical to make the appointment in accordance with the merit principle. Where appointments are currently being made from open competitions to the grade in question, or if a recruitment embargo is in place at the grade in question, “transfers” will not be approved.

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”.

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.”

The NICS believes that through the way it treats its people and the way it works each part of the organisation will operate at a higher level of output and the individual talents and expertise of individuals will be fully developed and utilised. The NICS has appointed a Diversity Champion who liaises with other specialists in the UK and elsewhere in identifying best practice in this area. Corporate HR has also developed outreach measures to increase awareness and the uptake of career opportunities in the NICS among under-represented groups.

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 already in place in the NICS: -

- Appointments and Marketing Branch staff 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, Appointments and Marketing 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.
- Appointments and Marketing 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 involved in providing careers advice or seeking work placements for themselves should contact Appointments and Marketing Branch who will liaise with Departments in arranging work experience placements. Work experience placements are typically of one or two weeks duration and can involve experience in many different work activities. Those organisations arranging work experience placements must provide insurance indemnity cover for the individual. Those seeking further information and to download an application form should click on the work experience tab at www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk
- Organising publicity and promotional features alongside advertisements aimed at correcting the stereotypical image of the NICS and promoting a positive, interesting and vibrant image of the Service. Flyers and posters are regularly sent to various community groups alongside advertisements for volume grades. Radio advertising has also been used.
- 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.

2 VACANCY INITIATION – AGREEMENT OF METHOD TO FILL

2.1 Identification of a vacancy

Once a line manager becomes aware of a potential vacancy within their business area the line manager creates the vacancy and submits to Departmental HR for consideration. Departmental 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.

A job analysis should be carried out by the appropriate business area in consultation with the line manager. This will inform the content of the Candidate Information Booklet as the duties and responsibilities and personal specification should be defined as part of the job analysis. An effective job analysis will ensure the panel receives the correct information to enable them to define suitable and effective eligibility and shortlisting criteria.

2.2 Approval required by CHR (Non SCS and SCS) and PSG (SCS competitions only)

CHR approval must be given for each recruitment competition before it is launched. In relation to Senior Civil Service competitions, the Permanent Secretary of the Department concerned discusses the options available for filling the post with the Director of Personnel in Corporate HR. 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, Corporate HR 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 (PSG). PSG approval of the proposed method of filling SCS posts is required before a competition can be launched.

2.2.1 The use of an Executive Search Agency in the Recruitment and Selection Process – CHR approval required

Departments may use an Executive Search Agency within government procurement rules. The approval of the Head of Resourcing Division, Corporate 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 Corporate HR a clear and well-documented business case outlining the justification for this. 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 recruiting Department will define the role of the Executive Search Agency in the business case submitted to Corporate HR 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 2](#).

2.3 Appointments from an existing competition

As referred to above Departmental HR 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 Senior Civil Service position, authorisation should be sought from the Office of 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;
- What was the 'equality' composition of the previous competition? Departmental HR can request this information from HRConnect. Is there an opportunity in running a new competition to attract a more diverse applicant pool?

2.4 Vacancy Initiation – requirements of the position

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

2.4.1 Nationality

The vast majority of vacancies in the NICS are open to UK Nationals, Commonwealth Citizens, British Protected Persons and EEA Nationals. There are a small number of posts to which only UK Nationals are eligible to apply. The requirements for appointment to the NICS are outlined in [Annex 3](#) of this booklet. Under the Civil Service (NI) Order 1999 ([Annex 4](#)), the Department of Finance and Personnel may make regulations prescribing the requirements for appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service. These regulations include Nationality requirements applicable to ALL posts within the Civil Service. The vast majority of posts fall into a “non–public service” (NPS) category which broadly speaking are open to UK Nationals, Commonwealth citizens, ‘relevant Europeans’ i.e. those born in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Swiss Nationals. Relevant Europeans also includes some Turkish Nationals, certain family members of EEA nationals and certain family members. Within the above regulations a “public service post” (PS) means a post which constitutes employment in the public service within the meaning of Article 48(4) of the EC Treaty (derogation from freedom of

movement of workers). Posts classified as 'Public Service' are **reserved** for UK Nationals only. Under 'The European Communities (Employment in the Civil Service) Order 1991 as amended in 2007 'a reserved post' means a post falling within article 6 which the Secretary of State considers needs to be held otherwise than by a relevant European. The posts falling within this article are posts whose functions are concerned with:-

- Access to intelligence information received directly or indirectly from the security and intelligence services;
- Access to other information which, if disclosed without authority or otherwise misused, might damage the interests of national security;
- Access to other information which, if disclosed without authority or otherwise misused, might be prejudicial to the interests of the United Kingdom or the safety of its citizens; or
- Border control or decisions about immigration.

