



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

E161/1/02

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Circular 37/2002: Competition for promotion to Assistant Principal (standard scale) level

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to refer to the attached scheme of promotion to Assistant Principal (standard scale) which has been agreed between the Official and Staff Sides. Under the terms of the scheme, this circular announces a Civil Service Commission competition to set up panels for interdepartmental promotion to Assistant Principal (standard scale) and certain related grades. Officers interested in competing should study the scheme, especially the sections on eligibility (paragraphs 11-16) and selection procedures (paragraphs 21-25).

Duration of panels

2. Vacancies that arise after 1 January 2003 will be filled from panels set up from this competition.
3. The validity period of the panels formed under the terms of this circular will extend to 30 June 2004, or until the exhaustion dates of those panels, whichever is the earlier.

The competition

4. The Civil Service is an equal opportunity employer. Promotion within the service is made on the basis of qualifications and the ability to carry out the responsibilities of the grade or post.

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 two stages:

- **Stage 1** is a qualifying stage and will consist of (i) Verbal Reasoning and Analytical tests and (ii) Job Simulation Exercise. These tests will last a half day and will be held on 4 December 2002. While Negative Marking will not feature in this competition, its role in future competitions will be assessed following a review by the Civil Service Commission.
- **Stage 2** will consist of (i) Case Study and Presentation and (ii) Competitive Interview. Only candidates who reach a satisfactory standard at Stage 1 will proceed to Stage 2.

TO ALL DEPARTMENTS [For Department read Department/Office throughout this Circular]

6. Further details of the format and structure of the written tests will, where appropriate, be issued to candidates in advance by the Civil Service Commission. At Stage 2, the Interview Board will be given a detailed breakdown of the range of competencies required for effective performance in Assistant Principal (standard scale) level posts which are appropriate for assessment at that stage of the competition. The competencies for the Assistant Principal role were recently reviewed and the new framework is set out at Appendix I.

Applications

7. Application forms are available from Personnel Sections or, alternatively, candidates can apply online or via e-mail. 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 Commissioners, Chapter House, 26-30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1** or online at www.publicjobs.ie or via e-mail to: daniella.lieghio@publicjobs.ie to arrive not later than **5.15 p.m. on Friday 15 November 2002**. This closing date must be strictly observed, since late applications will not be accepted. An applicant who has not heard from the Commission by 29 November 2002 should contact the Commission immediately. Candidates should use only **one** means of application i.e. hardcopy, online or e-mail.

8. 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 11-16 of the scheme.

9. Candidates should note that (i) eligibility to compete, and (ii) health and the level of sick leave, are not verified by the Civil Service Commission until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment after Stage 2. Therefore, admission to the competition and placement on a panel does 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

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 any 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

Interdepartmental promotion scheme to posts at Assistant Principal (standard scale) level

Definitions

1. A "department" includes any office such as the Office of the Revenue Commissioners or the Central Statistics Office which is normally treated as a separate nominating unit for interdepartmental competitions.

2. 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 listed below:

- Assistant Principal (standard scale) in all departments except the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Finance and the Land Registry/Registry of Deeds.
- Senior Auditor in the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- First Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- Assistant Principal Committee Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Posts filled by special interdepartmental competition will not reckon as vacancies for the purposes of this scheme.

Scope and application of the scheme

3. Every third fillable vacancy in the grades listed in paragraph 2 will be filled under the scheme.

4. Departments which have been assigned an import quota (see paragraphs 17-20) will be required to fill certain additional vacancies under the scheme.

5. Departments which have been assigned an export quota of two or more will substitute internal promotions for panel promotions and 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.

6. 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 those candidates qualified at the competitive interview stage of the competition (Stage 2). It will be drawn from in order of merit to fill posts under paragraph 3.
- **Panel A:** This panel will be formed from among all qualified candidates on Panel B who are Higher Executive Officers or Administrative Officers whose parent departments are assigned an export quota, excluding Administrative Officers in the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance. The number of candidates on this panel from any department will not exceed the export quota of that department to a degree of four (i.e. quota x 4). The panel will be drawn from in order of merit to fill posts under paragraph 4.

7. A candidate's parent department will be the parent department at the time of application for the competition. Appointments will be made from the panels strictly in accordance with the order in

which vacancies fall to be filled. 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.

