

22 February 2017

**Circular 04/2017:  
Interdepartmental Competition for appointment to  
Assistant Principal Higher in the Civil Service**

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to inform you that the Public Appointments Service (PAS) will hold an interdepartmental competition to establish a panel from which appointments as Assistant Principal Higher may be made.

The Assistant Principal Higher is a senior managerial grade in the Civil Service within the Departments of the Taoiseach, Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform. The vacancies to be filled from this competition will most likely occur in Dublin. Please see Appendix I for information about these Departments.

2. **Assistant Principal Higher Role**

Assistant Principal Higher is a senior managerial grade in the Civil Service and is a critical post in terms of ensuring excellence in policy development and quality service delivery to the public.

While the responsibilities and key deliverables for the role of Assistant Principal Higher in the Department(s) may vary depending on the assignment, they generally include:

- Policy and strategy formulation on complex issues;
- Shaping fiscally sustainable policy solutions to promote economic and employment growth and effective social policies;
- Engaging effectively with diverse audiences and stakeholders including Ministers, senior civil servants and the wider political system including on cross-governmental issues;
- Providing high quality budgeting advice and ensuring delivery against fiscal targets
- Planning and organisation of significant programmes of work in a pressurised environment, within tight deadlines;
- Leading and management of staff to deliver high levels of performance;
- Participation in and leadership of cross-cutting projects to deliver whole of Government objectives;
- Leading public service renewal and providing direction and innovation on the reform agenda;
- Development and management of staff;
- Representing Ireland's interests at EU and international level.

**Please note that the above list of responsibilities is not exhaustive.**

## General Personal Requirements

Assistant Principals Higher are key participants in the management team of these Departments, playing a critical management role in developing/delivering government policy in the economic, financial, international, environmental, public service reforms and/or social arenas.

The competencies for Assistant Principal Higher (which will be examined in detail during the selection process) are set out in Appendix II.

Additionally, candidates must:

- have a proven record of willingness to take the initiative and adopt a proactive approach;
- have excellent communications, influencing and presentation skills;
- have energy, drive and personal resilience to sustain activity in highly complex and challenging environments;
- have demonstrated judgment and problem-solving abilities in significant areas of policy or implementation;
- be self-starters, committed to continuous self-learning, new thinking, working to very tight deadlines and to achieving high quality results;
- have strong motivational skills and be capable of working equally well as a member of a team and as a leader of interdepartmental groups;
- be able to deal effectively with diverse audiences and stakeholders including top-level civil service and political management;
- have a strong commitment to the implementation of strategic change;
- be able to plan and manage budgets and expenditure; and
- be able to develop, manage and monitor staff and teams including their training and development.

### 3. Eligibility

Eligibility will be confined to staff currently serving at the grades of Assistant Principal Standard and equivalent, and those among the 300 top ranking candidates\* in the current Assistant Principal Standard Interdepartmental Competition ('Circular 26/2016: Interdepartmental Competition for promotion to Assistant Principal (AP) Standard in the Civil Service') following the completion of Stage 2 of that recruitment and selection process (i.e. Assessment Centre).

### 4. Candidates must:

- a) Be a currently serving Assistant Principal Standard or equivalent grade with not less than two years' service in the Civil Service before the closing date of **8<sup>th</sup> March, 2017**. Unestablished officers and officers serving in an acting capacity in the eligible grades may compete in the competition provided they fulfil the eligibility requirements set out above **or**;
- b) Be among the top 300 scoring candidates\* at Stage 2 of the selection process from the current AP Standard Interdepartmental competition, 'Circular 26/2016: Interdepartmental Competition for promotion to Assistant Principal (AP) Standard in the Civil Service' which is currently in progress.
- c) Demonstrate that they possess the key and general personal requirements detailed at section 2 above along with the skills/competencies identified as being essential for the role. These are outlined in Appendix II.

\* In the case of candidates being on the same score, as close as possible a number to the top 300 will be called.

