



**Northern Ireland Authority for Utility
Regulation**

**Recruitment and Selection Policy and
Procedure Manual**

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Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the “Utility Regulator”) is a non-Ministerial Government Department. Its role is to ensure that the utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within the strategic policy parameters determined by Ministers.
- 1.2 This document sets out the recruitment and selection policy and procedures for the Utility Regulator. It is designed to assist management and job applicants in understanding the essential requirements of a recruitment and selection process and what they can expect when participating in such a process

2 Policy

- 2.1 This recruitment and selection policy will be applicable to all employees engaged to provide services to the Utility Regulator, irrespective of whether the contract is of a temporary, fixed term or permanent nature.
- 2.2 This policy will be made available to all employees and prospective candidates and applies to both internal recruitment, through the Internal Transfer Policy, and external recruitment. The procedures to deal with the selection of contractors are set out under the Utility Regulator’s Procurement Guidelines.
- 2.3 It is the policy of the Utility Regulator to recruit staff only where there is a genuine requirement and to select the best person for each vacancy on the basis of merit. The Utility Regulator will ensure that all vacancies will be resourced in a consistent and professional manner and at all times will meet business and legislative requirements.
- 2.4 The Utility Regulator is committed to a policy of treating all of its employees and candidates equally. No employee or potential employee shall be subject to discrimination or receive less favourable treatment or consideration during the recruitment and selection process on any of the equality grounds. The Utility Regulator’s commitment to equality of opportunity in employment statement reads:

‘The Utility Regulator 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 organisation 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. It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

 - Gender, including gender reassignment
 - Marital or civil partnership status
 - Having or not having dependants
 - Religious belief or political opinion
 - Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
 - Disability
 - Sexual orientation

- Age

2.5 This policy is based on delivering an effective and efficient process which meets business needs and which ensures all employees and potential employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner at each stage of the recruitment and selection process.

3 Principles

- 3.1 It is a core principle that appointments to the Utility Regulator should be 'made on the basis of merit in fair and open competition'. As recommended by the Civil Service Commissioners "merit embraces issues of diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity, and recruitment processes should fully embrace those concepts" (Civil Service Commissioners Recruitment Code – June 2005)
- 3.2 This extends to all aspects of the process including the preparation of the job description and person specification, advertising of the vacancy and the selection processes used. Integral to this is the requirement to ensure that recruitment and selection processes are 'fit for purpose' in order to meet the business need of ensuring that 'the right people are appointed to the right post at the right time'.
- 3.3 This policy also aims to establish the principle of fair and consistent treatment for all employees and applicants. Selection processes and the manner in which they are applied must be demonstrably fair and underpinned by real commitment to equality of opportunity.
- 3.4 The Utility Regulator is also committed to the principle of openness, accountability and transparency in dealing with employees and applicants at all stages of the recruitment and selection process. This includes the provision of comprehensive information about the vacancy, open and active communication about the selection processes to be adopted and the provision of comprehensive feedback to candidates.

4 Procedures

The Utility Regulator aims to ensure that these recruitment and selection procedures are fairly and consistently applied to all appointments at all levels within the organisation. The Utility Regulator acknowledges that there may be exceptional circumstances that could impact on the application of such procedures. In this instance, the Human Resources Manager will be responsible for fully documenting the exception and obtaining approval from the Chief Executive.

5 Vacancy Approval and Documentation

- 5.1 Where the requirement to recruit additional staff is identified, in all cases directors will;
- Determine the most appropriate means of meeting that requirement i.e. on a part-time/full-time/job sharing/temporary basis; and

- Confirm, in the case of new posts, that the post is included in the approved complement for the directorate and appropriate budget is available for the position;
 - Prepare a job description and person specification in conjunction with HR. All selection criteria to be used will be outlined in the person specification. This will include the minimum eligibility criteria for the job, essential criteria and any desirable criteria as appropriate.
- 5.2 Where the appointment is for less than three months' duration, directors have delegated authority to make appointments.
 - 5.3 Where the appointment is on a permanent basis or temporary/longer fixed contracts of more than 3 months, directors must seek approval from the Chief Executive.
 - 5.4 In respect of the appointment of directors, the Chief Executive follow the detail laid out in the scheme of delegation.
 - 5.5 The completed documents and approvals will be reviewed by HR who will confirm the grade, appropriate salary band for the post and agree the appropriate approach to filling the vacancy. All selection criteria to be used will be outlined in the person specification. This will include the minimum eligibility criteria for the job, essential criteria and any desirable criteria as appropriate. The decision on criteria will be agreed at the outset and must be adhered to throughout the process.
 - 5.6 Human Resources will, under normal circumstances, undertake the management and administration of all recruitment competitions.

