



Ministry of Defence

Audit Report

January 2025

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| Profile | 3 |
| Audit Findings | 4 |
| Good Practice | 4 |
| Areas for Improvement | 4 |
| Queries Raised | 4 |
| Breaches of the Recruitment Principles | 5 |
| Exceptions | 5 |
| Exception 1 Usage | 5 |
| Diversity, Innovation and SCS Recruitment | 6 |
| Diversity | 6 |
| Innovation | 6 |
| SCS Recruitment (including External by Default) | 6 |
| Conclusions and Recommendations | 6 |
| Management Action Plan | 7 |
| Moderation Meeting | 7 |
| Audit Rating | 7 |
| Our Classification Systems | 8 |

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 Ministry of Defence (MoD) is a ministerial department, supported by 25 agencies and public bodies. Its role is to work for a secure and prosperous United Kingdom with global reach and influence. MoD will protect UK people, territories, values and interests at home and overseas, through strong armed forces and in partnership with allies, to ensure UK security, support UK national interests and safeguard UK prosperity.

- **Headcount:** 36,259 (September 2024)
- **Appointments:** 4,242 (last four quarters)
- **Exceptions:** 139 (last four quarters)
- **SCS1+2 / Commissioner-led competitions:** 75/12 (last four quarters)

MoD was audited in September 2024.

The MoD Complexity Score is 5. This reflects a standard score for the largest departments with a varied or high profile. MoD is content with their score.

MoD was engaged throughout the audit process and audit meeting. MoD staff have attended the CSC Recruitment Principles training.

Audit Findings

The audit reviewed six campaigns.

Good Practice

MoD clearly states whether the CV is being assessed, including whether Experience will be assessed. Additionally, the selection process explicitly states what candidates will be assessed on at each stage of the process.

Candidate packs include detailed support on how to apply for the role, answering behaviours and how to structure the statement of suitability.

Areas for Improvement

MoD should ensure that job adverts are clear, with headings to clearly signpost candidates to the relevant information. For example, the use of 'Person Specification' would be best placed under 'Job Description' as it lists the abilities, skills and experience required for a candidate to be successful.

MoD should explain the use of lead behaviours to candidates and how it will be used during the selection process.

Queries Raised

- MoD's interview records indicated that candidates were given an 'Experience Score'. Whilst the advert stated that this would be assessed, it did not state how.

MoD confirmed that this was not assessed and it was a GRS error.

Breaches of the Recruitment Principles

One Serious breach and one Technical breach were recorded in the audit. A further three Serious breaches were recorded outside of the audit.

One Serious breach was for treating candidates unequally during the process. A candidate applying under the Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) scored 4, but was marked unsuccessful in sift. Another candidate scored 4 and progressed to the interview. MoD could not offer an explanation and accepted the breach.

One Technical breach was for assessing candidates on a behaviour not advertised.

Three Serious breaches were found outside of the audit, related to not obtaining prior approval where the salary exceeded pay band 2 minimum; approval sought from the

Commission after a secondment date expired; and treating candidates unequally due to scoring in interview records.

Exceptions

The audit reviewed the following six exceptions:

- **Exception 1:** AO temporary appointment (Exception 1) for 8 weeks.
- **Exception 2:** AO support for government employment programmes (Exception 2) for 1 year.
- **Exception 3:** EO highly specialist skills (Exception 4) for 2 years.
- **Exception 4:** G7 former Civil Servant (Exception 5) for 1 year.
- **Exception 5:** HEO transfers of organisations into the Civil Service (TUPE) (Exception 9) Permanent appointment.
- **Exception 6:** EO conversion to permanency (Exception 10) from July 2024.

Exception 1 usage

- **Total (last 4 quarters):** 52

Extremely low use of Exception 1 for a department with this complexity score. Exception 1 appointments audited evidenced use was in line with the intended purpose of Exception 1 (to fill roles urgently on time-limited work or roles of short duration to provide cover whilst open competition undertaken).

MoD recruiting processes are currently conducted by recruiting line managers (RLMs) across the organisation, in line with MoD's delegated approach. MoD require that all RLMs follow departmental policies and procedures, which include compliance with the CSC Recruitment Principles. Defence Business Services (DBS) manage most of the recruitment operations and onboarding. DBS requires RLMs to record a justification of necessity on MoD systems when using an exception. DBS also manages the onboarding / pre-employment checks.

Diversity, Innovation and SCS Recruitment

Diversity

MoD provides personalised support to applicants through the Reasonable Adjustments Support Team, where candidates can request support with any part of the application process.

MoD removed qualification requirements for broader banded roles to encourage a diverse pool of candidates.

MoD uses TEXTIO software to improve the language used in job adverts prior to materials being published to ensure inclusivity and non-bias.

MoD utilises life chances schemes: Going Forward into Employment - Veterans and Partners/Spouses; and Care Leavers Scheme (though paused for 2024 due to resourcing issues).

MoD participates in the Summer Internship Programme and the Autism Exchange Internship Programme.

Innovation

MOD has a Recruitment Improvement Network Group in which best practice ideas from all areas within the department are shared.

MOD are creating a unified Employer Value Proposition, which will have a focus around diversity and inclusion.

MOD teams have attended recruitment fairs to raise awareness of MOD as an employer, and take on feedback on recruitment practices from this.

MOD is consistently looking to improve recruitment through its Defence Civil Servant Offer.

MOD is developing a Pan Defence Skills Framework, launching 2024, which will standardise skills and job profiles.

SCS Recruitment (including External by Default)

There were 75 SCS recruitment campaigns, 73 fair and open campaigns (56 of these were SCS1 and 17 of these were SCS2), 2 non-fair and open campaigns (Minister approved and compliant).

There were 179 appointments by exemptions (since May 2022) to the EbD due to short-term interim appointments ahead of permanent recruitment, redeployment of staff at risk, cover of sickness absence, and priority resourcing to cover national security.

Conclusions and Recommendations

One Serious breach and one Technical breach were found during the audit and an additional 3 Serious breaches were recorded outside of the audit. MoD recruited four individuals through Exception 1 which is extremely low considering the size of the department. MoD are reasonably proactive in terms of diversity and inclusion, participating in life chances schemes as well as focusing on inclusion in adverts. Additionally, MoD demonstrated some innovative practices.

Management Action Plan

The audit identified three recommendations:

| | Recommendations | Priority | Implementation Date |
|---|--|----------|---------------------|
| 1 | The Ministry of Defence should ensure appointments by exception are monitored more closely to avoid the need to ensure these receive relevant Commission approvals. | High | June 2025 |
| 2 | The Ministry of Defence should take steps to improve record keeping within their sift and interview records, particularly around treating candidates equally when scoring. | Medium | June 2025 |
| 3 | The Ministry of Defence should ensure all behaviours are assessed as advertised. | Medium | 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 number of breaches, in particular one Serious breach which could not be explained by the department.

The Commissioners were broadly content with the diversity and innovation work in the department.

The Commissioners noted that SCS campaigns they had been involved in had been conducted appropriately.,

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 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Weight (100%) | 40% | 25% | 10% | 10% | 15% |
| Sub Score | 8 | 25 | 8 | 6 | 12 |
| Total Score | | | 59 | | |
| 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. |