

Trainee Chartered Accountant

IRC323971

Completed application forms must be returned to HRConnect no later than **12 noon (UK time) on Friday 10 April 2026.**

Please retain a copy of this booklet for your reference throughout the selection process.

Candidate Information Booklet



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KEY INFORMATION

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) is looking for Trainee Chartered Accountants. Good financial management is a high priority for all government departments and financial expertise is one of the key skills. Working in a government department/agency you will be offered interesting and inspiring work that will test your technical, management and people skills.

KEY BENEFITS

- An opportunity to obtain the Chartered Accountancy qualification with Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI).
- An opportunity to earn £33,542 - £34,231. Trainee Chartered Accountant is analogous to the EO1 Grade and starting salary will always be at the minimum of the scale.
- 25 days annual leave, rising to 30 days after five years' service.
- 12 bank and public holidays each year.
- Opportunity for career progression.
- Access to an attractive pension scheme, with current Employer contributions set at 34.25%.
- A good work/life balance.

See pages 13-15 for the complete Terms and Conditions.

To start the competition process, you are invited to complete the application form. See pages 23-34 and page 40 for more information.

Selection will be over 3 stages, with only those deemed most suitable at each stage passing on to the succeeding phase.

- **Stage 1** – Online Aptitude Tests – completed by all applicants – see pages 23-26 for more details.
- **Stage 2** – Eligibility Sift – Following the online aptitude tests, the top scoring applicants will be assessed against the Eligibility Criteria (outlined on page 19). Only those candidates who meet the Eligibility Criteria outlined will progress to the next stage of the competition.
- **Stage 3** – Interview – The final stage will consist of a competency-based interview – see pages 26-30 for more details.

THE INTERVIEW

If you pass the eligibility sift you will be invited to interview. You will be asked questions and expected to answer with previous examples of work or situations you have been involved in. Don't be afraid to use examples from any previous experience you may have, including school, university, youth organisations, charitable work and previous employment. This is an accountancy post you are applying for, so expect questions that have a financial emphasis.

Your interview will last approximately 30 minutes, and you will have five lead questions on five NICS core competencies with an overall minimum pass mark. Please read pages 26-30 for more detailed information.

FOREWORD

In 2024 the NICS successfully launched a new Trainee Chartered Accountant Scheme. Now in the third year of the scheme, the NICS has at least 10 further places for self-motivated and enthusiastic individuals who are keen to progress their career in finance. These trainees will join, and be supported by, the existing trainees and the wider community of finance professionals across NICS.

You will need commitment and discipline to cope with the long periods of study and revision. You will also need to be positive about the prospect of returning to the classroom.

As a Trainee Chartered Accountant, the NICS will offer you a chance to gain hands-on practical experience of public sector finance, while also being supported to obtain the Chartered Accountancy Qualification with CAI. This provides you with an opportunity to pursue and progress your career in the NICS as part of the Finance Profession. This booklet provides further information on the Trainee Chartered Accountant Scheme and some of the key duties you will undertake in the role. We have also included important information on the selection process.

Trainee Accountants will be expected to attend the office in line with business needs. It is envisaged that some element of home working and/or remote working may be possible, in line with the NICS Hybrid Working policy and business needs.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Applicants wishing to learn more about the Trainee Chartered Accountant Scheme currently on offer before deciding to apply may contact Nicola McKnight at HoFP@finance-ni.gov.uk or at www.charteredaccountants.ie/Prospective-Students

If you have any questions about the competition process, please contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 400 or email: Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net.

FOREWORD

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF PROFESSION

As an Accountant who undertook their training whilst working in the NICS I can personally guarantee that training as an accountant will teach you skills that will be invaluable in your future career no matter what that might be or where it might take you.

I hope that you will choose to both train and spend your career in the NICS. The breadth and variety of work that we have to offer is arguably second to none – whether you choose to stay in the finance profession or broaden your horizons post-qualification.

The spending constraints faced by the Northern Ireland public sector over the coming years present a very challenging environment. Meeting this challenge will require the support of the best finance professionals and we are determined to provide you with the training and experience to enable you to meet this challenge.

Good financial management is a high priority for all government departments and financial expertise is one of the key skills that must be engaged by all aspects of the service. Working in a government department or agency you will be offered challenging and interesting work that will test your management and people skills as well as providing you with opportunities to put the accountancy theory you will learn in your studies into practice in the workplace.