6 Advertising

- 6.1 Once approved, where external recruitment is deemed appropriate, the position will be advertised externally, ensuring that all sectors of the community have an equal opportunity to apply. Notification will also be circulated to all staff internally (including those on sick, maternity or special leave via their line managers) by email.
- 6.2 The advertisement will be placed on the "Working For Us" section of the Utility Regulator website and in the appropriate press and/or on specialist recruitment websites or publications according to the nature and level of the position.
- 6.3 The advertisement will specify the main features of the job, the minimum eligibility requirements for the job, salary and benefits, application instructions and the closing date and time by which applications must be received. The advertisement will also specify the Utility Regulator's commitment to equality of opportunity in employment.
- 6.4 Where, exceptionally, other methods of advertising (executive search) should be factored into the approval phase set out in the sections above, such support will be sourced through Human Resources.
- 6.5 The requirements of the internal transfer policy should be followed where it is deemed appropriate to fill the vacancy internally.

7 Processing of Applications

- 7.1 An application form and candidate guide will be issued to prospective candidates upon receipt of a written or verbal request by telephone, post, email.

Application forms and candidate guides may also be downloaded and completed forms should be returned to Human Resources.
- 7.2 The Utility Regulator's standard application form will be tailored to suit the requirements of each position and will be issued to prospective candidates, together with a separate monitoring form for the purposes of assessing the community background of job applicants, as required by the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Acts 1976 and 1989.
- 7.3 The candidate guide will include a foreword, the background to the Utility Regulator, role description, selection criteria, the recruitment and selection process to be followed and the terms of the appointment.
- 7.4 Following the closing date of the competition, the Utility Regulator will endeavour to progress applications promptly. Candidates will be informed in the event of any unforeseen delay to the process.
- 7.5 Applications will be acknowledged on behalf of the Utility Regulator within seven days of the close of a competition.
- 7.6 Candidates with a disability who require assistance will be facilitated upon request and those wishing to receive application forms and information packs in accessible formats are requested to advise of their requirements as promptly as possible, allowing for the closing date for receipt to remain the same for all applicants.

8 Application Form

- 8.1 Candidates will be advised to clearly and fully demonstrate on their application form how they meet the selection criteria. The Utility Regulator may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information they have provided on their application form, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability.
- 8.2 Candidates are informed that it is essential that they fully describe on the application form how they meet each of the selection criteria giving specific examples as appropriate. Candidates are advised not to use acronyms, complex technical detail etc. and to refer clearly to their personal involvement in any experience they quote. Candidates are guided to outline how they carried out the piece of work and not simply to list the various posts which they have held. The Utility Regulator will not make assumptions from the title of an applicant's post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.

9 Pre-interview

- 9.1 Candidates will initially be assessed against the essential criteria for the role as set out in the person specification. Only those candidates who demonstrate how they meet the essential criteria may be selected for interview.

- 9.2 Should the initial assessment against the essential criteria result in a high number of candidates for interview, further shortlisting will then be undertaken against the desirable criteria.
- 9.3 Assessment forms will be used at each shortlisting stage to document the reasons for rejection/selection for interview. These forms will be signed and dated by the parties concerned and will be kept on file for no more than 3 years.
- 9.4 Candidates who are successful at the shortlisting stage will be informed of a date and time for their interview. The Utility Regulator will endeavour to name panel members and advise of their position in the letter of invitation to interview. Also enclosed in the invite to interview letter, will be advice on competence based interviews to assist candidates in preparing for their interview. Those candidates who have not been selected for interview will be sent a letter of regret thanking them for their application and advising that they have been unsuccessful.
- 9.5 The selection panel will meet prior to the interview process to agree the format and structure of the interview, to devise a set of standard questions and to consider any other selection tools to be used. The panel will also discuss and agree the scoring system to be used including the relative importance to be given to each of the criterion and any minimum acceptable standards to be applied in the scoring system.
- 9.6 For some posts the panel in conjunction with Human Resources may consider it appropriate to include some form of further assessment. Where it is deemed appropriate for the role, further assessment methods such as presentations, group exercises, role plays, written exercises or personality assessments may also be used to inform selection decisions. In these circumstances, every effort will be made to advise candidates of the full recruitment process at the outset. The selection of appropriate assessment tools will complement the essential/desirable criteria. Results of any further assessment exercises will also be fully documented and kept on file for no more than 3 years.

