

Appointment of Chairs to the Governing Bodies of Northern Regional College (NRC), South Eastern Regional College (SERC), South West College (SWC), Southern Regional College (SRC)

Frequently Asked Questions

I've seen the further education colleges described as Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB). What is this?

An NDPB is a body established by statute to deliver a particular public service and which is overseen by a Governing Body rather than Ministers. It employs its own staff and manages its own budget.

What do the Governing Bodies of Further Education colleges do?

A Further Education College Governing Body oversees the performance and strategic direction of the colleges. They are also responsible for ensuring the highest standards of corporate governance, efficiency and propriety in the use of public funds.

How do I apply – can I apply online?

Simply download an information pack and application form from the Department for the Economy (DfE) Public Appointments Unit (PAU) website at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/appointment-chairs-governing-bodies-nrc-swc-src-serc>

Alternatively, you can request a pack by email or in hardcopy from the DfE PAU at pau@economy-ni.gov.uk or by telephone:

Jean Mageean 028 9052 9461 or Neil Morrison on 028 9052 9212

Completed application forms can be posted to: PAU, DfE, First Floor, Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8FD or returned via email to: pau@economy-ni.gov.uk

What is the closing date for applications?

The closing date 12:00 Noon (BST) on Thursday 8th October 2026. Late applications will not be accepted.

Do I need to complete all sections of the application form?

Yes - all sections of the application form must be completed to the best of your ability.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate their **personal** ability to meet the criteria by way of practical examples. The Selection Panel will reach a decision on whether or not you meet each of the criteria on the basis of the evidence you supply.

It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities. The Panel will not make assumptions from the title of your post or the nature of the organisation, as to the skills and experience gained, so the onus is on the applicant to provide sufficiently detailed examples to demonstrate that they have the experience of putting into use the competences that are needed for the post.

Which essential criteria should I complete on the application form?

Candidates must complete all of the following four essential criteria:-

- 1. Leadership**
- 2. Corporate Governance, Accountability & Risk Management**
- 3. Problem Solving**
- 4. Collaboration**

Can I send you my CV?

The public appointment process does not permit CVs as a form of application. You must complete the application form.

Do you require any professional/academic qualifications?

No specific academic qualifications are required for this appointment.

Am I too young/too old?

There are no restrictions based on age - DfE public appointments are open to applicants on the basis of ability.

How can I find out more about the public appointment process?

Please contact DfE PAU by email at pau@economy-ni.gov.uk or telephone Jean Mageean 028 9052 9461 (Text Relay: 18001 028 9052 9461) or Neil Morrison on 028 9052 9212 (Text Relay: 18001 028 9052 9212).

How can I find out more about the role?

Information on the expectations of the role of a Governing Body Chairperson is available from:

Tina Diamond, DfE, Further Education Corporate Governance & Accountability
Telephone: 028 9025 7467
Email fegovernance@economy-ni.gov.uk

It is recommended that you contact her if you require any clarification on a particular aspect of the role.

Information on the Governing Bodies are available on their websites:

Northern Regional College (NRC) - <https://www.nrc.ac.uk/>

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) - <https://www.serc.ac.uk/>

South West College (SWC) - <https://swc.ac.uk/>

Southern Regional College (SRC) - <https://www.src.ac.uk/>

The Guide for Governors of Further Education Colleges available on the DfE website provides further information on the roles and responsibilities of an FE Governing Body, the Chair and the individual governors:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-governors-further-education-colleges>

I am already working in the public sector – can I still apply?

Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that, if appointed, they will be asked to obtain confirmation from their employer that any remuneration due and time worked for this position are truly additional to their existing job role and is not a duplication with salaried employment (unless allowed under the terms and conditions of employment). In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying to occur the Department reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

As a former civil servant am I still eligible?

Former civil servants are subject to rules on the Acceptance of Outside Business Appointments, Employment or Self-Employment for a period of up to two years after leaving the NI Civil Service. Individuals in this category who wish to apply should check their eligibility to do so with NICS HR Employee Relations to allow them to accept it. You can contact HRConnect using the contact details below:

Email: NICS@HRConnect.nigov.net or External Dial: 0800 1 300 400

I currently provide services to NRC, SERC, SWC and/or SRC. Does this disqualify me from serving as a Governing Body Chair?

The Department must take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. Therefore applicants, in their application form, must disclose information or personal connections which, if they were to be appointed, could lead to a conflict of interest or be perceived as such. Conflicts of interest may not be a barrier to appointment but both real and perceived conflicts must be discussed with all candidates by the Selection Panel. This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in the Governing Body's independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointees.

For further information please read the Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (CPANI) leaflet:

<https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/publications/guidance-conflicts-interest-integrity-and-how-raise-complaint>

and the Annex attached to the Candidate Information Pack for further information on this subject.

I have a family member who is a student/a member of staff at one of the FE colleges. Does this disqualify me from serving as a Governing Body Chair?

Neither of these circumstances automatically disqualify you from serving as a Governing Body Chair. Please refer to the answer above concerning individuals currently providing services to the college.

I am currently a member of staff at one of the colleges. Does this disqualify me from serving as a Governing Body Chair?

As set out in Annex B of the Candidate Information Booklet if you are currently a member of staff at an FE college you will not be eligible for appointment to the Governing Body of either of the colleges.

You should be aware that this ineligibility is applicable on appointment and will not impact on your eligibility to submit an application if your circumstances are due to change before the appointment starts. You could be considered for appointment if you are no longer a member of staff when the appointment is due to start.

I am currently a student at an FE college. Does this disqualify me from serving as a Governing Body Chair?

If you are a student at an FE college (other than NRC, SERC, SWC or SRC) you will be eligible for appointment as Chair of the Governing Body of NRC, SERC, SWC or SRC.

If you are currently a full-time student at NRC, SERC, SWC or SRC, as set out in Annex B of the Candidate Information Booklet, you will not be eligible for appointment to the Governing Body of that College.

You should be aware that the ineligibility for full-time students of NRC, SERC, SWC or SRC is applicable on appointment, and will not impact on your eligibility to submit an application if your circumstances are due to change before the appointment starts. You could be considered for appointment if you are no longer a full-time student of NRC, SERC, SWC or SRC when the appointment is due to start.

How will the sift and short-listing process work?

The selection panel will use an anonymised sift and short-listing process for this competition.

When assessing each application against the essential criteria, panel members will use a marking frame to determine how an applicant's skills, knowledge, experience and qualities meet the criteria. Applications which do not meet all of the essential criteria will be sifted out.

Candidates must have achieved the agreed pass mark of four or above out of the available seven marks in all four criteria to be considered eligible for interview.

If the Department receives a high number of applications which meet the selection criteria, the Panel reserves the right to apply a scoring system to further short-list for interview, based on the quality of evidence provided.

No applicant names will be given to the selection panel during the sift or shortlisting process.

How long will the selection process take?

It is anticipated that the sift and short-listing process will take place in early November 2026. Interviews are expected to be held on the 30 November, 1, 2, 3 and 4 December 2026. and it is expected that the outcome of the competition will be made known by January 2027.

I am a disabled candidate - how do I get reasonable adjustments for my interview?

For this competition we are using the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS), whereby we guarantee to interview any disabled applicant whose application meets or exceeds the minimum requirement for the post. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place. The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage.

If called for interview and you have a disability requiring any reasonable adjustments or specific access needs please email DfE PAU at pau@economy-ni.gov.uk and we will be happy to discuss these with you.

If I am unsuccessful, can you give me feedback?

Upon request, any applicant sifted out or short-listed out can be provided with feedback based on the agreed Panel's assessment of their application. If an applicant wishes to contest the decision not to short-list them for interview they should do so within 5 working days of receipt of their feedback letter.

Will I be subject to any checks before being appointed?

For the Department's consideration, applicants are asked to declare in the application form if they have been convicted of any offence (other than minor motoring offences) which are not spent in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978 or if any charges are outstanding.

Checks will be carried out with the DfE Insolvency Service and the following individuals will not be eligible for appointment:-

- Anyone disqualified from being a company director either through a Court Order or Undertaking.
- Anyone that is currently bankrupt.
- Anyone that is currently subject to a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order or Undertaking.

In addition, a cross-departmental check will be carried out on the probity and performance of those candidates who currently hold or have held public appointment roles.

Will I get training?

Yes - induction training will be provided to new appointees. All appointees to governing bodies are supported with additional development needs or training as necessary.

Where will training take place?

The location of training courses will be confirmed in advance of attendance. Corporate training may be provided at one of the Colleges' campuses or at an accessible external site.

How do I find out about other public appointment opportunities?

Register with us at pau@economy-ni.gov.uk or telephone Jean Mageean on 028 9052 9461 or Neil Morrison on 028 9052 9212

For a list of current vacancies/competitions throughout the Northern Ireland Civil Service please visit <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/public-appointment-vacancies>