

**Candidate
Information
Booklet**

IRC122759

**Marine Fisheries Scientist
Senior Scientific Officer**

(Fixed term – 36 months)

**Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Northern Ireland (AFBI)**

**Completed Application Forms
must be returned to HRConnect
no later than 12 noon (UK time)
on
Friday, 24 February 2012**

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (AFBI)

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

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INTRODUCTION

AFBI carries out annual stock assessments on the commercially exploited fish species in the Irish Sea, in order to provide management advice to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and to fulfil reporting requirements of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the European Commission.

A central requirement for this post is to ensure that AFBI meets its policy customer's objective to ensure sustainable marine fisheries resource management in the Irish Sea and surrounding areas, but also to monitor the results of fisheries policies. Stock assessments are central to be able to provide this service and specialist advice to policy customers on a local, national and international level. Fisheries stock assessment science requires a high level of experience in the use of quantitative analytical methods used in marine science.

The post holder will be responsible for the management of fisheries data collection and provide analytical and advisory support on the assessment of marine fish stocks. The post holder will also be expected to be an active scientist in the field of marine fisheries and carry out research into the abundance, biology, population structure and dynamics of marine fish stocks in waters off Northern Ireland.

AFBI BACKGROUND

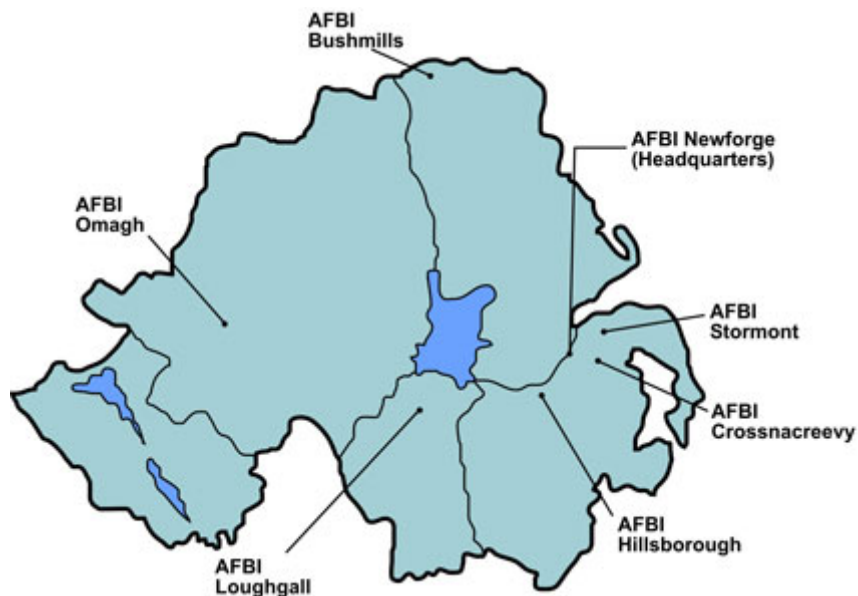
AFBI, the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, is one of the world's leading providers of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental and commercial organisations.

AFBI was established on 1 April 2006 as a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). It is responsible mainly for the provision of statutory and scientific programmes in the areas of agri-food, animal and plant health, fisheries and the environment, providing access to specialist expertise and providing facilities to Industry and Public Sector bodies for contracted scientific services. AFBI has a staff complement of approx. 800 people, with a budget of approximately £50million across its 7 specialised sites throughout Northern Ireland.

Location

AFBI is based at seven sites across the province, with its Headquarters at Newforge Lane, Belfast.

The AFBI sites are located at Newforge Lane, (Belfast), Crossnacreevy, Hillsborough, Stoney Road (Stormont), Loughgall, Bushmills and Omagh.



AFESD – BACKGROUND

The Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences Division (AFESD) is one of three primary research Divisions within AFBI. The others are Applied Plant Science and Biometrics Division and Veterinary Sciences Division. AFESD consists of five Branches, namely Fisheries & Aquatic Ecosystems Branch, Food Chemistry Branch, Food Microbiology Branch, Agri-Environment Branch and the Agriculture Branch.

The Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch conducts research and development, monitoring and technology transfer in support of sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources, focusing particularly on the needs of Northern Ireland. It has close links with Queen's University of Belfast and researchers in other UK and international universities and institutes. Currently, approximately 47 AFBI staff, together with contract staff and postgraduate students are based at FAEB.

FAEB is particularly well resourced, a 53m state of the art marine research vessel, the *R. V. Corystes*, underpinning the marine science programme.

FAEB conducts science programmes across several core areas:

1. Marine fisheries stock assessment, combining outputs from both fishery-dependent and fishery-independent programmes.
2. Coastal zone science, including marine resource assessment and modelling of carrying capacity of Northern Ireland's sea loughs.
3. Physical and biological oceanography and marine environmental monitoring, in support of the above.
4. Freshwater fisheries stock assessment and development of systems for the sustainable management of the fishery resource.

Individually and in combination, these core areas aim to sustain multi-disciplinary research programmes that merit national and international recognition.

The post holder will work within the marine fisheries group at AFBI, which carries out marine fisheries stock assessments. The post will require regular working with scientists from other European fishery laboratories, fishery customers, the fishing industry and international science organisations such as ICES.

JOB DESCRIPTION

There is currently one fixed term full-time position to be filled. A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any further vacancies which may arise.

The post-holder will initially be appointed on a fixed-term contract of 36 months, which may be extended subject to business needs. The successful candidate will be an employee of AFBI.

If there is a continuing business need, the fixed term contract may be converted to a permanent appointment on the completion of the initial 36 month period or any extension. This would be subject to satisfactory performance, attendance and availability of work. Employment in excess of 1 year will be subject to the employee satisfying health requirements.

Salary

The salary for the post will be within the range £34,163 - £38,893, within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will normally be at the minimum of the scale except for existing AFBI staff for whom starting salary may be determined by either promotion or re-grading terms if these are more favourable.

Consideration may be given to starting at a higher point on the salary scale for applicants with additional relevant experience and/or qualifications. The relevance and extent of the additional experience will be determined by AFBI at the time of offer of appointment.

Location

The successful candidate will normally be based at AFBI Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX. They may also be expected to work at other AFBI sites in Northern Ireland as required.

Travel

The post may entail some travel throughout the UK, Ireland and internationally and for this reason the successful applicant will require access to a form of transport that will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 after five years satisfactory service.

Working Hours

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours. On occasions the duties may include some evening and weekend working. AFBF operates a flexi working system.

Medical

The post holder will be required to participate in research surveys on board AFBF's marine research vessel and from time to time on other vessels and therefore must be able to pass an ENG1 seagoing medical exam and complete an appropriate sea survival course.

Further Information

Further information about the post may be obtained from Philip White, Telephone 028 90 255060.

If you have any queries about the competition process you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330, or email: recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The post holder will report to a Principal Scientific Officer and the main duties of the post will be:

1. To conduct scientific research and analyses for fish stock assessments

The post holder will be a project leader, responsible for projects to support the sustainable management of marine fishery resources in Northern Ireland. Within this post there is a core responsibility for the assessment of commercially exploited marine fish stocks. In support of this, the post holder will participate in and oversee the coordination, collation and analysis of fishery-independent data and fishery-dependent data, obtained from port sampling, research vessel surveys and samples taken on board fishing vessels. The successful applicant will be expected to act as a scientist-in-charge of research surveys of up to 3 weeks duration.

The post holder may also propose, after discussions with his/her line manager, and other scientists, supporting research projects that address the biology, population structure and dynamics of marine fish stocks in waters off Northern Ireland, in support of development and implementation of local, national and EU fishery management policy.

The post holder will supervise and participate in these projects and ensure that conclusions arising are communicated to appropriate stakeholders. The post holder will also be expected to prepare reports arising from the projects and publish findings in scientific journals.

