

28 September 2018

**Circular 17/2018:**  
**Interdepartmental Competition for Promotion to**  
**First Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade**

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to say that the Public Appointments Service (PAS) will hold an interdepartmental competition to set up panels from which appointments as First Secretary Standard may be made. It is not envisaged that appointments will be made from this competition after **30 October 2020**.
2. **Pay**

The First Secretary Standard Salary Scale (rates effective from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018) for the position are as follows:

Personal Pension Contribution (PPC)

€66,495, €68,898, €71,289, €73,687, €76,080, €77,460 (NMAX), €79,896 (LSI-1), €82,300 (LSI-2)

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

A different 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(LSI-1) and 6(LSI-2) years satisfactory service at the maximum of the scale

**Important Note**

Entry will be at the minimum of the scale and the rate of remuneration will not be subject to negotiation and may be adjusted from time to time in line with Government pay policy. 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.

3. **First Secretary Role**

**First Secretary - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

The First Secretary role is a senior management role within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Serving in missions abroad is an integral part of the work of a First Secretary in the

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Candidates appointed as First Secretaries from this competition will be required to serve in missions abroad on a regular basis throughout their career at this grade. The duties associated with this post include, but is not restricted to the following:

- briefing and assisting the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (and Ministers of State) in his/her role as principal adviser to the Government, on the policies and activities of other countries or international organisations;
- analysis and policy development in area of responsibility and appropriate contribution to Departmental strategy and policy development;
- managing and monitoring the performance of his/her work unit, including the management and development of staff and the effective operation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS);
- promotion and communication of Ireland's interests and image abroad including negotiation, representing and seeking support for Irish Government policies and positions in a wide range of multilateral and bilateral fora;
- service in Irish Missions, including interaction with the Host Government and International Organisations; contributing to management of Mission staff, financial and other key resources; assisting in the organisation of, and participation in Presidential and Ministerial visits; supporting Irish citizens overseas; activities relating to trade and cultural promotion; political/economic reporting to HQ as required; and management of Irish Aid programmes and budgets in relevant Missions.

4. First Secretaries are required to spend periods of residential postings abroad as and where required by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

#### 5. **Eligibility**

The eligibility requirements in this competition reflect those set out in General Council Agreed Report 1526 in respect of new promotion arrangements to apply in the Civil Service. Available here:

<https://hr.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Letter-to-Personnel-Officers-Jan-2014-and-General-Council-Report-1526.pdf>

#### **Location of Vacancies**

Appointments from this competition will be made, as the need arises, to fill positions at Headquarters in Dublin or in Limerick where part of the Development Cooperation Division is based. Candidates are required to indicate on the application form whether they are interested in being assigned to Dublin only or Limerick only or either location. Assignments will be at the discretion of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A diplomatic officer can expect to work both in Ireland and at a number of Embassies, Consulates and multi-lateral missions abroad. After recruitment, a First Secretary may be assigned to work for a period at Headquarters followed by an initial posting to a mission abroad for about three years. During a career, postings (usually of four years duration) to six or seven different countries would not be unusual. Candidates should remember that a key condition of service throughout one's career in the diplomatic service is readiness to accept foreign postings.

Selection for the position of First Secretary involves a demanding application and assessment process that takes place over a period of time. However, the Public Appointments Service will make the process as clear as possible and will keep applicants informed as they progress through the selection process.

The onus is on the candidate to ensure that they satisfy the essential eligibility requirements for the position. Admission to the competition does not imply acceptance that a candidate is eligible.

1. Candidates must on or before the closing date:

- a) Be citizens of Ireland
  - b) be serving in an established, unestablished or acting (see para 5.e below) capacity in the Civil Service in a grade below that of Assistant Principal, and
  - c) on or before the closing date of **18<sup>th</sup> October 2018** and have not less than two years' service in the Civil Service. 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.
  - d) Have management experience at an appropriate level, including leading teams, developing people and managing resources;
  - e) Have experience of analysis and policy development ideally with interest in foreign policy and operations;
  - f) Have experience of promoting and communicating Ireland's interest and values at home and/or abroad.
  - g) Have experience of engaging effectively with diverse stakeholders;
2. Demonstrate that they possess the skills/competencies identified as being important for the role. These include:

Leadership  
 Judgement, Analysis and Decision Making  
 Management and Delivery of Results  
 Interpersonal and Communication Skills  
 Specialist Knowledge, Expertise and Self Development  
 Drive and Commitment in Public Service Values

- a) 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 **18<sup>th</sup> October 2018**.
  - b) 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.
3. 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 Finance Circular 18/98 and if they are 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.

