

FOI DOF/2026-0300

Request

Re: DP competitions IRC277837 & IRC313542.

Please provide the following information relating to the 2022 Deputy Principal (DP) external recruitment competition, reference IRC277837:

1. Total number of applicants,
2. Number of applicants who applied under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS),
3. Number of applicants who undertook the online tests
4. Number of applicants who passed the online tests
5. Number of GIS applicants who were automatically invited to interview
6. Number of non-GIS applicants who passed the sift
7. Number of non-GIS applicants who failed the sift
8. Total number of applicants invited to interview
9. A breakdown of
 - i) number of candidates taken forward to sift stage
 - ii) interview invitations, by date or interview wave (to reflect that candidates, including GIS applicants, were called forward at different times)
10. Lowest online test score invited to interview
11. Number of GIS applicants who
 - i) attended interview
 - ii) did not attend interview
12. Number of non-GIS applicants who
 - i) attended interview
 - ii) did not attend interview
13. Number of applicants who passed the interview (GIS and non-GIS)
14. Number of applicants who failed the interview (GIS and non-GIS)
15. Total number of appointments made from the competition

16. The lowest merit position reached for appointment
17. Departmental breakdown of appointments (if held)
18. Number of candidates who withdrew at any stage (broken down by stage and, if held, by interview wave and GIS status)
19. Dates of first and last appointments from the competition
20. Dates during which the merit list was active and in use
21. Whether the merit list was exhausted before the competition closed

Please also provide the following information relating to the current 2026 DP external recruitment competition IRC313542:

1. Total number of applicants, including split between number
 - i) currently employed in the NICS,
 - ii) of external candidates
2. Number of applicants who applied under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)
3. Number of applicants who undertook the online tests
4. Number of applicants who
 - i) passed
 - ii) failed the online tests, split between those currently employed in the NICS and external candidates
5. How many candidates who passed the online tests scored above and below the online test threshold used to determine who progresses to sift
6. Of the 1000 applications taken forward to sift, how many of these are from GIS applicants
7. Of the 1000 applications taken forward to sift how many are
 - i) currently employed in the NICS
 - ii) external candidates
8. What is lowest online test score of those taken forward to the first stage of sifting
9. Number of DP vacancies declared so far by each department
10. Number of DP posts requested from the first wave
11. Any workforce planning documents referencing DP demand
12. Whether departments have indicated second-wave or third-wave demand

13. For candidates who passed the online tests but have not initially been taken forward to the sift stage, for what period of time do they remain eligible to be taken forward to the next stage of the competition? Please confirm: i) the duration for which these candidates remain under consideration, ii) the policy or internal guidance governing how long candidates may be held in reserve iii) whether the reserve period ends only when the merit list is created, or whether it continues beyond that point iv) whether candidates can be taken forward at any time before interviews conclude, or only within a defined window v) whether the reserve pool is reviewed periodically, and if so, at what intervals, vi) criteria for moving candidates to sift stage at a later time — score-based, GIS-based, or operational need, vii) whether this movement is done in batches or continuously.
14. how many of the 1000 applicants taken forward to the sift have been
- i) successful at the sift and invited to interview
 - ii) unsuccessful at the sift.

DoF response

I can confirm the department holds some of the information requested.

2022 Deputy Principal (DP) external recruitment competition IRC277837:

1. Information you have requested is held by the Department but is exempt under section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 exempts information if this information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption, and the Department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information. This information can be found at OpenDataNI [here](#).
2. 180 candidates applied under GIS.
3. Information you have requested is held by the Department but is exempt under section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 exempts information if this information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption, and the Department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information. This information can be found at OpenDataNI [here](#).
4. Information you have requested is held by the Department but is exempt under section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 exempts information if this information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption, and the Department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information. This information can be found at OpenDataNI [here](#).
5. GIS candidates are not automatically invited to interview. They must pass the eligibility.

6. Number of non GIS who passed sift – 904.
7. Number of non GIS who failed sift – 1018.
8. 946 candidates were invited interview in total – 40 of which were GIS.
9. Phase information is not held by HRConnect so this information is not held.
10. Lowest online score invited to interview was 112.67.
11. Number of GIS candidates who attended interview was 31. Number of GIS candidates who did not attend interview was 9.
12. Number of non GIS candidates who attended interview was 733. Number of non GIS candidates who did not attend interview was 171.
13. 20 GIS candidates passed the interview and 453 non GIS passed the interview.
14. 11 GIS candidates failed the interview and 280 non GIS failed the interview.
15. As at the date of the request, a total of 432 appointments had been made from Competition IRC277837.
16. The lowest merit position reached for appointment was 76D.
17. The Departmental breakdown of appointments, as at the date of the request, is shown in the table below.

Department	Appointments from Competition IRC277837
DAERA	113
DE	21
DfC	89
DfE	34
DfI	37
DoF	41
DoH	27
DoJ	46
HSENI	1
TEO	23
Grand Total	432

18. 120 candidates withdrew at different stages from the competition. The exact stages are not held.
19. As at the date of the request, the first appointment from the competition was 6 February 2023 and the last appointment was 1 December 2025. (Please note, NICS HR regards an appointment to have been made when confirmation is

received that a successful candidate has reported for duty on their agreed start date.)

20. The merit list was active and in use for allocations between November 2022 and February 2025.

21. The merit list was exhausted before the competition closed.

2026 Deputy Principal (DP) external recruitment competition IRC313542:

1. The information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption, and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. By applying Section 22 Exemption of the FOI Act, we are required to carry out a Public Interest Test. This can be found attached as a separate document (Annex C). The information will be published in due course.
2. 427 candidates applied under GIS for this competition.
3. - 5. The information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption, and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. By applying Section 22 Exemption of the FOI Act, we are required to carry out a Public Interest Test. This can be found attached as a separate document (Annex C). The information will be published in due course.
6. 76 candidates out of the top 1000 sifted were GIS.
7. The information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption, and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. By applying Section 22 Exemption of the FOI Act, we are required to carry out a Public Interest Test. This can be found attached as a separate document (Annex C). The information will be published in due course.
8. Lowest online test score taken forward to sift was 116.78.
9. Details of the total vacancies in each department is not held centrally by Department of Finance. Each Civil Service department is responsible for managing its resources – both financial and staff. Each department determines its individual workforce needs and is responsible for ensuring that any additional staffing resources are affordable. When a department identifies a vacancy that needs filled, the request is referred to NICSHR to initiate the process to fill the post. NICSHR liaises with all departments on an ongoing

basis to seek to prioritise recruitment activity within allocated financial and staff resources.

As at the end of May 2026, (the most recent figures available at time of the request), 212 vacancies which may be filled by competition IRC313542. The departmental breakdown is shown in the table below.

	DAERA	DE	DfC	DfE	DfI	DoF	DoH	DoJ	TEO	Grand Total
IRC313542	82	16	19	23	30	8	11	18	5	212
Grand Total	82	16	19	23	30	8	11	18	5	212

10. Number of DP posts requested from the first wave:

When a merit list is available for competition IRC313542, it is intended that all DP vacancies on the NICSHR caseload which may be filled from the competition will be allocated (subject to availability of successful candidates). There are no planned waves of demands.

11. This information is not held. It is part of ongoing recruitment activity to run general service volume competitions in order to have supply.

12. Please see response to Question 10 above.

13. The competition remains live for a duration of 2 years.

14. The information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption, and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. By applying Section 22 Exemption of the FOI Act, we are required to carry out a Public Interest Test. This can be found attached as a separate document (Annex C). The information will be published in due course.