2. To deliver specialist advice

The post holder will provide advisory support on the assessment of marine fish stocks and provide informed opinion to AFBI, DARD and other customers on issues relating to the sustainable management of marine fish resources and the implications of policies. When required, the post holder will represent AFBI on appropriate scientific and technical committees within Ireland, UK and the EU. Such representation should enhance his/her own and the Institute's reputation.

3. To manage staff and resources

The post holder will manage a small group of technical support staff to maximise their efficiency and to facilitate their personal and professional development. The post holder will also be responsible for the management of delegated resources.

4. To undertake continuous professional development

The post holder must maintain an up to date knowledge and awareness of developments in marine fisheries science. In addition, the post holder should be prepared to attend and participate in scientific conferences and workshops. He/she should also utilise training courses to enhance his/her personal development and the organisation's scientific reputation.

5. To fulfil other duties

The post holder will be required to fulfil any other duties and responsibilities as determined by management that fall within the ambit of the post. The job description is not intended to be rigid and inflexible, but should be regarded as working guidelines within which the post will work.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications have:

1. A degree in a biological science, mathematics, statistics or appropriate IT subject (at least 2:2); and
2. At least 4 years research experience, gained within the past 8 years, on some aspect of fisheries science, including participation in field surveys and data gathering interpretation of data and presentation of reports. This research period shall include any period spent in gaining a post-graduate qualification that involved fisheries research work; and
3. At least 1 years experience, gained within the past 4 years, of quantitative analytical methods used in fisheries science. Experience of applying numerical modelling / data analysis to biological systems using high level programming skills (e.g. R, Visual Basic, FORTRAN, C) is essential; and
4. Successful delivery of at least one paper in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Candidates must provide evidence of this by submitting a fully cited bibliography of all refereed publications. If necessary, this bibliography can be sent as a separate attachment, either electronically to HRConnect recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net including the Competition Reference Number, Competition Title and Candidate Name or by hard copy; and

5. Access to a form of transport which will permit the candidate to meet the requirements of the post in full.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

Relevant or equivalent qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc so that a well-informed decision can be made.

SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

In addition applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criteria will be used:

1. At least one year's experience of fisheries stock assessment.

Please note:

- You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required.
- It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.
- AFBI will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.
- If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.
- ONLY the details provided by you in your application form (the employment history and eligibility criteria) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post.
- AFBI may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.
- Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk

PERSON SPECIFICATION

CORE COMPETENCES

The Core Competence Framework, which is grade specific, describes what people need to do in order to be effective at work. It is not enough to just have the knowledge and skills to do our jobs. Competence is about what people actually do, it is about how you apply or demonstrate the knowledge and skills whilst carrying out your tasks. Demonstrated competence is observable and measurable.

Senior Scientific Officer is analogous to Deputy Principal in the NICS. Further information on the Core Competences for this grade can be accessed through www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk.

INTERVIEW CRITERIA

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview:

Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Develops and updates professional/specialist/technical knowledge and skills to meet objectives and improve performance; demonstrates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current developments in fisheries science and stock assessment, with particular reference to sustainable management.
- Applies knowledge and skills in the collection, collation, manipulation, analysis and interpretation of scientific data.
- Applies knowledge and skills in writing scientific and technical reports.
(Marks available: 40 with a minimum standard of 25 marks required)

Policy / Strategy

- Assists with the development, implementation and evaluation of organisational plans and policies. Contributes to drawing up strategy. Sets objectives to ensure achievement of strategies. Analyses past performance and assesses current performance against agreed strategies and plans, recommends and makes improvements having considered the long-term implications.
(Marks available: 10)

Services

- Manages operations so that they are focused on customer requirements, ensures the quality of research and accepts the need for continuous improvement.
(Marks available: 10)

Resources

- Identifies the resources that are required to deliver research and demonstrates the ability to bid successfully for these resources. Efficiently manages resources and makes recommendations as to how they can be best used in the future.

