



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

E109/90/03

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4 July 2003

Circular 21/2003: Appointment on secondment to the position of Investigator at Assistant Principal (standard scale) level, in the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman

A Dhuine Uasail

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to announce a competition for secondment to the position of Investigator at Assistant Principal (standard scale) level, in the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman.

Background

2. The Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002, provides for the establishment of the Office of Pensions Ombudsman. The main function of the Pensions Ombudsman will be to investigate and make a determination in relation to:

- a complaint made by, or on behalf of, an actual or potential beneficiary of an occupational pension scheme or Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) who alleges that he/she has suffered financial loss as a result of maladministration by, or on behalf, of a person responsible for the management of that scheme or PRSA.
- any dispute or fact of law that arises in relation to an act done by or on behalf of someone responsible for the management of a scheme or PRSA, and that is referred to him by an actual or potential beneficiary.

The decisions of the Ombudsman will be binding subject to a right of appeal to the High Court.

The Office will have a staff of up to 7 Civil Servants, including up to 3 Investigators. The Office will be independent of all Government Departments and will be located at 36 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2.

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

Job Description

3. Appointees will be working in a demanding environment, which will involve interaction with the beneficiaries of pension schemes and PRSAs and their representatives, employers, the trustees and administrators of pension schemes, and PRSA providers. They will be required to work as part of a team supporting the Pensions Ombudsman in carrying out his functions including;

- processing individual complaints
- conducting investigations
- submitting cases to the Pensions Ombudsman for decision.

A Principal Officer will have the lead role in managing the investigation team in consultation with the Pensions Ombudsman.

Personal Requirements

4. The following skills/attributes are considered essential for the position;

- an ability to analyse, evaluate, and integrate a range of complex information (including legislation) in a rational and objective manner
- an open-minded approach to issues and a commitment to forming ones own opinion on issues
- a high degree of interpersonal skills, including excellent oral and written communication skills
- a commitment and persistence in ensuring that complaints are fully investigated and finalised
- good investigative/research skills
- good judgement and sound decision making ability
- experience of working in a public/private pensions environment
- a clear understanding of how the pensions industry is structured and operates, and of the relationships - legal and contractual - between the various elements including members/beneficiaries, employers, trustees, intermediaries and the various providers of professional and administration services to schemes.

A professional qualification in the area e.g. C Dip Pen or equivalent, or progress towards APMI/AIPM or ACII and knowledge of legal/financial services would be desirable but is not essential.

Eligibility

5. In order to be eligible to compete, prospective candidates must, on 25 July, 2003, be serving in an established capacity in the Civil Service, with at least 2 years service as an Assistant Principal or an equivalent Departmental grade.

6. 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.

Conditions of appointment

7. Successful candidates must be in a position to take up duty without undue delay. Investigators will be on loan to the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman for a period of 3 years.
8. On expiry of the loan period, subject to agreement between the officer, the parent Department and the Pensions Ombudsman, the officer may:
 - extend the period on loan, or
 - be transferred definitively to the Office, or
 - return to fill a normal vacancy at Assistant Principal level in the parent Department.
9. While on loan to the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman, an officer will continue to have access to promotional opportunities in his/her parent Department and interdepartmental competitions.

Where an officer is definitively appointed to the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman under the terms of this Circular, s/he will have access to interdepartmental competitions in the Civil Service.

10. In the event of the officer's service with the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman not being satisfactory during the period on loan, the officer will be returned to his or her parent Department.

Competition.

11. Selection will be by means of a competitive interview, conducted by the Pensions Ombudsman. The right to short-list candidates for interview, having regard to the nature of the duties and the personal requirements for the position, is reserved.

Applications

12. Interested Officers should send a letter of application, along with their Curriculum Vitae, **to their Personnel Officers, by 23 July 2003 for onward transmission to Mr. Paul Kenny, Pensions Ombudsman, PO Box 9324, Dublin 2, to arrive not later than close of business on 25 July 2003.**

This date must be strictly observed.

Details of any particularly relevant experience or qualifications, which candidates feel are relevant, should be highlighted. **Applications should be accompanied by the attached recommendation form.**

13. Candidates should note that health and the level of sick leave are not verified until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment after the competitive interview stage. Admission to the competition, therefore, 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 Pensions Ombudsman will have regard to Department of the Public Service Circular 34/76, as amended by Department of Finance Circulars 32/91, 33/99 and 17/03.

Candidates with doubts about any aspect of their eligibility are advised to clarify their position with their Personnel Section before proceeding with the application.

14. Interviews are expected to take place between 11 August 2003 and 23 August 2003. The onus is on candidates to make themselves available for interview at short notice. If candidates have not been contacted by the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman by 5 August 2003 they should contact that Office, c/o Mr Aidan McCarthy, Personnel Section, Department of Social & Family Affairs at 01 7043800/7043660.

Circulation

15. Please bring this Circular to the notice of all eligible officers serving in your Department and associated Offices without delay. Special care should be taken to ensure that eligible officers on maternity leave, career break or any other relevant forms of leave are notified of the competition.

16. If candidates have any queries about this Circular, they should contact their Personnel Section. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed directly to the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman, PO Box 9324, Dublin 2.

17. The Civil Service is an equal opportunity employer. Recruitment to posts within the Service is on the basis of qualifications and the ability to carry out the responsibilities of the grade or post.

Mise le Meas

John O'Connell
Assistant Secretary

APPOINTMENT ON SECONDMENT TO THE POSITION OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL (INVESTIGATOR) IN THE OFFICE OF THE PENSIONS OMBUDSMAN

CERTIFICATION OF THE HEAD OF THE PARENT DEPARTMENT

To be completed by the Personnel Officer through Local Management

I certify that the Candidate:

CANDIDATE: _____ **GRADE:** _____

DEPARTMENT: _____ **PHONE** _____

ADDRESS: _____

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- (a) has worked well and been satisfactory in all respects in his/her present position
 - (b) fulfils the conditions of Circular 21/03
 - (c) has displayed the skills and attributes relevant to the post
 - (d) satisfies the conditions of Department of Public Service Circular 34/76 as amended by Department of Finance Circulars 32/91, 33/99 and 17/03 with regard to health and sick leave
 - (e) is recommended for assignment to the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman

SIGNATURES:

1st Manager: _____ **Date:** _____

Section/Branch: _____ **Grade:** _____

Personnel Officer: _____ **Date:** _____

Note: If an applicant is considered unsuitable s/he should be informed accordingly and the applicant not allowed to proceed