Good training and promotion prospects plus an attractive benefits package makes for a rewarding career with one of Northern Ireland's largest employers. The job description and person specification set out in more detail the kind of people we are interested in recruiting.

If you are highly motivated and can deliver results in a challenging and dynamic environment, we would be very interested to hear from you.

Applications from young people (people under the age of 35), people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities are particularly welcomed for this post.

Thank you very much for expressing an interest in this recruitment competition. I hope you will find the information outlined in the following pages helpful.

JOANNE MCBURNEY
NICS Head of Finance Profession

Background

BACKGROUND

THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

Strong financial management is critical to the achievement of optimum efficiency and value for money in the public sector.

Northern Ireland government departments and agencies produce annual commercial-style accounts based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), tailored for the specific accounting needs of government bodies.

Departments must plan, manage and account for public expenditure utilising financial reporting and management information systems. In addition, the implementation of wider developments in corporate governance and risk management has created an increasing focus within government on the area of systems and internal controls. In the current economic climate there is greater public scrutiny, making financial information more widely available.

There are currently nine main Government departments and nine agencies in Northern Ireland, all with specific remits, and accountancy professionals are employed in each to help make the best use of their skills.

The Northern Ireland (NI) departments are:

- The Executive Office
- Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
- Department for Communities
- Department of Education
- Department for the Economy
- Department of Finance
- Department for Infrastructure
- Department of Health
- Department of Justice

Non-ministerial government department:

- Public Prosecution Service

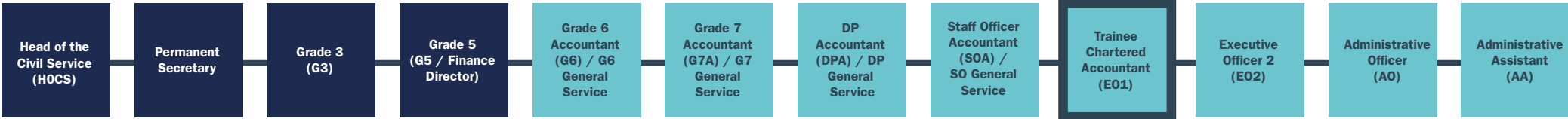
Further information on the NI departments can be obtained on the NI Direct website: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-executive>

The NI agencies are:

- Driver Vehicle Agency
- Forest Service
- NI Courts and Tribunals Service
- Youth Justice Agency
- Forensic Science NI
- NI Prison Service
- Legal Services Agency
- NI Environment Agency
- NI Statistics and Research Agency

ORGANISATION CHART

Only indicative, can vary across departments.



■ Senior Civil Service (SCS)

Training, Learning and Development

TRAINING, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

YOUR TRAINING

As a Trainee Chartered Accountant, the NICS will offer you a chance to gain hands-on practical experience of public sector finance, while also being supported to obtain the Chartered Accountancy Qualification with Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI). Our Trainee Chartered Accountant Scheme offers you:

- a comprehensive training programme.
- a generous study leave package in line with CAI recommendations.
- support to complete your CAI qualification.
- access to an experienced and dedicated mentor.
- day to day on the job, relevant work experience.

Your training and development mentor will provide you with support, advice, and guidance during your training. Your day-to-day work will be managed by a line manager who will be responsible for providing on the job training, guidance and mentoring.

During your training you will have an opportunity to work in a variety of teams and under the direction of a number of different line managers so that you get all the “on the job” skills and experience that you need in order to achieve your professional qualification. The NICS will fully support Trainees through the recommended CAI exam and study leave package in line with CAI guidance.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPING AS A TRAINEE ACCOUNTANT

You will be given guidance and support to help you do your work and also to develop a fuller awareness of the accountancy environment and how it meets the requirements of customers within the NICS.

STARTING WORK

At the beginning of your career as a trainee accountant in the NICS, you will agree specific objectives with your line manager and identify subsequent development needs as part of your Personal Development Plan (PDP). The setting of these clear objectives will help you, your manager, and your team to align your actions to the strategic priorities and values of your department/agency.

Throughout your career you will be concentrating on the achievement of these objectives and will be given the necessary support to grow as an accountancy professional. This will enable you to apply for promotions and progress as the opportunities arise.

