



An Roinn Airgeadais  
Department of Finance

E 109/63/03

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**Circular 13/2003: Confined competition to participate in a Masters Programme in Public Policy Analysis and, upon successful completion of the Programme, appointment as Assistant Principal to work in public policy analysis.**

A Dhuine Uasail

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to announce a confined competition for the selection of up to fifteen candidates to participate in a Masters Programme in Public Policy Analysis and, upon successful completion of the programme for appointment as Assistant Principals to work in public policy analysis. The programme will be a two year fulltime programme involving academic study and projects in public policy evaluation which, on successful completion, will result in the award of an NUI accredited M. Econ.Sc. in Public Policy Analysis. An outline of the programme is attached at **Appendix A**.

**Background**

2. There is a need to enhance policy analysis capabilities across the civil service to provide a more evidence-based approach to policy making based on best practice and focused on achieving effective and efficient solutions to problems and better value for money. Increased devolution of responsibility and authority from the centre under the modernisation programme, improved strategic and business planning processes across Departments, the roll out of comprehensive financial management information systems, greater focus on effective resource allocation and planning, the need for comprehensive expenditure review and programme evaluation, value for money and quality customer service considerations all highlight the need for enhanced policy analysis training and development. SMI, the PPF, Sustaining Progress and NESC have also stressed the importance of developing policy analysis capacity within the civil service. This two year, full time Masters Programme in Public Policy Analysis is one of a number of initiatives being undertaken in regard to the development of policy analysis capabilities across the civil service.

**Nature of Work**

3. Policy analysis is concerned with reviewing the objectives of Government policy, evaluating the effectiveness of programmes, assessing alternative means of achieving policy objectives, assessing value for money, and ensuring sound decision making. Persons who successfully complete this Master Programme in Public Policy Analysis will have a full appreciation of the role that systematic analysis and evaluation must play in terms of advising on public policy on economic and social development, resource generation and allocation issues, and on promoting the efficient and effective delivery of quality services to the public.

**To All DEPARTMENTS AND OFFICES** [For Department read Department/Office throughout this Circular.]

The policy analyst would also be expected to initiate and carry out evaluations in relation to departmental policies and activities, to play a leading role in identifying issues to be examined, and to develop and employ appropriate methodologies for analysing public policy. S/he would also be expected to promote the acceptance and implementation and the more widespread use of policy analysis and the changes indicated by such analyses by developing the necessary networking and influencing skills required.

### Training to be provided

4. The Master Programme in Public Policy Analysis will be a two year, full time programme to be delivered by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) in association with the Faculty of Commerce, UCD. The first year will be a full time academic year and will have a practical focus, with an emphasis on learning analytical skills and techniques which can be applied in practice. The second year will require students who successfully complete year one to undertake two major evaluation projects under supervision. CMOD, in conjunction with Departments and the IPA, will identify suitable topics for the projects to be undertaken by participants. The selection of topics for evaluation will have regard to the practical needs of Departments in terms of meeting their existing evaluation requirements and could, for example, include evaluations to be carried out under the *Expenditure Review* Initiative, etc. Suitable, ongoing, formal assessment of participants by the course tutors will also form an integral part of the training programme.

### Personal Requirements

5. The Masters Programme in Public Policy Analysis is aimed at officers in middle management (Higher Executive Officer and Administrative Officer or equivalents) grades across civil service Departments who have potential to advance to more senior levels in the future. An Honours Primary Degree or equivalent professional qualification is desirable. Candidates who have developed or who can demonstrate an aptitude for policy analysis and evaluation skills in achieving their work objectives will be given preference on this programme. Recognition will also be given to candidates with analytical work experience and demonstrable learning abilities and commitment.

6. Persons wishing to participate in the Masters Programme in Public Policy Analysis will be expected to have already undertaken some level of basic policy analysis and evaluation training and development. This could include completion of CMOD's introductory policy analysis training course, or completion of the Diploma Programme in Public Policy Analysis or other suitable policy analysis related training intervention. Candidates wishing to apply should possess keen intelligence, sound judgement, good communication skills, the ability to influence and secure co-operation and, in particular, an independent and creative approach to problem solving and an aptitude for interpretation and presentation of information.

