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## FAQs AND GUIDANCE

**PLEASE NOTE THIS REFLECTS OUR CURRENT ADVICE AND GUIDANCE ON THESE MATTERS AND REPLACES ANY PREVIOUS GUIDANCE OR ADVICE GIVEN ON THE RELEVANT SUBJECTS. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS CONSULT THE CURRENT VERSION ON OUR WEBSITE; PLEASE DISCARD ANY PREVIOUS LOCALLY SAVED VERSIONS.**

**The original version of this FAQs document was first issued in July 2019. This amended version: February 2021 (see additions and new guidance in red font)**

**PLEASE READ IN FULL TO NOTE OUR ADVICE AND GUIDANCE AS WE WILL EXPECT YOU TO BE AWARE OF AND COMPLY WITH IT.**

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**Which recruitment records do we need for an audit?**

For campaigns:

We need to see:

- job adverts and any other documentation given to candidates (e.g. job description, candidate pack),
- sift records,
- interview records.

There may be a need to see other documentation as well; this is not an exhaustive list. You must be able to show, for example, how you distinguished between tied candidates. **We expect to see an audit trail for this.**

If GRS holds this information it is your responsibility to ensure you obtain it or that GRS attends the audit.

For Exceptions:

We need to see (again, not exhaustive):

- Dates and length of the appointment (for all Exception types),
- Role title and grade (all),
- Salary (all),
- Reason for use of Exception (all),
- Whether appointee has been an Exception appointee in the last 12 months before this appointment (Exceptions 1-4 inclusive),
- When appointee left Civil Service and grade on leaving (Exception 5),
- Has the scheme been approved by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) (Exception 2)?
- Has the conversion process been approved by CSC (Exception 10)?

**If we find an Exception breach at audit, it is your responsibility to request any required retrospective approval.**

<p><b>Can candidates meet relevant people from the organisation?</b> E.g. Ministers, Senior Civil Servants?</p>	<p>Yes. The process for doing this should be set out in the advertised material. It should be clear what any meeting is for and offered to <i>all</i> relevant candidates (see below extracts from the <i>Recruitment Principles</i>).</p> <p>18.<sup>1</sup> Similar opportunities must be offered to all candidates to inform themselves about the role. For example, if some short-listed candidates have the opportunity to meet key people in the Department, then all short-listed candidates must be offered the same opportunity.</p> <p>26. Where candidates are asked to meet individuals other than panel members during the competition, it must be made clear to them whether this is for briefing purposes or whether it is part of the assessment.</p> <p>Don't forget the requirement for a representative of the Commission to be present at <b>Ministerial</b> meetings when the Minister wants to meet candidates. Meetings with a Minister must be offered to all <b>shortlisted</b> candidates:</p> <p>41. The Minister may meet each of the shortlisted candidates, to discuss his or her priorities and the candidates' approach to the role, and feed back to the panel views on any issues the Minister wants the panel to test at interview. Meetings between the Minister and candidates must be attended by a representative of the Civil Service Commission.</p>
<p><b>Which Exception appointees can apply for internal roles?</b></p>	<p>Only those appointed under Exceptions 5-10 inclusive can apply for internal roles.</p> <p>Those appointed under Exceptions 1-4 inclusive cannot apply for internal roles.</p> <p>Secondees (Exception 3) cannot apply for internal Civil Service vacancies, unless they have been appointed on merit following a fair and open competition to an accredited NDPB and are being seconded from that organisation. In that case, they can apply for Civil Service-wide vacancies.</p> <p>Secondees cannot be reappointed under Exception 5</p>

<sup>1</sup> All numbers refer to paragraphs of the Recruitment Principles (2018)

	<p>unless they have previously been appointed to the Civil Service on merit through fair and open competition and this appointment meets the Exception 5 requirements.</p> <p><b>You should ensure that staff are aware of their status in this regard.</b></p>
<p><b>When do we need Commission prior approval for salary for Exceptions?</b></p>	<p>When you are appointing to a role, whatever the grade, on a salary at or above the SCS Pay Band 2 minimum. This is currently £93,000 (as at January 2021) <u>but usually changes annually</u> and you should check on this between April and August when the change is typically advertised. This salary is pro rata and it does not matter who is paying the salary or any proportion of the salary. If the appointee is being paid pro rata at or above the Pay Band 2 salary you need our prior approval to make the appointment.</p>
<p><b>If we have a Commission approved Exception appointment for a period of less than 2 years do we need approval to extend this appointment even if only up to 2 years?</b></p>	<p>Yes as Commission approval only goes up to the date given in the approval letter.</p>
<p><b>If candidates experience technical issues with online tests can we give them more time to complete them?</b></p>	<p>Yes, where you have identified that candidates have been affected by technical issues, you must extend the deadline for all candidates who have not yet started or completed the tests.</p>
<p><b>How do we run our locational campaign's merit list?</b></p>	<p>For locational campaigns you should inform candidates how you intend to run your merit list, whether you use an overall merit list or locational merit lists and then stick to this. You must appoint in merit order.</p>

**How do we manage reserve lists?**

You must appoint in merit order. You cannot pick people off a merit list out of merit order, whether or not you think they are a better "fit" than the higher placed candidates. This would be a breach of the Merit principle.