LEARNING, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The NICS is fully committed to the training and development of its staff in line with business needs. A key part of being a trainee accountant is learning on the job and building up knowledge and skills. Successful candidates will also have the opportunity to partake in a range of NICS learning and development activities, which can include tutor-led, mentored and computer based training. Successful candidates will be required to participate in a full NICS induction and the CAI Trainee Accountant programme (<https://www.charteredaccountants.ie/prospective-students>)

MEASURING HOW FAR YOU HAVE COME

In order to track progress each member of staff will have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) which will be discussed and agreed between yourself and your line manager. You and your line manager will regularly assess your achievements against the targets in your annual PDP to evaluate your individual contribution.

Terms and Conditions

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

NUMBER OF POSTS

There are currently at least 10 full-time vacancies to be filled from this competition immediately.

SALARY

Trainee Chartered Accountant is analogous to the EO1 Grade.

Salary will be within the range £33,542 - £34,231 within which pay progression will be performance related.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale. If the successful candidate is an existing civil servant, normal pay on promotion/re-grading arrangements will apply.

ALLOWANCES

As you progress through your professional training and pass your exams, you will be entitled to receive an accountancy allowance on top of your salary. The current allowances are:

- £616 on completion of CA Proficiency 1
- a further £616 on completion of CA Proficiency 2.

Once candidates pass the Final Admitting Exam (FAE) and are admitted to CAI as full members, they will be eligible to apply for promotion to Staff Officer (SO) Accountant. If you already hold eligible qualifications you may be entitled

to receive one of the above allowances on commencement of your employment. You should refer to the Pay and Reward chapter of the [NICS Staff Handbook](#) for further information.

HOLIDAYS

In addition to 12 public and privilege holidays, the annual leave allowance will be 25 days, rising to 30 days after five years' service.

HOURS OF WORK

The standard hours of work are full-time: 37 hours per week, Monday to Friday.

The NICS operates, subject to business requirements, a flexi-time system which provides employees with flexibility over when they start and end their working day within core periods. It also allows employees to accrue flexi-hours as credits. These can be taken as flexi-leave in addition to the annual leave and the public and privilege holiday entitlement.

The NICS recognises the value of work/life balance for its staff. Requests for alternative working patterns will be considered, with decisions based on business needs.

Additionally, successful candidates will be required to

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

undertake their hours of study outside of conditioned hours in their own time. Travel outside Northern Ireland may also be required in some posts. Attendance at classes outside of normal office hours is not remunerated. This may include weekends and bank and public holidays, when required.

LOCATION

Posts will be based in the NICS throughout Northern Ireland.

While on the Trainee Accountant Scheme, you could be transferred to another Trainee Accountant post across NI. Trainee Chartered Accountants will be expected to attend the office in line with business needs. It is envisaged that some element of home working and/or remote working may be possible, in line with the NICS Hybrid Working policy and business needs.

TRAVEL

The successful applicant may be required to travel throughout Northern Ireland. Applicants must therefore have access to a form of transport that will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

PENSIONS

The NICS offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:
<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/civilservice-pensions-ni>

CAREER PROGRESSION

Successful Trainee Chartered Accountants will be eligible for consideration for promotion to SO Accountant. This process will involve a criteria based interview which candidates must pass.

NI Civil Servants have access to a wide range of internal job opportunities, including secondments with external organisations and are encouraged and supported in proactively managing their career. Career development is an integral part of the performance management system with PDPs identifying learning and development needs with a view to enhancing skills and capabilities.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Confirmation of your appointment will be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of a probationary period of one year. If your performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory your appointment may be terminated.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

TRAINING

This NICS Trainee Chartered Scheme requires you to achieve the CAI qualification. If you fail any examination after two attempts, you will no longer be eligible to remain in the Trainee Chartered Accountant Scheme, unless there are exceptional circumstances. You may also be required to pay back some or all of the fees incurred to that point.

A package of examination and study leave will be available to all successful candidates. Candidates will be expected to sit examinations at the first available sitting.

The CAI professional qualification is delivered mainly outside of working hours, in trainee's own time in evenings and at weekends. Time-in-lieu, flexi accrual and overtime is not applicable for time outside of working hours.

VETTING

An appointment will be dependent on the individual satisfying the vetting requirements for the post. The level of vetting required for these posts is Basic AccessNI, however, applicants should be prepared to undergo checks for a higher vetting level at a later date, if required.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is a basic requirement of all Civil Servants that their private activities should not bring them in to conflict with their official duties.

Conflict of Interest is not limited to the individual's own private, financial or other interests, as family, friends and associates may also have dealings which affect the department's business directly or indirectly.

Therefore, to avoid any conflict or potential conflict and to demonstrate impartiality to the public at all times, an officer must not, without prior approval, engage in any activity which could be considered to be in conflict with official business.