8. If Panel A is exhausted before all import quotas have been satisfied, any subsequent Panel A liabilities will be filled by the appointment of candidates from exporting departments placed on Panel B, but excluded from Panel A due to the export quota limit set out in paragraph 6. If there are no such candidates remaining on Panel B at that stage or if no such candidate accepts the post, it will be offered to those remaining on Panel B in order of merit. If Panel B is exhausted before its expiry date the Official and Staff Sides will consult on the arrangements to apply for the outstanding period.

9. If a post cannot be filled from a panel 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. If an internal appointment is made in this manner, then the panel will be deemed to have expired for the relevant grade or geographical location. However, within two months of the expiry date of Panel B, should a post subsequently arise in that grade or geographical location that is due to be filled from the panel, then the department concerned may fill the post internally, but will carry a debt to the panel.

10. For each officer in FÁS appointed under the scheme, one fillable vacancy in the grade of Assistant Principal (standard scale) in FÁS will be filled under the scheme.

Eligibility

11. 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 the Ordnance Survey of Ireland or be on secondment to FÁS from the civil service, in one of the following grades:

- Higher Executive Officer (including HEO/Systems Analyst).
- Administrative Officer.
- Third Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- 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 and Family Affairs.

and

(a) on **1 November 2002** 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 12). In this context, credit is given for all work-sharing service on the same basis as full-time service.

12. Social Welfare Officers must have at least eight years' service to be eligible to compete, and may count up to five years' service in the Executive Officer grade 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 those recertified grades, must have an

aggregate of at least eight years' service in eligible grades in order to compete. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. Officers serving in the Land Registry/Registry of Deeds are not eligible to compete.

Import/export quotas

17. Departments will be assigned and informed of an import/export quota based on their promotion trends to Assistant Principal (standard and higher scale). The Land Registry/Registry of Deeds, the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas will not be assigned a quota.

18. Departments, which in the preceding five-year period had more or less than the average number of promotions to Assistant Principal (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 given import or export quotas, respectively. The satisfaction of these import/export quotas will be considered to have made good the departures from average number of Assistant Principal promotions. Quotas below 0.5 will be disregarded and other quotas will be rounded to the nearest figure.

19. In determining import/export quotas, all promotions of Higher Executive Officers and Administrative Officers (excluding Administrative Officers in the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance) to Assistant Principal (standard or higher scale) will be counted.

20. Where a department has been divided or amalgamated during the five-year period covered in paragraph 18. 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 Section/Branch/Division involved in the interdepartmental reorganisation.

Selection procedures

21. Selection under this scheme is by means of a Civil Service Commission competition. The final stage of the competition will be a Case Study and Presentation Exercise which will be followed by a Competitive Interview, conducted by a board or boards set up by the Commission. Candidates will be required to undertake preliminary Verbal Reasoning and Analytical tests operated by the Commission. Only candidates who reach the requisite standard in those tests will be invited to Stage 2 of the competition and this will determine which candidates are fully qualified for appointment. Candidates may be invited to Stage 2 in "batches", with the highest-placed qualifiers at Stage 1 forming the first batch, and further batches likewise called by reference to their Stage 1 placing. The number of candidates per batch and the interval between the calling of batches are matters to be determined by the Commission. Candidates will be called to Stage 2 strictly according to the order of merit from Stage 1. The interview results and panel placing will issue on a board-by-board basis.

22. 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 such credit on or before the date of the competitive interview, or such other date as the Official and Staff Sides may agree.

23. Competitive Interview and Presentation Boards will consist of board members who have been fully trained in the structured interview technique.

24. Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General: Candidates who indicate an interest in being considered for Senior Auditor appointments in the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, and who are placed on Panel B, will be interviewed subsequently by a separate board to establish whether they are qualified for the Senior Auditor grade. This board will consist of a representative of the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office and a Civil Service Commission nominee. A panel of qualified candidates, if any, will be drawn up from those interviewed. The Commission may, at its discretion, decide that Auditors placed on Panel B are qualified for Senior Auditor without attending for further interview. Senior Auditor assignments, should vacancies arise, will be made from those candidates deemed suitable for the grade, in accordance with their Panel B ranking. Candidates interested in being considered for Senior Auditor appointments should note that they will be expected to have some knowledge of public sector accounting and financial procedures. They will also be expected to be able to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of current accounting and auditing standards.

25. Department of Foreign Affairs: Candidates who indicate an interest in being considered for First Secretary appointments in the Department of Foreign Affairs and who are placed on Panel B, will be interviewed subsequently by a separate board to establish their suitability for the First Secretary grade. This board will consist of a Department of Foreign Affairs representative and a Civil Service Commission nominee. A panel of qualified candidates, if any, will be drawn up from those interviewed. The Commission may, at its discretion, decide that Third Secretaries placed on Panel B are qualified for First Secretary without attending for further interview. First Secretary assignments, should vacancies arise, will be made from those candidates deemed suitable for the grade, in accordance with their Panel B ranking.