Great care needs to be taken in assigning a 'Public Service' 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 'Public Service' must contact the Secretary of State directly for approval.

In addition to ensuring that appointees to the NICS satisfy nationality 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-Public Service posts in the NICS, they may also require a work permit or sponsorship licence to legally work in the UK. HRConnect will need to check the applicant's passport etc to confirm if he/she can legally work in the UK and it will be the responsibility of Departmental HR to apply for a work permit/sponsorship licence for that candidate before offering a post, if one is required. Employment of migrants from outside the EEA and Switzerland is subject to the UKBA points based system. Comprehensive Guidance on Preventing Illegal working and the points based system can be found on the UKBA website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

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. It also clearly indicates whether the applicant is on the ISA's Children's list or Vulnerable Adults list and therefore is barred from working with those groups. This level is mainly for positions that involve contact with children or vulnerable adults. (The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) order 2007 which was effective

from 12 October 2009 sets out the new definitions of regulated and controlled activity for those who have contact with children and vulnerable adults.)

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 by the Defence Vetting Agency as opposed to Access NI. A different application form for these checks will be provided by HRConnect for completion.

- 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.

2.4.3 The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007

Departmental HR have responsibility for ensuring that competitions to appoint staff to 'Regulated' or 'Controlled' positions correctly identify such positions to those managing their recruitment and selection and ensure an Enhanced check is carried out on all appointees before any offers of appointment are made. An individual will commit an offence if he offers work to, or 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. Further information on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults can also be obtained from www.dhsspsni.gov.uk and www.isa-gov.org.uk.

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 or controlled Activity, as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, is regarded as exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

2.4.5 Pre employment Health Surveillance/Fitness for Post.

Departmental HR 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 5](#).

2.4.6 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 Corporate HR 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 NICS HR 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.

2.5 Identifying Panel Members

When planning a new competition HRConnect will provide lists and details of trained panel members to Departmental HR to assist in identifying suitable panel members to participate in a recruitment competition. An individual will not be permitted to become a member of a panel unless they have completed the appropriate training before the Competition Initiation Meeting and it is still valid. It is not essential for interview panel

members in volume competitions to have received formal training BEFORE the Competition Initiation Meeting as they will have no input to this meeting. The panel identified must include at least one member with recognised competence in the core areas of the post to be filled. If, for example, the post requires a third level qualification in a specialist area it may be appropriate for the panel member with specific competence in this area to possess a similar or better level qualification. Ideally the chairperson should be two ranks above the grade to be recruited with panel colleague/s one grade higher. Panel members from outside the civil service should be of 'standing' in their profession or occupy similar or equivalent positions in their organisations. Ideally the panel should also include one member experienced in HR issues. The ability of any panel to select the best possible person for the post is influenced by the draft Candidate Information Booklet which has been prepared as a result of the job analysis which has taken place. No panel should operate in the absence of at least one 'expert' and if such a person is not available, then consideration should be given to inviting colleagues from neighbouring areas/locations/organisations to assist in the recruitment/selection exercise. It is important that where prospective panel members are likely to have 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. Personal knowledge of a candidate by a panel member will not 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 declaration of interest should be made known to and recorded by HRConnect. All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure, as far as possible, that each panel is balanced in terms of sex and community background.