- d) Where an officer was acting or serving on a Fixed-Term contract and was subsequently appointed in a substantive capacity eligibility may be based on the aggregate service, e.g. six months in an acting capacity or on contract and eighteen months in a substantive capacity, can be aggregated to give two years' service. For the purpose of deciding eligibility, officers must be serving on the closing date of 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.
- e) Officers on probation are not eligible to compete except where they would have been eligible had they remained in their previous grade. Periods of special leave without pay should not be considered to break continuity of service for this purpose.
- f) An applicant who is no longer serving in a Department, resigns, retires, is dismissed from his/her post or transfers out of the Civil Service will cease to be eligible for appointment from the panel established.

It would be desirable to hold third level educational qualifications in relevant discipline(s) commensurate with the role.

Applicants in grades having the same maximum pay scale (or higher) as Assistant Principal Higher are **not eligible to compete in this competition**.

- 5. Officers on special leave with pay may apply if otherwise eligible. Officers on career break may apply if their career break conforms to the terms of Department of Public Expenditure Circular 04/13 and if they are otherwise eligible. Officers on special leave without pay (e.g. to serve with the EU) may be eligible; HR Units should check cases not covered by Department of Finance Circular 33/91 with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

## 6. **Application Process**

Practical Matters:

- Applications must be made online through [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie) via the link provided below.
- To apply, candidates must have a "User Account" on [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie). If you have not already done so, you must register as a '**New User**' to create your Profile (register a New Account).
- If you cannot remember your profile details, please do not create a second profile as this could invalidate your application.
- Candidates should not confuse registering (Creating a Profile) with submitting an application. Once you have created a Profile you must then access the application form, complete and submit it.

### **Username / Password issues**

#### ***Forgotten your username or password?***

If so, click on the following link:

<https://www.publicjobs.ie/candidateportal/home/forgottenDetails.do>

#### ***How to contact PAS?***

*If you continue to have 'User Name' or 'Password' difficulties please email PAS at [recruitmentservices@publicjobs.ie](mailto:recruitmentservices@publicjobs.ie) outlining your issue and giving your name and contact details, including a telephone number, where you can be reached.*

Candidates should note that support will only be available during office hours until the closing date.

Candidates must use **their own** valid email address. Email addresses from third parties will **not** be accepted and may invalidate your application. PAS will only communicate application information with the candidate and not with any third party.

- ***Username and Password***

It is important that you keep note of your username and password as you will need this information to access your PublicjobsMessageboard.

It is strongly recommended that you do not change your email address or mobile phone number in the course of this recruitment competition, as any email/text message notification will be sent to the email address/telephone number originally supplied by you.

- ***Publicjobs Messageboard***

Interaction with candidates during the selection process will primarily be conducted online. PAS will send most communication through your Publicjobs Messageboard. Check your Messageboard on a regular basis as email notifications of updates/tests issued to your Messageboard may sometimes be filtered into your Junk/Spam email folders (or 'Promotions' in the case of gmail). You are also advised to check all these folders regularly.

If invited to tests and/or interview, the onus is on each applicant to make him or herself available on the date(s) specified by the PAS.

The PAS accepts no responsibility for communication not accessed or received by an applicant. They must ensure that they regularly check their Messageboard and access all communications from the PAS.

## **How to Apply**

Candidates must submit a completed application form along with a cover letter (maximum 2 pages) outlining why you wish to be considered for the post and where you believe your skills, experience and values meet the requirements of the position.

The application form is available here:

<http://www.publicjobs.ie/publicjobs/campaignAdvert/49505.htm?lang=en>

You must complete the application form in full, attach the cover letter and click the submit button.

Once you have submitted your application form and cover letter you should return to your publicjobs account and confirm that it has been successfully submitted via '**My Applications**'. At this point you should consider adding *publicjobs.ie* to your safe senders or contact list within your email account to avoid not receiving email because a *publicjobs* email has been blocked.

