



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

E92/2/60

9th September 2003

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Circular 14/2003: Confined competition for appointment as Junior Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to invite applications for appointment as Junior Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas. It is proposed to make a number of appointments from the competition, subject to candidates being found qualified and suitable, and to the number of vacancies. Further appointments may be made from the competition, should vacancies arise.

The Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas

2. The Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas is Ireland's Parliamentary Civil Service. The staff of the Office are civil servants of the State under the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959. The Office provides administrative support for the Dáil and Seanad, for committees of those Houses and for members' involvement in certain inter-parliamentary activities. The Office is also the channel through which facilities are provided for members in connection with their parliamentary duties.

At present there are 320 staff in the Office. This number is expected to increase significantly as part of the Office Change Programme and with the move to independent Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. The Act to give effect to the new independent Commission was recently passed by the Oireachtas and the Commission will be established on 1st January 2004. More detailed information on the role of the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas is available on the Office's web-site on www.oireachtas.ie.

Eligibility

3. 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.

TO ALL DEPARTMENTS

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

4. The competition is confined to persons in respect of whom the head of the department certifies that on 1st October 2003;

- they are serving in an established capacity as Executive Officers
- they have at least two years' service in the grade of Executive Officer or at least three years total service of which at least one year has been in the grade of Executive Officer
- they have worked well in their present grade, have been satisfactory in general conduct and are suitable from the point of view of health, having particular regard to their sick leave records. In relation to health and sick leave, the procedures set out in Circular 34/76 (as amended by Circulars 32/91, 33/99 and 17/03) must be followed.

Officers on probation are not eligible to compete.

5. Junior Clerks are members of a departmental grade but are normally admitted to the interdepartmental scheme of promotion to Higher Executive Officer level posts. On completion of appropriate qualifying service in the grade, Junior Clerks are eligible for promotion on merit to be Senior Clerks, who in turn are eligible for further promotion.

Applications

6. Interested officers should send a letter of application, along with three copies of their Curriculum Vitae to their Personnel Officer by **Thursday 2nd October 2003**. Personnel Officers should forward applications from interested officers to Ms Gina Long, Personnel Section, Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 to arrive not later than **5.30 pm Thursday 9th October 2003**. Candidates should highlight details of any particular experience or qualifications which they feel are particularly relevant to the position of Junior Clerk. Applications should be accompanied by an assessment form that will be made available to Personnel Sections by the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Competition

7. Selection will be by means of a competitive interview. It is anticipated that interviews will be held in the week commencing **13th October 2003**. The Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas reserves the right to shortlist the applications sent forward, if necessary.

Duration of the panel

8. The panel formed under the terms of this circular will become valid from its formation date and will extend to 31st March 2005, or until the exhaustion date of the panel, whichever is the earlier.

Salary

9. The scale of pay is the same as that for Executive Officer but a successful candidate will, on appointment as Junior Clerk, be placed on the scale at a point three increments above existing salary subject to the normal maximum of the scale (i.e. exclusive of long-service increments) not being exceeded.

Appointment

10. An appointment will be on an acting basis in the first instance. If an officer's service is not satisfactory, the officer may, at any time up to the end of one year, be returned to the former department in the original grade.

11. The definitive appointment of a successful candidate as Junior Clerk will be subject to the issue by the Civil Service Commissioners of a certificate of qualification under the Civil Service Commissioners Act, 1956.

Duties

12. A Junior Clerk is required to perform a wide range of duties assigned from time to time in the administrative, procedural or committee areas of the Office as appropriate to the post by direction of the Ceann Comhairle. Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas are acknowledged, both in the Irish Civil Service and internationally, to be a highly professional body of people who demonstrate very high standards in their work and in their dealings with all key stakeholders in the political system. The attention of applicants is specially directed to the fact that attendance beyond the usual hours is frequently necessary. The role profile for this position is included in the appendix to this circular.

Annual leave

13. Junior Clerks are eligible for annual leave at the rate of 21 days during the first five years of service and 22 days thereafter, exclusive of the usual public holidays.

Circulation

14. This circular should be brought to the attention of all eligible officers serving in your department and associated offices **without** delay (including eligible officers on maternity or any other forms of leave).

15. Queries about this circular or about the progress of any application should be made to Ms Gina Long, Personnel Section, Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

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John O'Connell
Assistant Secretary

Appendix:

Role Profile:

Job Title: **Junior Clerk in the Houses of the Oireachtas**

Key Functions/Responsibilities:

Operational

In the House Services Directorate, the key function of the grade is to process, in the accurate, efficient and timely manner those matters that will arise in the plenary sessions of the Dáil and Seanad including parliamentary questions and other matters for answer in the chambers, Bills and amendment lists to Bills, and the journals of proceedings and the order papers of the Dáil and Seanad. Junior Clerks within the Committee Secretariat provide the essential supports necessary to enable the Committees of the Houses to function, including the preparation of documents for Committee meetings and engagement in the follow-up to Committee decisions with Government Departments and other bodies.

