



Department for Transport

Audit Report

January 2025

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Executive Summary

The Civil Service Commission audits organisations to drive greater innovation and improvement in departmental practice, while ensuring the important principle of recruitment on merit, after fair and open competition remains the cornerstone of an effective and impartial Civil Service.

The new audit programme better reflects the differences in scale and the challenge of recruitment within the different departments and organisations that the CSC regulates.

For each audit the Commission requests evidence on six campaigns, with each to include records related to:

- o the job advert;
- o the candidate pack;
- o the sift records (with scores);
- o the interview questions;
- o the interview scores (with feedback);
- o the appointment; and
- o the chair / panel report.

and:

- requests evidence on six exceptions;
- issues a questionnaire related to diversity, innovation and SCS recruitment;
- identifies areas of concern; potential breaches to the Recruitment Principles; and clarifying evidence from the organisation required for the interim audit;
- discusses the above with each organisation at an audit meeting;
- moderates the final report with Civil Service Commissioners including, where relevant, the department's Link Commissioner;
- issues the Final Audit Report with the audit rating to the organisation; and
- follows up recommendations with the organisation to ensure the actions have been addressed.

Profile

The Department for Transport (DfT) is a ministerial department, supported by 23 agencies and public bodies. Its role is to work with its agencies and partners to support the transport network that helps the UK's businesses and gets people and goods travelling around the country. DfT plans and invests in transport infrastructure to keep the UK on the move.

- **Headcount:** 18,245 (October 2024)
- **Appointments:** 1951 (last four quarters)
- **Exceptions:** 54 (last four quarters)
- **SCS1+2 / Commissioner-led competitions:** 40/8 (last four quarters)

DfT was audited in October 2024.

The DfT Complexity Score is 3. This reflects a standard score for a medium sized department with a varied range and public profile. DfT are content with their score.

DfT was engaged throughout the audit process and audit meeting. DfT staff has attended the CSC Recruitment Principles training.

Audit Findings

The audit reviewed six campaigns and five exceptions.

Good Practice

Candidates are offered the opportunity to find out more about the selection process at a virtual event. This is especially beneficial for external candidates.

Each campaign included a 'Role Profile' document, which had a detailed description of the behaviours assessed, which again made the campaign more accessible for external candidates.

Areas for Improvement

It was sometimes not clear how candidates would be assessed at sift and interview. For example, 'Experience' was titled in the Person Specification of one of the campaigns, but with no indication about when it would be assessed. It was assessed at sift/interview. Additionally, guidance was given on what to include in CVs, but it was not made clear whether or how it would be assessed.

There were some disparities between the job adverts and 'Role Profile' documents, for example in the inclusion of strengths.

DfT should state the use of reserve lists in the job advert. In some cases, they were used without being mentioned.

Queries Raised

- The Commission asked that DfT improve the clarity of the selection process in their job adverts. There was some ambiguous language such as 'you may be assessed against any of the criteria recorded within.'

DfT explained that this was a fault in the Oleo system rather than their own drafting. The Commission responded that this is something we are currently investigating with the Government Recruitment Service (GRS).

Breaches of the Recruitment Principles

One Technical breach recorded in the audit. A further 8 Technical breaches were recorded outside of the audit.

One Technical breach was caused by a deviation to the advertised process. In one campaign, 5 behaviours were advertised in the job advert, but 8 behaviours were advertised in the 'Role Profile' document. Only 5 behaviours were assessed.

8 Technical breaches were found outside of the audit, related to 8 campaigns, where the advertised criteria were assessed differently at the interview, which disadvantaged candidates.

Exceptions

The audit reviewed the following five exceptions:

- **Exception 1:** SEO secondment (Exception 3) for 1 year.
- **Exception 2:** G7 secondment (Exception 3) for 1 year.
- **Exception 3:** AO former Civil Servant (Exception 5) from October 2023.
- **Exception 4:** G6 secondment (Exception 3) for 1 year.
- **Exception 5:** EO former Civil Servant (Exception 5) from January 2024.

Exception 1 usage

- **Total (last 4 quarters):** 5

DfT appointed five individuals through Exception 1 over the last four quarters. This is a low number of appointments considering the department's size. The Commission did not audit any Exception 1 appointments.