However, we would recommend removing candidates from the reserve list who have been offered the actual job they applied for, and have rejected this offer. It may be different if they have been offered a role that is similar, but with closely matching essential criteria, and in this case it may not be appropriate to remove the candidate.

You should ensure you inform candidates at the point of making an offer what you intend to do (whether remove or retain them on the reserve list) and treat all candidates the same.

If appointing to the advertised roles from the merit list, you must offer roles with the same terms and conditions as advertised. Once you have made those original appointments, and want to use a reserve list to appoint to the same role or similar roles with closely matching essential criteria you can make a reserve list appointment on different terms and conditions to the original appointment. For example if the original role was a 2 year fixed term appointment, you can offer a reserve list appointment for 1 year. Or if the original job was full time you can offer a reserve list role on a part time basis.

You may also offer a reserve list role that is "better" than the original eg the candidate was successful in a competition for a fixed term role but you now have a role that is permanent.

Your reserve lists can be shared across other government departments and agencies who recruit into the Civil Service and used by these organisations. However, any GDPR issues that arise from sharing candidates' details in this way must be considered.

<p><b>What is accreditation and Exception 7?</b></p>	<p>Non Departmental Public Bodies who do not employ civil servants may be accredited by the Commission. This means that the staff they employ can apply for Civil Service-wide campaigns. The accreditation allows NDPBs to advertise their vacancies on CS Jobs.</p> <p>Exception 7 is a mechanism for staff <b>employed at these accredited bodies</b> to transfer into the Civil Service <u>after success in a Civil Service-wide competition</u>. You cannot transfer <b>such</b> staff unless they have been successful in such a competition. It should be used for relevant accredited NDPB staff who apply for Civil Service-wide roles and are then successful and need to transfer into the Civil Service. You should report these appointments under Exception 7.</p> <p>We can advise you if a body is accredited. <b>We now publish a list of accredited bodies on our <u>website</u></b>. Please contact us if you have any queries.</p>
<p><b>Can a reserve list be extended beyond 12 months?</b></p>	<p>Only with the Commission's approval.</p>
<p><b>Can I assess "desirable" criteria?</b></p>	<p>If you want to assess a criterion then please consider whether it is actually essential rather than desirable.</p> <p>The use of desirable criteria should be clearly set out in the advertised material. We recommend that desirable criteria are only used, in the event of a strong field of candidates, as a second stage after essential criteria have been considered and there is a need to distinguish between candidates who are close after the initial consideration of essential criteria, either at sift or interview.</p> <p><b>We would ask you to consider carefully whether you should add a qualification as a desirable criterion. Our recommendation is that a qualification is either needed or it is not, and if it is needed it should be in your essential criteria or in the eligibility requirements for the role .</b></p>

<p><b>Adverts - closing dates</b></p>	<p>You cannot close adverts early or say that you will do this, for whatever reason, including getting an unexpectedly large volume of candidates. <u>This is a breach</u>. You should consider instead, in advance, how you will assess a large field, for example by using a lead sift criterion and, of course, stating this in your advert.</p>
<p><b>Can civil servants come back into the Civil Service without applying for a competition?</b></p>	<p>Yes, if the terms of Exception 5 are met. Please see the Recruitment Principles for full details.</p> <p>However, there is no right to return. This is a matter for the relevant Civil Service organisation.</p> <p>Remember that civil servants cannot return on promotion under Exception 5. They can rejoin any Civil Service organisation, it does not have to be the one that they left.</p> <p>Commission prior approvals are needed for salary (paying PB2 salary or above) and grade (for roles at PB2 and above). However, the "within 12 months" approval is not required for Exception 5 only.</p>

**How should secondees who apply to a “fair and open” competition and are appointed on merit be treated?**

All secondees should now be appointed by Exception.

Secondees cannot apply for internal Civil Service vacancies, **unless** they have been appointed on merit following a fair and open competition to an accredited NDPB and are being seconded from that organisation. In that case, they can apply for Civil Service-wide vacancies.

