

Northern Ireland Civil Service

Work Experience Policy and Guidance for Users

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1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) comprises 13 Government Departments, each of which plays a key role in the development and implementation of government policy and delivery of services to the people of Northern Ireland.

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

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

The following are examples of positions in each Department.

2. Background to the Departments

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

The Department supports the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Executive and leads on a number of key cross cutting policy and strategy issues across the NICS such as equality, poverty, good relations, sustainable development and European policy. The Department will consider work experience opportunities in the following areas:

- All administrative grades

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Department's vision is that of a thriving and sustainable rural community and environment in Northern Ireland in which the Department aims to strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas, enhances animal, fish and plant health and welfare, develops a more sustainable environment and delivers effectively its services to customers.

DARD have a number of offices throughout Northern Ireland and will consider any requests for work experience in office based environments but if an individual has more specific interests they may wish to consider placements in more specialised areas of DARD including Veterinary Service, Service Delivery Group and Rivers Agency.

Veterinary Service

The majority of opportunities will be of an administrative, management or ICT nature. Where possible these will be offered in;

- a) **Administrative Work.** Administrative staff perform a wide variety of functions ensuring that the work programme for Veterinary Service is carried out. These tasks may involve data input, file management, dealing with telephone enquiries, answering routine correspondence. You would work as part of a team in an environment designed to develop organisation skills, team working, effective communication and good customer service skills.
- b) **First Line Manager Role-** This work includes:
 - Operational type work which can involve the development of practical arrangements to give effect to policy decisions or legislation and may involve the management of services.
 - Finance work which can involve forecasting public expenditure requirements, implementing payment and producing finance reports and;
 - Policy work which can involve assisting in the development or review of VS business responsibilities
- c) **ICT Specialists –** This type of work is varied and includes data analysis, programming, maintenance and support of data system;

Where business needs permit, it may be possible to provide an overview of the work carried out by a Veterinarian Officer. This would be provided in an office based environment.

The work of a Veterinarian Officer is associated with controlling enzootic diseases such as bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis, disease diagnoses, undertaking surveillance for other diseases and/or stamping out epizootic diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease and Bluetongue.

Service Delivery Group

Alongside office environments which offer a variety of basic administrative duties such as photocopying, filing, etc Service Delivery Group can provide a wide and varied range of practical work on some of their CAFRE College Campus sites. For example:

Enniskillen Campus – Equine Education

- Tending to horses in fields.
- Assisting with leading to & from exercise.
- Feeding, bedding & putting rugs on horses.
- Observing farrier, vet, dentist & physio.

Loughry Campus – Food Technology Education

- Helping the food technicians & lab staff with chemical & micro testing of food – levels of fat, protein, salt & bacteria.

- Working in the production development kitchen making food products & preparation for taste panels.
- Making Ice-cream, sausages etc.
- Cleaning.

Greenmount Campus – Beef and Sheep Development

- Feeding stock in the morning.
- Checking stock at grass.
- Milking cows.
- Cleaning.
- Moving stock within the enterprises.

Greenmount Campus – Crops & Horticulture Development

- Seed sowing.
- Taking cuttings.
- Planting in pots and soil under protected environment.
- Harvesting.
- Grading a whole new range of ornamental crops e.g. pot plants & cut flowers.

Rivers Agency

Rivers Agency is a civil engineering organisation that offers limited, mainly office based work placement opportunities to civil engineering students or those wishing to pursue a career in civil engineering.

Due to the health and safety restrictions on taking individuals out on site visits, work placements can be accommodated within Hydebank/Craigavon office locations, particularly with our design and asset management sections. Limited visits to controlled sites where no works are currently taking place are a possibility. These site visits allow individuals to view completed projects, particularly where works have been implemented by our Environment Section.

Work placement opportunities within Rivers Agency usually last up to one week with each day spent in a different section to demonstrate the variety of work undertaken by the Agency.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

The Department aims to achieve for society 'A confident, creative, informed and vibrant community'. It's vision is a society that develops and flourishes, becoming more informed and proud of its cultural identity, a society where we unlock our latent creativity, to become even more vibrant and confident in the future. The Department will consider work placement opportunities in the following areas:

- All administrative grades
- Curator

Inland Fisheries Technical Support – Castlewellan; Bushmills; Ballinamallard; Ballymoney – general industrial duties.