As such, to protect employees and the Department from public criticism, it will be mandatory for the successful candidate to complete a Conflict of Interest declaration on appointment.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Applicants wishing to learn more about the Trainee Chartered Accountant Scheme currently on offer before deciding to apply may contact Nicola McKnight at HoFP@finance-ni.gov.uk or at www.charteredaccountants.ie/Prospective-Students

If you have any questions about the competition process, or require any documentation in an alternative format you should contact HRConnect on 0800 1 300 330 or email Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net.

Key Responsibilities

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

While the precise duties and responsibilities of individual posts will vary, indicative activities are listed below:

- Analysis of financial data;
- Assist with in-year budget management and monitoring, monthly budget profiling, variance analysis and reporting;
- Assist with the production of monthly and/or quarterly management accounting information;
- Assist with the preparation of departmental or agency Annual Reports and Accounts in accordance with HM Treasury and Department of Finance guidance incorporating GAAP/IFRS;
- Ensuring data and reconciliations are accurate and complete;
- Dealing with internal and external auditors including the Northern Ireland Audit Office;
- Assist with the development and review of financial IT systems;
- Providing advice and guidance on the use and interpretation of financial information, accounting requirements and best practice;
- Assist with drafting and implementation of financial policies, procedures and controls;

- Assist with the preparation of reports; presenting information to colleagues and stakeholders, supporting financial summaries and reviews; provide guidance on financial matters to support cost centre managers;
- Use of activity based costing and benchmarking techniques;
- Promote good corporate governance across the organisation, improving the quality of information/data provided including work with/for internal audit;
- Assist with the financial processing function including General Ledgers/Purchase Ordering; and
- Pro-actively participate in your own development plan as agreed with your line manager.

Please note:

As the remit of the NICS is very diverse, the above list is not meant to be exhaustive but aims to give a good indication of the main duties of the post. The emphasis on particular duties will vary over time according to business needs and as directed by Line Management.

Eligibility Criteria

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must possess:

1a. An Honours Degree (minimum 2.2 or equivalent in any discipline (or graduating in summer 2026 with a predicted 2.2).

OR

1b. ATI First Year Examination (Level 4 Certificate for Accounting Technicians) achieved with merit or better (or be due to complete this in summer 2026), plus:

NI: Grade B minimum in English and Math at GCSE level and 3 Cs minimum at GCE Advanced level.

ROI: Pass 6 subjects in Leaving Certificate in one sitting only. Achieve at least H6 or O5 in both English and Mathematics and secure at least 356 points from any combination of six subjects in one sitting. Prior to 2017 achieve a minimum of 360 points in the Leaving Certificate out of 6 subjects (must include English and Mathematics at Higher Level grade D or better, or Ordinary Level grade C or better).

OR

1c. ATI Second Year Examination (Level 5 Diploma for Accounting Technicians) achieved with pass or better (or be due to complete this in summer 2026).

RELEVANT OR EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATIONS

Applications will also be considered from candidates with relevant formal qualifications considered by Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI) to provide the requisite level for admittance to their training programme. For example, members of other professional Accounting bodies may be eligible for entry into the ACA programme.

The onus will be on applicants to provide the CAI Admissions team with the relevant information for them to conduct an eligibility (and exemptions where relevant) assessment. Proof of confirmation of eligibility must then be provided to NI Civil Service.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

ONLINE APTITUDE TEST

- Following application you will receive a link via email. **Please ensure you check your email account including junk folder.** If you do not receive an email by **5pm on Monday 27 April 2026**, please email recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net inserting 'Trainee Accountant test link not received' in the subject line.
- This link will take you to a website where you will have to complete a series of tests.
- The online tests can be done in your own time and at a place that suits you.
- You cannot stop an individual test once started but you can take the three tests at different times.
- You must pass all three tests to be eligible to move to the next stage in the selection process.
- The tests should be completed by **5pm on Monday 4 May 2026.**



GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME

As part of our commitment to the employment of disabled people, we operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The GIS does not guarantee a job. However, its objective is to ensure a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. Further information on the GIS can be found at [Information for Disabled Applicants](#).

In assessing whether applicants meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria, they are required to undertake a test/assessment. All applicants must achieve the required minimum score in order to be invited to interview.

