



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

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Circular 37/2001: Competition for promotion to Higher Executive Officer posts in Dublin

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to refer to the attached scheme of promotion to Higher Executive Officer, which has been agreed between the Official and Staff Sides. Under the terms of the schemes, this circular announces a Civil Service Commission competition to set up panels for interdepartmental promotion to Higher Executive Officer posts. Posts in the Dublin area only will be filled from this competition. Staff who meet the eligibility requirements, irrespective of location, may compete for these vacancies. Officers interested in competing should study the scheme, especially the sections on eligibility (paragraphs 10-13) and selection procedures (paragraphs 17-19).

2. In providing for promotion to Dublin vacancies only, this competition departs from previous practice whereby such competitions have provided for the filling of vacancies in all locations, not just Dublin. The change reflects the following supply and demand factors:

- Under the terms of Circular 9/2000, a panel was established which had a duration extending from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001. While this panel was exhausted for purposes of filling vacancies in the Dublin area well before its nominal expiry date, there are still staff on the panel who refused vacancies in the Dublin area but are interested in vacancies in other locations. These staff have prior rights to any vacancies which arise in such locations and which are due to be filled from the interdepartmental panels set under the scheme in the period ending 31 December 2001 over staff appointed to the interdepartmental panels from any subsequent competition.
- Under the terms of Circular 2/2001, a panel was established which had a duration extending from 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2002. While this panel is likely to be exhausted for purposes of filling vacancies in the Dublin area later this year, there are still staff on the panel who refused vacancies in the Dublin area but are interested in vacancies in other locations. These staff have prior rights (subject to discharging any rights due to staff appointed to the panel established under Circular 9/2000) to any vacancies which arise in such locations and which are due to be filled from the interdepartmental panels set under the scheme in the period ending 31 December 2002, over staff appointed to the interdepartmental panels from any subsequent competition.

TO ALL DEPARTMENTS [For department read department/office throughout this circular.]

- As a result there are likely to be sufficient people placed on panels already in existence to meet any demand for filling posts in locations other than Dublin for the period to 31 December 2002.
- However, the demands by Departments for staff to fill vacancies in the Dublin area from interdepartmental panels are such that it is necessary to establish a further panel since, as mentioned above, the panel composed under Circular 9/2000 is exhausted for this purpose and the panel composed under Circular 2/2001 is likely to be exhausted for this purpose later this year, well before the nominal expiry date of 31 December 2002.
- Thus while there is a necessity to provide for the establishment of a further panel to fill vacancies in the Dublin area, there would be no purpose served in announcing a competition which would, nominally, be used to fill vacancies outside Dublin since the prior rights of staff appointed to the earlier panels interested in such locations would have to be met and, as indicated above, the number of such staff is such that it will be likely to be more than adequate to meet the demand.
- If, however, there is a shortfall in the supply of staff on existing panels to meet the demand for filling promotional posts in any location(s) outside the Dublin area before the nominal expiry date of the panel set up under Circular 2/2001 (i.e. 31 December 2002), then further competition(s) to establish promotion panels for these locations will be held. As with the current competition, staff serving in any location will be able to compete in such a competition.

Duration of panels

3. The nominal duration of the panels established as a result of this competition will be identical with that of the panels established under Circular 2/2001 (i.e. 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2002). As mentioned above, however since the panels already established under that circular are likely to be exhausted for the purposes of filling posts in Dublin later this year, they will become valid from the exhaustion of the panels set up under that circular.

4. The validity period of the panels set up under the terms of this circular will extend to 31 December 2002, or until the exhaustion dates of those panels, whichever is the earlier.

The competition

5. Selection will be by means of a competition run by the Civil Service Commission. The competition will be based on a competency methodology and will have three stages:

- **Stages 1 and 2** will be held on the same day on 2 October 2001.
- **Stage 1** consists of a Multiple-Choice Job Scenario Questionnaire. The test content is directly relevant to the role of the Higher Executive Officer. Part A incorporates analysis, detailing incidents relating to interpreting, checking and analysis of trends in data. Candidates may be presented with information in different formats, for example, charts,

memos, letters etc. Part B is organisational in nature, focusing on incidents relating to organising and planning, prioritising and monitoring resources, incidents relating to summarising and presenting information, and incidents relating to people management and managing relationships. Again candidates may be presented with information in different formats for this part of the test.