(Marks available: 10)

People

- Committed to developing the knowledge and skill base of colleagues to ensure the best possible research performance. Allocates work, agrees objectives and sets out plans. Develops and maintains effective working relationships with the Line Manager, team members and other colleagues. Minimises the potential for conflict and deals effectively with conflicts as they arise. Makes a significant contribution to selecting the people needed to carry out work activities.

(Marks available: 10)

Information and Communication

- Ensures informed communication by seeking, organising and evaluating information that meets the needs of customers. Makes informed decisions whilst keeping others advised, informed and involved. Communicates in a way that is clear concise, timely and relevant to the audience.

(Marks available: 10)

Programme and Project Management

- Contribute to the development and progression of business cases for programmes and projects that demonstrate benefit to the organisation and support in the achievement of its strategic objectives.
- Supports the management and evaluation of projects, ensuring project management systems are in place.

(Marks available: 10)

Candidates will be considered successful at interview only where they have reached the required minimum standard of 25 marks for Professional Knowledge and Skills and an overall pass mark of 60.

COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWS

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly.

INTERVIEWS

It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI, Newforge Lane, Belfast during week commencing 16 April 2012.

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

A competence-based interview does however require you to:

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfill the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:

- Situation – briefly outline the situation;
- Task – what was your objective, what were you trying to achieve;
- Action – what did you actually do, what was your unique contribution;
- Result – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competences. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Merit Principle

Appointments to AFBI are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Making your application

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility/shortlisting criteria.

Guidance for Applicants

- The space available on the application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat application forms.
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline;
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your branch or your job.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write "I" statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be checked out at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your *unique* role the panel are interested in, not that of your team or division.

Application Form Submission

- Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application.
- **All** parts of the application form **must** be completed by the applicant before this application can be considered. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.
- All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted. Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1st class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is also the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to

HRConnect. HRConnect will not accept any application where they are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.

- Only the employment history, eligibility and shortlisting sections will be made available to the panel.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.
- When completing the online application, your information is saved as you move through the pages. You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button. Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- Please note - the session timeout for the online application is 40 minutes, if you do not save or change page within this time you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.
- Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this will result in disqualification.

Changes in personal circumstances

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances.

Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

Further appointments from this competition

Where a further position in AFBI is identified which is considered broadly similar to that outlined in this candidate information booklet, consideration will be given to filling the position from this competition. The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to one year.

Disability Requirements

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form

Please note, this form is regarded as part of your application and failure to complete and return it will result in disqualification.

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement to which AFBI adheres please refer to page 21.

As Roman Catholics are currently known to be under represented in this grade, applications from the Roman Catholic section of the community would be particularly welcome.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit

AFBI IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

Assessment Information

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility shortlisting criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

Employment Requirements

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.

Entry to the United Kingdom is controlled under the Immigration Act 1971. Everyone who does not have the right of abode is subject to immigration control. You should check whether there are any restrictions on your stay or your freedom to take or change employment before you apply for a post. If you are invited to interview we will ask you to provide documentation confirming that you are entitled to work in the UK, under the terms of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

Advice on entitlement to work may be obtained from the Home Office website, www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Nationality Requirements

There are no nationality requirements for AFBI posts.

Vetting Procedures

1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this posts in the AFBI the level of vetting is a Baseline Standard. For this check you will be required to provide the following:

- a) Your passport OR
- b) A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) AND your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).
- c) Other acceptable documents are listed on www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.
- d) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is;

Basic Disclosure Certificate

You should not put off applying for a post because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner, and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made.

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is: <http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>. Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. This can be downloaded from the AccessNI website. Guidance notes of the completion of the form are also included on the website. Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment. Failure to complete the above form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

Order of Merit

The selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment. The selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. The order of merit is valid for one year.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Pensions:

New entrants who join the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme, the (PCSPS (NI)) – NUVOS arrangement. Pension is an important part of the reward package for civil servants and, on average, employers pay more than 18% of pay towards pension costs. As well as providing you with an easy and secure way to help you provide for your retirement, the PCSPS (NI) also provides dependants and ill health benefits.

