



# Information Booklet

## Appointment of Chair to the Governing Body of Northern Regional College

**This information pack can be made available in other formats on request.  
For details, please contact**

**DfE Public Appointments Unit at:**

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## WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in becoming Chair of the Governing Body of Northern Regional College (NRC).

This information booklet provides you with content regarding:

- Background to the Further Education (FE) sector and to NRC;
- Role of the Chair of the Governing Body;
- Person specification for the role of the Chair;
- How to make an application, the interview arrangements and selection process.

The Department for the Economy (DfE) is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit. Independent assessment, openness and transparency are integral parts of the process. DfE is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all individuals.

Applications are welcome regardless of gender, age, marital status, disability, religion, ethnic origin, political opinion, sexual orientation or whether or not you have dependants.

**We particularly welcome applications from people with a disability, those from ethnic minorities and young people as these groupings are currently under-represented on the Governing Body.**

**Female Chairs are currently under-represented across all bodies sponsored by DfE and applications from females would also be particularly welcome.**

Applications are equally welcome from candidates of all backgrounds including public sector, private sector and the voluntary sector.

We are operating a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for applicants with a disability. Further details can be found within [section 4](#) of this booklet. All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability.

If you would like to speak to someone in connection with any aspect of the process or if you require an application pack in a different format, such as Braille, large print, audio etc, please contact us using the details provided on the front cover of the booklet.

We look forward to receiving your completed application.

The selection panel for this competition will consist of:-

- Heather Cousins – Head of Skills & Education Group (DfE)
- Beverley Harrison – Director of Further Education (DfE)
- Douglas Bain – Independent Assessor from the Office of The Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE SECTOR

### Introduction

DfE is seeking to appoint a Chair to the Governing Body of NRC.

The procedure for these appointments adheres to the [Code of Practice](#) issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI). This means that it is based on merit with a fair, open and transparent process that involves independent scrutiny and the Minister responsible for DfE making the final decision on whom to appoint.

### Background to the Sector

Northern Ireland has six regional FE colleges, offering a wide range of programmes including professional, technical and academic studies, from Level 0 to higher education.

The colleges are classified as Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and carry out their functions at arm's length from DfE, the parent Department. As NDPBs, the colleges:

- Carry out functions on behalf of the Executive
- Are legally incorporated with their own legal identity and their own legislation,
- [The Further Education \(NI\) Order 1997](#)
- Employ their own staff
- Are allocated their own budgets
- Publish their own business plans, annual reports and accounts
- Are subject to Executive and Departmental priorities including [‘Further Education Means Success’](#)

The DfE Minister is ultimately responsible to the Northern Ireland Assembly for the colleges' performance.

In practice most of the responsibilities of the Minister and Departmental Accounting Officer are delegated to the senior sponsor (the Director of Further Education) and Departmental sponsor team to discharge.

The FE sector in Northern Ireland provides skills and opportunities that are essential to building a modern economy and to creating a stronger, more inclusive society. The aim for FE in NI is to develop a world class FE sector, financially efficient and with strong governance; a sector with state of the art, affordable accommodation; a sector which is collaborative, responsive and adaptive to learner and employer needs; a sector which plays a vital role in delivering skills for the economy which provides a strong NI offering aligned to economic priorities; and which supports social inclusion. The vehicle for delivering the next chapter in FE is the [FE Means Success Strategy](#).

DfE intends to issue a consultation on a new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland early in 2021. The consultation will re-emphasise and place renewed focus on the central role the FE sector fulfils in delivering the skills required to underpin Northern Ireland's economic prosperity and to address social inequality.

The six colleges sit at the centre of the professional and technical education system, undertaking a dual role in both contributing to generating a strong and vibrant economy and also in addressing educational disadvantage. The FE Sector's draft Corporate Plan 2018-2021 sets out the shared values and vision, embodying their commitment to working collaboratively in providing skills solutions that meet current and emerging economic demand while supporting one of the FE Sector's unique strengths: each college's ability to deliver tailored, employer-led, locally responsive provision. The six colleges' shared vision is to 'provide world-class skills and support to business that transforms lives'.

Colleges are mostly funded from the public purse through DfE, receiving funding of £184.9m in the last financial year 2019/20. In the same period NRC received funding of around £24.5m.

In 2018/19, the total number of enrolments at NI FE colleges stood at 148,002<sup>1</sup>, of which 17% were full-time and 83% part-time. Regulated enrolments<sup>2</sup> accounted for 80% (118,160) of the total enrolments, with 20% (29,842) non-regulated<sup>3</sup>. Students in the '19 years and under' age group made up 57% of total college enrolments; with 31% of students in the '25 and over' age group. Of these enrolments there was a total of 76,670 individual students.

NRC has seven campuses, Ballymena (Trostan Avenue), Ballymena (Farm Lodge), Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne, Magherafelt and Newtownabbey. DfE is investing £85m in the delivery of two fantastic new campus buildings in Coleraine and Ballymena to provide modern, state of the art facilities, and enable the delivery of an extensive curriculum offering. This significant investment is critical to the future delivery plans for the College and will consolidate the existing estate, enable the needs of industry and learners to be fully met and significantly aid economic regeneration and growth in the area.

The College's Mission is:-

*"Northern Regional College will provide students with a life-changing, supportive and innovative experience, which will equip them with the skills to compete successfully in the global employment market and meet the needs of local industry and employers."*

In 2018/19, NRC had 21,900 enrolments (14.8% of total enrolments across the sector), with 18,016 part-time and 3,884 full-time regulated enrolments. In the period 2018/19, it employed 586 people (expressed as full-time equivalents) of whom 324 were teaching staff. Further information on the College can be found on its website; [www.nrc.ac.uk](http://www.nrc.ac.uk)

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- 1 FE Activity in NI 2014/15 to 2018/19 bulletin published 28th November 2019: [Further Education Enrolments | DfE](#).
  - 2 'Regulated enrolments' are regarded as those on courses that are at 'level 3 or below' and appear on Register of Regulated Qualifications, or part of DfE's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications and Higher Education qualifications (level 4 and above)
  - 3 'Non-regulated enrolments' are those which potentially lead to a formal qualification (at level 3 or below) but do not appear on Register of Regulated Qualifications or where a qualification is not expected, typically hobby & leisure courses.

## SECTION 2: ROLE PROFILE

### Role and Duties

The Chair of the Governing Body of an FE college has particular responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership for their college which aligns with the strategic direction of the Minister, as well as ensuring that the Governing Body works effectively.

The Governing Body of a college is required by legislation:

- To ensure the efficient and effective management of that college; and
- To ensure the provision of suitable and efficient FE to students of the college having regard to the needs of industry, commerce and the community and, also, existing educational provision within the local area.

A Governing Body's responsibility for the efficient and effective management of the college includes its financial performance and the quality of its teaching and learning. It must ensure that the college for which it is responsible is managed with probity and integrity.

The Governing Body has a responsibility for ensuring that the professional, technical and academic programmes of the college reflect the college's strategic direction and mission as well as meeting the strategic priorities DfE has set for FE. In guiding the strategic direction of the college, the Governing Body provides and exercises both a support and challenge function in respect of the Principal/Chief Executive and executive team. For more information please see the Further Education Strategy – [Further Education Means Success](#).

College Governing Bodies have up to 18 Members each, 12 of whom are appointed by the Economy Minister through the public appointments process. The remaining Members are the college Principal/Chief Executive, two staff representatives, a student representative and up to two Members who may be co-opted by the Governing Body to bring added expertise and experience not considered adequately covered by other Members.

Individual Governing Body Members should bring independence, objectivity, impartiality and expertise to both the decision making and challenge processes within the college. All Members have equal voting rights on the Governing Body.

All Governing Body Members must personally subscribe to and uphold the seven principles of public life, set by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. (See [Annex A Principles of Public Life](#))

The Chair's specific responsibilities include:

## **Governance**

Ensuring that the Governing Body has sufficient support and information to discharge its functions.

Ensuring that the Governing Body takes due account of all statutory regulations, codes of practice and other requirements.

Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place within the college.

Contributing objectively to the proceedings of the Governing Body and its committees, exercising a challenge role as appropriate.

Approving the arrangements for the appraisal of senior staff, which also complies with sector wide arrangements.

Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Further Education (NI) Order 1997 and adherence to the public sector standards applied to Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

## **Leadership**

Providing strong leadership to the Governing Body, ensuring that individual governors work corporately as a cohesive team.

Enabling all governors to make a full contribution to the affairs of the Governing Body. This includes advising new members on their role and responsibilities.

Representing the interests of the college at meetings with the Minister, senior officials and the general public.

Assessing the performance of the Principal and Chief Executive and Governing Body members on an annual basis.

Ensuring that the college acts as a responsible employer. Contributing to the Governing Body's role in the process of appointing, suspending, dismissing and also, determining the pay and conditions of service of senior staff.

Establishing an agreed framework for the pay and conditions of service of all other staff.

Working collaboratively with all other colleges to develop a cohesive FE sector.

## **Strategic Direction**

Leading in determining the mission of the college, the establishment and maintenance of its general character and its medium to long-term strategic direction.

Setting the strategic direction of the college, aligned with Executive/Ministerial strategic priorities, in particular the Programme for Government, Industrial Strategy, the FE Means Success Strategy and the FE sector's corporate plan and DfE for the Economy's new Skills Strategy (from 2021).

Ensuring that the college delivers against the strategy and policy for FE in Northern Ireland.

Ensuring that the quality of college education/skills provision meets the needs of students, prospective students and employers.

## Budget

Ensuring effective oversight of the college's management of performance, financial controls and staff.

Encouraging high standards of propriety and promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources throughout the college.

Monitoring the college's operational and financial performance.

Critically analysing internal and external information/data sources to establish a robust evidence base to solve problems and make informed decisions.

You can find further information on the roles and responsibilities of an FE Governing Body, the Chair and the individual governor in the [Guide for Governors of Further Education Colleges](#).

## Period of Appointment

A Chair will normally serve for a period of four years (one term) but may be considered for appointment for one further term. An annual assessment of the performance of the Chair is carried out throughout the period of appointment. Reappointment may be considered subject to satisfactory performance during the initial period of office, continued adherence to the principles of public life and subject to statutory disqualifications set out in [Annex B](#). Ultimately, the decision to re-appoint will rest with the Economy Minister.

In accordance with the [Code of Practice](#) issued by CPANI, appointments for the same position i.e. on the same Governing Body, are restricted to two terms. An individual who has served for two terms on the Governing Body of one college, is however eligible to apply to serve on the Governing Body of another college should they wish to do so. An existing Governing Body member can be considered for appointment as Chair of their Governing Body, through open competition. Such an appointment would be to a different position and would count as a new appointment.

## Time Commitment

There are a minimum of six full meetings of a Governing Body per year usually held at one of the College campuses. A Chair is expected to attend all meetings and also, to represent the college at other meetings and public events. A Chair is also likely to have significant involvement in sub committees. Additional meetings may be called as required.

On average, a Chair can expect to commit around one day a week to college business. This includes Governing Body meetings, which are generally held in the evening, as well as regular interaction with DfE. Engagement with DfE will primarily be through the Director of Further Education, who is the lead official for all FE colleges in Northern Ireland. A Chair, along with the Chairs and Principals/Chief Executives from other colleges, will also participate in the work of the Colleges' Employers Forum, which is responsible for negotiating the terms, conditions of service and remuneration of staff.

## Remuneration

- The post of Chair of a Governing Body is remunerated at a rate of £20,000 per annum. Further details are available on request or on the [DfE website](#).
- You will also be eligible to claim allowances, at Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) rates, for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on Governing Body business.
- All remuneration and expenses are subject to deduction of income tax and national insurance.

## Double Paying

Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that

- they may be ineligible for consideration for this appointment if in DfE's view there is a conflict of interest, a perception of conflict or a potential conflict, between the appointment and existing commitments;
- they will be asked to confirm that they have permission from their employer to take up an appointment if one is offered and departments will confirm this; and
- there is a general guiding principle that an individual should not be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. As a result public appointees who already work in the public sector may not be entitled to claim remuneration or travelling expenses if the duties are undertaken during a period of time for which they are already paid by the public sector. They may be entitled to receive payment if their duties are undertaken outside of their normal working hours, for example at night, at weekends or during periods for which they are not paid if they work part-time. A civil or public servant may or may not be entitled to any remuneration payable if their duties as a public appointee are carried inside their normal working hours – it will depend on individual circumstances and each case will need to be considered on its own merits and with the agreement of their employer.

In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying to occur DfE reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

## Code of Conduct

To ensure that public service values remain at the heart of NRC, the Chair is required, on appointment, to demonstrate high standards of corporate and personal conduct and to subscribe to their Governing Body's Code of Conduct. This encompasses the seven principles of public life. (See [Annex A](#)).

## Training

Appointees to FE College Governing Bodies are expected to undergo appropriate training in corporate governance and board membership. You will be expected, as a condition of your appointment, to attend an appropriate training course, provided by DfE or the College. All appointees will be supported with additional development needs or training as necessary.



## SECTION 3: PERSON SPECIFICATION

The person specification addresses the qualities, experience, background and competences sought. A criteria based selection process is employed for this process requiring you to provide evidence which demonstrates that you can meet the requirements.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

#### Eligibility

[Schedule 3](#) of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 requires that applicants should be, or have previously been, engaged or employed in business, industry or any profession. This is a basic eligibility requirement for all applicants, and candidates must demonstrate how they meet this criterion. Please note the legislation does not set a minimum time period for this criterion.

For the purposes of this criterion, **'any profession'** is defined as an occupation, practice or vocation requiring significant understanding and experience of applying a complex set of knowledge and skills through professional education and/or practical experience.

Please be aware that DfE employs a broad interpretation of this criterion. **A background in education is not required to undertake the role of Governing Body Chair and is not a criterion for appointment.**

Selection is also based on the essential criteria set out below.

#### Essential Criteria

Applicants are expected to demonstrate their ability, by way of specific practical examples, as to how they meet six essential criteria. You will need to show, both on the application form and at interview, how **you** meet these criteria. The criteria are all of equal weight:

**Effective Governance** - How **you** have demonstrated effective governance in the operation of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation, including safeguarding its values and reputation and being accountable for its actions and decisions.

**Financial Management** - How **you** have displayed experience and skills in managing the financial systems and controls which govern the use of significant resources in a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation.

**Leadership** - How **you** have acted as a strategic leader of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation to ensure focus and direction, and deliver results successfully.

**Contribution to Strategy** - How **you** have made a significant contribution to defining the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation, in order to deliver improvements in a dynamic and complex environment.

**Analysing and Using Evidence** - How **you** have analysed complex information to make evidence based decisions and solve problems in a team environment.

**Effective Communications and Working Relationships** - How **you** have demonstrated effective communication, strong interpersonal skills and the ability to develop and maintain constructive working relationships and networks with key stakeholders/partners.

Only those candidates who have provided evidence of sufficient quality to meet all of the stated essential criteria will be considered for interview. More detail is set out on the following pages.

## **Qualifications**

**No specific academic or other qualifications are required for this appointment.**

## **Disqualifications**

You should note that there are statutory disqualifications associated with positions on Governing Bodies. These can be found at [Annex B](#).

You should be aware that these disqualifications are 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. For example if you are a Member/Chair of the Governing Body of another college, a full time student of the College or a member of staff of a college at the time of submitting your application, you could be considered for appointment if you will no longer be in this position when the appointment is due to start.

The central concept is that you **cannot** serve as a Governing Body Chair **at the same time as any of the** circumstances listed.

If you wish to seek clarification on the impact of this from a personal perspective, please contact us using the details provided on the front cover of this booklet.

## EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

**How you have demonstrated effective governance in the operation of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation, including safeguarding its values and reputation and being accountable for its actions and decisions.**

In this context, governance is about the direction and supervision of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation. It means making sure that the organisation is well run (or governed), complies with the governance framework associated with its legal status (FE colleges are Non-Departmental Public Bodies) and carries out the work it was set up to do. This involves planning for the future, guarding the organisation's values and reputation, looking after the resources and being accountable for the organisation's actions and decisions.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- ensure effective governance;
- embed an effective risk management approach;
- effectively monitor and analyse college performance;
- respond to underperformance;
- safeguard the college's values and reputation;
- plan for the future;
- behave with integrity;
- be open, objective and accountable; and
- positively challenge established thinking.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- understanding **your** role and collective responsibilities in the promotion of effective governance within an organisation;
- **your** ability to deliver results in line with organisational values and purpose, on an individual basis and through the organisation's people;
- **your** ability to identify, understand, evaluate and manage risks which may have an adverse impact on the performance of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation; and
- **your** ability to ensure systems of internal control are in place to support the achievement of policies, aims and objectives.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

How you have displayed experience and skills in managing the financial systems and controls which govern the use of significant resources that are associated with a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation

As Chair, you will lead in the scrutiny of a large amount of financial information which directly impacts college performance. You will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of effective oversight of the college's management of performance, financial controls and resources. This includes adherence to wider financial standards with which the college must comply.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- monitor and report on the financial health of the organisation;
- manage competing financial priorities;
- drive and deliver a culture that emphasises continuous improvement and value for money to maintain delivery within the allocated budget;
- positively challenge the status quo and assumptions;
- demonstrate high standards of propriety and promote the efficient and effective use of resources throughout the college;
- analyse complex financial/commercial/economic data to make critical decisions; and
- maintain a clear focus on maximising defined resource and questioning the value of activities against strategic priorities.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- **your** ability to ensure the effective management, monitoring and reporting of an organisation's financial position;
- **your** ability to monitor, understand and interpret critical financial information, to identify areas of concern, obtain adequate explanations and challenge assumptions;
- **your** ability to provide oversight and challenge to senior management to make strategic decisions on spend ;
- **your** understanding of the wider strategic environment and taking account of this when making decisions; and
- **your** ability to ensure that challenging financial performance targets are met.

## LEADERSHIP

**How you have acted as a strategic leader of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation to ensure focus and direction, and deliver results successfully.**

As Chair, you will have responsibility for leading the Governing Body. Within this context, leadership should be understood as the process by which chairs establish and demonstrate the values and mission of the sector and college.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- lead and motivate others;
- manage diversity;
- build effective cohesive teams;
- lead the setting of strategic vision and purpose for the college ;
- promote and fully engage with collaboration across the FE sector;
- effectively resolve conflict;
- interface constructively with the college senior management team and senior departmental officials;
- create a culture of adaptability, flexibility and responsiveness; and
- build a strong network of collaborative relationships across the Governing Body and FE sector.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- **your** ability to provide clear strategic direction and guidance and develop individuals into a cohesive and effective team;
- **your** ability to set a compelling vision and lead from the front to achieve outcomes responding effectively to changing requirements;
- **your** ability to ensure that business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation is effective and that the skills and experience of team members are harnessed, so that every individual contributes;
- **your** ability to effectively resolve conflicts or disagreements between team members;
- **your** ability to demonstrate strong values and be adaptive, flexible and resilient leadership;
- **your** ability to build partnerships and work collaboratively across a broad range of settings to achieve outcome; and
- **your** ability to develop and maintain effective working relationships with a broad range of stakeholders.

## CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGY

**How you have made a significant contribution to defining the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation, in order to deliver improvements in a dynamic and complex environment.**

As Chair, part of your role will be to provide strategic leadership to the college. This will include, taking full account of the requirement to implement key Executive and Departmental objectives which underpin the direction of the FE sector.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- understand, influence and develop strategy;
- maintain a broad perspective;
- take account of Executive and Departmental priorities;
- have organisational and business acumen ; and
- lead in developing and ensuring the successful delivery of the college's strategy, business plan and objectives.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- **your** involvement in the preparation, monitoring and review of the strategic plan of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation;
- **your** ability to contribute to the processes by which a strategic plan and an implementation/ business plan are agreed and progress monitored towards the targets which they contain; and
- **your** ability to address and respond to competing and changing priorities in developing and implementing the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation.

## ANALYSING AND USING EVIDENCE

How you have analysed complex information to make evidence based decisions and solve problems in a team environment.

As Chair, you will be presented with large amounts of complex information on a regular basis which you will be required to analyse in order to fulfil your responsibilities.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- analyse complex data to provide clarity;
- listen/gather feedback;
- make timely decisions;
- make quality decisions based on the evidence;
- solve problems; and
- challenge constructively.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- **your** ability to demonstrate the skills required to analyse complex information contribute to effective corporate governance, to understand the quality of own thinking and decisions and seek feedback where appropriate;
- **your** preparedness and ability to make evidence informed decisions quickly;
- **your** ability to analyse issues in the face of problems, decide who needs to be involved and generate options; and
- **your** ability to articulate options, weigh up competing views, challenge constructively to reach good decisions.

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

How you have demonstrated effective communication, strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to develop and maintain constructive working relationships and networks with key stakeholders/partners.

As Chair, one of your key responsibilities will be to effectively engage, communicate with and positively influence a wide and varied audience of college stakeholders/ partners, in order to deliver the strategic vision and various aims of the FE sector and your college.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- represent the interests of the college at meetings with the Minister, senior officials and the general public;
- use persuasive, compelling and informed arguments to influence others and achieve positive outcomes;
- have an open communication style, engage positively in debate and seek to balance views and resolve difficult and complex issues;
- show sensitivity in addressing and resolving the concerns of others;
- gain/enhance the commitment of stakeholders/partners in support of the organisation's aims;
- work constructively and collaboratively within the FE sector to achieve wider sectoral objectives/priorities; and
- engage constructively with internal and external stakeholders to develop positive relationships.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- **your** ability to actively create, develop and maintain constructive and collaborative working relationships and networks, with both internal and external stakeholders/partners;
- **your** ability to use persuasive and compelling arguments which influence others to understand and accept different approaches and perspectives;
- **your** ability to communicate with conviction and clarity, identify suitable communication methods and style depending on the audience and the situation;
- **your** ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of individuals, including senior leaders and key stakeholders/partners; and
- **your** ability to influence and negotiate with others, challenging constructively where necessary and, at the same time, maintain effective working relationships and networks.



## SECTION 4: APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

### APPLICATION PROCEDURE

#### **Sift and Short-listing Process**

An anonymised sift and short-listing process will be employed. When assessing each application against the selection criteria, panel members will use a marking frame to determine how an applicant's skills, knowledge and experience meets each of the criteria. Applications which do not meet all of the selection criteria will be sifted out.

If DfE 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, using aggregated marks.

If shortlisting is required the selection panel has agreed that the pass mark will be 32 out of a total possible score of 42. Candidates must also have achieved the agreed pass mark of two or above out of the available seven marks in all six criteria to be considered eligible for interview.

Should there be an insufficient pool of candidates achieving the required score of 32 the panel may consider reducing the required aggregated pass mark by one mark each time until a sufficient pool of suitable candidates for interview are found.

#### **Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)**

The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet all of the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

#### **Integrity & Conflicts of Interest**

DfE must ensure that the individuals appointed are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

DfE 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 board's independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointees.

Please read the CPANI leaflet 'Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and How to raise a complaint' and [Annex C](#) attached to this Information Pack for further information on this subject.

## How to Apply and Contact Details

Given the current circumstances it would be preferable if completed application forms could be emailed to [pau@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:pau@economy-ni.gov.uk); however, if this is not possible, hard copy applications can be posted to DfE, Public Appointments Unit, Netherleigh, Massey Avenue, Belfast, BT4 2JP

Telephone:

Jean Mageean on 028 9052 9461 Text Relay: 18001 028 9052 9461

Neil Hempton on 028 9025 7634 Text Relay: 18001 028 9025 7634

Mrs Mageean and Mr Hempton are the contacts for further details about the appointment process in general or regarding the progress of an application. Should you require clarification on any aspect of the role, please contact Mr Brian Patterson, DfE, Further Education Corporate Governance & Accountability, Telephone 028 9025 7993 or e-mail [brian.patterson@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:brian.patterson@economy-ni.gov.uk)

To ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:

- CVs, letters, or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms will not be accepted;
- applicants must complete electronic application forms in Arial Size 12
- applicants must complete hand written application forms in a legible format;
- applicants must not use more than 400 words per criterion. Any information over and above the word count will be disregarded;
- applications will not be examined until after the closing deadline; and
- all personal information will be processed in accordance with Data Protection legislation for the purposes of making public appointments. DfE's Public Appointments Privacy Notice can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/2HGSAEU>

## Time Frame for Process

**The deadline for receipt in all cases is 12:00 Noon on Thursday 4 February 2021.** Applications will be individually date-stamped and the time of receipt recorded. It is the responsibility of the applicant, taking into account their chosen method of delivery, to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with DfE on or before the deadline.

**Late applications will not be accepted.** Please ensure that posted applications bear the correct amount of postage as any shortfall may lead to a delay in delivery, causing you to miss the deadline. Applicants who send their application form electronically are also required to meet the closing deadline for receipt in this office.

All those sifted out/not short-listed will be provided with feedback based on the Panel's agreed assessment of their application. If an applicant wishes to contest the decision of the Panel they should do so within five working days of receipt of their feedback letter. Further details about the process will be provided in the feedback letter.

**It is anticipated that interviews will take place during weeks commencing 19 and 26 April 2021.**

Interviews will be carried out in line with Covid-19 regulations and further information will be made available to candidates nearer the time. Candidates invited for interview are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses incurred within the UK and the Republic of Ireland only. All reasonable receipted dependent carer and/or child care expenses will also be reimbursed where applicable.

### **Presentation of Results to the Minister**

Ministerial choice is a key element of public appointment policy that enables Minister(s) to indicate if they wish to have the names of candidates suitable for appointment presented in a ranked (strict merit order) or unranked (alphabetical) list. Minister Dodds has made it known that her preference in all cases is an unranked list.

### **Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form**

DfE is required to monitor the gender, ethnic origin, community background and disability of applicants to ensure that equal opportunities measures are effective. Applicants are therefore asked to complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Information section of the application form. The information is purely for monitoring purposes. It is not made available to the Selection Panel and does not play a role in the decision-making process.

### **Other Public Appointments**

The 'candidate summary' will include the outcome of a Company Director's disqualification check, a bankruptcy check and a post-interview cross-departmental check on the probity and performance of appointable candidates who currently hold or have held public appointment roles. The process involves DfE contacting the department(s) identified to us by Central Appointments Unit, to ask if there are any probity or performance issues we need to be aware of.

### **Complaints Procedure**

If at any stage, you feel you have reason to complain you should refer to our complaints procedure which is set out at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/departments/economy-public-appointments>

## ANNEX A PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

Ministers expect that the conduct of those they appoint to serve on the boards of public bodies will be above reproach.

Like others who serve the public, public appointees are expected to uphold the seven principles of public life set by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

The seven principles are:

### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest;

### **Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships;

### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias;

### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this;

### **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing;

### **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful;

### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## ANNEX B DISQUALIFICATIONS

Persons shall not be eligible for **appointment** as a Chair of the Governing Body:

- where they have previously served two full terms of office, of four years each, whether or not consecutive, as a Chair of the Governing Body.
- If they are a Member of the Governing Body of another college
- If they are a fulltime student of the College
- If they are a member of staff of the College or if they are a member of staff of another institution of further education established under the Further Education (NI) Order 1997
- If they are a Member of the NI Assembly
- If they have been removed from the membership of a Governing Body of an institution of further education established under the 1997 Order
- If they have been removed from the Governing Body or its equivalent in any organisation granted aid for the purposes of providing education
- If they have, within five years of the date their appointment would take effect, been convicted in a court in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Irish Republic of any offence and have been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine
- If they are included in a list kept by the Department of Education under Regulation 8 of the Education (Prohibition from Teaching or Working with Children) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007
- If they are included (other than provisionally) in the list maintained as required by Article 6 of The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- If their estate has been sequestrated, they have been adjudged bankrupt, they have made an arrangement with their creditors, or they have granted a trust deed for their creditors or a composition contract
- If DfE reasonably believes that the member is not fit to hold office

### **Integrity & Conflicts of Interest**

DfE will ensure that the individuals appointed are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

DfE will take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. Therefore, in your application form, you must disclose information or personal connections, which, if you 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 Interview Panel. This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in the Board's independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointees. Please see below for further information on this subject.

If you already work in the public sector you need to be aware that:

- You may be ineligible for consideration for this appointment if in DfE's view there is a conflict of interest or the perception of a conflict, between the appointment and you existing commitments;
- Where applicable you will be asked to confirm that you have permission from your employer to take up an appointment if one is offered (see also paragraph 15 regarding double paying).

### **Former Civil Servants**

Former Civil Servants or equivalent Home 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 their former Department.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the information contained in the leaflet "Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and How to Raise a Complaint" produced by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, NI, which provides examples of the types of issues that may give rise to conflicts of interests.

All candidates who put themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the principles and values of public service. One of the issues which might arise in relation to this is that of conflict of interest.

Public appointees must adhere to the seven principles of Public Life as established by the Nolan Committee. Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that:

### **What is a conflict of interest?**

1. Public Appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared. There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.

2. No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives a lot of media attention. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

### **Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?**

3. The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual and the board that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a Board Member can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that a Member acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

### **What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?**

4. You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give the Selection Panel as much information as possible.

### **If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?**

5. No - each case is considered individually. If you are short-listed for interview, the Panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially on the board and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings where an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. However, if, following the discussion with you, the Panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the board or the appointment, they can withdraw your application from the competition.
6. The report on the outcome of the interview process which is put to the Minister will include clear written reference to any perceived or actual conflicts of interest or integrity issues connected to any candidate put forward as suitable for appointment. It will include sufficient information to ensure that the Minister is fully aware of any of these matters and can make an informed decision.

### **What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by DfE after my appointment?**

7. Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but DfE may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life and may terminate your appointment.

### **What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?**

8. This situation may arise where the candidate is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the Panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

## **What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?**

9. This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the Member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work on the board becomes apparent. The second is where a Member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.
10. In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Chair of the board and the Chief Executive of the body concerned, in consultation with the Sponsoring Department, to decide whether or not the Member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.
11. It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the Member to continue on the board, if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body's routine business. In such cases, the Member may be asked to stand down from the board.