



CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS

RECRUITMENT PRINCIPLES

April 2009 Edition

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1. The Civil Service Order in Council 1995 (as amended) and the Diplomatic Service Order in Council 1991 (as amended) requires selection for appointment to the Civil Service to be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition (“the requirement”) and that the Civil Service Commissioners (“the Commissioners”) publish Recruitment Principles to be applied for the purposes of the requirement. This document sets out those principles.

- **Merit** - means the appointment of the best available person: no one should be appointed to a job unless they are competent to do it and the job must be offered to the person who would do it best.
- **Fair** – means there is no bias in the assessment of candidates. Selection processes must be objective, impartial and applied consistently.
- **Open** - means that job opportunities must be advertised publicly and potential candidates given reasonable access to information about the job and its requirements, and about the selection process.

Role of the Commissioners

2. The role of the Commissioners in recruitment is to maintain the principle that appointments to the Civil Service are on merit through fair and open competition. Annex A provides more detail on how the Commissioners interpret the principle.

3. The approval of the Commissioners is required for appointments to the posts listed at Annex B. The Commissioners will decide whether and how it will participate in the selection processes for such posts.

4. The Commissioners except certain appointments from the principle of appointment on merit through fair and open competition. These are described at Annex C.

Departments and agencies’ responsibilities

5. Departments and agencies must comply with the principle of appointment on merit through fair and open competition and these Recruitment Principles, including Annexes A, B and C. Overall responsibility for doing so rests with the permanent secretary or chief executive of each department or agency.

Ensuring compliance

6. The Commissioners will undertake regular audits of the recruitment policies and practices of departments and agencies in order to ensure compliance with appointment on merit through fair and open competition and these Recruitment Principles. The outcome will be reported in the Commissioners' annual report.

7. The Commissioners will consider complaints that the principle of appointment on merit through fair and open competition and these Recruitment Principles have not been met. It will expect the complainant to raise the matter with the department or agency first. Departments and agencies must ensure that all applicants are made aware of their right to do this.

SELECTION FOR APPOINTMENT ON MERIT ON THE BASIS OF FAIR AND OPEN COMPETITION

This Annex, which departments and agencies must follow, explains in more detail how the Commissioners interpret the principle of appointment on merit through fair and open competition. The Commissioners do not seek to set out the recruitment policies and practices that departments and agencies must follow: when auditing, though, they will look to see if those policies and practices comply with appointment on merit through fair and open competition and these Recruitment Principles.

Merit - means the appointment of the best available person: no one should be appointed to a job unless they are competent to do it and the job must be offered to the person who would do it best.

- If several candidates are competent, the job must be offered to the person who would do it best. It will be rare for a candidate to meet all of the selection criteria exceptionally well; the most meritorious candidate will be the one who is best at the job's critical elements.
- In competitions for a single job, the best candidate must be offered the job. If he or she turns it down, it can then be offered to the other appointable candidates in merit order.
- When a department or agency is running a campaign to recruit a large number of staff, it may be impractical to wait until the end of the competition and offer jobs in a strict merit order. Departments and agencies may offer jobs out of strict merit order, but in doing so must ensure that the individuals appointed are clearly towards the top of the likely merit list. Candidates who are likely to be further down the list or borderline will have to wait until the end of the process before an appointment can be confirmed. This is to ensure that the most meritorious candidates will be appointed by the end of the competition.

Fair – means there is no bias in the assessment of candidates. Selection processes must be objective, impartial and applied consistently.

- This does not necessarily mean treating everyone exactly the same; rather it is about applying the same general criteria of assessment to everyone while taking account of the different experience and expertise that candidates bring.

Open - means that job opportunities must be advertised publicly and potential candidates given reasonable access to information about the job and its requirements, and about the selection process.

- The media chosen to advertise job opportunities must be suitable for attracting a diverse field of strong potential candidates. Jobs can be advertised in newspapers or job centres, or on the Civil Service or on departmental and other internet sites.
- Advertisements can be job specific or for a number of jobs or for a rolling recruitment programme. Under such a programme, jobs may be advertised continuously and candidates assessed at intervals for particular vacancies.
- Alternatively, expressions of interest may be sought for future vacancies and used to form a competition between the candidates when the vacancy arises.
- Advertisements for a particular post may also include other posts that have been advertised previously without success.

Decisions on appointments

For the majority of posts, decisions on appointments will be taken by permanent civil servants.