The functions of a Junior Clerk in the Corporate Services Directorate involve ensuring that services in areas like Personnel, IT, Finance and Training are provided. Junior clerks have an ongoing involvement in areas such as the implementation of HR policy in the Office, the development of financial systems for monitoring and controlling expenditure, the operation of legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, the operation of the partnership process in the Office and the implementation of the civil service modernisation programme in the Office.

In the Members Services Directorate Junior Clerks are responsible for the delivery of various services to Members including organising travel and accommodation for attendance at Inter-Parliamentary meetings and conferences; processing travel claims for Members and ensuring accurate payment of all Members allowances; co-ordination and implementation of arrangements for official itinerary of incoming and outgoing parliamentary delegations.

Human Resources

While teamwork rather than supervision would be the dominant feature of the interaction between different grades in the Office, Junior Clerks would work to Senior Clerks and Principal Clerks and be responsible for allocating work to clerical staff and would also undertake PMDS functions in managing the performance and development of clerical staff in their areas.

Customer Service

The provision of an effective service to the customers of the Office is a central part of the Junior Clerk function. As well as being responsible for the direct delivery of various services to Members, Junior Clerks would also be in the front line in providing services to the other customers in the organisation, especially in areas such as HR and finance. As well as ensuring the delivery of a quality customer service, Junior Clerks will be centrally involved in the development of services provided by the Office through cross functional teams and reviews. Junior Clerks will be expected to develop the skills associated with the delivery of a quality customer service while serving in the grade.

Strategy/Planning

Staff at Junior Clerk level have ongoing involvement in areas such as the implementation of HR policy in the Office, the development of financial systems for monitoring and controlling expenditure, the operation of legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, the operation of the partnership process in the Office and the implementation of the civil service modernisation programme in the Office. Opportunities are also available to participate in cross-functional teams that look at development of office policy on wide ranging issues many of which arise out of SMI.

What are the key long term objectives?

While the long term objectives of posts will vary widely due to the variety of work that the grade is involved in, the key long terms objectives will relate to the directly to one of the four objectives of the organisation, which are:

1. To continuously improve the services to the satisfaction of the Chairman, Members of the Houses and all other stakeholders including the public.
2. To develop all aspects of human resource policies and functions to enable all staff to contribute to the achievement of goals in an optimum working environment.
3. To maintain and constantly improve on the capacity to service the particular procedural requirements of parliament and to use expertise built up in this area to develop further our relationships with Parliaments in other countries.
4. To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operation and to promote any changes in the structure, design and professional management skills of the Office which are necessary to do this.

Key Deliverables for the year *(what elements should I focus on achieving this year?* *What are the key elements of my performance that I will be judged on?)*

Junior Clerks will have a central role in the delivery of the outputs of their section and in meeting the objectives set out in the Business Plan for their area. These outputs would include the ability to process items that arise in Parliament; the delivery of

direct services to Members and the provision of ancillary services such as payments and the arrangement of travel.

Critical Success Factors *(what are the key elements which must go right / must be in place that will help me to achieve my objectives?)*

The two essential elements that need to be in place, especially for junior clerks newly assigned to the Office, are the ability of the Junior Clerk to ask questions and learn quickly and to be prepared to adapt to change.

Key Performance Indicators *(specifically, what key results, qualitative and quantitative, am I expected to show and what are the benchmarks by which success will be judged?)*

Junior Clerks will be assessed through the PMDS and probationary process on the extent to which they have developed an understanding of the work of the section and the role of the Office; the extent to which they have adapted and come to terms with work that is new to them; and the extent to which they have met the expectations of colleagues and the Head of Section, as outlined in the PMDS process.

Identification of Competencies for the Job

Behaviours and Attributes required -

Deadline and Priority Management – Works effectively under pressure and consistently meets deadlines

Knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure and Precedence – Develops a good working knowledge of Parliamentary procedure and precedence and knows where and how to access information on same.

Learning from others and self-learning – Demonstrates an interest in becoming as effective as they can at many relevant areas of expertise. Seeks out experienced people for advice and asks questions about how things work on a deeper level.

Initiative – Consistently thinks through strategy and plans to identify areas of potential difficulty in the future and generates solutions ahead of time.

Concern for clarity and work quality – Is conscious of setting and maintaining high standards and enhancing the integrity and reputation of the Office.

Communication Skills – Communicates well with others by listening well and conveying the key message appropriately.

Interpersonal Sensitivity – Has the ability to accurately hear and understand both the spoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings and concerns of others.

Knowledge and Skills required - list not more than four particular skills and/or knowledge required - *not from competency*

1. A good understanding of the role of Parliament
2. An awareness of customer service issues in a Parliamentary context
3. An ability to work under pressure in a deadline driven environment and
4. Excellent interpersonal skills