10 Panel Membership

- 10.1 A Chairperson will be appointed for each recruitment exercise and this individual will have overall responsibility for the efficient operation of the shortlisting and interview process.
- 10.2 Interviews will be conducted by a minimum of three people. In all but the most exceptional circumstances a balance of different gender and community backgrounds should be reflected in the interview panel. If necessary to maintain this balance, an independent member may be appointed to the panel. It is recognised, however, that at least one panel member should be a specialist in the area that the position relates to, ensuring a clear understanding of the requirements for the job and in determining candidate's suitability.
- 10.3 All interview panel members will have been trained in equal opportunities and interviewing skills.
- 10.4 Any person who is directly involved in the selection process who has a close personal relationship with an applicant must disclose such relationship. The

selection panel, having sought advice from Human Resources, will decide whether or not the panel member concerned should withdraw from the selection process due to conflict of interest.

- 10.5 Depending on the level, background and specialist knowledge of the position being recruited, an expert external advisor may be appointed to advise the selection panel and/or to participate as a member of the selection panel.

11 Interview

- 11.1 Interviews will be based upon the essential, and if appropriate, the desirable criteria, and will be specifically related to job requirements as set out in the candidate information pack. Throughout the course of the interview, the same questions will be explored with each candidate to ensure fair and consistent assessment of candidate's abilities and suitability for the job. Candidates will each be allocated the same amount of time for the duration of their interview. It will be the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to ensure that this is adhered to.
- 11.2 Agreed interview questions will be printed on the Interview Recording Sheet and each member of the panel will be allocated specific questions to ask each candidate. Panel members will record their name, candidate's name, the date of the interview, time taken and factual notes on candidates' responses during the interview to assist with the evaluation process when the interview has been completed. Any unusual occurrences that may have impacted on the process will also be recorded.
- 11.3 When the candidate has completed the interview, each panel member will individually score the candidate's performance and following discussion the panel will then agree on a consensus score for each of the criteria areas. An overall agreed score will then be reached by adding the consensus scores together.
- 11.4 When all interviews have been completed, the panel will review the scores allocated to ensure equitable treatment of all candidates and consider any required adjustments to scores, which will be documented on the interview paperwork and initialled by all panel members.
- 11.5 A Summary Assessment Form will also be completed by a nominated panel member, usually the Human Resource representative if present. This will record the names of all panel members, candidate details, date and overall panel decision regarding suitability for appointment. These forms will be signed and dated and will be kept on file for no more than 3 years.
- 11.6 Where it is deemed appropriate for the role, further assessment methods such as presentations, group exercises, role plays, written exercises or personality assessments may also be used to inform selection decisions. In these circumstances, every effort will be made to advise candidates of the full recruitment process at the outset. The selection of appropriate assessment tools will be based on the essential/desirable criteria. Results of any further assessment exercises will also be fully documented and kept on file for no more than 3 years.

11.7 All candidates will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application. All information arising out of the selection process will be treated as strictly confidential.

12 Reserve List

Where it is judged to be appropriate, for example, if a further similar requirement is envisaged within the near future, successful candidates may be placed on a reserve list up to a maximum of 12 months, with specific timeframes determined by the interview panel (taking into consideration very lengthy or large recruitment and selection exercises). Under such circumstances, candidates will be advised in writing that they have been placed on a reserve list, the specified timeframe (for example 6 months from the date of interview) and what the term 'reserve' means (post requiring similar competences on a similar salary scale).

13 Assessment of Candidates with Disabilities

13.1 Where candidates with disabilities apply for a position, appropriate reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that the applicant has fair opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the role and is not treated less favourably than any other applicant. These adjustments will take account of potential reasonable adjustments to working arrangements or physical features of the workplace.

13.2 Candidates will be asked to provide initial details on their application form of any reasonable adjustments which they may require throughout the recruitment and selection process. This information will be further discussed and confirmed with the individual at the appropriate stage of the selection process.

14 Pre-employment Checks

14.1 When attending for interview, candidates will be asked to provide proof of identity as part of pre employment check phase to assure the organisation of the applicant's identity. Offers of employment will be made subject to receipt of the relevant documents:

14.2 Proof of Eligibility to Work in the UK

The Utility Regulator is required to adhere to legislation brought into force in May 2004 where employers are required to check eligibility to work in the UK, under section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. As such candidates will be asked to provide:

- A passport; or
- A document verifying their permanent national insurance number (for example P45, P60, National Insurance card); and
- A birth certificate (long version)

Other acceptable documents are listed on www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

14.3 Proof of Qualification

Where stipulated, candidates will be required to produce their original qualification certificates and, at the very least, provide on the application form membership number and details of the professional body concerned.

14.4 Employer References

Candidates are required to supply two referees on their application form, one of whom should be a current employer and a second from a former employer. Candidates are informed that references will not be taken up without their consent and that the offer of employment is subject to the receipt of satisfactory references and other specified pre-employment checks.