Department of Education

The Department of Education works together as partners in education and youth services to ensure a high standard of education for all children and young people, which will put them at the centre of education, motivate them, build their confidence and enrich their lives, and promote the foundation for a vibrant economy. The Department will consider work placement opportunities in the following area:

- All administrative grades

Department for Employment and Learning

The role of the Department is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy. The Department's objectives are to promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training as well as to help people into employment and promote good employment practices.

- All administrative grades
- Careers Advisor

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

The goal of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is to grow a dynamic innovative economy, with a greater capacity to generate wealth and raise living standards. The key priorities for the Department are to improve productivity of the manufacturing and private sector, raise employment levels and develop the tourism sector. The Department will consider work placement opportunities related to the following areas:

- All administrative grades
- Health and Safety Inspectors
- Trading Standards Officer

Department of the Environment

The aim of the Department of Environment is to contribute to a better and safer environment which will support a vibrant and dynamic economy and to support the delivery of a system of strong and effective local government. The Department will consider work placement opportunities in the following areas:

- Planning Service – Headquarters Belfast, Ballymena, Belfast, Craigavon, Downpatrick, Londonderry, Coleraine, Omagh, Enniskillen (Planners);
- Press Office;
- Driver Vehicle Agency (DVA) – Testing (Vehicle Examiners), IT Section;

- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA);
- Corporate Services - Finance Unit (Accountants);
- Environmental Protection - Industrial Pollution & Radiochemical Inspectorate, Water Management Unit (Scientists);
- Natural Heritage - Conservation Designations & Protection, Countryside and Coast, Regional Operations (Bellaghy Bawn, Castlearchdale Country Park, Coastal Zone Centre (Portrush), Peatlands Park) (Rangers).

Department of Finance and Personnel

The Department of Finance and Personnel and its Agencies are responsible for a wide variety of functions, many of which are carried out centrally on behalf of the Northern Ireland Civil Service as a whole. These include Central Finance Group, Corporate Human Resources, Departmental Solicitors' Office, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Central Procurement Directorate, Corporate Services Group; and Land and Property Services. The Department will consider work placements in the following areas:

- All administrative grades;
- Assistant Statistician;
- Accountants (on behalf of all NICS Departments);
- IT Professionals;
- Valuers;
- Mapping and Charting grades;
- Legal grades;
- Assistant Economists;
- Construction disciplines;
- Procurement professionals;
- Internal Audit.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

The Department's mission is to improve the health and social well being of the people of Northern Ireland. It endeavours to do so by supporting programmes of health promotion and education to encourage the community to adopt activities, behaviours and attitudes which will lead to better health and well-being and by ensuring the provision of appropriate health and social services. It aims to do this both in clinical settings, such as hospitals and GP's surgeries, and in the community, through nursing, social work and other professional services.

- DHSSPS have a range of health and social care related policy areas and will consider requests for work placements in suitable areas of the Department.

Department for Regional Development

The Department aims to improve the quality of life for everyone in Northern Ireland by securing transport and water infrastructure and shaping the regions' long-term strategic development. The Department will consider work placements in the following areas:

- All administrative grades;
- Graduate trainee civil engineer;
- PTO/HPTO Graphic Designer;
- PTO Civil Engineering Assistants;
- PTO Electrical Engineers;
- PTO Mechanical Fleet;
- TGI/TG2 (Technical Grades).

Department for Social Development

In December 1999 the Department for Social Development (DSD) was established as part of the Northern Ireland Executive. It's overall aim is to tackle disadvantage and promote individual and community well-being of the people of Northern Ireland through integrated social and economic action. It has strategic responsibility for urban regeneration, community and voluntary sector development, social legislation, housing, social security benefits, pensions and child support.

Around 7,500 people are employed by DSD, with the majority of staff working in the Social Security Agency and Child Maintenance Service. While the majority of staff are located in Belfast, the Department also has offices throughout Northern Ireland.

DSD Human Resources arrange placements for Work Placements, Internships and Programme-Led Apprenticeships. The list below provides the range of business areas where placements may be facilitated:

- (i) Social Security Agency:
 - Financial and Commercial Services
 - Working Age Services
 - Pensions, Disability and Corporate Services
 - Universal Credit
 - Organisational Change

- (ii) Resources and Social Policy Group:
 - Child Maintenance Service
 - Financial Management
 - Human Resources
 - Housing
 - Social Security Policy and Legislation

- (iii) Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group;
- (iv) Communication Policy and Strategic Support

Department of Justice

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is a new Northern Ireland Department which came into existence on 12 April 2010 and was established by the Department of Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2010. It has a range of devolved policing and justice functions set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010.