2.6 Training of Panel Members

All staff that have a role in recruitment must have an awareness of the issues which impact on the work they carry out. It is essential that panel members must have received formal training in Interview Management including Criteria Based Interviewing and the recruitment and selection process to the required standard. It will be the

responsibility of Departmental HR to confirm that all panellists are sufficiently trained in equal opportunities issues and in recruitment and selection processes. This training must include guidance on equality of opportunity, the Commissioners' Code, the role of Commissioners and consideration of diversity issues. Appointments and Marketing Branch will liaise with CAL (Centre for Applied Learning) in developing training schemes which meet the above requirements. The following is a summary of the core areas, which it is expected would be covered in training:

- a) An understanding of equal opportunities legislation and its implications in recruitment and selection. A unified guide to promoting Equal Opportunities in Employment can be found at www.equalityni.org
- b) An understanding of the role of the Civil Service Commissioners and their Recruitment Code;
- c) An understanding of 'Diversity' issues in the wider NICS and of outreach measures;
- d) Training in recruitment and selection practice. This must include the following:
 - the context and basis of criteria based interviewing;
 - setting eligibility/shortlisting criteria;
 - the development of effective job descriptions/person specifications;
 - the skills appropriate to criteria based interviewing;
 - note taking and record of interview;
 - Freedom of Information and Data Protection issues; and
 - professional management of interview.

To participate on a panel, training is compulsory and it is therefore essential that panel members and Departments sign up to this commitment from the outset. 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 bespoke training with CAL to ensure the individual is familiar with NICS recruitment and selection processes. The bespoke

training of an individual can only be used where there will be two other panel colleagues (including the chair) fully trained in NICS recruitment and selection processes.

The Centre for Applied Learning will also deliver refresher training for staff whose formal training was more than two years ago or where it is clear that significant changes to recruitment and selection policies and procedures have since taken place.

2.7 Quality Assurance of Training

All training will be delivered to the standard required by Corporate HR. Departments have a responsibility to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to monitor the effectiveness of training. CAL representatives will provide feedback to Departmental HR where it is evident that a panel member may require further training before participating in a competition. When reviewing the effectiveness of recruitment and selection procedures in competitions panel members must give due consideration to training issues in terms of their own performance or that of others and advise HRConnect accordingly. The Competition Evaluation report which each panel chairperson is required to complete, provides an opportunity to do this.

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, Departmental HR 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 will have been carried out by the relevant business area prior to the scoping meeting and a draft CIB will be provided by DHR to aid discussion of relevant issues at the scoping meeting. Issues which may be discussed include:

- Any Ministerial involvement in the appointment;
- 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.

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/Departmental HR and Corporate HR. In Senior Competitions DHR may draft a Candidate Information Booklet for use at the Scoping meeting.

The Candidate Information Booklet should include the following:

- a. Foreword. (by HOCS or Permanent Secretary in the case of senior competitions);
- b. About the Department (explanatory paragraph about the role of Department/Directorate/Division/Branch. Including organisational chart, if appropriate);
- c. 'Our Approach' setting out Departmental Values, etc;
- d. Job Description setting out role of post holder and key responsibilities;
- e. Draft eligibility and shortlisting criteria;
- f. Person specification to include core competences for the NICS grade as well as any other competences/behaviours, considered essential for effective performance in the post;
- g. Key terms and conditions including salary wording which has been approved by Corporate HR 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.
- h. Application process;
- i. Recruitment Process including contact details. Person named as contact in Candidate Information Booklet must not be a panel member;

- j. Anticipated test / interview dates;
- k. Details of the NI Civil Service Commissioners;
- l. Equal Opportunities Policy; and
- m. Equal Opportunities Monitoring.

The Candidate Information Booklet will be used for all recruitment to industrial and non-industrial positions which may be permanent, temporary, full-time or part-time. Items (e) to (l) MUST be included in ALL Candidate Information Booklets.

3.3 Management of the Competition Initiation Meeting

The Competition Initiation Meeting is the principal planning meeting for the competition and is a requirement for all competitions which are to be publicly advertised.

When approval to run an external competition has been granted by Corporate HR, HRConnect will issue the formal invitations to attend the meeting. The chairperson of the panel must attend the meeting and there must be at least one other panel member present with experience in the core areas of the job to be advertised. Where one panel member cannot attend the meeting, it will be the responsibility of the chairperson of the panel to brief that member on decisions reached and to obtain their consent. Whilst the formal responsibility for decisions reached at Competition Initiation Meetings lies with the panel, the role of the HRConnect representative will be to chair the meeting, advise panel members on selection issues and the possible implications of decisions they may take.