### Eligibility Requirements

7. A nominee must on 1 July, 2003
    - (a) be serving in an established capacity in the civil service as a Higher Executive Officer or Administrative Officer or equivalent grade
- and

- (b) have completed not less than two years service in the existing grade or an aggregate of two years service in eligible grades. In this context, credit is given for all job-sharing service on the same basis as full-time service;

and

- (c) be certified by the Personnel Officer in their Department as suitable for consideration with regard to performance of work in the present grade, general conduct, and health, especially sick leave (the assessment requirements that Departments must fulfil in respect of each nominee are set out at paragraph 11. below)

8. Candidates, if subject to probation in the existing grade, must have satisfactorily completed probation in that grade or in another eligible grade; in cases where officers would have been eligible to compete had they remained in their previous grade, this probation requirement would not apply.

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

### Nominations

10. Departments are now invited to each nominate a maximum of two candidates at middle management (Higher Executive Officer and Administrative Officer or equivalents) grades for consideration for inclusion on the Masters Programme in Public Policy Analysis to commence in September, 2003. Departments should satisfy themselves that nominees meet all the requirements of this circular letter, that they can undertake the rigorous programme of study involved, that they have the capacity and that they will have the opportunity to make a significant contribution to public policy analysis of the Department on successful completion of the programme. Nominations, accompanied by a curriculum vitae for each nominee, should be forwarded by the Personnel Officer of the Department to Mr. John Keegan, Human Resources Development Services, CMOD, Department of Finance. Nominations must be received in CMOD, no later than 13 June, 2003.

### Performance Appraisal

11. Eligible officers who are interested in participating in this programme should inform the Personnel Officer of their serving Department. For each candidate whose application is approved by their parent Department and who is, as a result, nominated for inclusion on the programme, the Personnel Officer will be required to provide CMOD with an assessment of suitability (i) for inclusion on the programme and (ii) for promotion on a supernumerary basis during the training period and on a permanent basis on successful completion of the two year training programme (see paragraph 17 below). Where a candidate is subject to a scheme of performance appraisal within his or her department, the promotion potential form in that scheme of performance appraisal as completed at the last appraisal before the date of this Circular should be used in meeting this requirement. Where a sufficiently long period ( of the order of nine months or more) has elapsed since the candidate's appraisal and where there is sufficient reason to believe that the candidate's performance in the interim period merits a change in the assessment, then a current appraisal should be made.

## The Competition

12. Those nominated by Departments will be required to undergo a selection process, which will be by way of competitive interview. In addition, CMOD 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.

13. In placing in order of merit the candidates considered best qualified for appointment, credit will be given 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 closing date for receipt of applications for this competition.

## Conditions of participation in the programme and for appointment

14. For the duration of the programme, Departments will appoint successful nominees to temporary supernumerary positions at Assistant Principal (Standard) level on an acting basis subject to the maximum scale point of the Assistant Principal (Standard) salary not being exceeded. If a nominee successfully completes the programme, which will specifically include reaching the required academic standard, s/he will be promoted to Assistant Principal in an existing vacancy in their own Department and the supernumerary position would cease to exist.

15. Officers will continue to be employed by and formally assigned to their own Departments for the duration of their participation in the programme. Each participant's parent Department will have responsibility for meeting all costs associated with the programme, including fees and expenses and any general accommodation/administrative requirements etc. **Any net additional expenditure under the scheme will be considered as eligible expenditure for the purposes of meeting the 4% payroll target for spending on training and development under the PPF and reiterated in "Sustaining Progress". Such net additional expenditure would include expenditure on academic fees and the salary cost of the supernumerary Assistant Principal position.** During the second year of the programme, participants will undertake project work (see paragraph 4 above). Participating Departments will be expected to suggest suitable topics for this project work. Programme participants may be required to undertake project work unrelated to the work of their Department.

16. Before being released to begin the first year of the training programme, each nominee will be required to sign an agreement declaring that, if s/he leaves the Civil Service within two years of completing the course, s/he will refund the cost of the course (e.g. fees and any other expenses incurred on the officer's behalf) and the salary costs paid to the nominee during release from normal working duties for the purpose of attendance on the course.

17. Officers will continue to be eligible for promotion in the normal course in their parent Department during the programme period. An officer promoted to Assistant Principal (Standard Scale or Higher Scale) or equivalent during the training period may accept the promotion and opt either to take up the promotion in the relevant Department or continue to participate in the programme.