- **Exemptions from re-sitting Stage 1 tests:** Exemptions from re-sitting Stage 1 tests are available for candidates who have qualified on these tests during the competition held in February 2001 (Circular 2/2001). Candidates may, of course, if they wish, re-sit this stage under the competition announced in this circular. Candidates who choose to avail of these exemptions will retain the scores they achieved on Stage 1 of that competition and will progress to Stage 2 without being required to re-sit the Stage 1 tests. The same qualifying standard at Stage 1 will be required for this competition as for the previous competition. This decision cannot subsequently be reversed in the event of a poor result at the re-sit.
 - **Stage 2** consists of a project exercise divided into three separate parts. Candidates may be presented with an information pack containing several pieces of information relevant to a set of issues a Higher Executive Officer might be faced with on a typical day and are required to answer the questions based on the information provided. Part A focuses on deciding, Part B on planning and Part C on communicating. **Only candidates who reach a satisfactory standard at Stage 1 will have their Stage 2 scripts corrected. Only candidates who reach a satisfactory standard on each test at Stage 2 will be called to the next stage.**
 - **Exemptions from re-sitting Stage 2 tests:** Exemptions from re-sitting Stage 2 tests are also available for candidates who have qualified on these tests during the competition held in February 2001 (Circular 2/2001). The same conditions as for Stage 1 exemptions apply.
 - **Conditions of exemptions:** Candidates who choose to avail of these exemptions are still required to complete an application form and must indicate on the application form if they wish to avail of an exemption from Stage 1 tests and/or Stage 2 tests. An exemption from re-sitting the test cannot be given unless candidates supply their PPS (RSI) number.
 - **Stage 3** is expected to commence in December 2001. It involves a competitive competency-based interview and an oral presentation to a Board. The presentation will be based primarily on the candidate's recommendations following their work on the project exercise, together with an opportunity for Board Members to question the candidate on the recommendations made. Candidates may be interviewed in "batches", with the highest-placed qualifiers at Stage 2 forming the first batch, and further batches likewise called by reference to their Stage 2 placing. The number of candidates per batch and the interval between the interviewing of batches are matters to be determined by the Commission. Candidates will be called to interview strictly according to the order of merit from Stage 2. The interview results and panel placing will issue on a board-by-board basis.
6. Further details of the format and structure of the different stages of the competition will be issued to candidates, where appropriate, in advance.

Applications

7. Candidates should get their application forms from the Personnel Section of their serving department. The 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, or by e-mail to HEODublin@csclac.irlgov.ie, to arrive **not later than 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday 28 August 2001. This closing date must be strictly observed, since late applications will not be accepted.** . An applicant who has not heard from the Commission by **21 September 2001** should contact that office immediately. **Candidates should use only one means of application, i.e. hard copy or e-mail, not both.**

8. The Civil Service Commission will contact Personnel Sections in respect of candidates being called to Stage 3 of the competition (structured interview and oral presentation). For each such candidate the Personnel Officer will be required;

(i) 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 10-13 of the scheme,

and

(ii) to supply the candidate with an assessment of his or her suitability for appointment on a form to be supplied by the Commission. **The candidate will be required to present the completed assessment form to the interview board on the day of the interview.**

9. Eligibility to compete, and health and level of sick leave, are not verified by the Commission until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment after Stage 3. So 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 Circular 32/91. Candidates with doubts about any aspect of their eligibility should clarify their position with their Personnel Section before applying.

Circulation and further information

10. 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.

Mise le meas,

Joe McGovern
Assistant Secretary

Scheme of interdepartmental promotion to posts at Higher Executive Officer level

[Note: The scheme as set out below has been adapted to reflect the fact that the current competition is to fill posts in Dublin only.]

Definitions

1. A "department" includes any office such as the Office of Public Works or the Central Statistics Office which is normally treated as a separate nominating unit for interdepartmental competitions. It also includes FÁS.

A "fillable vacancy" only arises in respect of posts which are to be filled by promotion. It includes newly created posts, along with vacancies in existing posts in the grades and departments/bodies listed below:

- (a) All departments: Higher Executive Officer.
- (b) Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas: Senior Clerk.
- (c) FÁS: Higher Executive Officer.

Posts which have traditionally been filled by special interdepartmental competition shall not reckon as vacancies for the purposes of this scheme.

Scope and application of the scheme

2. The following posts will be filled under the scheme:

- (a) Every third fillable vacancy in the grade of Higher Executive Officer in all departments except specialist posts in the Land Registry/Registry of Deeds.
- (b) Every third fillable vacancy in the grade of Senior Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- (c) Fillable vacancies in the grade of Higher Executive Officer in departments having an import quota; the number of vacancies to be filled in this manner will be determined by reference to the import quota assigned to individual departments (see paragraph 14).
- (d) One fillable vacancy in the grade of Higher Executive Officer in FÁS for each officer serving in FÁS who is appointed under the terms of this scheme.