3.3.1 Competition Initiation Meeting Agenda

The purpose of this meeting is to formally approve all the information in the Candidate Information Booklet, but must particularly include:

- 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.
- **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 **presentation** may be included as part of the selection process. Panels should discuss the need for a presentation and record what competences they wish to assess through the presentation and record how they intend to score the presentation. Candidates must be advised in the Candidate Information Booklet if they will be permitted to use audio-visual equipment. Panels and candidates should be clear on the competence/s against which the presentation will be scored.
 - **Advertisement** - It is an NICS requirement that the advertisement contains location, salary and, if appropriate, if the appointment may be offered as a secondment opportunity;
 - Consideration and agreement of **advertising media** – where and when to advertise;
 - Agreed **timetable** for all stages of the competition, to include 2 working days for the Secretariat to authorise Stage A prior to advertising;
 - **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.
 - **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 a low number of suitable applicants or where the applicant pool is outside of Northern Ireland the provision to pay expenses may be agreed at the Competition Initiation Meeting. 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 who claim they have a disability recognised under the Disability Discrimination Legislation.

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. Eligibility Criteria must be clearly defined so that applicants completing an application form have a clear understanding of each requirement. The panel must ensure the eligibility criteria are essential for the position to be filled. In setting eligibility criteria panels should consider achievements and outputs as a means of determining eligibility before deciding if a minimum period of experience is necessary. The NICS Core Competence Framework and the Professional Skills for Government framework both provide 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 panels 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, the panel insisted on extensive experience going back to say the last 10 years, it 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.

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 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 panel must be prepared to justify objectively any shortlisting decisions made and these must be recorded. Reducing the pool of candidates to be interviewed will not count as objective justification.

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: Application Forms, Interviews, Psychometric tests, Work sample tests and Assessment Centres. Deciding which assessment method to use involves finding the right balance between the ideal assessment approach and the money and time available. Further advice on assessment tools can be obtained from Resourcing Division, Corporate HR.

Should a selection panel decide to use a test as part of the selection process, they must ensure it has been considered suitable by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (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 panel 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. The use of psychometric tests in selection processes has a number of risks, which must be fully considered and evaluated before any Department applies them. In particular Departments need to consider the following:

- a) Has a job analysis been carried out on the competences required for the post and has the test been designed to assess these competences?
- b) Is the test reliable, valid and free from bias? The NISRA HR Consultancy Service can provide professional analysis and guidance on these issues.
- c) Will the test produce a merit order of the most able candidates?
- d) Has HRConnect been contacted to determine if a suitable test already exists or if one can be sourced?
- e) Has action been taken to ensure there is a pool of staff with the required skills and recognised training to administer the test?

- f) Are suitable premises/facilities available which will enable the test to be professionally administered?

3.6 Qualifications

When agreeing Candidate Information Booklets, panels 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 will 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 demonstrate through course modules etc. 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.

3.7 Quality Assurance of decisions reached

At the end of each meeting a checklist must be completed, which the panel chairperson and HR representative of the Department will endorse as confirmation of decisions reached. This checklist requires confirmation by the panel 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 Competition Initiation Meeting. Finalised documents will be sent to the Competition Lead and panel within the agreed timetable.

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.

4.1.1 Stage A Authorisation for SCS competitions

Prior to advertising any Senior Civil Service competition authorisation must be given by the Civil Service Commissioners. HRConnect prepare all the relevant documentation and forward to the Commissioners' Office for authorisation. Once authorisation has been received the advertisement can go to press.

4.1.2 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. Tuesdays in the Belfast Telegraph and Thursdays in the Irish News and the Newsletter. All vacancies are input to the NICS recruitment website www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk and to www.recruitni.com. All non SCS vacancies are also advertised with www.jobcentreonline.com. It is not a requirement to advertise temporary posts in newspapers. HRConnect may advertise these positions in the local Job Centres and should ensure that that the location/s chosen to advertise in 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.

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 under-represented 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”, unless the position being advertised is a unique single position.

When advertising senior competitions it may be appropriate to include additional text in the advertisement. Corporate 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 as 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.



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. Applications 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.

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 cannot be accepted. In addition, the same amount of space should 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 also submits an organisational chart to

HRCconnect, 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 3750 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.

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 HRCconnect receive more than one application from an applicant only the latest application received will be forwarded to the panel for consideration.