Should a large number of candidates achieve the required score, we may limit the overall numbers of interviews offered and those applicants who demonstrate they best meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the job (i.e. the highest scoring) will be invited to interview. In this scenario, we will take positive action to ensure that the number of GIS applicants invited to interview will be in proportion to those who pass the test/assessment.

If you wish to apply under the GIS, you must declare this on your application form. If you do not wish to apply under the GIS, but do require us to make reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process, you should provide details on your application form.

We will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments for any stage of this recruitment process. Details of any disability are only used for these purposes and do not form any part of the selection process.

If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability, are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be asked to outline any reasonable adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

Please note:

ONLY the details provided by you in your application form (the employment history, eligibility) will be provided to the selection panel for the purpose of determining your eligibility for the post. Please do not include your name in the employment history or eligibility criteria sections.

Application Guidance

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

KEY DATES

It is anticipated that the following timetable will apply:

Projected Timeframe	Stage of Competition
Friday 10 April 2026	Closing date for applications
Monday 27 April - Monday 4 May 2026	Aptitude Test
W/C Monday 25 May 2026	Interviews

It is intended that interviews for this post will commence in Belfast during week commencing **25 May 2026**. Please note this is for interview purposes only, if successful, you must be willing to work in any NICS Department/location.

As this competition is being run to a very tight schedule, candidates should make themselves available for interview during the period specified above. Changes to the timetable will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. If you decide to withdraw from the competition, please inform HR Connect as soon as possible: Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HRCONNECT AND YOU

HRConnect will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible. You should therefore provide an email address that you have 24/7 access to and check your email account, including your junk/spam mail folder, to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. If you change your email address, then it is your responsibility to inform HR Connect. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

1. ONLINE APTITUDE TEST – ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

You will receive an email (sent to the email address you provided) with a link to the online tests by **Monday 27 April 2026**. You will have until **5pm on Monday 4 May 2026** to complete the tests.

The link gives you access to the ID verification process, the familiarisation materials and the live tests.

This assessment will be proctored. Proctoring means that your identity will be verified before starting the assessment and you will be monitored via your webcam during the assessment. To enable this and complete the online test, you will require a computer which has a reliable internet connection and a working webcam.

You will need to have an up-to-date Chrome or Microsoft Edge browser on a PC. If you are using a Mac, you **MUST** use Chrome or Edge. Do **NOT** use Safari.

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Verifying your identity – for this you will need to have a valid photo ID (passports, driving licenses and electoral cards are acceptable). Once you receive the link, using a webcam you will need to take a photo of your photo ID and also a photo of yourself. When your photo ID has been approved by a human verifier, you will receive an email informing you of this.

We should have your ID images checked within 24 hours of submission, so if you feel it has taken too long and you have also checked your status on the site, you should email support@assessmentintelligence.com including your Candidate Reference Number and 'IRC323971' in the subject line.

You can take the live tests as soon as your ID has been verified.

It is important that you read your invite as soon as you get it. It is also important you access the test site as soon as you can, so you have plenty of time to resolve any technical issues and complete the tests ahead of the deadline. There is important information on completing the verification of your identity and on checking your computer and network on the test site.

For further information on how we process this information, NICSHR's Privacy Notice is available online via the link: [**NICSHR Privacy Notice - Online Assessments.**](#)

The first stage of the selection process will comprise of a balanced portfolio of online assessments to determine

suitability for this type of EO1 role. There will be three separate tests to complete:

- 1. Critical Reasoning**
- 2. Data Analysis and Decision-Making**
- 3. Management Decisions**

1. Critical Reasoning - This test has three sections. In one of the sections you will be given sets of six words arranged in a row. Many of these words will have several meanings. Your task is to identify whether any of the six words have a similar meaning and, if they do, to choose the TWO words that are the closest in meaning in each question. There are 15 sets of words.

In the other sections you will be presented with short passages of text followed by a number of statements. Your task is to identify whether these statements follow from what has been stated in the text. There are seven passages and a total of 28 statements. You will have 40 minutes in total to work through the three sections.

2. Data Analysis and Decision Making - This test has two parts. In the first part you will be asked to carry out a range of calculations, instructions will be given on the process you should use to do this.

In the second part you will be presented with data in various forms such as tables and graphs and are

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

required to answer questions on this data. In total you will be asked to complete 28 multiple choice questions and will have 40 minutes to do so. You can use a calculator in the test.

3. Management Decisions - In this test you will be provided with a number of scenarios/situations which are fictional, but based on the work of EO1s in the NICS. You will then be asked how you would deal with each situation and be shown a list of five different responses. Your task will be to rate, using a four-point rating scale, how appropriate each response is for the situation described.