Secondees cannot be reappointed under Exception 5 unless they have previously been appointed to the Civil Service on merit through fair and open competition and this appointment meets the Exception 5 requirements.

Our legal advice is that there is no such thing as a “fair and open secondment” if the only option in the advert for this role was a secondment. This is because this is open to legal challenge on “openness” because candidates need to be employed and for their employer to agree to their secondment to be able to apply.

If the “fair and open” external advert gives the option of a secondment or, for example, a fixed term appointment, this will meet the openness requirement. However the above paragraphs still apply: if seconded, they should be recorded as Exceptions, they cannot apply for internal roles, Exception 5 does not apply.

The only thing that may be permissible here is that secondees appointed following a fair and open (to all) competition, may be appointed permanently to the Civil Service if they leave the employer they were seconded from, and immediately join the Civil Service the next working day. You should seek our advice on this on a case by case basis if considering permanency.

**This guidance was first produced in July 2019, and has been slightly amended since then.**

<p><b>Are these statements breaches if included in external advertisements or other advertised material?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stating that those on probation cannot apply.</li> <li>2. Stating that line manager approval or appraisals are required to apply (where this clearly relates only to civil servant applicants).</li> <li>3. Stating that candidates on disciplinary procedures cannot apply.</li> <li>4. Failure to include complaints procedures, Recruitment Principles reference and Civil Service Code reference in advertised material.</li> </ol>	<p>These were always breaches, but for several years we have not given breaches. We believe that we have given sufficient leniency on this now and from 2019-20 will consider breaching organisations where any of these are seen in adverts.</p> <p>In addition, we may breach you if you pre sift on any of these or other similar restrictive criteria <u>on the application form. Please see below.</u></p> <p>In an application form and advert it must be clear why candidates are being sifted out. If for example, your vetting process will fail anyone (whether a civil servant or not) who has been dismissed within 3 years you should state this on the form and also state this in the advert if you intend to pre sift on this. Similarly, the advert and application form should state if a certain conviction would make a candidate ineligible and you intend to pre sift on this.</p> <p>For disciplinary matters, these cases should have been found proven, unless your vetting would fail anyone with even an ongoing case. Otherwise candidates should not be sifted out for this.</p> <p>Please ask us about any other similar restrictions that you use to sift out.</p>
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<p><b>Can we appoint “near misses” to a lower grade role if we didn’t state this in the advert?</b></p>	<p>If the applicant has been found appointable at the higher grade but there are no positions available, they may be offered a role at the lower grade, in merit order, and in line with the reserve list provisions, whether or not this possibility was advertised.</p> <p>If the applicant was not found appointable at the higher graded role, they may be appointed to the lower role but only if they have been assessed at the lower role and found appointable to the lower role and this possibility (of a lower grade role) was advertised when they applied to the original, higher graded role. This can be done without approval from the Commission. It must be done in merit order and in line with the reserve list provisions.</p> <p>If the applicant was not found appointable at the higher grade and there was nothing in the advert about appointing to a lower grade role, our consent is required. We will need to see how they were assessed at the lower grade and found to be appointable to this role.</p>
<p><b>Can we turn an applicant away at interview if they do not bring a passport or driving licence?</b></p>	<p>No, there should be a wider choice of identifying documents than this.</p> <p>Candidates should be given the opportunity to produce such documentation at a later date where relevant. We do not believe that candidates should be turned away for failing to bring ID documentation to an interview.</p> <p>If a particular type of ID is required in order to enter a particular building for an interview you should consider holding interviews at an alternative location for those without access to the required ID - which may be for many reasons, or even a temporary situation.</p> <p>If it is an objectively justified requirement of the job itself to hold a passport, for example, candidates should be given the opportunity to apply for a passport when offered the role.</p>

