



## **Guide for Applicants**

# **Appointment of Economist – 51 Week Student Placement 2021/22 Network Regulation**

### **Key Dates for Applicants**

**Closing Date:** 2pm on 15 March 2021

**Interview Date:** Week commencing 29 March 2021

## **The Utility Regulator**

The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the Utility Regulator) is responsible for regulating the electricity and gas industries, and water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland, to promote the short and long-term interests of consumers.

We are a non-ministerial government department and are governed by a Board of Directors.

We make sure the utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within Ministerial policies as set out in our statutory duties. The Utility Regulator is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through financial and annual reporting obligations.

## **Electricity Regulation**

The main statutory framework for our work in electricity is set out in the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, the Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 and the Electricity (Single Wholesale Market) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.

Our principal objective is to protect consumers' interests, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition, and we have a series of further objectives relating to universal service, financeability, sustainability and vulnerable customers.

Northern Ireland has around 805,000 electricity consumers, with load split around 40% / 60% between domestic and non-domestic customers. This electricity is generated by three main power stations, plus a large number of smaller and renewable stations. Significant volumes are imported from Scotland through the 450MW Moyle interconnector, and there is a 500MW transmission line to the Republic of Ireland. Electricity generation in the island of Ireland is around 60% gas-fired, with peat, coal and wind also being significant fuels.

Northern Ireland belongs to the all-island Single Electricity Market (SEM). This is the only regional market in Europe with fully integrated arrangements for regulation, scheduling, and dispatch, as well as a high level of harmonisation in system operation and network tariff arrangements. The SEM is regulated by the SEM Committee which comprises of an independent member; a deputy independent member; three members currently from the Utility Regulator appointed by the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI); and three from the Irish Republic's Commission for Energy Regulation (CER).

## **The Team**

We are currently recruiting for a placement student to assist Networks directorate in their regulation of the major utility network companies in Northern Ireland, including electricity, gas and water industries.

This is an excellent opportunity for students to gain valuable work experience, using their economic, quantitative and IT skills in support of a range of regulatory and public policy issues.

The post holder is expected to be placed within the Special Projects team, which is responsible for several areas of regulation, including close support with Retail in the development of the Consumer Protection Programme.

Special Projects currently lead on the joint Networks/Retail directorate development of new electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service / Overall Standards of Performance.

Special Projects has lead responsibility for economics related network price control activities:

- econometric benchmarking and setting efficiency targets

- analysing and deciding our assumptions for productivity growth and Real Price Effects (where we compare cost forecasts in nominal percentage terms against our central inflation forecast)
- consumer research, including statistical significance testing of survey sample responses, for example
- consumer priorities and consumers' willingness to pay (for enhanced service delivery)
- new consumer metrics, where we instruct companies to report their annual performance across a range of KPIs as well as cost categories (so we can publish for each network company, annual Cost & Performance Reports)

During their placement, the post holder can expect to play a part in the economic regulation of a number of major utilities, gain an insight into the legislative framework and can expect to contribute to the effective development of regulation policies through involvement in the Regulator's public consultations.

### **The Role**

The role will involve assisting the team across a number of new price controls. These include GD23 which encompasses the x3 local gas distribution networks companies of SGNG, Firmus Energy and PNG. GD23 is expected to cover the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2028, with the brunt of our determination work occurring in 2021/22.

As well as GD23, we expect to begin preparatory work in 2021 to enable NIE Networks' next price control RP7 to be determined and take effect from 1 April 2024.

Tasks may include:

- Contributing to briefings for senior management
- Compilation, quality assurance, analyses and the reporting of data
- Presentation of results
- Report writing
- Updating and analysis of relevant economic and data trends
- Contributing to internal / external reports and presentations
- Desk research (including the sourcing and analysis of information and data from a range of sources including public departments, libraries, Internet, annual reports etc.)
- General administration
- Using Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- Using video conferencing such as ZOOM, Webex, MS Teams and Jabber
- Using various statistical analysis packages such as PSPP, STATA and/or other econometric packages
- Develop economic knowledge and skills through reading relevant economic publications and attending seminars and conferences
- Assist in the review and quality assurance of business cases and post project evaluations
- Any other related duties

### **The Person**

We are seeking applications from dynamic and highly motivated persons of exceptional ability and intellect that are able to work well in a team and under their own supervision.

You should be able to work well under pressures of time and workload, have excellent oral and written communication and interpersonal skills, and excellent quantitative analysis skills.

**Applicants must:**

1. Be students currently studying for a BA/BSc Honours Degree in Economics, or in a subject where the study of economics is a major component\*.

\* 'Major component' is defined as: At least 50% of the course covers micro, macro and quantitative economics. Candidates must list all modules and briefly describe their relevant economic modules to allow the panel to determine that their qualification contains 50% of micro, macro and quantitative economics.

The onus is on candidates to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made.

**AND**

2. Have successfully completed the second year of their degree by end of the 2021/2022 academic year\*\*.

**\*\* The Panel is unable to accept applications from students who will complete their degree on or before 2021/22. Second year examinations should normally be completed by applicants by summer 2021; however, applications will be accepted from students whereby examinations are postponed or cancelled due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19.**

**AND**

3. Have the opportunity to undertake a 51 week work placement for the 2021/2022 academic year.

Applicants are asked to provide the following details on their application form:

- Name of Tutor/Professor or other responsible person from whom a report may be sought.
- Contact telephone number and/or e-mail address for Tutor/Professor.
- University address, including Department.