3. Departments which have been assigned an export quota of two or more will substitute internal promotions for panel promotions; the number of such substitutions will equal the export quota. In implementing these substitutions, departments will alternate actual promotions from the panel with (internal) "substitution" promotions. This alternating arrangement, which will commence with a panel promotion, is designed to ensure that departments do not experience a sudden or excessive reduction in their intake of interdepartmental appointees.

4. In calculating the sequence of vacancies for these purposes, posts filled under paragraph 31 will not reckon.

5. An interdepartmental competition will be held to fill all vacancies within the meaning of the scheme. Two panels of qualified candidates placed in order of merit will be set up as follows:

- **Panel B:** This will be the main panel; it will be formed from among all qualified candidates. The panel will be drawn from in order of merit to fill posts under paragraph 2(a), (b) and (d).
- **Panel A:** This panel will be formed from among all qualified candidates on Panel B and who are Executive Officers whose parent departments (when they apply for the competition) are assigned an export quota (see paragraph 14). The number of candidates on this panel from any department will not exceed four times' that department's export quota. The panel will drawn from in order of merit to fill every post falling to be filled under paragraph 2(c).

Appointments will be made from the panels strictly in accordance with the order in which vacancies fall to be filled.

6. Where a vacancy falls to be filled from both Panel A and Panel B, it will be filled from Panel A, thereby also discharging the liability to Panel B.

7. If Panel A is exhausted before all import quotas have been satisfied, any subsequent Panel A liabilities will be met by appointment of candidates from exporting departments placed on Panel B but excluded from Panel A due to the export quota limitation set out in paragraph 5. If no such candidates remain on Panel B at that stage, Panel A liabilities will be met by appointment of candidates from Panel B in order of merit. If Panel B is exhausted prior to its expiry date the Official and Staff Sides will consult on the arrangements to apply for the outstanding period.

8. If a post cannot be filled from a panel **on grounds of grade** or because it is in **FÁS** (see paragraphs 24-28), it may then be filled internally in the department concerned and this will be deemed to satisfy that department's obligation to the panel in that instance.

9. An Executive Officer promoted to Higher Executive Officer under Department of Finance Circular 30/65 or any later circular containing similar provisions governing the return of an officer to fill a post of Higher Executive Officer in his/her parent department, will, on his or her return to such department, be regarded as filling the next vacancy which would normally be due to be filled from Panel B.

Eligibility

10. Candidates must,

- (a) on the date they apply for the competition be serving in an established capacity in the civil service as an Executive Officer or a Junior Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas or an Executive Officer on secondment to FÁS from the civil service,
and
- (b) on 1 January 2002 have not less than three years' service in their existing grade or an aggregate of three years' service in eligible grades or not less than five years' total service of which not less than two years was in an eligible grade (set out at (a)). Service in the former grades of Officer and Indoor Officer of Customs & Excise in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners will count as service in an eligible grade.

11. 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.

12. 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 their career break conforms with the terms of Department of Finance Circular 18/98 and if they are otherwise eligible.

13. The eligibility of any particular grade or group for appointment to any grade under the competition held under this scheme applies exclusively in the context of the scheme.

Import/export quotas

14. Departments will be assigned (and informed of) an import/export quota based on promotion trends to Higher Executive Officer. In determining these quotas, all Executive Officer to Higher Executive Officer promotions (including promotions to HEO/Systems Analyst) will be counted. The Land Registry/Registry of Deeds, the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas and FÁS will not be assigned an import/export quota.

15. Import/export quotas will be calculated from time to time, generally on an annual basis. Departments which in the preceding period of three years had more or less than the average number of promotions to HEO (calculated by multiplying the annual average of eligible officers in each department by the ratio which the number of promotions to the grade service-wide bore to the number of eligible officers service-wide) will be assigned import or export quotas respectively, the satisfaction of which will make good the departures from the average. Quotas below 0.5 will be disregarded and other quotas will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

16. Where a department has been divided or amalgamated during the three-year period referred to in paragraph 15, that department's quota will relate to the functional area for which it is now responsible. The quota will be calculated by reference to the numbers of eligible officers and promotions in the individual branch/division involved in the interdepartmental reorganisation.

Selection procedures

17. Selection will be by means of a Civil Service Commission competition. The final stage of the competition will be a competitive interview and oral presentation, conducted by a board or boards set up by the Commission. This stage will determine which candidates are fully qualified for appointment. Panels will be drawn up, in order of merit, from among these qualified candidates.

