



The Commissioner for
Public Appointments

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Civil Service Commission and
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Appointments

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20 August 2013

Our reference: FOI/13/19

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 14 August about recruitment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. In it you requested the following information:

- a. When we hope to produce a guide on good practice
- b. The standards currently observed in the most successful departments
- c. The standards currently observed in the Cabinet Office
- d. The enforcement powers we possess to take action against a department.

I am dealing with this request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In response to your first question, the Commission has no plans to produce a guide on good practice. The Cabinet Office used to advise departments on good practice, this responsibility has recently transferred to the Civil Service Employee Policy Team (CSEP) within the Department for Work and Pensions. The Commission does publish a guide to the legal requirement for appointments to the Civil Service called the *Recruitment Principles*. **I enclose a copy for your information.**

In answer to your second question, the standards currently observed in the most successful departments are those laid out in the *Recruitment Principles*.

In answer to your third question, the standards currently observed in the Cabinet Office are provided in our annual audit of compliance and capability, details of which have already been supplied to you in our earlier reply of 7 August 2013. In our most recent Annual Report and Accounts we said "The 2012-13 assessment round was the fourth and final audit undertaken by DLA Piper. Departments and Agencies carried out a self assessment of their policies and procedures from which a risk-based programme of follow up visits was agreed.

Those organisations visited received a risk rating. The Commission was pleased to note that the number of high-risk and medium-risk organisations had fallen compared to previous years.

Four Departments were judged to be high-risk in 2012-13: the Cabinet Office [and three others]... At the Cabinet Office two breaches of the Recruitment Principles were identified and there were also problems with the management of their recruitment data. ... The First Civil Service Commissioner wrote to the Permanent Secretaries/heads of these Departments; they were given an action plan for improvement and asked to report back regularly on progress.”

In answer to your fourth question, the Commission has not been given enforcement powers as such. Under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 Civil Service management authorities are required to comply with the *Recruitment Principles*. The Commission may:

- require the Commission’s approval to be obtained for a selection for appointment;
- participate in the process for any selection for which its approval is required;
- determine steps that must be taken by a person before making a complaint about an appointment;
- determine procedures for the making of complaints and for the investigation and consideration of complaints by the Commission;
- after considering a complaint, may make recommendations about how the matter should be resolved;
- carry out whatever reviews of recruitment policies and practices it thinks are necessary;
- make other recommendations to a department; and
- report on our findings to parliament (in our Annual Report and Accounts).

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Clare Salters
Chief Executive
Civil Service Commission
Room G/08
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

e-mail: clare.salters@csc.gsi.gov.uk

You should note that the Civil Service Commission will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure

provided by the Civil Service Commission. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Foster-King