We offer all new employees the choice of either:

- Nuvos - a high quality, index-linked defined benefit pension scheme that currently has a 3.5% member contribution rate. Your employing Department also makes contributions; or
- Partnership in a stakeholder type money purchase arrangement with an employer contribution. The employer basic contribution is based on your age, and this is paid regardless of whether you choose to contribute. You do not have to contribute if you do not wish to, but if you do your employing Department will match your contributions up to an additional 3% of pay. Your employing Department will also pay a further contribution, of 0.8% of pay, to the PCSPS (NI) to cover you for Death in Service benefits.

If you previously worked for an employer covered by the PCSPS (NI) arrangements, different conditions may apply. If you already have a PCSPS (NI) pension in payment, you should be aware that the pension scheme rules prevent members from receiving more by way of pay and pension combined on re-employment than they were earning as salary before they retired. This is called “abatement”. If you want to know more about how this may affect you, please contact Civil Service Pensions at:

Waterside House,
75 Duke Street,
Londonderry,
BT47 6FP;
Tel: 028 7131 9000;
Email: cspensions.cpg@dfpni.gov.uk

If you left the NICS with an early retirement, severance or redundancy package then your existing benefits may be affected if you accept this post. If your service was enhanced (increased) when you left then you will not be able to build up benefits in the defined benefit scheme during the period that is covered by the enhancement included in your existing benefits. If you opt to join the Partnership arrangement, employer contributions will not be payable for this enhancement period but you will be able to contribute if you wish. If you are receiving a pension or annual compensation payment then this may be reduced during your re-employment. If you received a top-up payment under the early severance temporary arrangements then your pay may be reduced during your

re-employment. If you want to know more about this, please contact Civil Service Pensions.

You may be able to transfer a pension with your current or a previous employer into the PCSPS (NI). Information on Transfers In can be found in the New Entrant Pack which you should receive on taking up employment.

Feedback

AFBI is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair. 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.

THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Completed application forms should be sent to the HRConnect Recruitment Team:

HRConnect
PO Box 1089
2nd Floor
The Metro Building
6-9 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 9EW

NOTE: Late applications or applications received by fax or email will not be accepted.

Contact details:

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect at the address above or by;

Email: Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net
Tel: 0800 1 300 330
Fax: 028 9024 1665

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Policy Statement

The Northern Ireland Civil Service Equal Opportunities Policy statement to which AFBI adheres is set out below.

“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.”

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Equality monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information that is relevant to and necessary for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between different categories of persons. This section sets out what information is collected, the reasons for doing so and what it is used for.

You should note that the Monitoring Form is regarded as part of your application and failure to fully complete and return it will result in disqualification. The Monitoring Form will be processed separately and neither the form nor the details contained in it will be available to those considering your application.

Legislative Context

This section explains the reasons for gathering this information by setting out the legislative background.

Gender

The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the grounds of his or her sex. Information on gender is also necessary to enable the completion of the annual statutory monitoring return, as required by the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally.

Age

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 make it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on grounds of age. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different age.

Community Background

The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 outlaws discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. The information requested in the Community Background section of the monitoring form is required in connection with the requirements of the above Order and to enable the completion of the annual statutory monitoring return to the Equality Commission for NI.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief and political opinion. Following guidance issued in July 2007 by the Equality Commission for NI the NICS has decided to use “community background” information as a proxy for political opinion.

Disability

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) provides protection for disabled persons against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The DDA defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This definition is interpreted as follows:-

Physical Impairment: this includes, for instance, a weakening of part of the body (eyes, ears, limbs, internal organs etc) caused through illness by accident or from birth. Examples would be blindness, deafness, paralysis of a leg or heart disease.

Mental Impairment: this includes mental ill health and what is commonly known as learning disability.

Substantial: put simply, this means the effect of the physical or mental impairment on ability to carry out normal day to day activities is more than minor or trivial. It does not have to be a severe effect.