5.4 Formal screening of application forms

Formal screening of application forms consists of a check to determine that the application 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;
- The eligibility criteria are not complete. If an application form requires an applicant to demonstrate how he/she meets the eligibility criteria and the candidate has clearly failed to provide any information; the application should be rejected. It is important in this context that the application form provides clear advice that **ALL** sections of the form must be completed.

An application should normally be rejected if:

- The applicant does not satisfy the nationality requirement for the post;
- The applicant has stated on the application that he/she has been dismissed or medically retired from the NICS;
- The applicant is currently employed within the NICS at the same grade as the competition seeks to recruit (general service grades);
- The applicant is currently employed in the NICS (either directly or by an Agency) in a temporary position and has applied for a further temporary position;
- Staff who are employed within the NICS, whether through an Agency or directly by a Department, are not eligible to apply for temporary posts for any grade within the NICS;
- 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 valid applications have not been received from them. HRConnect will advise applicants of any decisions to exclude them on the basis of Nationality, dismissal or same grade, 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 above grounds will be forwarded with recommendation/s to Appointments and Marketing 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.

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. HRConnect will consider requests and determine what adjustments can be made in consultation with the candidate. 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. Candidates who request complex arrangements will be invited to contact HRConnect to discuss any adjustment sought. Policy advice in respect of reasonable adjustments can be sought from Corporate HR. Specialist advice may also be obtained from organisations such as RNIB and RNID. The Department of Employment and Learning also provides advice and support to people with disabilities.



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 Competition Initiation Meeting 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.

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).

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 correct NICS policy and procedures. Members of Departmental HR have no role in the management of sifts.

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. Panel members should individually consider each application against each eligibility/shortlisting criteria before attending the sift meeting. Before commencing the sift, panel members should familiarise themselves with the eligibility and shortlisting criteria. The sift meeting is an opportunity to ensure that all panel members have a clear and united understanding of the eligibility and shortlisting requirements before applying this to candidates.

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 recorded 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.

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.”

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 must be formatted so that applicants are required to 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. The onus will be on those applicants who are completing application forms to demonstrate each criterion in that part of the form which addresses that criterion. An application form in which the candidate does not attempt to demonstrate the requirements of a criterion in the appropriate part of the form, but attempts to satisfy it by including a cross reference to an already completed criterion, will generally be regarded as incomplete. However, Panels should always complete a review of all decisions to reject candidates and satisfy themselves that the basis of these decisions is sound. Panel members may wish to validate the information provided against the eligibility/shortlisting criteria with that provided in the candidate’s employment history. Panels are provided with the candidate’s employment history alongside eligibility/shortlisting criteria therefore all this information must be considered before making an informed decision. It is recommended that before concluding the meeting the panel completes a review of the applications of all candidates who are considered not to have satisfied an eligibility/shortlisting requirement.

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 interview 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 interview ALL eligible candidates is more likely to have a positive impact on diversity issues within the workforce;
- 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 be invited to interview;
- Panels must be able to objectively justify the application of shortlisting criteria.

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 two 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. 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.

6.4.1 Stage B Authorisation for SCS competitions

For senior competitions HRConnect must prepare all the relevant documentation after the eligibility sift meeting and issue to the Commissioners’ Office. Candidates must not be advised of the outcome of the eligibility sift until the Commissioners have granted authorisation.



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 Competition Initiation Meeting 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 are criteria based and designed to test the candidates' ability to perform effectively against the requirements of the post.

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 required leadership experience, then the lead question should provide each candidate with an opportunity to give examples of how they have demonstrated leadership qualities. Subsidiary 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.

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 Competition Initiation Meeting the criteria on which they will ask lead questions and they should have these questions prepared in advance of the formal pre-board meeting. 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 lead questions and indicators of performance should be given to the HRConnect representative at sift meeting before interviews take place. Supplementary questions should arise out of responses which interviewees have already given and would tend to take the form of a panel member seeking clarification on an issue or context described by interviewee. Panels need to be aware that the use of supplementary questions has the potential to provide advantage to those candidates to whom they are asked. A panel may consider that the scores awarded to candidates who required supplementary questions to clarify issues would reflect this fact.

In planning their lead questions and indicators of performance, panels, of non SCS competitions, may wish to refer to the NICS core competence framework, which is used for internal assessment of staff. For Senior Civil Service competitions the Professional Skills for Government framework should be referred to. A copy of both frameworks can be found on the website www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk.

