

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
BUSINESS PLAN 2013-2014**

<b>THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION</b>
<b>We are established by statute to provide assurance that civil servants are recruited on merit on the basis of fair and open competition; and to help safeguard an impartial Civil Service.</b>
<b>We are appointed through public open competition and are independent of the Government and the Civil Service. As senior managers from the private, public and voluntary sectors we seek to be firm on principles but pragmatic about process.</b>
<b>We want to see a highly efficient and effective Civil Service, now and for the future. We strongly believe that the country is best served by a Civil Service which recruits and develops the best and most diverse talent, free of personal and political patronage, and remains true to its core values of Impartiality, Objectivity, Integrity and Honesty as described in the Civil Service Code.</b>

*This is the Business Plan for the Civil Service Commission for the period April 2013 to March 2014. It is based on the themes in the Commission's Strategic Framework for 2012-2016.*

The Civil Service Commission is established as an independent body with statutory functions by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. The Commission is an executive Non Departmental Public Body, sponsored by the Cabinet Office, from whom we receive grant-in-aid.

The 2010 Act assigns the Commission two primary statutory functions:

- First, we are responsible for upholding the statutory requirement that selection for appointment to the Civil Service must be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.
- Second, we hear and determine appeals raised by civil servants under the Civil Service Code. The Code describes the values of the Civil Service – Impartiality, Objectivity, Integrity and Honesty – and is part of the contractual relationship between civil servants and their employer.

In addition, the Commission:

- Chairs internal competitions to fill posts at the most senior levels within the Civil Service (SCS pay band 3 and above);
- Works with departments to help them promote the Civil Service Code and the core values of the Civil Service; and
- Accredits the recruitment practices of Non-Departmental Public Bodies

The Board of the Commission regularly reviews progress against the Commission's Business Plan. We have objectives as laid out in this plan to help us meet the requirements of our four-year Strategic Plan.

As an independent regulator, the Commission reports annually to Parliament rather than to the Cabinet Office as its sponsor department.

**THEME ONE: To be firm on principles but pragmatic on process**

*The Commission will continue to argue for, and uphold, selection to the Civil Service on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. This means ensuring that our regulatory processes and frameworks are flexible and aimed at securing the appointment of the best candidates.*

Objective	Performance Indicators/Targets
We will introduce a new compliance monitoring approach to monitor recruitment across the Civil Service, that focuses more on principles and outcomes rather than process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New monitoring approach to be developed, piloted and formally adopted by April 2013.</li><li>• Ongoing evaluation of the new arrangement to enable any necessary enhancements or modifications to be introduced quickly and by March 2014 at the latest.</li></ul>
We will ensure that we meet the urgent business needs of the Government to appoint specialist staff to senior roles by responding flexibly and promptly to requests for exceptions to the normal arrangements for recruitment on merit following fair and open competition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 95% of requests for exceptions to be turned round within five working days or less and to a standard that no reconsideration requests are received.</li></ul>
We will keep under review our policy positions on merit, fairness, openness and exceptions, taking account of the evolving public debate and Government policy on the role of the civil service and reflecting the experience of operating the December 2012 practice note on Ministerial involvement in senior appointments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As and when policies need to be reviewed or amended, changes to be incorporated and disseminated in a clear and timely way.</li></ul>

**THEME TWO: To work with the Civil Service to improve recruitment practices and help achieve better outcomes.**

*The Commission will work with departments to encourage better recruitment practices and will focus relentlessly on how departments make successful appointments from strong and diverse fields. This work ranges from chairing competitions to fill senior vacancies, through thematic reviews of particular recruitment activities to the new outcomes-focused compliance monitoring approach being introduced this year.*

*For workload planning purposes, we have assumed that Commissioners will be required to chair up to 80 external competitions (PB2 and above) and up to 50 internal competitions (PB3 and above) during the course of the year.*

Objective	Performance Indicators/Targets
<p>We will conduct in-depth reviews on key aspects of selection, to assess how effective the system currently is at delivering the right outcomes (recruitment of the best candidates) and where there is scope for improvement. The conclusions of the reviews to be published, as appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of fast-stream recruitment by July 2013.</li> <li>• Review of specialist senior recruitment by March 2014.</li> <li>• Review the long-term outcome of competitions chaired by Commissioners, by March 2014.</li> <li>• Review the operation of the Senior Appointments Protocol by October 2013 and, if required, conclude any subsequent discussions with Cabinet Office by end March 2014.</li> </ul>
<p>Through our chairing of senior competitions, we will encourage Departments to increase the quality and diversity of the fields of applicants in competitions for the most senior posts within the Civil Service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of successful applicants in senior competitions being judged by the panel to be “outstanding” or “very good” candidates.</li> <li>• Diversity of the applicant pool and the successful candidates.</li> <li>• Consultation with one or more search consultants on how they attract a strong and diverse field, by July 2013.</li> </ul>

**THEME TWO: To work with the Civil Service to improve recruitment practices and help achieve better outcomes.**

*The Commission will work with departments to encourage better recruitment practices and will focus relentlessly on how departments make successful appointments from strong and diverse fields. This work ranges from chairing competitions to fill senior vacancies, through thematic reviews of particular recruitment activities to the new outcomes-focused compliance monitoring approach being introduced this year.*

*For workload planning purposes, we have assumed that Commissioners will be required to chair up to 80 external competitions (PB2 and above) and up to 50 internal competitions (PB3 and above) during the course of the year.*