18. In ranking the candidates considered best qualified for appointment, the Commission will give credit for proficiency in both Irish and English, in accordance with Department of the Public Service Circular 43/75 and Department of Finance Circular 30/90 and any other relevant instruction to candidates qualified for the award of such credit on or before the date of the competitive interview, or such other date as may be agreed between the Official and Staff Sides.

19. Competitive interview boards will consist of board members who have been fully trained in the structured interview technique.

Appointments

20. Offers of appointment will be made from the panels in order of merit. An officer will have a maximum of five working days after receipt of an offer to accept or reject it. Appointments will be in an acting capacity for at least one year and will be subject to the usual conditions governing such appointments. Officers not promoted at the expiry of the panels will have no claim to promotion thereafter because of their having been on the panels. In the event of reversion an officer will return to fill a vacancy in the grade previously held in the parent department just prior to promotion. The next person on the relevant panel will be appointed to the vacancy thus created without affecting the sequence of appointments in that department provided the reversion occurred before the expiry of the relevant panel.

21. Officers on the panels will continue to be eligible for promotion in the normal course in their own department but in the event of any such officer accepting an offer of appointment made in the normal course or under the scheme or to a grade covered by the scheme he or she will no longer be offered appointment to posts at or below that level under the scheme.

22. Any candidate who (a) resigns, retires, is suspended or dismissed from his/her post or (b) is not qualified by the selection board as being suitable for promotion to Higher Executive Officer level, will not be eligible to be placed on the panels.

23. Knowledge of Irish: It is recognised that the performance of duties in the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and the Civil Service Commission through the medium of Irish could present special difficulties. Those departments may therefore, as an exceptional arrangement, satisfy themselves as to the competence of any candidate due to be assigned to them to undertake such duties through the medium of Irish. If further appraisal of such competence is sought, it will be effected by the Commission on the basis of a test held specifically for this purpose. An officer found not to be qualified for appointment because of this special Irish language requirement will retain his or her place on the relevant panel. If on expiry of that panel the officer has not been promoted and it is established that he or she would have been promoted from the panel but for the special Irish language requirement, then that officer will be offered the first appointment falling to be filled from the next equivalent panel set up under this scheme to which the special Irish language requirement does not apply.

Refusal of appointments

24. Appointments will be offered, in order of merit, to officers on the panels set up as a result of the interdepartmental competition. An officer may refuse an appointment on grounds of grade offered or on the basis that the post offered is in FÁS.

25. An officer who refuses appointment **on grounds of the grade offered** will not be offered an appointment to that grade again but will remain on the panel for appointments to other grades.

26. An officer who refuses an appointment **in FÁS** will not be offered another appointment in that body but will remain on the panel for other appointments.

27. An appointment refused under the provisions of paragraph 24 will be offered successively in order of merit to the remaining candidates on the appropriate panel until the post is filled. If the appropriate panel is Panel A and if no candidate accepts the position, it will be offered to those candidates from exporting departments placed on Panel B but excluded from Panel A because of the export quota limitation referred to in paragraph 5. If there are no candidates from exporting departments remaining on Panel B at that stage or if none of them accept the position, the appointment will be offered in order of merit to those remaining on Panel B. In the event that the post cannot be filled in this way and **the appointment has been refused on grounds of grade or because it is in FÁS**, it will be filled by internal promotion in the department concerned and that department will be deemed to have satisfied its panel liabilities in respect of the vacancy in question,

28. An officer who refuses an offer of appointment under the provisions of paragraph 24 and who has not been promoted at the expiry of the relevant panel will have no claim to promotion thereafter because of having been on the panel.

Career development and training

29. An officer promoted from a departmental grade to a general service grade, or vice versa, under this scheme will have career development opportunities equivalent to other members of the grade. Subject to the demands of the job having priority, any desirable induction training (formal and on-the-job) should also be provided as soon as practicable.

Steering Committee

30. A Steering Committee, representative of the Official and Staff Sides, will monitor the progress of the scheme with a view to resolving individual problems and addressing general issues which may arise in relation to its operation.

Reservations

31. The Minister for Finance reserves the right to suspend or modify the scheme in the event of redundancy which has to be dealt with on a general service-wide basis. The Minister also reserves the right to arrange for the filling, by separate interdepartmental competition or otherwise, of vacancies at Higher Executive Officer level for which special qualifications are deemed necessary or in respect of which other special circumstances exist. Before an interdepartmental competition is initiated in any case where special circumstances are deemed to exist, there shall be consultation between the Official and Staff Sides.

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