18. An officer whose participation on the training programme is not satisfactory may, at any time during the training period, be returned to her/his former position (or other suitable vacancy at that level) and duties without delay and any entitlement to an allowance or subsequent appointment to Assistant Principal under the terms of this Circular will then cease.

19. An officer will not be released for career break or special leave, with or without pay, or to work-share during the training period because of the specialised nature of the training in the programme.

#### Assignment and promotion on satisfactory completion of the programme

20. On satisfactory completion of the programme officers can generally expect to be assigned to a posting in their parent Department at Assistant Principal level and to undertake work in public policy analysis.

21. Officers will, on assignment, be offered promotion to Assistant Principal (Standard Scale) in an acting capacity in accordance with the normal arrangements in their Department, subject to completion of the minimum period of service necessary for such a promotion. Starting pay will be calculated in accordance with the provisions of Circular 34/77 (Starting Pay on Promotion or Establishment).

#### Application and selection

22. Where candidates are nominated by their Departments to be considered for inclusion on this training programme, their nominations (including curriculum vitae and suitability for participation and promotion assessments) should be sent directly to **Mr. John Keegan, Human Resources Development Section, CMOD, Department of Finance, Lansdowne House, Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4 to arrive not later than 13 June, 2003.** Nominees will be expected to be available for interview shortly thereafter. The onus is on candidates to make themselves available for interview at short notice.

23. The Head of the Department should not send a candidate's application to CMOD unless satisfied that the candidate fulfils the conditions of eligibility set out at paragraphs 7 to 9 above, has worked well and been satisfactory in their present grade and in their general conduct, and are suitable from the point of view of health, with particular regard to sick leave.

#### Assessment of Eligibility

24. Candidates should note that (i) eligibility for the competition and (ii) health and the level of sick leave are not verified until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment onto the Masters (Public Policy Analysis) Training Programme. Admission to the competitions and interview does not imply acceptance of a person's candidature. In considering a successful candidate's suitability for appointment in terms of health and sick leave, regard will be given 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

25. 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 this circular they should contact their Personnel Section. After the nomination process has been completed and nominations submitted by Departments any subsequent enquiries about this confined competition should be addressed to Mr. John Keegan, HRDS

Section, CMOD, Department of Finance, Floor 3, Lansdowne House, Lansdowne Road,  
Dublin 4 (Phone 01 604/5066 or e-mail at [john.keegan@finance.gov.ie](mailto:john.keegan@finance.gov.ie)).

26. 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.

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John O'Connell  
Assistant Secretary

# Master of Economic Science

## (Public Policy Analysis)

The MSc in Policy Studies is a two-year full-time programme. The primary aim of the programme is to enhance the capabilities of personnel within the public sector system to analyse policy and thus to contribute to decision-making on the allocation of public money.

### **Admission requirements**

Applicants should have an honours primary degree or equivalent. In exceptional circumstances, applicants without an honours degree but with suitable professional experience may, subject to assessment, be permitted to enrol in the programme.

### **Programme Content**

#### **Year 1**

Participants will study six subjects per semester in the two semesters of year one.

#### **Statistical Reasoning and Analysis**

This course is designed to develop students understanding of the key statistical concepts underlying economic and social analysis. It aims to develop students' statistical reasoning skills and emphasises concepts over computations.

#### **Elements of Economic Analysis**

The course covers the elements of microeconomic and macroeconomic analysis. It emphasises how economic analysis can be used to assess policies in the public sector. The course develops an understanding of markets and of the implications of government microeconomic policy. The macroeconomic analysis sector of the course provides the context for public policy.

#### **Financial Analysis**

This course emphasises the development of financial expertise and analytical skills relevant to modern day Public Service Financial Management. It blends the study of key underlying principles from a range of disciplines (finance, management and financial accounting, economics and quantitative analysis) with practice in their application to the complex strategies, policies and programmes encountered in the public sector.

### **The Public Sector Modernisation Programme**

This course details the elements of the Public Service Modernisation programme. It relates them to their origins in 'New Public Management' and the problems confronting the public sector. The programme shares many characteristics with movements for public sector change in other Western states. The Irish experience will be compared and contrasted with these.

### **Research Methods for Policy Analysis**

This course introduces students to the fundamental principles and methods of research that are necessary to conduct a reasoned analysis of policy. Students are introduced to the roles of research in policy analysis and to the different frameworks for gathering and interpreting data. Students will be introduced to quantitative and qualitative research, the differences between them and the appropriate methodologies for both. These modes of research will be illustrated by case studies.