The role of the Department is to support the Minister of Justice to help keep the people of Northern Ireland safe.

In addition to its statutory functions, the department provides resources and a legislative framework for its agencies and arms length bodies (which together constitute most of the justice system in Northern Ireland). Together with these organisations the department is responsible for ensuring there is a fair and effective justice system in Northern Ireland and for increasing public confidence in that system.

The Department has four Agencies, the Northern Ireland Prison Service, Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, Forensic Science Agency and the Youth Justice Agency.

The Department also sponsors a number of Non-Departmental Public Bodies/bodies affiliated with policing and justice.

Work placement requests for the Department of Justice will be considered on a case by case basis.

The Public Prosecution Service

The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS) was established in June 2005 by the commencement of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. Following the devolution of policing and justice in April 2010, the Department moved from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and became a NI Civil Service non-ministerial department.

The role of the PPS is to decide whether or not to prosecute people for committing criminal offences. It makes decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the police in Northern Ireland, and also considers cases investigated by other statutory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs.

The Service is divided into four regions each headed by a Regional Prosecutor (Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions / Senior Civil Service Grade 5):

- Belfast;
- Eastern (Office in Lisburn);
- Northern (Offices in Ballymena and Foyle); and
- Southern and Western (Offices in Newry and Omagh)

There are also other business areas, each headed by an Assistant Director, which deal largely with specialised or complex types of work. These include:

- Central Prosecutions;
- Fraud and Departmental;
- Policy; and
- High Court, International and Restraint and Confiscation.

Finally, Corporate Services is responsible for a variety of support services including Finance, Human Resources, ICT and Business Improvement.

PPS currently offer a 5 day legal-based Work Experience programme based in the Belfast Region, designed for 6th form students. The programme focuses on the life of a case file and involves shadowing PPS staff who work in the Court environment.

Regionally based and non-legal based requests are also considered by the PPS on a case by case basis.

3. Indemnity Insurance

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

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

4. Types of work placements which may be facilitated

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

4.1 Applications made via Corporate HR

These opportunities are coordinated by Corporate HR on behalf of the 13 departments. The application form captures information regarding the individual applicant, allows them to outline their career plans / interests and which department they would be most interested in attending for placement. The application also provides the individual with the opportunity to outline any health conditions or special requirements that should be considered prior to placement.

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

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

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

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

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

The normal duration for work experience placements is one week.

(b) Students in further and higher education;

As at (a); however these may include applications to attend for placement on a 1 – 2 day basis over a number of weeks in line with the courses studied.

(c) Non-UK student opportunities.

These exchange placements are sponsored by the EU, primarily under the Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus programmes. Participants are typically graduates coming from a wide variety of vocational/educational backgrounds. They choose to do an

international placement in order to gain professional experience to develop their English language skills and to broaden their horizons.

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

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

(d) Work placements for people with a disability

The NICS has made a commitment to work with external disability organisations to develop structured work placement programmes to make sure that people with disabilities can gain real work opportunities and experience within the NICS to improve their opportunities of securing future employment.

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

This scheme will initially be limited to around 12 placements per year. Applications for these work placements are available online at www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk under the Work Experience tab. These will be submitted to CHR on behalf of individuals by a recognised disability organisation who are willing to provide appropriate support, guidance and assistance to the individual during their period of work placement and also to staff who will be directly working with the individual to ensure that the work placement is a positive and developmental experience for all concerned.

Before the individual commences any such work placement, a designated Employment Officer from the disability organisation must meet with local management in the business area identified for the work placement to discuss issues such as the work placement job role, reasonable adjustments, work pattern, any training required by staff in advance and the role of the Employment Officer during the work placement period. Further guidance for departments can be found at Annex 1.

As with all work experience/work placement opportunities, NICS Corporate or Departmental HR Units are not able to fund any external support provided to the individual, nor can a permanent job be offered as a result of an individual completing a period of work placement with a Department. Financial assistance may be available if the individual is being supported through the European Social Fund projects managed

by the Department for Employment and Learning - see Section 4.5 (c&d).

(e) Unpaid Internships arranged through Colleges or University;

An internship is a period of work experience arranged by a university in which the intern will be placed in a government Department. The period of the placement is likely to mirror a university semester and the placement will be in a Department which is providing a function directly related to the nature of the degree course being provided by the university and being undertaken by the student.