DfT monitors exceptions held in their central SharePoint folders.

Diversity, Innovation and SCS Recruitment

Diversity

DfT holds a membership to Inclusive Companies, a nationally recognised membership body across the diversity and inclusion sector committed to the principles of equality and opportunity for all.

DfT have a strategy in place to improve inclusivity in their job adverts e.g. they avoid Civil Service jargon such as acronyms.

DfT have attended job fairs such as Bradford Jobs Fair, hosted by the Department for Work and Pensions, to support getting people into work.

DfT networks with the British Disability Forum to improve the knowledge of the team and ensure reasonable adjustments follow industry best practice.

Innovation

DfT has had an occupational psychologist review the DfT Policy Exercise assessment to ensure that it is inclusive.

DfT provides interview questions and candidate briefs for assessments in advance of interviews.

SCS Recruitment (including External by Default)

There were 40 SCS campaigns in DfT of which 7 were Commissioner led campaigns.

Since May 2022, DfT has requested approval for 75 Ministerial exemptions to External by Default. 73 of these were approved. An additional 7 requests are awaiting Ministerial approval following the pre-election period.

Conclusions and Recommendations

One Technical breach was recorded during the audit. DfT had 8 Technical breaches from outside the audit. DfT appointed five individuals through Exception 1 which is relatively low for the size of the department. DfT is relatively proactive in their approach to diversity and aims to continually improve how they attract talent. Their SCS recruitment is mostly external, but this could be improved.

Management Action Plan

The audit identified three recommendations:

	Recommendations	Priority	Implementation Date
1	The Department for Transport should ensure it understands the rules on the use of exceptions and seeks approval where required from the Civil Service Commission.	High	June 2025
2	The Department for Transport should take steps to ensure candidates are assessed on the advertised criteria in the interview in line with the Recruitment Principles.	Medium	June 2025
3	The Department for Transport should take steps to ensure recruitment processes, outlined in job adverts, are consistent with the candidate packs to ensure all candidates can find the required information.	Low	June 2025

The Civil Service Commission will follow up with the organisation to ensure actions have been taken to address the recommendations.

Moderation Meeting

The Moderation Meeting, held on 29 October 2024, noted the large number of breaches, which would bring down the audit rating.

However, the Commissioners also noted the positive work on diversity and inclusion.

The Commissioners agreed both the recommendations and the audit rating.

Audit Rating

The audit rating is determined by compliance (breaches and Exception 1 usage); positive actions (diversity and innovation) and SCS recruitment (including external by default and Commissioner insight). The weighting will also be determined by the department size – for

example, larger departments will have more SCS staff than smaller departments who may not have any SCS staff.

	Breaches	Exception 1 Usage	Diversity	Innovation	SCS Recruitment
Scale: 1-5	1	4	4	4	3
Weight (100%)	40%	25%	10%	10%	15%
Sub Score	8	25	8	8	9
Total Score			58		
Rating	Fair				

Our Classification Systems

Complexity Score

- 5** **Most Complex** – largest most varied or currently most high-profile departments
- 4** **Complex** – large, varied or a high-profile department
- 3** **Average Complexity** – small, more focused departments, medium range and public profile
- 2** **Less Complex** – small department, low range and public profile
- 1** **Least Complex** – smallest departments with a focused remit

Considerations Informing Audit Rating

Compliance, Breaches, Exception 1 Usage, Diversity, Innovation, and SCS Recruitment.

Audit Ratings

Good	70-100
Fair	50-69
Needs Improvement	30-49
Needs Regulatory Intervention	20-29

Recommendations

Priority	Definition	Action Required
High	Non-compliance with the Recruitment Principles.	Remedial action must be taken taken urgently within an agreed timescale.
Medium	Impact on the legal requirement of the Recruitment Principles related to fair, open, and based on merit.	Remedial action should be prioritised within an agreed timetable.
Low	No, or minimal, impact on the legal Requirement of the Recruitment Principles related to fair, open, and based on merit.	Remedial action should be taken at earliest opportunity within an agreed timetable.