Long-term adverse effect: the effect has to have lasted or be likely to last overall for at least 12 months and the effect must be a detrimental one. A person with a life expectancy of less than 12 months is of course covered if the effect is likely to last for the whole of that time.

A normal day to day activity: this is something which is carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis such as washing, eating, catching a bus or turning on a television. It does not mean something so individual as playing a musical instrument to a professional standard or doing everything involved in a particular job.

What sort of effect must there be?

The person must be affected in at least one of the respects listed in the DDA: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech; hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or perception of risk of physical danger.

What happens if the effects are reduced by medication or other treatment?

Broadly speaking, the effects that matter are those that would be present if there was no medication or treatment taking place. The exception is people who wear spectacles or contact lenses when what matters is the effect that remain while the spectacles or contact lenses are being used.

Are there any types of condition covered by special provisions in the DDA?

Yes, because some people with particular conditions might not otherwise be counted as disabled. These are provisions covering:

Recurring or fluctuating conditions such as arthritis, where the effects can sometimes be less than substantial, which are treated as continuing to have a substantial adverse effect so long as that effect is likely to recur;

Conditions which progressively deteriorate, such as motor neuron disease, which count as having a substantial effect from the first time they have any effect at all on ability to carry out normal day to day activities even if it is not substantial, so long as there is eventually likely to be a substantial adverse effect; and

People with cancer, HIV, or multiple sclerosis are deemed to be disabled people from the point of diagnosis, regardless of whether or not they have any symptoms.

Are any conditions not covered?

Yes, the following conditions specifically do not count as impairments:

Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other substance (unless resulting from the substance being medically prescribed);

Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) unless it aggravates the effect of another condition;

Tendency to set fires, or steal, or physically or sexually abuse other persons;

Exhibitionism and voyeurism;

Severe disfigurements consisting of tattoos, non-medical body piercing or attachments to such piercing are not treated as having substantial adverse effects.

What if someone has recovered from a disability?

Much of the DDA also applies to people who have had a disability in the past (for example, someone who was disabled by mental ill health) but have now fully recovered. People who were registered disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (NI) 1945 both on 12 January 1995 and 2 December 1996 will be regarded as having had a disability in the past if they do not in any case fall within the definition of the DDA.

Race

The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial group.

Sexual Orientation

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) Order 2003 makes it unlawful for employers and others to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. In order to monitor the effectiveness of NICS policies information is gathered on sexual orientation. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different sexual orientation.

Marital Status & Dependants

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities in carrying out their functions in NI to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different marital status and between persons with dependants and persons without.

Use of Monitoring Information

Monitoring information is used to enable the NICS to assess the effectiveness of its EO policies and to determine the impact (if any) of various policies and procedures on different categories of staff. In addition to this internal focus community background and gender information on both staff and applicants is used to complete the annual statutory monitoring return to the Equality Commission.

Confidentiality of Monitoring Information

As with other forms of personal data, the obtaining, use, storage and disclosure of monitoring information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Monitoring information is held on computer and is protected by a high level of security. Access to this data is restricted to those NICS staff, employees of HRConnect and Trade Union officials whose duties make it necessary for them to have it. Misuse of monitoring information is viewed as a disciplinary offence.

The confidentiality of community background information is also protected through regulations made under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 (FETO). These make it a criminal offence, subject to specific exceptions, for an employer or employee to disclose information on the community background of an individual which has been obtained or used for the purposes of monitoring under FETO.

The release of an individual's monitoring information is permitted by legislation as part of prospective or actual proceedings under equality legislation, e.g. where another individual has made a complaint of alleged discrimination.

Many people from all backgrounds in Northern Ireland and beyond are interested in the profile of the NICS workforce and the candidates who apply for jobs. For this reason the NICS regularly publishes data in the form of statistical summaries, graphs etc. On occasions it may also be necessary to use monitoring information to answer questions from Assembly Members, MPs and MEPs or to respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act. In all cases where information is made public, the format of presentation will be such that it will not be possible to identify any individual's information.