Objective	Performance Indicators/Targets
<p>We will drive an improvement in the standard of recruitment below the senior level, as assessed by the new compliance monitoring process as it is rolled out. During this first year, we want the new approach to collect high quality baseline data to enable us to assess improvements in future years and judge where it is appropriate to intervene.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least five Departmental reviews completed by July 2013.</li> <li>• First comprehensive report to the Board by December 2013.</li> </ul>
<p>We will maintain close working relationships with those responsible for recruitment within departments, to ensure that the Commission is, and is seen as, a facilitator for improvement in outcomes rather than a process-based block to progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link Commissioner to hold at least one round of formal meetings with their departmental Permanent Secretaries and HR directors.</li> <li>• Secretariat teams to hold at least one round of meetings with their departmental contacts.</li> </ul>
<p>We will handle all complaints made under the Recruitment Principles in line with published guidance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge receipt within three working days.</li> <li>• Complete initial assessments within 15 working days of receipt.</li> <li>• Further targets and performance indicators to be agreed following review of systems.</li> </ul>
<p>As requested by the Cabinet Office, we will continue to review the recruitment practices of accredited NDPBs on a three yearly cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One third of accredited NDPBs to be reviewed by March 2014.</li> </ul>

**THEME THREE: To improve understanding of the Commission's purpose and approach, among the public, their elected representatives and the Civil Service.**

Objective	Performance Indicators/Targets
<p>We will improve the clarity and relevance of information provided on the Commission's website and increase the opportunities for departments and members of the public to interact with the Commission online.</p> <p>In particular, we will ensure that information on the website about hearing complaints under the Civil Service Code to ensure communication is clear and comprehensive. <i>[This responds to a specific audit recommendation.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General review completed by June 2013.</li> <li>• Conclusions implemented by December 2013.</li> <li>• A dedicated area of the website available by March 2014 with resources and guidance for departments and agencies: material on the Civil Service Code and its promotion.</li> </ul>
<p>We will contribute constructively to the public debate on the role and values of the Civil Service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence submitted, as appropriate, to Parliamentary Select Committees.</li> <li>• At least one open meeting held in-year.</li> <li>• Commission's Annual Report and Accounts published and laid in Parliament by summer recess 2013 and in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly in a similarly timely manner.</li> </ul>
<p>We will act as a source of advice and expertise on recruitment within the civil service and on the Civil Service Code and values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide five awareness sessions for departments on the Recruitment Principles and our compliance monitoring process by May 2013. We will seek feedback after each event.</li> <li>• Respond to 95% of departmental queries about Commission policies within three working days.</li> <li>• Provide information, as required, to members of the public and representatives of non-UK bodies.</li> </ul>

<b>THEME FOUR: To support an effective and diverse Civil Service that reflects and has the confidence of the people it serves.</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Performance Indicators/Targets</b>
We want to move the public debate on Civil Service reform away from the narrow issue of ministerial choice and onto the broader issue of improving skills and capability. As part of this, we will contribute, as appropriate, to the implementation of the Government's Civil Service Reform programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess evidence seen through senior appointments competitions and compliance monitoring process against the objectives in the Reform Plan. [ongoing]</li> <li>• Reform a standing item on the agenda for quarterly HRD/CSC liaison meetings.</li> <li>• Regular dialogue between the Commission and the government's head of HR profession.</li> </ul>
We will examine the ways in which the Commission promotes the Civil Service Code and the core values of the Civil Service: impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity to see whether this can be done more effectively and in a way that better meets the needs of government today.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Commission's promotion of the Code by March 2014.</li> <li>• Decide by June 2013 whether to conduct a formal audit of departments' Code compliance.</li> <li>• If so, complete the audit by March 2014.</li> </ul>
We will handle all complaints made under the Civil Service Code in line with published guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge receipt within three working days;</li> <li>• Complete initial assessment within 15 working days;</li> <li>• Complete each further step of the complaint within 20 working days.</li> <li>• Further targets and performance indicators to be agreed following review of systems.</li> </ul>
We will continue to work with the Cabinet Office and Civil Service Employee Policy to agree a set of standard Policies and Procedures for departments to use in dealing with Code cases, that the Commission can endorse.	
We will develop and support (with Cabinet Office) an effective network of Nominated Officers in departments dealing with Civil Service Code cases.	

## DEVELOPING OURSELVES

*Supporting all its core themes, the Commission commits to operating efficiently.*

Key area	Targets
PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit a new Commissioner by 3 July 2013, who will (among other things) act as link Commissioner with the Scottish Government.</li> <li>Ensure all Commissioners have completed induction before chairing a competition.</li> <li>Organise at least three continuous professional development sessions for Commissioners in year, and for each Commissioner to attend at least one.</li> <li>Maintain a peer support facility for Commissioners to share best practice and ensure consistency of approach across competitions (at least three sessions in year, each Commissioner to attend at least one).</li> <li>Comply with the requirements in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with regard to staffing matters.</li> <li>All Secretariat staff will have current development plans based on the new Civil Service competency framework that supports the Civil Service Reform Plan. We will focus on our professional development and on building long-term relationships with our customers that foster innovation and trust.</li> </ul>
MONEY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the Commission uses its funds appropriately and efficiently and accounts for its spending accurately and complies with the requirements of the MoU.</li> </ul>
SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage constructively in the Cabinet Office-led triennial review of the Commission, scheduled to begin during 2013-14.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the operation of the integrated Civil Service Commission/Commissioner for Public Appointments functions by September 2013, and implement any necessary further enhancements by January 2014.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the internal governance arrangements within the Commission, (in particular the respective roles of the Board, its Standing Committees, the First Commissioner and the Chief Executive) by Sept 2013.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond promptly to all recommendations by the Internal Audit team.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain the Commission's compliance rating with the National Audit Office at green/amber or better.</li> </ul>