Only fully completed and submitted applications with cover letter will be accepted into the competition. The admission of a person to the competition, or invitation to undertake any element of the selection process is not to be taken as implying that the PAS or other body is satisfied that such a person fulfils the requirements.

**Only one application per person is permitted. Remember, you must include your PPS number when applying.**

## **Closing Date**

The closing date for receipt of completed applications is **not later than 3pm, on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017.**

If you do not receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your application within two working days of applying, please email [recruitmentservices@publicjobs.ie](mailto:recruitmentservices@publicjobs.ie). Candidates should note that support will be available during office hours until the closing date.

## 7. **Selection Process**

The selection process for this competition may comprise a number of elements. These may include one or more of the following:

- Completion of an online Assessment Questionnaire;
- Online and/or paper-based assessment test(s);
- Short listing;
- Interview(s), which may include video/remote interviews;
- Presentation/Analysis exercise;
- A language test, if applicable;
- Group exercise;
- Work sample test or any other tests or exercises that may be deemed appropriate.

### **Shortlisting**

Candidates should note that it is possible for the number of applications received to exceed the number required to fill existing and future vacancies. While you may meet the eligibility requirements of the competition, if the numbers applying for the positions are such that it would not be practical to interview everyone, the Public Appointments Service may decide that a number only will be called to interview. In this respect, the Public Appointments Service provide for the employment of a short listing process to select a group for interview who, based on an examination of the application forms, appear to be the most suitable for the position. This is not to suggest that other candidates are necessarily unsuitable, or incapable of undertaking the job, rather that there are some candidates who are, prima facie, better qualified and/or have more relevant experience.

During any short listing exercise that may be employed, the Public Appointments Service are guided by an assessment board who examine the application forms and assess them against pre-determined criteria based on the requirements of the position. It is therefore in your own interests to provide a detailed and accurate account of your qualifications/experience on the application form.

Applicants must successfully compete and be placed highest, in order to be considered for advancement to the next stage of the selection process. The number to be called forward from one stage to the next will be determined from time to time by the PAS.

Successful candidates will be placed on a panel(s) from which future vacancies may be filled.

### **Candidates with Disabilities**

PAS is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and our charter on positive supports can be found here:

[http://www.publicjobs.ie/publicjobs/publication/document/PAS\\_Charter\\_on\\_Positive\\_Supports.docx](http://www.publicjobs.ie/publicjobs/publication/document/PAS_Charter_on_Positive_Supports.docx)

### **Positions requiring specialist Irish language skills**

The Civil Service is fully committed to fulfilling obligations under the Official Languages Act. It is intended that vacancies arising which require staff to provide a full range of services through the Irish language (Functional Bilinguals), may be filled from this competition.

Candidates who indicate their interest on the application form and who are successful at the final selection stages may be required to undergo an assessment of their Irish language

skills.

Candidates should make themselves available on the date(s) specified by the Public Appointments Service and ensure that the contact details specified on the application form are correct. The Public Appointments Service will not be responsible for refunding any expenses incurred by candidates.

8. Candidates should note that (i) eligibility for the competition, (ii) health and the level of sick leave, (iii) performance of work in the present grade, (iv) verification that the candidate has received a rating of "Satisfactory" at the previous year's PMDS End-of-Year Review, and (v) general conduct are not verified by the PAS until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment. Admission to the competition, or any of the selection stages of the competition, does not imply acceptance by the Public Appointments Service. In particular, candidates should note that the Personnel Officer will not have verified the above including health and the level of sick leave of those called to competitive interview – accordingly, admission to the competition, or any of the selection stages of the competition does not imply that candidates meets the eligibility criteria including health and sick leave.

In considering a candidate's suitability for appointment in terms of health and sick leave, the Public Appointments Service will comply with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 12/2015. Candidates having doubts on any aspect of their eligibility are advised to clarify their position with their Personnel Section before proceeding with their application.