#### 4. Application process

Practical Matters:

- Applications must be made online through [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie).
- 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). To register click on "**Login**" and then enter your details under '**New User**'.

- 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 [firstsecretary2018@publicjobs.ie](mailto:firstsecretary2018@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 Publicjobs Messageboard.
- It is strongly recommended that you do not change your email address or mobile phone number in the course of this recruitment campaign, 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 themselves 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**

Please note that in parallel with this Interdepartmental Competition other separate competitions are also being conducted using the same application form. If applying for any of these, please ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements and submit only one application form indicating the competition(s) you wish to be considered for. The onus is on the candidate to select the correct competition(s).

Click on the button 'Apply now' to access the application form. This button is located at the end of the job posting page for "Management Opportunities" on [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie). You must complete the application form in full and click the submit button.

Once you have submitted your application form 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 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 **3 pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018**. If you do not receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your application within two working days of applying, please email [firstsecretary2018@publicjobs.ie](mailto:firstsecretary2018@publicjobs.ie). Candidates should note that support will be available during office hours until the closing date.

## **5. Selection Process**

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

- Short listing;
- Completion of an online Assessment Questionnaire;
- Online and/or paper-based assessment test(s);
- Language tests (oral and/or written), e.g. in the case of applicants for Functional Bilingual positions in the Irish language;
- Interview(s), which may include video/remote interviews;
- Presentation/Analysis exercise;
- Work sample test or any other tests or exercises that may be deemed appropriate.

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 will be determined from time to time by the PAS.

More detailed information will be made available to the relevant candidates if they are invited to progress through the selection process.

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

### **Shortlisting**

The number of applications received for a position generally exceeds that required to fill existing and future vacancies for the position. In this instance, the Public Appointments Service provide for the employment of a short listing process to select a group of candidates for the next stage 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 than 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(s) 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.

### **Next Steps**

Should you come under consideration to proceed to subsequent stages of the selection process, information will be forwarded to you at the appropriate time.

### **Candidates with Disabilities**

Candidates who have indicated on their application form or profile that they would like to avail of reasonable accommodations are asked to submit a psychologists/medical report. The purpose of the report is to provide PAS with information to act as a basis for determining reasonable accommodations where appropriate.

These reports must be forwarded to John Fayne, Public Appointments Service, Chapter House, 26-30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1 by close of business on **18<sup>th</sup> October 2018**.

If you have recently applied for a competition with PAS and submitted a report, please email [Amanda.kavanagh@publicjobs.ie](mailto:Amanda.kavanagh@publicjobs.ie) to confirm that your report is on file.

6. 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 an Evaluation of at least "Fully Achieved Expectations" 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 meet 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 6/2014. Candidates having doubts on any aspect of their eligibility are advised to clarify their position with their Personnel Section before proceeding with their application.

## **7. Conditions of Appointment**

Appointment to the post of First Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade 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 First Secretary. Prior to the end of this probationary period a decision will be made on substantive appointment to the grade.

11. Candidates should note that the provisions of Circular 6/89, Removal Expenses, will not apply to any offers of appointment arising from this competition.

12. A candidate who accepts an offer of appointment as First Secretary whether 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.

13. Officers not promoted at the expiry of the panels, will have no claim to promotion thereafter because of having been on the panels.

#### 14. **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.

#### **Candidates' Rights – Review Procedures in relation to the Selection Process**

For information on Review Procedures please view:

[http://www.publicjobs.ie/restapi/documents/Review\\_Procedures\\_in\\_relation\\_to\\_the\\_Selection\\_Process.doc](http://www.publicjobs.ie/restapi/documents/Review_Procedures_in_relation_to_the_Selection_Process.doc)

#### **Requests for Feedback/Test Rechecks**

Feedback in relation to the selection process is available on request. Feedback and rechecks may be requested for up to six months after completion of each stage of the competition. However, please note that the Review Process as set out in the Code of Practice is a separate process with specified timeframes that must be observed. Receipt of feedback is not required to invoke a review. It is not necessary for a candidate to compile a detailed case prior to invoking the review mechanism. The timeframe set out in the CPSA Code cannot be extended for any reason including the provision of feedback and/or the outcome of rechecks.

