



Northern Ireland

# Civil Service

People and Organisational Development  
Forbairt Daoine agus Eagraíochta

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**From: Jill Minne**  
**Deputy Secretary, People & Organisational Development**

**To: PSS**

**Date: 26 NOVEMBER 2025**

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT POLICY**

### **SECTION 6, PRIVATE OCCUPATIONS**

#### **Background**

1. Section 6 of the Standards of Conduct policy has been amended regarding the approval process for accepting additional public sector work and preventing double payment from public funds. Staff who wish to take on paid roles with another public body must now request unpaid leave for these extra duties; annual or flexi leave can no longer be used for this purpose.

#### **Approval and consultation**

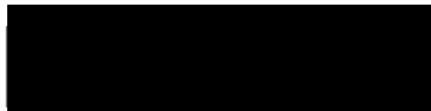
2. The Finance and HR Advisory Group (FHRAG) reviewed this change, and it has been approved by the minister. The Central Trade Union Side completed its consultation in late October 2025 and agreed to the policy updates. You can find the revised Standards of Conduct policy attached as **Annex A**.

#### **Exception for electoral duties**

3. In response to feedback received during the policy review process, notably from the Chief Electoral Officer, an exception has been incorporated for staff assigned to election polling or counting responsibilities. The revised policy position has been communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer.

## **Next Steps**

4. The updated policy will be published on **1 December 2025** and communicated through an all-staff email, as well as notices on the Employee Services Portal and departmental intranet sites. These communications will specify that any previous agreements permitting the use of annual or flexi leave for other paid public sector employment will **not** be valid after 1 December. People & OD will provide regular reminders to ensure all staff remain informed.
  
5. Please ensure that staff within your departments comply with the updated procedures for undertaking other public sector assignments. Should you have any questions or require further clarification, please contact Aisling Quinn at extension 51195 or Joan Fleetham at extension 72778.



**JILL MINNE**  
**PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Standards of Conduct policy**

**6 Private Occupations**

6.1 This section details the rules for undertaking private work, including when private work is not permitted, how to seek the approval necessary to undertake other public sector work and how to apply for time off for public sector work.

**Types of private work which cannot be undertaken**

6.2 Staff may wish to undertake a private occupation whilst retaining their NICS employment. As a guideline the following information outlines the types of private work which cannot be undertaken by civil servants:

- a. work which would occupy your time or attention, or render you unavailable for duty during normal official hours;
- b. work identified in any way with the activities of a political party, group or organisation (see paragraph 19.1 and Annex 8);
- c. work of an educational, literary or scientific nature involving the use of information acquired by you in your official capacity or from official sources, except where it has previously been published, unless you have received the permission of your employing Department to undertake such work;
- d. work of a nature conflicting with your duty to your employing Department, or the NICS, or the Government generally, or as a member of the Civil Service;
- e. work which may ultimately have to be reviewed by you or any member of the Civil Service acting in an official capacity;
- f. work, related to your function, which a Civil Servant might otherwise justifiably undertake, but which could involve unfair competition with persons wholly dependent on such work for a livelihood;
- g. work which would involve the use of the property, tools, equipment or materials of Departments; and
- h. work which is, or might be, inconsistent with your position as a public servant and may expose you or your Department to public criticism.

6.3 If you are unsure whether the above rules apply, you should speak with your line manager in the first instance. If your line manager needs further advice or guidance, they should contact NICSHR Employee Relations.

## **Seeking approval to undertake other public sector work**

6.4 It is important to note, if you wish to undertake any private work (paid or unpaid) with another public sector body (including another Government Department) you must first obtain approval from your Head of Business Area (Grade 5 or above).

6.5 You can obtain this approval by accessing the HRConnect employee self-service function and completing the outside interests field. If you do not have access to HRConnect you should contact either your line manager or HRConnect directly. This [HRConnect Quick Reference Guide](#) provides more information on how to apply.

6.6 It is important when engaging with your line manager that you advise if the work is paid or unpaid. Paid work includes a fee, payment or other compensation other than travel and subsistence expenses.

## **Applying for time off to undertake paid work in another public sector post**

6.7 From 1 December 2025, staff must apply for **unpaid leave** to allow them to undertake paid work in another public sector post. There is no entitlement to the timing of unpaid leave for the purpose of undertaking other work and any such request will be subject to business needs.

6.8 The exception to this rule is for staff working for The Electoral Office and performing polling station or count duty at local or general elections. On these occasions, annual and/or flexi leave may be requested for such work. A limited number of circumstances allow staff to apply for and have special paid leave approved - see [HR policy 3.08 Special Leave](#) Section 16 Reserve and Cadet Forces Training for further information.

## **Pensions Abatement**

6.9 Staff in receipt of a pension, who undertake work for another Government Department or an organisation covered by the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme and who are considered to be an employee of the NICS or that organisation, should consider if [pensions abatement](#) may be appropriate depending on the terms and conditions of their employment. Staff are responsible for clarifying the impact on their pension of any change that would result in a permanent or temporary increase or decrease to their pensionable pay, excluding any normal pay rise payable to all staff. Staff should check the [Civil Service Pensions](#) website for information on “abatement” and how any increase in pensionable pay can affect pension benefits.