#### 9. **Conditions of Appointment**

Appointment to the post of Assistant Principal Higher in the Civil Service will be subject to the usual conditions governing such appointments. On appointment the appointee will serve a one-year probationary period in the post of Assistant Principal Higher. Prior to the end of this probationary period a decision will be made on substantive appointment to the grade.

10. A candidate who accepts an offer of appointment as Assistant Principal Higher as a result of this competition or otherwise, will cease to be eligible for appointment from this competition. An officer who retires, resigns, etc. from his or her position in the Civil Service will cease to be eligible for appointment from the panel established.

11. Candidates not appointed at the expiry of the panel, will have no claim to promotion thereafter because of having been on the panel(s).

#### 12. **Codes of Practice**

The recruitment and selection process for appointment to this position will be conducted in accordance with the Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil and Public Service published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments.

The Code of Practice reflects the following core principles:

- Probity
- Appointments Made on Merit
- An Appointments Process in Line with Best Practice
- A Fair Appointments Process Applied with Consistency
- Appointments Made in an Open, Accountable and Transparent Manner

Candidates are advised to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Codes of Practice including, inter alia, the provisions in relation to the responsibilities placed on candidates who

participate in the recruitment and selection process.

13. Complaints/requests for review will be considered by the Public Appointments Service in accordance with the procedures set out in the Codes of Practice.
14. The Codes of Practice may be accessed by visiting *www.cpsa.ie* or by contacting directly the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA), 18 Lower Leeson Street Dublin 2. The main switchboard for the Office is 00 353 1639 5750.

Feedback is available on written request. Please note that feedback/recheck is completely separate to a review.

The Review Process as set out in the Code of Practice is a separate process with specified timeframes that must be observed. It is not necessary for a candidate to compile a detailed case prior to invoking the appeals mechanism. The timeframe set out in the CPSA Code of Practice cannot be extended for any reason including the provision of feedback and/or the outcome of rechecks.

#### 15. **General Arrangements in Respect of Appointments**

Appointments from the panels will initially be in an acting capacity. An officer whose service is not satisfactory will be notified of the action to be taken. Where a decision is made not to confirm the appointee in the post of Assistant Principal Higher, the appointee may request that the Civil Service Disciplinary Code Appeal Board review the decision. [Ref. Circular 19/2016 Civil Service Disciplinary Code] In the event of reversion, an officer will return to a vacancy in his/her former grade in the former Department.

16. The Minister reserves the right to arrange that vacancies for Assistant Principal Higher may be filled by separate interdepartmental competition or otherwise where special qualifications are deemed necessary or where other special circumstances exist. In such circumstances there will be consultation between the Official and Staff Sides.

#### 17. **Salary**

The Assistant Principal Higher Salary Scale (rates effective from 1 July 2013) for the position are as follows:

##### **Personal Pension Contribution (PPC)**

€67,434 ; €69,910;	€72,391	€74,870	€77,304	€78,714
				NMAX
€81,109	€83,510			
LSI1	LSI2			

This rate will apply where the appointee is an existing civil or public servant appointed on or after 6<sup>th</sup> April 1995 and is required to make a personal pension contribution.

##### **Non-Personal Pension Contribution (Non-PPC)**

€65,000	€66,531	€68,893	€71,244	€73,600	€74,973
					NMAX
€77,275	€79,552				
LSI1	LSI2				

This rate will apply where the appointee is a civil or public servant recruited before 6<sup>th</sup> April

1995 and who **is not required** to make a Personal Pension Contribution.

Long service increments may be payable after 3(LSI1) and 6(LSI2) years satisfactory service at the maximum of the scale.

### **Important Note**

The terms of Circular 34/77 – Starting Pay on Promotion or Establishment will apply, as appropriate, to appointments under this competition.

Subject to satisfactory performance, increments may be payable in line with current Government Policy. (See Haddington Road Agreement.)

