

• The Principles •

2.1 These are the seven principles that underpin the Code of Practice. They come directly from recommendations by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Nolan: First Report, May 1995). They are the foundations of the public appointments process and are designed to ensure appointment on merit and a quality outcome.

2.2 The relevant procedural points relating to each principle are set out below.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

2.3 Ultimate responsibility for appointments rests with Ministers. To ensure Ministers can fulfil their role properly, departments must:

- agree appointment criteria and the process to be followed with Ministers at the outset, to avoid disruption of the process at a later stage;
- ensure that once the process is under way, these criteria are not changed; and
- ensure that all candidates put to the Minister for approval meet the criteria and the standards required by the principle of probity.

MERIT (AND DIVERSITY)

2.4 Appointment on merit is the overriding principle within the appointments process. However, in line with the Nolan Committee's original recommendations, criteria for selection can take account of the need to appoint boards which include a balance of skills and experience. Nonetheless,

- departments must guard against positive discrimination,
- political activity cannot be used as a criterion for selection, unless there is a statutory requirement to do so.