Appointments

26. Offers of appointments will be made from the panels strictly in order of merit. An officer will have a maximum of **five working days** after receipt of an offer from the department with the promotional vacancy to accept or reject the promotion. Appointments will be in an acting capacity for at least one year and they 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 having been on the panels. In the event of reversion, an officer will return to fill a vacancy in the grade previously held by them in the parent department 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.

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

28. Any candidate who (a) resigns, retires, is suspended or is dismissed from his or her post or (b) is not qualified by the interview board as being suitable for promotion to Assistant Principal (standard scale) level, will not be eligible to be placed on the panels.

29. Knowledge of Irish: It is recognised that in the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Civil Service Commission the performance of duties 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, that officer will then 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

30. An officer may refuse an offer of appointment from the panels on grounds of grade offered or on grounds of geographic location. An officer may also refuse an appointment to FÁS.

31. An officer who refuses appointment on grounds of grade will not be offered an appointment to that grade again, but will remain on the panel for appointments to other grades. Similarly, an officer who refuses appointment on grounds of geographic location will not be offered an appointment in that location again, but will remain on the panel for other locations. 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.

32. An officer who refuses an offer of appointment under paragraph 30 and has not been promoted when the relevant panel expires will have no claim to promotion thereafter because of having been on the panel.

Performance appraisal

33. For each candidate called to competitive interview, the Personnel Officer will give the Commission an assessment of the candidate's suitability for promotion on a form supplied by the Commission. The 'promotion potential' element to the relevant scheme of performance appraisal that was completed at the candidate's last appraisal before the date of the competition Circular should be used when completing that form. Where a sufficiently long period, (i.e. in the order of nine months), has elapsed since the candidate's appraisal, and where there is reason to believe that the candidate's performance in the meantime merits a change in the assessment, a current appraisal should be made.

Career development and training

34. 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

35. 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

36. 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 Assistant Principal (standard scale) level for which special circumstances exist. Before an interdepartmental competition is initiated in any such case, there will be consultation between the Official and Staff Sides.

October 2002

APPENDIX I**Assistant Principal (Standard Scale):
Competency Framework**

The following table represents a summary of the competencies identified as being essential for effective performance of the Assistant Principal (Standard scale) role.

AP (STANDARD SCALE) GRADE: CORE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK	
Competency Title	Summary Statement of Competency
Strategic Perspective	Understands the relevance of wider departmental, civil service and external issues and recognises the implications in the context of their role. Thinks about issues and their own role in a strategic way and aims to achieve beneficial outcomes for a wide range of stakeholders.
Makes Things Happen and Implements Change	Implements change taking a solution-focused and creative approach to dealing with problems. Is willing to make difficult decisions and to take on responsibility for challenging tasks. Identifies barriers to change and works to overcome them. Looks critically at existing ways of working and recognises opportunities for making improvements.
Analytical Thinking and Decision Making	Identifies relevant information sources, objectively analysing and evaluating complex information to identify the key issues. Demonstrates a well-rounded general capability to analyse and interpret numerical information. Makes sound and realistic decisions on issues based on a thorough analysis of the relevant information. Consults with others, where appropriate, and considers the implications of decisions on other parties.
Leading and Managing Staff Performance	Shows staff how their work fits into the broader context and keeps them informed of relevant issues. Sets high standards for the team and encourages team members to meet these standards. Effectively manages staff performance and development by setting clear and realistic goals and providing constructive feedback as well as directly addressing issues of poor performance.
Organising for Results	Effectively plans projects, maximising available resources and setting realistic timeframes to ensure quality outputs/services. Involves relevant stakeholders and delegates tasks according to the strengths of the team. Measures and monitors progress to ensure delivery of results. Anticipates potential problems and puts contingency plans in place.
Communicating and Influencing	Communicates clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing. Makes a compelling case, can present persuasive arguments and maintain poise under questioning. When influencing, is clear about the objectives, plans how to influence others to achieve the desired outcomes and is prepared to state own position clearly.
Commitment to High Standards	Demonstrates a commitment to achieving high standards even in pressurised or difficult conditions. Constantly develops own skills in order to improve standards of performance. Sets high standards for the work of their team and strives to ensure that these standards are met.