

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – OCSCNI

QUESTION	ANSWER
♦ What does this organisation do?	Commissioners' role is set out in legislation – our job is to make sure that all external appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition – ie the best person for the job gets the job. We also can hear concerns from civil servants if they feel that there has been a breach of the Civil Service Code of Ethics .
♦ Can I easily find a clear explanation of what this organisation is doing?	Yes – there is clear information on our website and our Annual Report summarises what we have done each year.
♦ Can I easily find out about the quality of service provided to the public?	We do not provide a direct service to the public. However, as regulators, we do provide an overall assurance to the public that recruitment is carried out on the basis of merit.
♦ What is being done to improve services?	Our audit function in relation to NICS Departments has recently been reviewed and revised so that we can conduct our audit function more effectively.
♦ Can I easily find out about the organisation's funding and how it spends its money?	Our annual budget is set out in our Annual Report .
♦ Who is in charge of the organisation?	The legislation is clear that Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on an individual basis. Our documentation and website contains their details and also that of the Chairperson who represents all Commissioners. We are completely independent of government. The team of staff who support Commissioners are all civil servants led by a part-time Senior Civil Servant, known as the Secretary to the Commissioners.

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♦ How are they elected or appointed?	Commissioners are appointed by Royal Warrant following open competition. They are now appointed for one five year term (previously for a maximum of two three- year terms).
♦ At the top of the organisation, who is responsible for what?	We have a 'Framework Document' which clearly sets out the responsibilities of the Chairperson and the Secretary.
♦ According to the organisation, what values guide its work?	The values guiding the work are those set out in the Commissioners Code of Practice which enshrines the seven principles of public life.
♦ Does it follow these values in practice?	These values are inherently built into Commissioners' role as guardians of the Merit Principle.
♦ What standards of behaviour should I expect?	That you will be treated with dignity and respect and that your query will be dealt with efficiently and fairly. If you have a complaint about how you have been treated by the Office, we have a process in place for the handling of complaints .
♦ Do the senior people in the organisation put these standards of behaviour into practice?	Yes, as evidenced by their dealings with stakeholders and all those in contact with the office.
♦ Do they put into practice the 'Nolan' principles for people in public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership)?	Yes, as evidenced by their dealings with stakeholders and all those in contact with the office.
♦ Who is responsible for what kinds of decisions in the organisation?	Commissioners, led by the Chairperson are responsible for determining the strategic direction of the organisation and for approving the main policies developed. The Secretary is responsible for the day to day management of the Office and is responsible to the Northern Ireland Office for the Organisation's budget.

QUESTION	ANSWER
♦ Can I easily find out what decisions have been taken and the reasons for them?	Our strategic plan and annual business plan (updated quarterly) show the work we do and is available on our website. Our audit reports are also available. All other information available to the public is set out in our Publication Scheme which is updated annually.
♦ Are the decisions based on up-to-date and complete information and good advice?	Yes – we receive validated recruitment data from NISRA. We also obtain legal advice as necessary.
♦ Does the organisation publish a clear annual statement on the effectiveness of its risk management system?	No but we do identify and manage risk as required by the Northern Ireland Office which provides our funding.
♦ Does the organisation publish a clear annual account of how it makes sure that its policies are put into practice?	Yes an Annual Report is published on the website every year (by September) clearly setting out the year's achievements.
♦ How does the organisation encourage people to get involved in running it?	Not applicable – the Northern Ireland Office determines the number of Commissioners and advertises at the appropriate time.
♦ What support does it provide for people who do get involved?	Training to chair recruitment panels together with a thorough one to one induction is provided to all new Commissioners. Newly appointed staff are also given appropriate induction training and additional training needs are assessed annually.
♦ How does the organisation make sure that all those running the organisation are doing a good job?	The Commissioner appraisal process builds in 360 degree feedback for the Chairperson. Commissioners have an annual appraisal with the Chairperson. Staff are appraised internally as part of standard NICS/Northern Ireland Office line management policy and procedure.
♦ Can I easily get information to answer all these questions?	All information except that which has been classified as 'protected' is available on our website.

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♦ Are there opportunities for me and other people to make our views known?	There is a Contact Us facility on our website. NICS refers to the role of Commissioners in all recruitment documentation and provide contact details.
♦ Does the organisation publish an annual report containing its accounts for the year? Are copies freely available? Is the content informative?	Our Annual Report is freely available to download from our website.
♦ How do I find out what decisions were taken as a result of my and others' opinions being asked for?	Any consultations are published on our website together with our consultation response document which will set out the actions we have taken as a result of consultation.
♦ Are there opportunities to question the people in charge about their plans and decisions?	There is a Contact Us facility on our website. NICS refer to the role of Commissioners in all recruitment documentation and provide contact details.
♦ Can I easily find out how to complain and who to contact with suggestions for changes?	There is a Contact Us facility on our website. NICS refer to the role of Commissioners in all recruitment documentation and provide contact details. We also have a Handling Comments, Enquiries and Complaints Process .