This information will be used to confirm applicants' eligibility to undertake a one year placement for the 2021/22 academic year. Candidates will only be appointed if confirmation is obtained from the College/University that they are required to return and complete their course.

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.

The Utility Regulator holds the right to determine the relevance of a degree.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### Appointment

Candidates will only be appointed if they have successfully completed at least the second year examinations of their degree by end of the 2021/22 academic year.

**\*\* The Panel is unable to accept applications from students who will complete their degree on or before 2021/22. Second year examinations should normally be completed by applicants by summer 2021; however, applications will be accepted from students whereby examinations are postponed or cancelled due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19.**

Those appointed will be employees of the Utility Regulator and will be based at our offices in Queen Street, Belfast. Due to the current restrictions in place because of COVID-19, you may have to work remotely for part of your placement. This is under constant review in line with The Executive guidance.

Appointments will be for a duration of no more than 51 weeks from the date of commencing employment.

### Work pattern

The normal hours of work are full-time: 37 hours per week (excluding meal breaks) Monday to Friday. Flexi-time is available.

Annual leave arrangements are currently 25 days annual leave in addition to 12 public and privilege holidays across a calendar year. An annual salary of £15,777 applies.

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

### 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.
- The selection panel 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.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be explored 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.
- State clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote.
- State "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.
- 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. Please do not include your name in the employment history or eligibility criteria sections.
- The Utility Regulator may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.

### 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 and how you apply or demonstrate the knowledge and skills whilst carrying out your tasks. Demonstrated competence is observable and measurable.

### **Interview criteria**

In addition to satisfying the above eligibility criteria, applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills (competencies) at interview:

- (i) **Communication and interpersonal skills;**
- (ii) **Awareness of the Northern Ireland regulatory scene and the key features of UK utility regulation;**
- (iii) **Sound IT skills;**
- (iv) **A sound economic understanding; and**
- (v) **Quantitative Analysis skills.**

### **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

The selection process will include a presentation and a competence based interview.

### **PRESENTATION**

As part of the selection process candidates will be required to make a presentation on a notified topic relevant to the responsibilities of the post, lasting no longer than 7 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the panel.

The subject of the presentation will be provided to candidates in the invitation to interview letter. Applicants should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview as no preparation time will be provided on the date of interview.

Your presentation will be delivered remotely and you will be asked to submit it to Human Resources by a specific date prior to your interview. Full details will be provided should you be invited to interview.

The presentation will be used to assess Communication and interpersonal skills & Awareness of the Northern Ireland regulatory scene and the key features of UK utility regulation:

- (i) **Communication and interpersonal skills**
- (ii) **Awareness of the Northern Ireland regulatory scene and the key features of UK utility regulation**

**Marks available: 40**

**Minimum standard: 24**

### **Competence Based Interviews**

- (iii) **Sound IT skills**  
**Marks available: 20**
- (iv) **A sound economic understanding**  
**Marks available: 20**

**(v) Quantitative Analysis skills**  
**Marks available: 20**

**Total Marks Available: 100**  
**Overall Pass Mark: 50**

**Competence Based Interviews**

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

No notes or personal documentation may be brought to interview.

**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 fulfil the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

Appreciating as a student, you may not have significant work experience, you should concentrate on drawing examples and experience from your academic life, personal life or clubs/societies you may belong/have belonged to.

**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; and,
- 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 or life experiences.

**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.

- 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.
- We will not examine applications until after the closing deadline.
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc.
- 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

- We will not accept incomplete application forms, application forms received after the closing deadline or reformatted application forms.
- Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1st class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to the Utility Regulator.
- We will not accept any application where we are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.
- Applicants are encouraged to download an application form from this website and submit their completed application forms by email if possible to [recruitment@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@uregni.gov.uk)  
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.
- Applications will be acknowledged by email within two working days from close of competition. **If you do not receive an acknowledgement, please contact the Utility Regulator on 0289031 6672**

### 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.

### 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.*

### Assessment Information

It is Utility Regulator policy that all candidates invited to attend for interview, bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility 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.

### Nationality Requirements

The Utility Regulator must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom. The Placement Student posts are classified as Non-Public Service, therefore certain nationality requirements apply. Applicants must be either:

- i. UK national; or



- ii. National of a Commonwealth country; or
- iii. National of the Republic of Ireland; or
- iv. EEA nationals with (or eligible for) status under the EU Settlement Scheme; or
- v. Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals working in the Civil Service; or
- vi. Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals who have built up the right to work in the Civil Service; or
- vii. Certain family members of the relevant EU & Turkish nationals

Further guidance on Nationality requirements may be obtained from the Home Office website, [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk)

### Vetting Procedures

For Placement Student posts in the Utility Regulator 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](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk)
- d) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

### Criminal Record Check

Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by the Utility Regulator, normally after interview and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form for a **Basic Disclosure Certificate**. Instructions on the process can be accessed from [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni) and you can apply online via this link also.

Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment. Failure to submit the application form to AccessNI and obtain the certificate within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

You should not put off applying 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.

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

### General Information

Completed application forms and other relevant documentation should be returned to [recruitment@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@uregni.gov.uk) to arrive no later than **2pm on 15 March 2021**

The Utility Regulator is an Equal Opportunities employer. All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.