14.5 Pre-employment Medical

Successful candidates will also be required to undertake a medical examination which will be considered before the offer of employment is confirmed. This will take the form of standard self-assessment and Doctor's assessment questionnaire. If a charge is made for the medical, this will be reimbursed after the appointment has been taken up

14.6 Salary Details

Successful candidates will be required to provide evidence such as a copy of a recent payslip (within the preceding 3 months) in order to confirm their current salary and benefits. An offer will be made on the basis of the confirmed salary and benefits in line with the pay on recruitment policy

14.7 Security Clearance

Successful candidates will be required to apply for a Basic Disclosure Certificate from Access Northern Ireland (Access NI) which must be presented to Human Resources who will note the details. The successful applicant retains their certificate and will be reimbursed for the fee charged by Access NI after the appointment has been taken up. Existence of a criminal conviction will not automatically result the withdrawal of an offer of employment. More information is available on www.accessni.gov.uk

15 Offer of Appointment

15.1 The successful candidate will be sent a letter confirming their offer and the main terms and conditions of employment, to include the following:

- Job title;
- Job status e.g. fixed, permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time etc;
- Salary;
- Additional benefits (for example, car parking space if applicable);
- Proposed date of commencement;
- Holiday entitlement;
- Pension details;
- Details of probationary period;
- Reporting details; and
- Any further conditions of offer (for example medical reference)

- 15.2 The information given in this letter forms the basis of the contract of employment and the principle terms and conditions which will be confirmed in writing to the employee within 8 weeks of the employment commencing (in accordance with The Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996).
- 15.3 The offer will make clear that the notice period that the successful candidate is required to work with their current employer will have been deemed to start at the date of the letter of offer and that, in any event, the candidate will be required to commence employment not later than three months from that date.

16 Provision of Feedback

All applicants are encouraged to seek feedback on their application, regardless of their performance in the selection exercise. Candidates should place requests for feedback in writing to the Human Resource Manager. A written response summarising the reasons for selection/non selection in relation to the essential and/or desirable criteria for the role at each stage of the recruitment process will then be issued.

17 Records and the Retention of Data

- 17.1 Information on gender, age, community background, race, disability and previous applications will be collected on a separate monitoring form in order to monitor the number of applications from different groups as required by the Equality Commission NI. Information supplied on monitoring forms will be collated by the Monitoring Officer and stored separately from a candidate's application form. It will remain confidential and will not be made available to those involved in the selection process.
- 17.2 All recruitment documentation (written records of interviews, reasons for decisions made at each stage of the process and reasons for appointment or non-appointment) will be kept by Human Resources for 3 years. Records will then be disposed of confidentially.
- 17.3 All information held about a candidate will be used only for the purpose for which the information has been collected.

18 Service Standards and Accountability

The service standards outlined below are indicative of what an employee or candidate can expect when participating in a recruitment and selection process.

Activity	Service Standard
Issue of application pack	With 2 working days of receipt of the request
Acknowledgement of receipt of completed application form	Within one week of the closing date of the recruitment exercise
Issue of invitation to interview	Within one week of the date of the interview
Issue of interview results	Within one week of the date of the completion of the interviews. Candidates will be notified in the event of any undue delay

Response to requests for feedback	Within 15 working days of written receipt of the request
Response to complaint	Within 15 working days of written receipt of the complaint

19 Responsibilities under the Policy

19.1 Human Resources Department will be responsible for;

- Regular review of the policy;
- Approving any exceptional variations to laid down procedures;
- Ensuring that the Policy is operated effectively;
- Confirming grading and salary of posts;
- Advising Vacancy Holders regarding best practice recruitment and selection procedures including the review of job descriptions and person specifications and the choice and operation of selection tools;
- The placement of advertisements;
- All candidate and panel administration associated with the completion of the recruitment and selection exercise;
- The facilitation and support of selection activities including sifting, shortlisting, interviews and any other assessment exercises used;
- The confidential retention and disposal of all electronic and non-electronic data relating to recruitment and selection exercises;
- Ensuring that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates, in consultation with both the candidate and the vacancy holder;
- Confirming final details required for contracts and offer letters;
- Approving the issue of offer letters and contracts;
- Approving the issue feedback requests and complaints; and
- The completion of all monitoring activity related to recruitment and selection exercises.

19.2 Vacancy Holders will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the appropriate budget is available for the post and the necessary approvals have been obtained;
- Preparation of an initial draft of the job description and person specification;
- Attendance at appropriate training and pre-panel meetings as required;
- Assist in the completion of sifting, shortlisting and interview/assessment activity;
- Completion of factual notes and documentation of all decisions made at each stage of the selection process;
- Declaration of any potential conflict of interest with their role as selection panel member; and
- Confirming final details required for contract and offer letter.