4.2 AccessNI Security checks for Work Placements

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

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

4.3 Applications made directly to Departments

(a) Paid Opportunities advertised by Departments

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

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

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

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

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

(c) Civil Servant Exchange Programmes

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

4.4 Ad hoc requests

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

4.5 Opportunities managed by the Department of Employment and Learning

More information and how to apply for the opportunities listed a-d below is available through <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/training.htm>, or by visiting the Careers Service in your local job centre.

(a) Programme Led Apprenticeships

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

(b) Steps to Work – including the Graduate Acceleration Programme (GAP)

‘Steps to Work’ is the main adult return to work programme for the unemployed and economically inactive in Northern Ireland, replacing the former New Deal programmes. The programme provides a broader range of back to work assistance than previously available under New Deal and is tailored to individual’s needs by identifying and tackling their barriers to work.

GAP is the Graduate Acceleration Programme run by Business in the Community; it is a work placement programme, lasting up to 26 weeks, in which graduates will complete a project or piece of work and study for a graduate certificate with either Queens or the University of Ulster. More information is available at www.gapni.com.

(c) Youth Employment Scheme

In recognition of the difficulties faced by many young people in trying to move into the labour market, the NI Executive are supporting the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) through the funding of a specific programme aimed at 18-24 year old unemployed people throughout Northern Ireland. The Youth Employment Scheme offers real work experience and skills development opportunities for young people to help them progress towards their employment goals. Specifically for young people with disability, DEL is aiming to secure 6 to 9 month skills development placements across the public sector. The NICS, in conjunction with the local disability sector, would like to support this initiative by identifying appropriate placements and agreeing the appropriate level of support required from the respective Employment Officers from the disability organisation. The host Department will be expected to provide both formal and informal development opportunities for the young person during their work placement, whilst the disability organisation will support both the individual and their colleagues.

(d) European Social Fund projects

The Department for Employment and Learning manages the European Social Fund (ESF) for Northern Ireland. A number of the local projects supported by ESF are delivered by specialist disability organisations and provide employability skills training, vocational qualifications, as well as work placement opportunities for people with a disability. Disability organisations who are delivering a local ESF project, and who have participants on their project who would be suited to the work placements being offered by the NICS, should submit an application to CHR on behalf of those individuals. A work placement cannot be guaranteed for all applicants and where an application is being considered, the procedures described at Section 4.1 (d) would apply in all instances.

5. Reporting of work placements

Corporate HR will be reporting annually on all work placement opportunities provided by NICS Departments. Departmental HRs should, therefore, maintain a log of all opportunities provided by their Department together with any information illustrating the benefits obtained by both the Department and those undertaking the placements.

Annex 1

Corporate HR Scheme – Guidance to Departments on facilitating placements for people with a disability

Applications

This scheme will initially be limited to around 12 placements per year.

All applications for placements for people with a disability will be submitted to Corporate HR through a recognised Disability Organisation who will allocate an Employment Officer to each potential placement. The application form will outline the basic placement and adjustment requirements deemed necessary by the individual and their Employment Officer. These should be considered on a case by case basis as each will depend on individual circumstances, the type of work placement requested, length and nature of the placement and the resources of the requested department, however, NICS Corporate or Departmental HRs will not be expected to fund any external support to be provided to the individual.

People with disabilities must have the same opportunities as others to benefit from work placements therefore Departments are encouraged to facilitate such placements where possible.

Pre-Placement meeting

The Employment Officer will be available to meet with the placing department to agree a plan which outlines the responsibilities of the placement provider (branch), the Organisation, Employment Officer and the individual.

This plan might cover aspects such as;

- The individual's aims for the placement, expectations and interests;
- Agreed role, attendance, duration of the placement and agree a basic work plan;
- Physical access to the workplace;
- Agreement of adjustments required and where the responsibility lies for providing necessary adjustments;
- Procedures for risk assessments to be completed for the placement;
- Procedures for responding to any difficulties encountered during the placement;
- Any other information which the Employment Officer may deem relevant to the proposed placement.

Security Checks

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

AccessNI checks for individuals attending work placement will be considered in line with normal work placement guidance.

During the placement

Individuals may be reluctant to disclose their disability and not all information about an individual's disability may be related to their proposed work placement. If this is the case, such information should only be shared with staff members who need to know in order to proceed with the placement.

The Employment Officer will act as support (if required) for the individual during the placement and staff who will be working directly with the individual.

Evaluation and Feedback

Corporate HR may ask Departments, Employment Officers and individuals to provide feedback on facilitated placements to improve and develop the process for future placements. This will also allow lessons learned from placements to be shared with departments who receive similar placement applications.