



An Roinn Airgeadais  
Department of Finance

E.100/2/01

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**Circular 14/2001: Confined competition for promotion to Investigator posts in the Offices of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner**

A Dhuine Uasail.

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to announce the holding of a confined competition, to be run by the Civil Service Commission, for promotion to no more than three posts of Investigator in the Offices of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner. A panel of qualified candidates will be established from the competition from which future vacancies may be filled. It is envisaged that the panel established from this competition will last for a period of one year.

**Background**

2. The Office of the Ombudsman is an independent Office established under the Ombudsman Act, 1980. The Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints about administrative actions, or inaction, adversely affecting persons or bodies in their dealings with government departments, local authorities, health boards and An Post.

The Office of the Information Commissioner is an independent Office established under the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. The Act gives members of the public the right of access to information held by certain public bodies, including access to their personal records and enables them to have such records corrected. The Office of the Information Commissioner reviews decisions of public bodies and plays a key role in the implementation of the Act.

**Job description**

3. The appointee will be working in a demanding but stimulating environment. S/he will be part of a team supporting the Ombudsman/Information Commissioner in carrying out his functions including:

- processing individual complaints / reviews.
- conducting investigations.
- promoting good practice and
- monitoring of performance by public bodies.

**TO ALL DEPARTMENTS**

[For Department, read Department/Office throughout this Circular.]

### Essential Requirements

4. Candidates must:

- be capable of analysing, evaluating and integrating a range of complex information (including legislation) in a rational and objective manner;
- be able to adopt an open-minded approach to issues and be committed to forming their own opinion on issues;
- demonstrate good judgement and sound decision-making ability;
- demonstrate a detailed approach to information handling;
- be able to organise and schedule multiple tasks in a timely and resource efficient manner;
- have a high degree of interpersonal skills and be able to demonstrate excellent oral and written communication skills;
- demonstrate assertiveness, an ability to put forward views, and constructively challenge others when appropriate;
- demonstrate commitment and a willingness to put in extra effort and display a high level of persistence in ensuring all work is completed to a high standard;
- otherwise possess the requisite knowledge and ability and be suitable to enter on the discharge of the duties of the position.

### Eligibility

5. Candidates must, on the date they apply for the competition:

(i) be serving in an established capacity in the Civil Service as a Higher Executive Officer or an Administrative Officer or in a departmental grade listed in paragraph 2 of the Appendix to this circular, or be serving as a Higher Executive Officer on secondment to FAS from the Civil Service

and

(ii) on **1 April 2001**, have not less than three years' service in their existing grade or an aggregate of three years' service in eligible grades, 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 6 below). In this context, credit is given for all job-sharing service on the same basis as full-time service.

6. 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, must 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.

7. Officers who, other than on an allowance basis, are serving as HEO/Systems Analyst or who have prior service as HEO/Systems Analyst may count such service as HEO service for the purpose of paragraph 5 above.

8. Officers on probation are not eligible to compete except where they would have been eligible had they remained in their previous grade and they have served continuously since satisfactorily completing a period of probation. Periods of special leave without pay should not be considered to break continuity of service for this purpose.

9. 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 provisions of Department of Finance Circular 18/98 and if they are otherwise eligible.

### **Conditions of appointment**

10. Appointment will be to the grade of Investigator and will be subject to the usual conditions governing such appointments. On appointment, the officer will be assigned to either the Office of the Ombudsman or the Office of the Information Commissioner. After a period of service in one Office he/she may be assigned to a position in the other Office. The officer may be required to perform other duties assigned from time to time as appropriate to the grade of Investigator. An officer whose service is not satisfactory, or who opts not to remain in the post, may, at any time up to the end of one year, be returned to his or her former Department/Office or duties. Any extra payment arising from the assignment would then cease.

### **The competition**

11. Selection will be by competitive interview, which will encompass a written test, consisting of a work related case study paper, conducted by the Civil Service Commission. The interview board may, having examined the applications of all candidates by reference to the nature of the duties and the general and personal requirements set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 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 candidate(s) best qualified for appointment. The interview(s) will be conducted by a board(s) to be set up by the Civil Service Commission.

12. 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 the award of such credit.

### **Applications**

13. Candidates should obtain their application forms from their own Personnel Section. The Civil Service Commission will supply application forms to Personnel Sections on request.

Applications should be addressed directly to **The Chief Executive Officer, Civil Service Commission, 1 Lower Grand Canal Street, Dublin 2**, to reach there as soon as possible but not later than **5.30 p.m. Tuesday 6 March 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 during the last week of March 2001.

14. The Civil Service Commission will contact Personnel Sections in respect of candidates being called to competitive interview. For each candidate called to competitive interview the Personnel Officer will be required to certify that the candidate:

- has been satisfactory and worked well in his or her present grade.
- has been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- fulfils the conditions of eligibility specified in paragraphs 5-9 of this circular.

15. 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. In this regard, admission to the competition and placement on a panel do not imply that a candidate meets the health and sick leave criteria. In considering a candidate's suitability for appointment in terms 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

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

Misc le meas.

Joe McGovern  
Assistant Secretary

**APPENDIX - GRADES ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE**

1. The general service grades of Administrative Officer and Higher Executive Officer.
2. The following departmental grades at Higher Executive Officer/Administrative Officer level:

Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General  
Auditor

Department of Foreign Affairs  
Third Secretary

Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas  
Senior Clerk

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform - IT and Telecommunications  
Division at Garda Headquarters  
Systems Analyst

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs  
Social Welfare Officer

3. Certain officers serving in FÁS as specified in paragraph 5(i) of the circular.