There are 15 scenarios to complete and you will have 40 minutes to complete them.

You do not need to complete all three tests at the same time or even on the same day. Individual tests do however need to be taken in a single sitting therefore you should ensure that when completing each test you have sufficient time for the test itself plus additional time for reading and understanding the relevant instructions for each test.

For best results we recommend completing the online assessments in a test-like environment. Any possible distractions should be turned off, for example mobile phones, TV and music. Concentration is needed throughout the assessments, so when completing each test ensure other people are aware that they should not disturb you until you are finished. No responsibility can be

accepted for any issues arising from where you choose to sit the tests.

Before starting a test you should close all other browsers and browser tabs. You should not take the test on a computer that is remotely connected to a work network as the link may be unstable.

If you lose internet connection while in the live test, you should immediately close your browser. When your internet connection is restored and you are confident it will be reliable, you should log back into the live test.

Your previous answers will have been saved (except possibly on the last page you were on before losing connection) and you will not lose any time.

FAMILIARISATION AND PRACTICE

Familiarisation materials for all three tests are available through the link you will receive in your invite and will remain available until the end of the live test period.

The Familiarisation material will give you a detailed description of the tests, include full instructions for completing the tests and provide example questions so that you know how to record your answers and navigate your way around the tests. You should be fully familiar with these things before taking the live tests in order to perform at your best.

Note that some network firewalls, e.g., on work networks may block access to the test site or prevent images from

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

showing. It is **ESSENTIAL** that you access the Familiarisation materials using the computer and internet connection that you intend to take the live test on well in advance of the tests.

There are no practice materials other than those found in the familiarisation materials that you can find via your invite link.

If you have any technical problems accessing the familiarisation or live tests, you should email: support@assessmentintelligence.com including your Candidate Reference Number and 'IRC323971' in the subject line.

2. ELIGIBILITY SIFT

Top test performers will progress to this stage in the first instance.

This selection stage is an assessment of the evidence provided in your application form against the eligibility criteria. Should a large number of candidates achieve the required score, we may limit the overall numbers of interviews offered and those applicants who demonstrate they meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the job and score the highest in the aptitude test will be invited to interview.

Additional candidates who passed the first stage online assessment test may be progressed through the eligibility sift to interview stage as required during the lifetime of

this competition.

INFORMATION ON THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

3. INTERVIEW

Candidates who are successful in the test and eligibility sift will be invited to interview. Candidates will need to provide proof of eligibility as confirmed by CAI before attending the interview.

COMPETENCIES

The NICS Competency framework sets out how all NICS employees should work. It puts the Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality at the heart of everything they do, and it aligns to the three high-level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model as appropriate to their role and level of responsibility: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results.

Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours, which lead to successful performance. The Framework outlines ten competences, which are grouped into three clusters. The competencies are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 2 should be demonstrating level 1 as a matter of course.

Competence is about what people actually do, it is about how you apply or demonstrate the knowledge and skills whilst carrying out your tasks. Demonstrated competence

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is observable and measurable.

The selection process will assess candidates against the **NICS competency framework** at level 2. Trainee Accountant is analogous to EOI in the NICS.

It is important that all candidates familiarise themselves with the **competency framework** as this forms the basis of the interview criteria as outlined on the next page. Candidates should refer to the effective behaviours at level 2 in preparing for their application/interview.

Further information on what is expected for this grade can be accessed through **NICS Recruitment**.



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INTERVIEW CRITERIA

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria, the following competencies will be tested at interview. Applicants will be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview.

1. Leading and Communicating

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens.

Marks available: 20

2. Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions.

Marks available: 20

3. Changing and Improving

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. For all staff, it is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways.

Marks available: 20

4. Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

Marks available: 20

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5. Collaborating and Partnering

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the NICS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

Marks available: 20

The selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the areas above and award marks accordingly.

TOTAL MARKS AVAILABLE: 100

OVERALL PASS MARK: 60



APPLICATION GUIDANCE

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:

- Talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- Provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- Provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

A competence-based interview does however require you to:

- Focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfil the competencies required for effective performance in the role; and
- Provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:

- **SITUATION** – briefly outline the situation;
- **TASK** – what was your objective, what were you trying to achieve;
- **ACTION** – what did you actually do, what was your unique contribution;
- **RESULT** – what happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competencies. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work /life experiences.

