



An Roinn Airgeadais  
Department of Finance

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**Circular 6/2001: Confined competition for promotion to Assistant Principal (standard scale) posts in the Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners**

A Dhuine Uasail.

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to announce the holding of a confined competition for promotion to Assistant Principal (standard scale) posts in the Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners (OCSLAC). Successful candidates, who will undertake a two year programme aimed at providing experience of the implementation and use of a range of best practice recruitment and selection techniques, will be promoted into the OCSLAC on the basis of secondment, after which they will return to fill Assistant Principal vacancies in their parent departments.

**Job context**

2. The OCSLAC is responsible for all recruitment to the civil service and for selection, by open competition, to certain other public service senior management and professional posts, mainly in the Local Authorities and Health Boards. The Office is committed to providing an excellent recruitment and selection service, and has made significant advances in this area through the use of job analysis and the introduction of best practice techniques, including competency-based interviewing, job simulation exercises and a range of psychometric tests.

3. The OCSLAC now has a number of promotional opportunities at Assistant Principal (standard scale) level, which it intends to fill by means of an interdepartmental competition. Successful candidates, who will take up appointment on the basis of two-year secondments to the OCSLAC, will be assigned to the Assessment Services Division, which is responsible for leading the development, implementation, quality assurance and review of selection mechanisms used by the Commission.

**Job description and details of programme**

4. During the two-year period participants will be primarily involved in supporting the delivery of the interview programmes of the OCSLAC. They will also have the opportunity to

**TO ALL DEPARTMENTS**

[For department, read department/office throughout this circular.]

become involved in a variety of recruitment-related activities, including many competency-based initiatives, and to participate in a range of projects that develop understanding and skills in the area of recruitment and selection.

5. During the course of the programme, successful candidates will:

- Receive comprehensive training in interviewing, including competency-based interviewing, and in other assessment-related techniques such as psychometric testing.
- Gain extensive experience of interviewing and reporting on a wide range of high level boards conducted by the OCSLAC. This will require participants to perform the role of Chairperson, Interviewer and Representative of the Commission.
- Develop skills in the training and development of new interview board members.
- Participate in new initiatives such as the development of feedback systems to candidates.
- Contribute to the development of new selection techniques for the civil service.
- Gain experience of the process involved in managing recruitment campaigns.
- Contribute to new and ongoing systems of evaluating selection procedures e.g. “equality-proofing”.

### **Personal requirements**

6. Suitable candidates will have a keen interest in developing their knowledge and skills in the area of recruitment, assessment and selection. They will also have a good appreciation of HR practice and its development within the civil service. In addition candidates must possess some or all of the following abilities/qualities:

- Good analytical skills.
- Excellent interpersonal, communication (oral and written), and presentational skills.
- Proven people management skills, keen intelligence, and sound judgement.
- Ability to be decisive and an appreciation of consensus decision-making.
- Capacity to work independently and use own initiative.
- Openness to learning and good self-awareness.
- Strong customer focus and a commitment to quality service.
- Knowledge of the use of IT and an appreciation of the impact of IT on business.

### **Eligibility**

7. In order to be eligible to compete, prospective candidates must,

(a) on the date they apply for the competition be serving in an established capacity in the civil service (or on secondment to FÁS from the civil service) in one of the following grades:

- Higher Executive Officer (including HEO/Systems Analyst)
- Administrative Officer
- Auditor in the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General
- Senior Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Systems Analyst in the IT and Telecommunications Division at Garda Headquarters of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Social Welfare Officer in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

**AND**

(b) on **1 June 2001** have at least three years' service in their existing grade or an aggregate of three years' service in eligible grades (set out at (a)), except in the case of a Social Welfare Officer or a Higher Executive Officer or an Administrative Officer who has prior service in the Social Welfare Officer grade or the former grade of Higher Officer of Customs & Excise (see paragraph 8).