### **18. Information on Panels**

Certain information on panel(s) formed as a result of this competition will be made available to Personnel Officers in relevant Departments/Offices. In addition, candidates may be asked to agree to the non-identifying information being made available to the relevant civil service unions for the purpose of monitoring the operation of the scheme.

### **19. Candidates Obligations**

Candidates must not:

- knowingly or recklessly provide false information
- canvass any person with or without inducements
- personate a candidate at any stage of the process
- interfere with or compromise the process in any way

It is important to remember that this is a competitive process for a role where integrity is paramount. Sharing information on the selection process e.g. through social media or any other means, may result in you being disqualified from the competition.

Please note that all assessment and test materials are subject to copyright and all rights are reserved. No part of the test material (including passages of information, questions or answer options), associated materials or interview(s) may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, photographing, recording, written or otherwise, at any stage. To do so is an offence and may result in you being excluded from the selection process. Any person who contravenes this provision, or who assists another person(s) in contravening this provision, is liable to prosecution and/or civil suit for loss of copyright and intellectual property.

### **Use of Recording Equipment**

PAS does not allow the unsanctioned use of any type of recording equipment on its premises. This applies to any form of sound recording and any type of still picture or video recording, whether including sound recording or not, and covers any type of device used for these purposes.

Any person wishing to use such equipment for any of these purposes must seek written permission in advance. This policy is in place to protect the privacy of staff and customers and the integrity of our assessment material and assessment processes.

Unsanctioned use of recording equipment by any person is a breach of this policy. Any candidate involved in such a breach could be disqualified from the competition and could be subject to prosecution under section 55 of the Public Service Management (Recruitment & Appointments) Act, 2004.



In addition, where a person found guilty of an offence was or is a candidate at a recruitment process, then:

- Where he/she has not been appointed to a post, he/she will be disqualified as a candidate; and
- Where he/she has been appointed subsequently to the recruitment process in question, he/she shall forfeit that appointment.

20. **Circulation and Further Information**

HR Units should bring this circular to the notice of all eligible officers serving in their Departments and associated Offices without delay, including eligible fixed term workers, officers on term time, secondment, maternity leave, career break, contract, and all other relevant forms of leave.

21. If candidates have any queries about this circular, they should contact their HR Unit. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed directly to the Public Appointments Service.

22. The Civil Service is an equal opportunities employer.

Mise le meas,



**David Cagney**  
**Civil Service Chief Human Resources Officer**



## **Appendix I**

### **Department of the Taoiseach**

The Department of the Taoiseach supports the work of the Taoiseach and Government. The Department's purpose is to help the Taoiseach and the Government to develop a sustainable economy and a successful society, to pursue Ireland's interests abroad, to implement the Government's Programme and to build a better future for Ireland and all her citizens.

### **The Department of Finance**

The Department of Finance has a central role in implementing and promoting policies which can deliver sustainable economic growth, international competitiveness, internal efficiency and increased employment. This includes advising the Government on, and managing, the overall process of resource generation to secure sustainable economic and social benefits.

Over recent years the Department has implemented changes with the aim to develop a modern, professional and forward-looking Department. Resources have been adapted, realigned and enhanced in order to achieve its goals.

### **Department of Public Expenditure and Reform**

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's mission is to serve the country, its people and the Government by delivering well-managed and well-targeted public spending, through modernised, effective and accountable public services.

## **Appendix II**

### **COMPETENCIES FOR ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL HIGHER Leadership**

- Leads and manages staff to deliver high levels of performance.
- Develops capability of others through feedback, coaching and creating opportunities for skills development.
- Leads public service renewal and provides direction and innovation on the reform agenda
- Has a strong commitment to the implementation of strategic change.
- Represents Ireland's interests at EU and international level.
- Has a proven record of willingness to take the initiative and adopt a proactive approach .

### **Analysis, Judgement and Decision Making**

- Identifies relevant information sources to objectively analyse and evaluate large amounts of complex information (including numerical data).
- Identifies the key issue(s) to make appropriate recommendations and present solutions.
- Makes independent decisions on issues based on his/her research, taking a strategic/long-term view of issues and considers the wider implications of particular courses of action.
- Makes clear and realistic decisions and provides recommendations in a timely manner, justifying their decisions with supporting arguments.