7.3 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. The overall merit list will be compiled by 'top slicing' the top candidates from each panel with each 'slice' being determined by the numerical scores of each candidate. The same principle will apply where test scores are added to interview scores to achieve an overall mark for each candidate – i.e. Overall merit will be determined by top slicing top candidates from each tier.

7.4 Invitation to interview

Those applicants who satisfy the eligibility/shortlisting criteria should be invited to attend for test/interview. A timetable should be drafted and invitations issued 10 working days in advance of the test/interview date. The invitation to test/interview 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.

8 SOURCE AND SELECT – TEST OR INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

8.1 Management of test / interview

HRConnect staff facilitate all test sessions or interviews. This includes 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 or interview.

The verification process is carried out by HRConnect and must not be carried out by selection panel members. All original qualification certificates and identity documents must be brought to test/interview 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 proforma 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.

8.2 Guidance to panels

The aim of the interview, and indeed the whole selection process, is to appoint the best person, as defined by the selection criteria, to the job. 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. 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.

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.

8.2.1 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 may 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. The Justification section must be completed by each individual panel member to justify the marks awarded.

Please note: the notes made by panel members in the Justification column must relate specifically to the candidate's performance at interview and may be made available to the candidate who requests feedback;

- 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 2 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.

8.2.2 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. (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;
- 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. 0.5. A panel chairperson must not use a, b, c etc.
- 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.

8.2.3 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 within two weeks of the last interview date;
- 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.

8.3 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 interviews. It is for the panel to decide if they are prepared to reconvene and consider other applicants.

The panel will notify HRConnect of its decision regarding whether or not the interview is to be reconvened.

8.4 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.

8.4.1 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 HRConnect agent will carry out a quality check of all the paperwork submitted by the panel at the end of the assessment exercise.

8.4.2 Stage C Authorisation for SCS competitions

For senior competitions HRConnect must forward all the relevant documentation to the Commissioners' Office after the interviews are complete. Stage C authorisation must be obtained prior to interview results issuing.

8.5 Feedback from panel members to candidates

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

Panel members, including the Chairperson, must **not** contact successful or unsuccessful internal or external 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 Departmental representative at the time 'interview result' letters are being issued.

8.5.1 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.

(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. 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 Departmental HR 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 (internal or external) 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 written requests from candidates.

8.6 Competition Evaluation Report

Selection panel chairpersons are required to complete short reports on the effectiveness of the selection processes used. These should be returned to HRConnect after the interviews have taken place. The report contains the following information: -

- Comments on the scoping meeting (senior competitions only);
- Comments on the Competition Initiation Meeting;
- Comments on the effectiveness of eligibility / shortlisting criteria;
- Comments on the effectiveness of the selection process;
- Comments on the overall management of the competition;
- Comments on key learning points;
- Comments which relate to the effectiveness of training received by themselves and their fellow panel members.

HRConnect will provide an analysis of above reports to Corporate HR on an ongoing basis.

8.7 Complaints

Applicants who consider that they have suffered detriment as a result of decisions taken by panels may write to HRConnect. It is important that in responding to such complaints that applicants are advised that 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 panel so that a review of the decision can take place. Some issues can only be addressed by the panel members and will need to be copied directly to them for response. HRConnect will, however, provide draft input to responses for 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

9 PRE - PLACEMENT VERIFICATION – PRE - EMPLOYMENT CHECKS

9.1 Baseline Personal Security Standard

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. 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 6](#)).

9.1.2 Criminal Record Check (CRC)

A criminal record check is an essential element of the **Baseline Standard (BS)** 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.

A CRC is only actioned for those candidates found suitable at interview 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. The administration of vetting applications will be carried out through HRConnect completing employer section of each applicant's Access NI application form and forwarding to Access NI for processing. HRConnect will ensure only one Access NI check is submitted per

candidate. The date of the AccessNI check will be recorded against the applicant record.

When the Criminal Record Check undertaken highlights an unspent criminal offence, Appointments and Marketing Branch will consider the information received against the NICS Risk Assessment Form ([See Annex 7](#)). The Risk Assessment Form provides a standard model against which all unspent offences are assessed. If the conviction does not fall under any of the categories listed, Appointments and Marketing branch will advise HRConnect to proceed with the application.