For professional and technical posts, questions may be framed in the context of professional elements of the post.

No notes or personal documentation may be brought into the interview room.

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

SELECTION PROCESS

THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

In accordance with the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code, appointments to the NICS are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

Further information on the Civil Service Commissioners can be found at: www.nicscommissioners.org.

MERIT LIST

Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark at interview stage will be deemed suitable for appointment and will be placed on a list in order of merit, with the highest scoring candidate ranked first. HRConnect will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed. It is presently intended that the merit list for this competition should remain extant until November 2026. However you should be aware that circumstances may arise in the future where it will be necessary to extend the currency of the merit list for a further period. The merit list will only be extended where cogent practical reasons for doing so arise.



OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT

Candidates will only receive one offer of appointment which, if not accepted, will generally result in withdrawal from the competition.

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

MAKING YOUR APPLICATION

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility criteria.

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms, unless it is specifically requested in the application form and Candidate Information Booklet.
- Do not use acronyms, complex technical detail etc.
- Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your branch or your job.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write “I” statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.
- You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required.
- The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. This is very important as the examples which you provide may be checked out at interview and you may need to be prepared to talk about

these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your unique role the panel are interested in, not that of your team or division.

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

- It is not sufficient to simply list your duties and responsibilities.
- The selection panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicant’s post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.
- If you do not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates needed to meet the eligibility criteria, the selection panel will reject your application.
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.
- HRConnect will not examine applications until after the closing deadline.

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

APPLICATION FORM SUBMISSION

- Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application.
- All parts of the application form must be completed by the applicant before this application can be considered. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.
- When completing the online application, your information is saved as you move through the pages.
- You may leave the application at any time, providing you have clicked on the 'Save & Continue' button.
- Once your application has been submitted the option to edit will no longer be available.
- **Please note** - the session timeout for the online application is 40 minutes, if you do not save or change page within this time you will automatically be logged out and any unsaved work will be lost.
- You must click **SUBMIT** once you have finished your online application. You will receive an acknowledgement email. Please contact HRConnect if you do not receive an acknowledgement email within 24 hours.

HELP WITH MAKING YOUR APPLICATION

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office - contact details are available on NIDirect: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-benefits-offices.

You can also get advice or assistance from local disability employment organisations. To find out more about local disability employment organisations contact Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), an umbrella group for individuals and organisations promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to access and maintain employment, email info@niuse.org.uk, tel. 0044 (0)28 71 377709, text phone 0044 (0) 28 71 372077.

Artificial Intelligence can be a useful tool to support your application, however, all examples and statements provided must be truthful, factually accurate and taken directly from your own experience. Where plagiarism has been identified (presenting the ideas and experiences of others, or generated by artificial intelligence, as your own) applications may be withdrawn. Please see our candidate guidance, via the link below for more information on appropriate and inappropriate use: [Artificial Intelligence & Recruitment Guidance](#)

NICSHR PRIVACY NOTICE

NICSHR are committed to protecting your privacy. HRConnect manage job applications on behalf of NICSHR, in line with the NICSHR privacy notice available via [NICS Recruitment](#).

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

CHANGES IN PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Please ensure HRConnect are informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances. It is important that HRConnect Recruitment Team have up-to-date contact details for you. If your email address changes, it is your responsibility to inform HRConnect Recruitment Team.

(Note for existing NICS staff – An update to your employee record will not result in your applicant profile being updated. You must still inform HRConnect Recruitment Team of a change in contact details.)

TRANSGENDER REQUIREMENTS

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process please contact HRConnect. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

DISABILITY REQUIREMENTS

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process. If you have

indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact HRConnect.

DOCUMENTATION

Identification documents to satisfy the Nationality and Security requirements of the post will be required. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment.

You should ensure that the required documents are readily available. Failure to provide the appropriate documentation when requested will result in your application being rejected.

Right to Work and Nationality Requirements

RIGHT TO WORK AND NATIONALITY REQUIREMENTS

HRConnect must ensure that you are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom and satisfy the Nationality requirements for appointment to the NICS. Please note **ALL** applicants for external recruitment will be subject to a Nationality validation check.

Applicants must be either:

- (i) UK national; or
- (ii) National of the Republic of Ireland; or
- (iii) National of a Commonwealth country; or
- (iv) Nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Iceland or Liechtenstein with settled or pre-settled status under the **European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)**; or
- (v) Nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Iceland or Liechtenstein have made a valid application for settled or pre-settled status under **European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)**.
- (vi) Relevant EEA or Turkish nationals working in the Civil Service or who have built up the right to work in the Civil Service; or
- (vii) Certain family members of the relevant EU, EEA, Swiss & Turkish nationals.