### **Management and Delivery of Results**

- Plans and organises large blocks of work effectively in a pressurised environment with tight deadlines.
- Prioritises and plans work, identifying possible problem areas and developing contingency plans where necessary.
- Takes responsibility for producing high quality work at all times, even when working under pressure or to tight deadlines.
- Pays attention to detail and puts in extra effort when required to ensure a high quality outcome.
- Can plan and manage budgets and expenditure.

### **Building Relationships and Communication**

- Engages effectively with diverse audiences and stakeholders including Ministers, senior civil servants and the wider political system including on cross-governmental issues.
- Is skilled in presenting a case, using persuasive arguments, listening to others, selling the benefits of a proposed course of action and tailoring an approach to take account of others' perspectives.
- Emphasises shared objectives to compromise where appropriate and to focus on achieving consensus.
- Interacts effectively with a wide range of people using a variety of methods and ensures his/her message is clearly understood.
- Listens to and understands the needs and concerns of different individuals/parties and adapts his/her approach accordingly.
- Motivates and encourages people and must be willing to deal with conflict if it arises.
- Is capable of working equally well as a member of a team and as a leader of interdepartmental groups.

## **Specialist Knowledge and Expertise**

- Understands the relevance of wider departmental, Civil Service and external issues and recognises the implications in the context of his/her role.
- Has developed expertise in policy and strategy formulation on complex issues.
- Has shaped fiscally sustainable policy solutions to promote economic and employment growth and effective social policies.
- Is committed to continuous self-learning and new thinking.

## **Drive and Commitment to Public Service Values**

- Uses his/her initiative and proactively identifies and implements improvements in his/her own area of responsibility.
- Has a positive approach to change, taking a creative approach to dealing with problems and implementing solutions.
- Continually seeks to develop his/her own skills and to keep up to date with developments in relevant areas.
- Ensures the citizen is at the heart of his/her work.

## Appendix III

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

#### Terms and Conditions

*Your attention is drawn to this important information. By submitting an application, accessing or attempting any assessment/test materials you are agreeing to be bound by the terms set out below:*

1. All test and assessment materials are subject to copyright and all rights are reserved. **No part of the tests/assessment materials or interview(s) (including any text, questions and/or potential answer options) or associated materials (including practice and/or familiarisation materials) may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, printing, photographing, recording, written or otherwise, at any stage.** To do so is an offence and may result in you being excluded from the selection process. Any person(s) who contravenes this provision, whether an applicant or other, or who assists another person(s) in contravening this provision, is liable to prosecution and/or civil suit for loss of copyright and intellectual property.
2. Note the Commission for Public Service Appointment's Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil and Public Service. In particular, please note Section 5 - Responsibility of Candidates (see below).

#### **Canvassing**

Candidates should note that canvassing to enhance their candidature or encouraging others to do so will disqualify them and will result in their exclusion from the appointments process.

Candidates' obligations

Candidates in the recruitment process must not:

- Knowingly or recklessly provide false information
- Canvass any person, with or without inducements
- Interfere with or compromise the process in any way.

A third party must not personate a candidate at any stage of the process.

#### **Penalties for failure to comply**

Any person who contravenes the above provisions, or who assists another person in contravening the above provisions is guilty of an offence. A person who is found guilty of an offence is liable to a fine and/or imprisonment.

If a person found guilty of such an offence was or is a candidate in a recruitment process, then:

- Where s/he has not been appointed to a post, s/he will be disqualified as a candidate
- Where s/he has been appointed subsequent to the recruitment process in question, s/he shall forfeit that appointment.

3. The admission of a person to the competition, or invitation to undertake any element of the selection process is not to be taken as implying that the Public Appointments Service are satisfied that such a person fulfils the essential requirements.