8. Social Welfare Officers will be required to have not less than eight years' service to be eligible for the competition and may count service, up to a maximum of five years, in the grade of Executive Officer as service in the Social Welfare Officer grade for this purpose. Former Social Welfare Officers and former Higher Officers of Customs & Excise who have been recertified as Higher Executive Officers and/or appointed as Administrative Officers **and** who have less than three years' service in the Higher Executive Officer and/or Administrative Officer grades, will be required to have an aggregate of at least eight years' service in eligible grades to be eligible for the competition. Service in the former grade of Higher Officer of Customs & Excise will count as service in an eligible grade. Former Higher Officers of Customs & Excise may count up to five years service in the Executive Officer grade or in the former grades of Officer and Indoor Officer of Customs & Excise as service in the Higher Officer grade for this purpose.

9. Officers on probation are ineligible unless they would have been eligible had they remained in their previous grade and they have served continuously since satisfactorily completing a probation period; special leave without pay does not break continuity of service for this purpose.

10. Officers on special leave with pay may apply, if otherwise eligible. Officers on special leave without pay (e.g. to serve with the EU) may be eligible; Personnel Sections should check cases not covered by Department of Finance Circular 33/91 with this department. Officers on career break may apply if the terms of their career break conform with the terms of Department of Finance Circular 18/98 and if they are otherwise eligible.

### **Conditions of appointment**

11. Appointments will be to the grade of Assistant Principal (standard scale) and will be subject to the usual conditions governing such appointments. While officers may be requested to remain with the OCSLAC after the initial two-year secondment period, in general, it is expected that they will, at that stage, return to their parent department to fill an AP vacancy.

### **The competition**

12. Selection will be by means of competitive interview, which will incorporate an exercise/presentation. The interview board will be set up by the Civil Service Commission and may, having examined the applications of all candidates by reference to the nature of the duties and the personal requirements described in paragraphs 4 to 6 above, decide that not all of the candidates will be invited to attend before the board for interview. In addition, the board may, at its discretion, require candidates to undergo a preliminary interview and invite only those who reach the requisite standard to attend for competitive interview to select the candidates best qualified for appointment.

13. In placing in order of merit the candidates considered best qualified for appointment, the Civil Service Commission will give credit for proficiency in both Irish and English, in accordance with Department of Finance Circular 30/90 and Department of the Public Service Circular 43/75, and any other relevant instruction to candidates qualified for such credit.

#### **Applications**

14. Candidates should obtain their application forms from their own Personnel Section. The Civil Service Commission will supply application forms to Personnel Sections on request. Candidates should return their completed application forms directly to the **Chief Executive Officer, Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners, 1 Lower Grand Canal Street, Dublin 2**, to reach there as soon as possible but not later than **5.30 p.m. on Thursday 3 May 2001**. This closing date must be strictly observed. Candidates invited to interview must be prepared to make themselves available at short notice. It is expected that interviews will take place in late May/early June 2001.

15. The Commission will contact Personnel Sections in respect of candidates being called to competitive interview. For each such candidate the Personnel Officer will be required:

(a) to certify that the candidate

- has worked well and been satisfactory in his or her present grade,
- has been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- fulfils the conditions of eligibility set out in paragraphs 7 to 10 above,

**AND**

(b) to send to the Commission an assessment of the candidate's suitability for promotion to Assistant Principal (standard scale) on a form to be supplied by the Commission.

16. Candidates should note that eligibility to compete, and health and the level of sick leave, are not verified by the Civil Service Commission until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment. So admission to the competition does not imply that a candidate meets the health and sick leave criteria. In considering a candidate's suitability for appointment from the point of view of health and sick leave, the Commission will have regard to Department of the Public Service Circular 34/76, as amended by Department of Finance Circulars 32/91 and 33/99. Candidates with doubts about any aspect of their eligibility should clarify their position with their Personnel Section before applying.

#### **Circulation and further information**

17. Personnel Sections should bring this circular to the notice of all eligible officers serving in their department and associated offices without delay, including officers on maternity leave, career break and other relevant forms of leave. If candidates have any queries about this circular, they should contact their Personnel Section. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed to the Civil Service Commission.

Mise le meas,

Joe McGovern  
Assistant Secretary