When the results of a criminal record check reveal unspent convictions which fall under any of the four categories of offences listed, Appointments and Marketing Branch will advise HRConnect to write to these candidates to confirm that the convictions relate to them and to offer the candidate an opportunity to provide a statement of disclosure regarding the conviction/s. A statement of disclosure is an opportunity for the candidate to outline any special circumstances which he/she feels should be considered before any decision to appoint/not appoint is made. Further advice regarding statements of disclosure can be obtained by contacting the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) on 02890 320157 or by email at niacro@niacro.co.uk. If the competition is to fill a post in an 'excepted' category listed under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Legislation, the candidate will have been required to agree to a 'standard' clearance in which ALL convictions are listed in the criminal record check and invited to provide a statement of disclosure regarding all of them.

Appointments and Marketing Branch will consider all the information received prior to making a decision on whether offences should preclude candidates from appointment. In deciding if a candidate can be appointed, Appointments and Marketing Branch will consider any mitigating circumstances provided by the candidates which tend to suggest that the convictions are not representative of the overall character of the candidate.

Information received regarding criminal records is destroyed when a recruitment decision is taken. Such information is not retained by HRConnect.

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 date the check is returned will be recorded against the applicant record.

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, questionnaires will be provided by HRConnect and completed by candidates. HRConnect will forward the completed questionnaires to the Defence Vetting Agency for processing. 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. The date the check is returned and expiry date should be recorded against the applicant record.

9.1.5 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 Appointments and Marketing Branch who will consider and evaluate the risks involved should this circumstance arise.

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.

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 AMB. Further advice and guidance may also be sought from organisations such as RNIB, RNID and the Disability Advisory Service of DEL. 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 DHR and if necessary, CHR if candidates' requests can be implemented.

9.4 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.

9.5 Reporting Details

Departmental HR should provide the reporting details when the vacancy is created on i-recruit, 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 Departmental

HR who should provide the required details within 1 day to enable an offer of appointment to be made.

9.6 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. If the successful candidate is an existing permanent civil servant, HRConnect will calculate the new salary through a % increase on their existing salary (assuming the new post represented a promotion) in line with current NICS policy. The starting salary will be detailed in the offer of appointment. Should a Department require further guidance on pay related issues they should contact CHR – Human Resources Policy, Pay and Pensions.

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 Departmental HR 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);
- 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 DFP.

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.

10.2 Temporary Positions

A candidate for a temporary post who has obtained temporary employment in the civil service through a recruitment agency subsequent to their date of application must be advised by HRConnect that it will not be possible to consider an offer of appointment to any candidate currently employed (either directly or through an Agency) in the NICS. Where the candidate provides confirmation that his/her employment in NICS duties has ceased, HRConnect will consider the candidate for future posts.

Offers of appointment in respect of temporary vacancies will be for a maximum period of 51 weeks and must not be extended beyond this period. Temporary vacancies arise out of the need for NICS Departments to fill vacant positions which cannot last more than 51 weeks. 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 their area.

10.3 Permanent Positions

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

withdrawn from the competition. 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 criminal record check 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 United Kingdom and of any pending charges which have not yet been dealt with by the Courts. Information received from candidates will be copied to Appointments and Marketing 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.

10.4 Internal / External Candidates

Where the successful candidate is a permanent employee, HRConnect will advise both the candidate's current Departmental HR and the new one (if different) of the candidate's success. HRConnect will liaise with both Departmental HR and agree the start date and terms and conditions of the appointment. 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.

10.5 Stage D Authorisation 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 D authorisation must be obtained prior to an offer of appointment issuing to the successful candidate.

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 Corporate 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 Departmental HR will prepare an offer of appointment advising the appointee of the terms and conditions of the new post.

10.7 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.