However, Ministers may need to give final approval to the most senior appointments. Where a Minister has an interest in an appointment, it is important that they are consulted at the outset to agree the terms on which the post is to be advertised, the job and person specifications, and the criteria for selection, including the composition of the selection panel.

Departments and agencies should then ensure that the Minister is kept in touch with the progress of the competition throughout, including being provided with full information about the expertise, experience and skills of the candidates. Any further views the Minister may have about the balance of expertise, experience and skills required for the post should be conveyed to the selection panel. For the most senior posts the Minister may wish to brief the Commissioner chairing the selection panel, who may then invite the Minister to brief the selection panel and/or each of the shortlisted candidates,

The candidate recommended for appointment must be the one placed first in order of merit by the selection panel. Where a Minister does not feel able to approve the selection panel's recommended candidate, the matter must be referred back to the panel with the Minister's reasons. The panel must decide whether the Minister's observations cause it to revise the order of merit, and if it

does so, it must refer the case with its reasons to the Commissioners for their collective approval.

Use of recruitment agencies and search consultants

Where recruitment agencies and/or search consultants are used, the department or agency must satisfy itself that the final recommendations arise from a proper application of the principle of appointment on merit through fair and open competition and these Recruitment Principles.

POSTS REQUIRING THE COMMISSIONERS' APPROVAL

The approval of the Commissioners is required for appointments to the Civil Service to the following posts:

- Permanent Secretary
- SCS Pay Band 3
- SCS Pay Band 2

The approval of the Commissioners is also required for all appointments to posts which currently fall within the remit of the Senior Leadership Committee (SLC) i.e. Permanent Secretary and Pay Band 3.

In addition the Commissioners may agree with a department or agency that their approval is needed for specific other appointments.

EXCEPTIONS TO SELECTION FOR APPOINTMENT ON MERIT ON THE BASIS OF FAIR AND OPEN COMPETITION

The Commissioners except certain appointments from the principle of appointment on merit through fair and open competition where they believe this is justified by the needs of the Civil Service or to enable the Civil Service to participate in a government employment initiative that major employers have been asked to participate in.

Departments and agencies may apply the exceptions listed below **except that the Commissioners' specific approval is required for appointments to the Civil Service made to the posts listed at Annex B.**

The exceptions are:

- 1. Short term appointments up to maximum of two years** to provide managers with the flexibility to meet short-term needs, and to enable departments to appoint individuals who are eligible for support under government programmes to assist the unemployed. Any proposal to extend an appointment made under this exception beyond two years requires the approval of the Civil Service Commissioners.
- 2. Permanent appointments to administrative (i.e. old style AA and AO) and industrial grades** of individuals who have been appointed through exception 1 at or after 12 months of that appointment on the basis of a fair and objective process approved by the Commissioners and subject to their audit.
- 3. Appointments of individuals with highly specialised skills and experience for up to two years** to allow highly specialised people to be brought in without a competition for a particular one-off job on the basis that such a process would be a mere formality. Any proposal for a longer appointment at the outset or to extend an appointment made under this exception beyond two years requires the approval of the Civil Service Commissioners.
- 4. Secondments of up to two years** to facilitate interchange between the Civil Service and other employers. Any proposal for a longer secondment at the outset, or to extend the appointment beyond two years or to convert it to a permanent appointment without fair and open competition, requires the approval of the Commissioners.

5. Re-appointment of former civil servants to enable individuals who were previously civil servants by virtue of an appointment on merit through fair and open competition or by a process approved by the Commissioners and who meet the competences required for the new post to re-enter the Civil Service.

6. Transfer of an organisation into the Civil Service to enable departments and agencies to gain or retain the expertise of its staff. (If the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) apply staff have an automatic right of transfer.)

7. Transfers of individuals into the Civil Service to enable departments and agencies to make use of their expertise. Transfers of staff from another civil service in the United Kingdom may take place freely provided they were appointed on merit through fair and open competition. Transfers of staff from other public bodies (e.g. non-departmental public bodies) need the approval of the Commissioners.

8. The recruitment of disabled people to enable departments and agencies to recruit participants in the government scheme (currently entitled "WORKSTEP") to promote the employment of disabled people.

9. Assistance for disabled people to enable departments and agencies within the framework of appointment on merit through fair and open competition to offer encouragement and assistance which are not available to other candidates. This enables departments and agencies to guarantee an interview or to modify other selection arrangements used for non-disabled candidates.