#### 17. **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 First Secretary, the appointee may request that the Civil Service Disciplinary Code Appeal Board review the decision. [Ref. Circular 14/2006 Civil Service Disciplinary Code paragraphs 11 and 50 (ii).] In the event of reversion, an officer will return to a vacancy in his/her former grade in the former Department.

18. The Minister reserves the right to arrange that vacancies for First Secretary 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.

#### 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 test material, e.g. through social media or any other means, may result in you being disqualified from the competition.

Please note that all 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) or associated materials 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.

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;  
&
- 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 Sections 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 Section. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed directly to the Public Appointments Service.

22. The Civil Service is an equal opportunities employer.

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David Cagney  
Civil Service Chief Human Resources Officer



Appendix I

Key Competencies for effective performance at First Secretary level:



## First Secretary Officer Level Competencies

Leadership	Actively contributes to the development of the strategies and policies of the Department/ Organisation
	Brings a focus and drive to building and sustaining high levels of performance, addressing any performance issues as they arise
	Leads and maximises the contribution of the team as a whole
	Considers the effectiveness of outcomes in terms wider than own immediate area
	Clearly defines objectives/goals & delegates effectively, encouraging ownership and responsibility for tasks
	Develops capability of others through feedback, coaching & creating opportunities for skills development
	Identifies and takes opportunities to exploit new and innovative service delivery channels
Judgement Analysis & Decision Making	Researches issues thoroughly, consulting appropriately to gather all information needed on an issue
	Understands complex issues quickly, accurately absorbing and evaluating data (including numerical data)
	Integrates diverse strands of information, identifying inter-relationships and linkages
	Uses judgment to make clear, timely and well-grounded decisions on important issues
	Considers the wider implications, agendas and sensitivities within decisions and the impact on a range of stakeholders
	Takes a firm position on issues s/he considers important
Management & Delivery of Results	Takes responsibility for challenging tasks and delivers on time and to a high standard
	Plans and prioritises work in terms of importance, timescales and other resource constraints, re-prioritising in light of changing circumstances
	Ensures quality and efficient customer service is central to the work of the division
	Looks critically at issues to see how things can be done better
	Is open to new ideas initiatives and creative solutions to problems
	Ensures controls and performance measures are in place to deliver efficient and high value services
	Effectively manages multiple projects
Interpersonal & Communication Skills	Presents information in a confident, logical and convincing manner, verbally and in writing
	Encourages open and constructive discussions around work issues
	Promotes teamwork within the section, but also works effectively on projects across Departments/Sectors
	Maintains poise and control when working to influence others
	Instills a strong focus on Customer Service in his/her area
	Develops and maintains a network of contacts to facilitate problem solving or information sharing
	Engages effectively with a range of stakeholders, including members of the public, Public Service Colleagues and the political system
Specialist Knowledge, Expertise and Self Development	Has a clear understanding of the roles objectives and targets of self and the team and how they fit into the work of the unit and Department/Organisation
	Has a breadth and depth of knowledge of Department and Governmental issues and is sensitive to wider political and organisational priorities
	Is considered an expert by stakeholders in own field/area
	Is focused on self development, seeking feedback and opportunities for growth to help carry out the specific requirements of the role
Drive & Commitment to Public Service Values	Is self motivated and shows a desire to continuously perform at a high level
	Is personally honest and trustworthy and can be relied upon
	Ensures the citizen is at the heart of all services provided
	Through leading by example, fosters the highest standards of ethics and integrity

## Appendix II

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION** **Terms and Conditions**

***Your attention is drawn to this important information. By 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 (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. Your attention is drawn the Commission for Public Service Appointment's Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service. In particular please note Section 5 - Responsibility of Candidates (see below).

#### Canvassing

Candidates should note that canvassing 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 he/she has not been appointed to a post, he/she will be disqualified as a candidate
- Where he/she has been appointed subsequent to the recruitment process in question, he/she 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 is satisfied that such a person fulfils the essential requirements.
  - 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.