ANNEX 1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

VACANCY INITIATION				
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify vacancy to be filled by open competition¹ 		DHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain CHR approval to run competition. PSG approval also required for SCS competition. 		DHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an Executive Search Agency is to be used submit business case to Head of Resourcing, CHR, to obtain approval² 		DHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriately trained panel members 		DHR		
<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) 		DHR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate/approve competition on system and forward to HRConnect 		DHR		

¹ It is essential that before the vacancy initiation process begins that DHR 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 The Executive Search Agency should be invited to all relevant competition events. Further guidance is available in the Policy and Procedures Manual

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<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 		DHR		
<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	
<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	

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition Lead and panel chairperson to sign and return competition documentation to HRConnect 		DHR / Competition Lead		Panel Chairperson

SOURCE AND SELECT				
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRConnect complete formalities for Commissioners Secretariat Stage A authorisation (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Stage A authorisation(SCS only) 	OCSC			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage advertising formalities of competition after authorisation has been granted by the Commissioners' Secretariat 			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"> • 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

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	HRCConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<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	
<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 B Commissioners' Secretariat authorisation (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage B Authorisation(SCS only) 	OCSC			
<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 B authorisation has been granted. 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate papers issued to panel members 			HRC	

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<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 interviews in line with guidance in Panel Members Guide and NICS policy and procedures manual 				Full 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 interviews 				Full Panel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all candidate papers are fully completed in accordance with NICS policy and procedures and returned to HRConnect on same day interviews have been completed 				Panel Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality check all documentation for accuracy 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Competition Evaluation Report and return to HRConnect 				Panel Chairperson

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	HRConnect	Panel Chairperson/Panel Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and issue documentation for Stage C Commissioners' Secretariat authorisation (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage C authorisation(SCS only) 	OCSC			

PRE-PLACEMENT VERIFICATION AND OFFER				
ROLE	RESPONSIBLE BODY			
	Office of the Civil Service Commissioners	Departmental / Corporate HR	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 C 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 D Commissioners' Secretariat authorisation (SCS only) 			HRC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Stage D authorisation. (SCS only) 	OCSC			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue letter of offer of appointment to successful candidate. For SCS competitions this must only occur after Stage D authorisation 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 CHR³ 		DHR		

³ Further guidance on the feedback required for the use of an Executive Search Agency is available in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

ANNEX 2 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 Resourcing in Corporate HR. 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 Corporate HR 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 Corporate HR 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 DFP. 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 channelled through the contractual Departmental 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 Departmental 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 Departmental 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.

ANNEX 3 REQUIREMENTS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE NICS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Under the Civil Service (NI) Order 1999, the Department of Finance and Personnel (“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 and EC law, the following restrictions must be observed.
- 2.6.2 Every person appointed to a "public service" 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.

2.6.3 Every person appointed to a post which is not a “public service” post must be either:

- (i) a UK National; or
- (ii) a Commonwealth citizen; or
- (iii) a British Protectorate Person; or
- (iv) an EEA or Swiss national; or
- (v) a person who is not an EEA or Swiss national but is a family member of an EEA or Swiss national who has moved to the UK from another EEA Member State or Switzerland for an approved purpose.

2.6.4 Within the nationality requirement: -

- (a) “public service post” means a post which constitutes employment in the public service within the meaning of Article 39(4) of the EC Treaty (derogation from freedom of movement of workers).
- (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).
- (d) “British Protected Person” means a member of any class of persons declared to be British Protected Persons by Order of Council under the British Nationality Act 1981, or by virtue of the Solomon Islands Act 1978.
- (e) “EEA” national means a national of an EC Member State or of Iceland, Norway or Liechtenstein.
- (f) an “EC Member State” means a Member State of the European Community, including the UK.
- (g) “family member of an EEA or Swiss national” means:

the national's spouse*; or

a direct descendant (child/grandchild etc.) of that national, or his/her spouse, who is under 21 years of age or is their dependant; or

a dependent relative in the directly ascending line (parent/grandparent etc) of the EEA or Swiss national or his/her spouse.

* "Spouse" does not include a party to a marriage of convenience and in the case of EEA or Swiss national vocational students, family members are restricted to spouses and dependent children only.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Checks and assessments of all the above requirements should be completed before an appointment is made.
- 3.2 Advice on the interpretation and application of the requirements is available from the NICS Policy and Procedures Manual available at www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk

John McKervill
Head of Resourcing
Corporate HR
May 2009

ANNEX 4 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 and Personnel;

"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 and Personnel ("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.

ANNEX 5 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 “at-risk” 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.

ANNEX 6 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 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
ZX 1956-61	NE 1980 FEBRUARY	JT 1993 JANUARY
ZY 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).

ANNEX 7 RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

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 Departmental HR 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.