

# RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION: STATEMENT ON PROCEDURES

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## INTRODUCTION

This statement is to formalise the recruitment and selection process within the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) and is applicable to all appointments made other than internal transfer or deputising arrangements (NIO Circular 91/96). The EONI is committed to appointing on the basis of merit regardless of religious belief, political opinion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, having or not having a dependent, disability, race, ethnic origin, nationality, age, trades union membership or non-membership.

## RECRUITMENT PROCESS

### Attracting Candidates

When a vacancy arises consideration will be given to the necessity for the post, to a review of the job description, person specification and whether affirmative action is required. All vacancies will be notified to current staff in grades below that of the vacant post by e-mail and by post to those who are temporarily absent (including staff on career break).

- Open Competition

All permanent vacancies and temporary vacancies of more than twelve months duration, may be advertised externally in the Belfast Telegraph, Newsletter and Irish News. Occasionally, for cost effectiveness, the EONI may decide to use alternative advertising methods including advertising in the Training and Employment Agency.

- Internal Trawl

Temporary vacancies of up to twelve months' duration, unless specialist skills are required, may be filled by existing employees through internal competition. This procedure enables an opportunity to existing employees for career development. Casual staff are not entitled to apply for internal trawls. However, electoral assistants and canvassers who are employed on a casual basis, may be invited to apply for particular internal vacancies due to operational and administrative needs.

- Re-employment

During the short-term election and registration periods vacancies are filled internally initially through a re-appointment process of available experienced staff who have performed satisfactorily.

- Reserve Lists

All eligible persons who have applied through an open recruitment and selection process for temporary election and registration staff are subsequently retained on a reserve list. Consideration may also be given to retaining reserve candidates for one year for other external and internal recruitment competitions.

### **Processing Applications**

The Human Resources Section has responsibility for administering the recruitment process in relation to open competition and internal trawls. Following advertisement, the vacancy is assigned to the HR Assistant who will carry out all clerical and administrative duties relating to the vacancy.

However, it is the responsibility of the appropriate Area Electoral Office to process applications in respect of the *re-appointment* of election and registration staff, and *appointment* of staff from a reserve list.

#### Re-employment and Reserve Lists

During elections around 4,500 staff may be employed at approximately 1,550 polling stations and approximately 1,000 canvassers are employed during the registration period. In order to ensure the efficient running of the election and registration process, invitations for applications may be issued to a current list held by the EONI of election and registration staff, including reserve staff. Those staff who fail to return their form, within the specified closing date, will be removed from the staff list.

The re-employment of election and registration staff will not normally be subject to interview. The appointment of staff, including supervisors, will be made by the appropriate Area Electoral Officer. The basis for selection may include relevant experience, past performance, preferred choice, car availability and distance willing to travel. Care should be taken when selecting staff to ensure that a written note of the basis for selecting successful staff and rejecting others is made and placed on the appropriate file. Where a successful candidate has a disability for which adjustments may need to be considered, advice should be sought from the HR Officer.

Successful staff will be provided with an appointment letter, guidance and documentation which should be returned to the appropriate Area Electoral Officer. Short-falls in respect of the re-appointment and reserve process may be advertised through open competition. Electoral Assistants may be retained by Area Offices on a casual basis to meet the needs of the office.

### Open Competition/Internal Trawl

The EONI requests that all applicants complete an application form when applying for a vacancy and alternative forms of applications such as braille, disk or audio can be made available if required. A curriculum vitae will not be considered. Applicants may put their request for a form in writing, fax, e-mail, in person, by telephone or textphone. On occasion, a stamped addressed envelope may be required eg, election and registration staff.

Each application form is accompanied by a monitoring form and it is the responsibility of the Human Resources Officer to ensure the confidentiality in the processing of monitoring information.

No applications will be accepted after the specified closing date except in exceptional circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

- Shortlisting

All returned application forms are assigned a reference number. A folder is prepared for each member of the short-listing panel containing a copy of all application forms, the job description and person specification together with shortlisting sheet. Original application forms are retained by the HR Section. The panel should meet to discuss and draw up the shortlist and the Chair of the panel should complete a proforma decision sheet identifying any additional selection techniques to be used and interview dates. This form should be returned with all signed shortlisting papers.

In some cases, depending on the number of applications received and work pressure, the HR Section may be required to carry out a preliminary sift of candidates who meet the essential criteria.

- Selection Panel (see Appendix 1)

The final list of candidates to be interviewed will be determined by a selection panel, which will normally consist of three or more persons one of whom will normally be a Human Resources representative. All panel members will have undergone training in recruitment and selection methods and in equality legislation and its implications. Panels will be comprised of representatives of both the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities and of both sexes. The Chair of the panel should be at least two grades above that of the vacancy. Any panel member who feels that their knowledge of a candidate would seriously compromise their objectivity must withdraw.