<p><b>Qualifications</b></p>	<p>If you include a qualifications requirement, think carefully about this as you will have to exclude any candidate who does not have this.</p> <p>If you ask for e.g. Maths and English qualifications specifically, please ensure that you check that all candidates have these. Do not assume that having a degree automatically means the candidate has these qualifications.</p> <p>If you have a qualification as an essential requirement, with no alternative given, you should not sift through to the next part of the process anyone who does not have this qualification, nor should you appoint them.</p> <p><b>We would not expect candidates to be turned away from interview if they do not bring qualifications. They should have the opportunity to provide these at a later date if required.</b></p>
<p><b>Apprenticeship campaigns</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You can state that graduates cannot apply but it is your decision whether or not you want graduates to apply.</li> <li>2. You can state that if the applicant has a <u>similar type of qualification</u> (eg business administration) to the level of qualification that the apprenticeship is offering or to a higher level, they cannot apply. This must be for a similar type of qualification though, not excluding all qualifications at particular levels. For example, an engineering qualification would not exclude an applicant from applying to a business administration campaign.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Non-open/exclusionary criteria</b></p>	<p>You cannot state that candidates must live in a particular location. You can "particularly welcome" applications from people in particular locations.</p> <p>You cannot require, for example, experience "as a civil servant", "working with a minister", "working in a particular department". Instead, please think about the skills gained from such experience that you believe are essential and express what these are. For example, "experience working with senior staff/stakeholders to tight deadlines" could be used instead of "working with a minister".</p>
<p><b>Rolling campaigns</b></p>	<p>You can state in a rolling campaign, <u>and only in a rolling campaign</u>, that applicants cannot reapply within a six month period. You <i>cannot</i> have a blanket statement that they cannot reapply.</p> <p>You cannot state that you will close any campaign, <i>whether a rolling campaign or not</i>, when you have received sufficient applicants. You must give notice of closure of a rolling campaign (we recommend at least 2 weeks).</p> <p>You should give guidance in your advert about when you will sift and interview.</p> <p>You must appoint in tranches by time order, in merit order. Do not mix up your tranches. This will lead to appointments being made out of merit order.</p>
<p><b>Conflicts of interest</b></p>	<p>It is not appropriate for a family member to be on a recruitment panel. This raises Civil Service Code and Recruitment Principles issues.</p> <p>The Recruitment Principles state:</p> <p><i>Panel members must declare any conflict of interest including prior knowledge of any applicant. It is for the appointing Department to decide, in accordance with its own rules of conduct, how to proceed where it appears that an actual or perceived conflict of interest may arise. A record must be kept of how any such conflicts were dealt with.</i></p> <p>Therefore, where a candidate is known to panel member/s please record how this conflict has been managed. Even if a panel member feels they will not be influenced by this</p>

	<p>knowledge, the conflict and the steps taken to manage it still need to be recorded.</p>
<p><b>Security clearance</b></p>	<p>This should be considered sufficiently before you advertise. We have allowed some appointments to be made at a lower clearance to that advertised because of Covid-19 issues, but going forward we will be considering breaches where you want to appoint at a different level <b>to that advertised</b>. For example it will be a breach to appoint with CTC clearance when you actually advertised that SC was required. This is because you have potentially narrowed your field of applicants by advertising SC in the first place</p> <p><b>Please contact us if you are considering making it a requirement in a campaign that candidates hold a certain clearance level already.</b></p>
<p><b>Joint grades campaigns</b></p>	<p>These can be difficult to manage and can result in merit order breaches. If at all possible we recommend you avoid running such campaigns.</p> <p>If you do have to run such a competition, you must state how you are going to run it and which graded posts candidates will be considered for. You must offer posts in merit order. When using merit lists and reserve lists you must consider candidates who have passed at the higher grade for any roles first, including lower grades where the higher graded posts are all filled, unless candidates have made clear they only wish to be considered for the higher grade.</p>
<p><b>Agency workers</b></p>	<p><b>Agency workers are employed by their agency. This means that they are not Exceptions and they cannot be converted to permanency under Exception 10.</b></p> <p><b>Agency workers cannot apply for internal campaigns. They can apply for external campaigns only.</b></p>

<p><b>SDIP appointments</b></p>	<p>Summer Diversity Interns, appointed under Exception 1, may be extended by departments or agencies beyond the term of their SDIP appointment (including any SDIP approved extension period), but if you want to extend a SDIP appointment beyond the SDIP period and approved extension period, you should ask for our prior approval, as we regard this as another Exception appointment within 12 months. Similarly, if SDIPs are moving to a different role you must get our prior approval.</p>
<p><b>Holding candidates, campaign issues.</b></p>	<p>Candidates can only be held at sift, having passed sift but not yet been invited to interview, <i>for the campaign to which they have applied</i>. Candidates must be invited to interview in merit order.</p> <p>There should not be a "reserve list at sift" ie candidates who have been successful at sift but gone no further in a campaign, cannot be carried over straight to interview in a second campaign, to which they have not applied, bypassing sift.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances, candidates can carry their applications forward to an identical campaign (<i>with completely identical criteria only</i>) if, for example, the original campaign has been cancelled or roles are no longer available, but candidates should also have the option to put in a new application for the second campaign should they wish to do this. We would ask you to seek our advice if you are proposing to carry applications forward in this way.</p>