ALL candidates are required to state their nationality and the category they are applying under in the Right to Work and Nationality Requirements response box in Part 1 of your application form.

For candidates applying under categories iii – vii you are required to provide the confirmation of Right to Work and Nationality Requirements, including your ‘Share code’ in the response box in Part 1 of your application form.

You should provide details of your ‘Share code’ in the ‘Share code’ field which will be used to validate your Right to Work in the UK. You can find further detail on obtaining your ‘Share code’ **here**.

Failure to provide the requested information **WILL** result in your application being rejected.

EU Settlement Scheme EU, other EEA, Swiss citizens and family members provides guidance on EUSS and certain family members.

Where a candidate has a Right to Work status which has a time limitation, ongoing checks will be in place to ensure the Right to Work is maintained.

Further guidance on Nationality requirements is available in the **Nationality Guidance** section of the NICS Recruitment website.

RIGHT TO WORK AND NATIONALITY REQUIREMENTS

VETTING PROCEDURES

For this post in the NICS the level of vetting is Basic AccessNI, however, applicants should be prepared to undergo checks for a higher vetting level at a later date, if required.

For this check you will be required to provide the following:

(a) EITHER

(i) Your passport OR

(ii) A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) **AND** your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).

AND

(b) A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

Further information regarding the Baseline Personnel Security Standard, including other acceptable documents is available via [Government baseline personnel security standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/baseline-personnel-security-standard).

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all applicants to be carried out by AccessNI.

The category of AccessNI check required for this post is:

Basic Disclosure Certificate

You should not put off applying for a post because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner, and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made. Further information regarding policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders and the vetting process is available at: <https://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk> in Recruitment Policy and Procedures manual.

Security Policy for AccessNI Disclosure Information is available at: <https://www.nicsrecruitment.org.uk> under Useful Information.

The AccessNI code of practice can be accessed via <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni>.

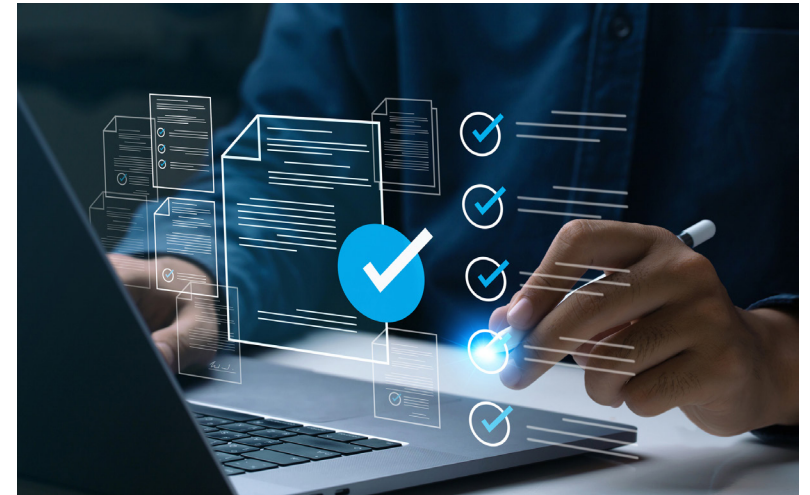
For more information regarding AccessNI checks, please see: www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/accessni-criminal-record-checks.

Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by HRConnect, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment.

RIGHT TO WORK AND NATIONALITY REQUIREMENTS

Failure to complete the application form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.



General Information

GENERAL INFORMATION

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MONITORING FORM

Please note the Equal Opportunities monitoring section of the application form is mandatory in order to submit an application.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is an Equal Opportunities Employer. For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to the DoF website: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/qualopportunities-information-candidates>.

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

Applications from young people (people under the age of 35), people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities are particularly welcomed for this post.

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

It is HRConnect policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements. Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment. You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

FEEDBACK

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair and in accordance with the principles of the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Code. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Completed application forms should be submitted to HRConnect no later than 12 noon (UK time) on **Friday 10 April 2026**.

NOTE: Late applications or applications received by fax or by email will not be accepted.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact HRConnect at the address above or by:

Email: Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net

Tel: 0800 1 300 330

Fax: 028 9024 1665

