

PUBLICATION SCHEME

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

REVISED DECEMBER 2011

Introduction

Welcome to the Publication Scheme of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland.

Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland are responsible for ensuring that appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

This Publication Scheme is a guide to the information the Commissioners publish or intend to make routinely available to the public.

Role and Status of the Civil Service Commissioners

Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland were first appointed in 1923. Commissioners are appointed on merit following public advertisement and by fair and open competition. All Commissioners are independent of the NICS and this is fundamental to their role as regulators. There are currently six Commissioners who bring to the job wide experience from different backgrounds, careers and interests.

The Northern Ireland Commissioners derive their responsibilities and authority from prerogative Orders in Council made by the Secretary of State. The Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999 gives the Commissioners specific responsibility for maintaining the Merit Principle.

The Commissioners' responsibilities are to:

- maintain the fundamental principle that selection for appointment to the NICS is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, including the approval of appointments through open competition to the most senior levels in the NICS;
- publish and maintain a Recruitment Code setting out the essential principles and procedures on which recruitment to the NICS must be based;
- prescribe certain exceptions to appointment on merit;
- audit recruitment policies and practices followed by departments and agencies in making appointments to the NICS; and
- require departments and agencies to publish information about their recruitment activity.

Under the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999, the Commissioners may also consider and determine appeals made to them under the NICS Code of Ethics.

The Commissioners have a website (www.nicscommissioners.org) explaining their role and presenting key documents.

Purpose of this Publication Scheme

This Publication Scheme responds to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which requires all public bodies to adopt and maintain a scheme for the proactive publication of information. Such schemes are intended to ensure that information is made available to the public without the need for a specific request. Information which would be exempt under Part II of the Act, for example because it is sensitive or confidential, is not included in our Scheme. Such information may be edited out of documents published under the Scheme.

Our aim in developing this Publication Scheme is to set out:

- the classes of information we publish or intend to make available;
- how this information can be accessed; and
- whether the information will be available free of charge or on payment.

Responsibility for administering this Scheme rests with Mrs Heather Stevens, Secretary to the Civil Service Commissioners, and Mrs Joanne Dowling, Deputy Secretary, who can be contacted by telephone on 028 9054 9487 and 028 9054 9425, respectively.

For more detailed enquiries about this Publication Scheme, please contact Mr Gareth Wright by telephone on 028 9054 9153 or e-mail to gareth.wright@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk
Contact details for the Commissioners' Secretariat are as follows:

Address: Office of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland,
5th Floor, Windsor House
Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT 2 7SR

Telephone: 028 9054 9151

Fax: 028 9054 9414

Classes of Information and Description

1. The role, history and biographical details of the NI Civil Service Commissioners
2. Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999
3. Civil Service Commissioners (NI) (Amendment) Order 2003
4. Commissioners' General Regulations 1999
5. Commissioners' General Regulations 2005
6. Commissioners' General Regulations 2007
7. Recruitment Code (2001)
8. Revised Recruitment Code (2005)
9. Summary minutes of Commissioners' business meetings, as from January 2011
10. Summary of appointments to the NICS made by way of an exception to the Merit Principle
11. The number of senior appointments to the NICS approved by Commissioners
12. Annual summary of Commissioners' Audit reports, examining key aspects of NICS recruitment policies and practices
13. The text of the NICS Code of Ethics and Commissioners' Guidance for appellant leaflet
14. Summary account of appeals considered by Commissioners under the NICS Code of Ethics
15. Commissioners' Equality Scheme
16. Commissioners' Equality Scheme Annual Progress Report
17. Commissioners' Five Year Review of the Equality Scheme
18. Commissioners' Disability Action Plan
19. Commissioners' Annual Reports (Reports from 1998/99 to date are available from the website)
20. Business Plan for the current year
21. Code of Practice
22. Register of Interests for the current year

23. News up-dates published on website, as appropriate

24. Contact details for the Secretariat

Charges and How to Obtain the Information

The information in this Scheme is available on the Commissioners' website. For those without Internet access, or who require a hard copy, a single printout or bound copy of any of the documents referred to in the Scheme, these can be obtained free of charge by post or by contacting the Secretariat as outlined above.

When requesting information please include the following details:

- your name and address;
- the information or documents you would like to access; and
- the way you would like the information sent to you i.e. hard-copy or e-mail

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Further information on Crown copyright can be found at:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/our-services/crown-copyright.htm>

Complaints Procedure

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the response received from a member of the Secretariat for information under this Scheme, he / she may seek an internal review of that decision. A member of staff who was not involved with the original request will undertake the review. An internal review should normally be completed before an appeal may be made to the Information Commissioner. A request for an internal review of a decision not to disclose information should be made to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary who will respond within 20 working days.

If an applicant remains dissatisfied, he / she can seek an independent review by the Information Commissioner. Requests for a review by the Information Commissioner should be made writing direct to:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House

Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 525 510

Feedback

The Secretariat intends to review this Publication Scheme on an annual basis and would value your assistance in identifying ways in which you consider it might be improved. Any questions or comments about this Scheme, or its operation, should be forwarded to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary.