

The Central List of Independent Assessors

INTRODUCTION

In August 2004, OCPA NI took over responsibility for the selection, administration and training of Independent Assessors. The Commissioner appointed a central pool of Independent Assessors (IAs), who successfully completed a selection process, which involved a criteria-based application form, interview and references. They have also received induction training.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT DEPARTMENTS?

Competitions run under both the Regulated and Monitored Kitemark schemes must be referred to OCPA NI, which will allocate an IA to that process. Departments should no longer approach IAs on their own account for these competitions. It is left to the discretion of departments to decide whether they also use the central pool for appointments which are neither regulated nor monitored. In the interests of consistency, however, the Commissioner encourages departments to do so.

Forward planning is essential; OCPA NI should be contacted early in the process, so that we are given as much notice as possible to appoint an IA. We will need to know in what stages of the process the IA will be involved i.e. will they be required to scrutinise draft documentation, or carry out the sift process, as well as taking part in the selection panel. Clearly, this will affect the amount of time which the IA will need to set aside for the competition and so we will have to be able to confirm their availability at the time of allocation. We also need a broad indication of when the IA will be required e.g. late November, or first 2 weeks in January. It can cause difficulties if firm dates are set in advance of the IA being allocated, as it may not be possible to identify an IA who will be available on these days.

In the past, it has been common practice for departments to use the IA to balance the selection panel. We will be allocating IAs in rotation, to ensure that all IAs are given an equal chance to participate in the process. OCPA NI cannot guarantee, therefore, that we will be able to allocate an Assessor with a given gender or community background, so the Commissioner has asked that departments should endeavour to ensure the panel is balanced before approaching OCPA NI for an Assessor. Alternatively, Sponsor teams may be allocated the IA first and then select other panel members accordingly. If this is not possible, we will do our best to accommodate you, but departments should not rely on this.

Please note that this new process applies only to Independent Assessors who are working on public appointments. Other Assessors, such as those for Appeals Panels and so on, are not affected.

FEES

Central Pool Independent Assessors are currently paid a set fee of £250 per day, or £125 per half day, which will be paid by the department. This should normally be paid for time spent in the department on sifting, shortlisting and interviewing and would cover any small amounts of administrative work, which the IA does at home. It would also cover brief visits to the department, for example, a 10-15 minute visit to sign off a process.

However, there are occasions in large competitions where an IA may spend a good deal of time working at home and in such cases, the IA should be paid the set fee for this, in addition to work within the department. If this is likely to be the case in a particular competition, OPCA NI recommends that Sponsor Branches agree this with the IA in advance. IAs are also entitled to travelling expenses at the civil service rate.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Performance appraisals are an important factor in the management of the central pool, particularly as they will be used to assess whether or not IAs shall be re-appointed in due course. They will also inform the Commissioner as to how new entrants to the pool are performing and help indicate whether further training is necessary. To this end, a short performance appraisal *pro forma* should be completed after every competition and submitted to OCPA NI. This will then be sent to the IA for information and they will have the opportunity to add their comments to this form.

A copy of the standard form is attached for information and details on how to complete this are set out below. This should be completed at the end of each competition by the Chair of the interview panel, or, if a conversation with a purpose is being held, by the official who conducts the conversation

The Performance Appraisal Form Section One

The first section asks for the following:

Competition

State which body the competition is for, whether it is for Chair or member appointments and for the latter, how many appointments are being made.

Regulated Process/Monitored Process

Tick the relevant box to indicate whether the appointments are regulated or monitored by OCPA NI.

Independent Assessor:

Insert the name of the IA being appraised.

Completed by:

Insert the name and contact details of the person completing the appraisal.

Finally, the form should be signed and dated.

The Performance Appraisal Form Section Two

The appraiser should consider each of the criteria listed and assess how strongly they agree or disagree with each statement, for the IA's contribution at both selection stage and interview stage. Selection stage covers the IA's involvement from the beginning of the process to the shortlisting stage. Interview stage covers the interview and subsequent recommendations. If the appraiser strongly disagrees with any of the statements, the Commissioner requires them to support this with comments in the box provided. They may, of course, provide comments in any case, if they wish.

The appraisal should be carried out immediately after the competition is complete and should be sent to OCPA NI within 2 weeks

ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR

If you are interested in reading more about the role of the IA, information can be found in the OCPA NI document "A Guide for Independent Assessors in the Public Appointments Process", which is available on our website at www.ocpani.gov.uk.

Independent Assessor (Northern Ireland) Evaluation Form

Competition:	Regulated Process
	Monitored Process
Independent Assessor:	
Completed by:	
Contact telephone number or e-mail:	
Date:	Signature:

To be completed by the Chair of the interview panel, or the official who conducts the conversation with a purpose

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements :

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree*		Not applicable	
	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage
The IA demonstrated knowledge/understanding/ application of:										
the appointments process;										
the Commissioner's Code of Practice;										
equality legislation;										
the Data Protection Act;										

Please return to the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland, Room A5.34, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SR

The IA demonstrated:	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree*		Not applicable	
	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage	Selection stage	Interview stage
Good interviewing skills and techniques										
The ability to put forward opinions and comments convincingly;										
The ability to absorb and interpret information;										
The ability to make reasoned judgements on the relative merits of candidates;										
The ability to challenge constructively;										
The ability to work effectively as a team member;										
The ability to bring common-sense solutions to difficult and sensitive circumstances.										

Comments * Required if "Strongly disagree" selected

Comments by Independent Assessor