- Selection Tests

There may be some elements of the selection criteria that are difficult to test at interview. Consideration may therefore be given to using job-related selection tests or asking candidates to give presentations as part of the selection process. All candidates will be given the same written information

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<sup>1</sup> Such circumstances might include, for example, a postal strike.

as to how long the test will take, the topic area and any preparation in advance.

- Interview

In advance of the interview, folders are again prepared for the panel. These will contain the application forms of the short-listed candidates only, job description, and a timetable of attendees.

Assessment papers and questions (agreed by the Panel) are prepared by the HR Section and provided with the interview folders. Each panel member should record (without consultation with other panel members) a separate score against each question for each interviewee. The Chair should complete the Panel Summary Sheet which should be returned with all signed assessment papers. The decision of the selection panel is final.

- Post-Interview

Once the panel has recommended the successful candidate a verbal offer by telephone may be made (usually by the HR Officer). This is followed by a formal written provisional offer subject to a number of pre-employment enquiries.

In all recruitment exercises, consideration will be given to the appointment of reserve candidates in rank order, should a vacancy be confirmed for a similar post at the same grade within twelve months of the date of the panel decision. A reserve list may also be retained in relation to open competitions for temporary election and registration staff. In instances where there is no appointment, or no applications, the Chief Electoral Officer shall then determine the appropriate action to be taken.

Requests for feedback should be made in writing to the HR Officer, who will consider a written response in the first instance. Where further clarification is sought the appropriate selection panel will consider the response which should be provided by the Chair. Copy correspondence or documentation should be sent to the HR Officer for the recruitment file.

## **Appointment Process**

Pre-employment Enquiries include (open competition only):

- References
- Health Declarations
- Security Checks (where necessary)
- Birth Certificate
- Work Permit (if appropriate)

In addition to the above the HR Officer will also request evidence of the successful candidate's qualifications and a formal offer will not be made until all pre-employment enquiries are complete.

External appointees will normally commence at the minimum point of the scale. However, it may necessary to recognise the value of previous experience or qualifications and appointees may be paid above the minimum point. Internal candidates who have been in post for at least one year and are successful in obtaining appointments, whether in internal or open competitions, will be entitled to payment on promotion in accordance with Civil Service Promotion Entry Point rules. Alternatively, successful internal candidates, not in a post for one year, will normally be appointed to the minimum of the new scale or the point on the new scale which is immediately above their pay at the lower grade, whichever is the higher.

### **CRIMINAL RECORDS**

The EONI will not discriminate unfairly against applicants who possess a criminal record and will not necessarily bar an application for appointment due to an unspent conviction. The nature of the conviction and its relevance to the post will need to be considered.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The Chief Electoral Officer must ensure public confidence and integrity and therefore membership of any political party or group is considered to be incompatible with employment in the EONI.

### **RETENTION OF RECORDS**

All original papers relation to a recruitment exercise will be retained for a period of three years after the date the candidate is offered appointment. Duplicate application forms which have been used by the selection panel may be shredded or disposed of as confidential waste.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All documentation relating to recruitment exercises will be treated with the strictest confidence. Papers may be disclosed to assist with the resolution of any complaint.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

**CEO - Electoral Office for NI**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

**Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance**

## APPENDIX 1

### Recommended Composition of Selection Panels

Selection panels should normally comprise at least three or more persons, one of whom will normally be a Human Resources representative:

<b>POST</b>	<b>PANEL</b>
<b>Grade A</b>	<b>Chief Electoral Officer; Independent Panel Members/Advisers</b>
<b>Grade B1</b>	<b>Chief Electoral Officer; Grade A (Line Manager); Operations Manager or Grade A from another Dept</b>
<b>Grade B2</b>	<b>Grade A; Grade B1 (Line Manager); Head of Corporate Services or Grade B1 from another Dept</b>
<b>Grade C</b>	<b>Grade B1; Grade B2 (Line Manager); Human Resources Officer or Grade B2 from another Dept</b>
<b>Administrative Officers/ Administrative Assistants</b>	<b>Grade B2; Grade C (Line Manager); Human Resources Officer or Grade C from another Dept</b>
<b>Electoral Assistants/ Canvassers</b>	<b>Grade C; AO (Area Office); Human Resources Assistant or AO from another Dept/Area Office.</b>

The Chair of the Panel will always be the most senior person.

Each panel should be representative of both gender and community background.