### **Strategic Management in the Public Sector**

This course examines the theory and the practice of strategic management in the Public Sector. The course provides an understanding of the main concepts and elements of strategic management including: (i) an understanding of strategic issues (strategic analysis); (ii) the considerations and means of deciding on the exact strategies to be followed by an organisation (strategy evaluation); and (iii) the main issues that organisations must manage in order to realise their strategic direction (strategy implementation). It investigates how different organisational contexts impact on aspects of strategic management. It examines how strategies are realised and affected by the internal cultural and political processes operating in the organization.

### **Workshops in Applied Statistical Analysis**

This course is designed to develop students' ability to apply their understanding of key statistical concepts. It reinforces students understanding of the key concepts underlying economic and social analysis by focusing on the common issues confronting practising researchers in undertaking data analysis. It aims to assist prospective researchers in mastering the art of data analysis and to help students in recognising that quantitative analysis is far more than routine application of statistical tests.

### **Project and Risk Management**

This course outlines the principles of effective Project and Risk Management. It makes the distinction between the skills required to manage a project as distinct from operational management techniques. The necessary tools required in designing a successful project are defined. Alternative approaches to structured project management are reviewed and practical approaches to implementation issues specific to project management are developed. The significance of risk management for public sector organizations is outlined and methodologies for risk assessment and management are explored.

### **Public Finance**

This course examines spending decisions within the context of the annual budget cycle including the constraints attaching thereto. The economic implications of



taxation and debt policies are outlined and alternative sources of finance explored. Public financial procedures are reviewed and assessed with an emphasis on the emergence of measures of accountability in evaluating performance. Reforms to financial management procedures are outlined and the usefulness and relevance of private sector techniques to public sector organizations are evaluated. International reforms to public sector financial management are also outlined and assessed.

### **Public Sector Economics**

The course develops the understanding of the key concepts in public sector economics. It establishes the rationale for government intervention and critically examines the major forms of intervention in markets by government including, taxation, subsidisation, regulation and direct provision. The course examines the private provision of public goods and the conceptual and procedural issues that arise in public private partnerships. The course examines policy issues in areas such as health, housing, regional policy, and education.

### **Policy Evaluation**

This course distinguishes amongst the different kinds of evaluation methodologies appropriate to the variety of policy programme at hand. The impact of patterns of governance upon the suitability of various forms of evaluation is examined. Economic evaluation and experimental design, commonly grouped under the rubric of impact evaluation, are identified as the most appropriate methodologies for those programmes whose goals are clear and homogenous. For those programmes which are more heterogeneous in terms of objectives and outcomes (typical of the governance paradigm), alternative models of evaluation are detailed. The problems surrounding the dissemination of research findings into the policy-process will also be discussed.

### **Economic Evaluation & Cost Benefit Analysis**

The course establishes the principles and procedures of economic evaluation. It proceeds from the economic foundations of efficiency and effectiveness and develops an understanding of the different approaches to evaluation. The course makes a detailed study of the theory and practice of cost benefit analysis – the most developed method for public investment appraisal in the public sector emphasising both the conceptual and technical issues which arise. The course integrates the relevant evaluation documents from Ireland including “Guidelines for the Appraisal and Management of Capital Expenditure Proposals in the Public Sector” and “Proposed Working Rules on Cost Benefit Analysis”. The procedures of Cost Benefit Analysis are examined in a number of key areas. The lessons of economic evaluation and cost benefit analysis are applied to value for money studies.

## **Year 2**

The second year will require students who successfully complete year one to undertake two major evaluation projects under supervision. CMOD, in conjunction with Departments and the IPA, will identify suitable topics for the projects to be undertaken by participants. The selection of topics for evaluation will have regard to the practical needs of Departments in terms of meeting their existing evaluation requirements, for example, in relation to evaluations to be carried out under the

*Expenditure Review Initiative*, etc. Suitable, ongoing, formal assessment of participants by the course tutors will also form an integral part of the second year of the training programme.

The IPA will ensure that project assignments undertaken by the students are of sufficient quality to meet academic standards and represent best practice, and will also be responsible for carrying out whatever assessment is required to ensure that successful completion of the two year Policy Analyst Trainee Programme leads to the award of a Masters degree of National University of Ireland (NUI) standard.