

ANNEX A

FOI DOF/2021-0441

Request

Could I please request the following information, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

1. The number of vacant Inspector Grade II Food positions within DAERA from January 2019 until end of May 2021 that HR have been asked to be filled by the department, how many of these posts have been filled and
 - B. was any supply available to fill these posts (people who were available on a live merit list during this time but had not yet been offered a post).
2. It is understood that covid extensions to merit lists is considered on case-by-case basis. What is the policy when arriving at decisions in relation to extending merit lists due to Covid 19 pandemic
 - B. what is the average length of time of any extensions for other promotion boards.
3. The number of vacant Inspector Grade II Food posts within DAERA from June 2021 and
 - B. when did the department identify the 'need' to create these posts, when were funding and headcount forms submitted and subsequent position ID created.
4. The costs of extending Inspector Grade II Food, Agriculture, Equine promotion board / merit lists for six-month period.
5. The costs to run each Inspector Grade II (Food, Agriculture, equine promotion board.
6. The number of new promotion boards within DAERA from January 2019 until end of September 2021 where existing names from closed/previous lists have been moved to new merit list on a new promotion board e.g. Carry Forward

7. The number of employees in temporary promotion within DAERA
8. The number of employees in temporary promotion Inspector grade II Food within CAFRE and
 - B. was there any supply to fill these posts when these jobs needs were identified.
9. The role of the Vacancy management team in ensuring adherence to new policy for filling vacancies where a gap in supply is identified to ensure that process is completed in accordance with the Vacancy management policy 1.04.
10. The decision process followed for how to list successful candidates following internal promotion boards to ensure consistency e.g., published lists, published reserve lists and merit lists and what is the distinction between how successful candidates are listed.
11. When was the need for these three post identified (Senior Food Technologist Grade II Dairy, Senior Food Technologist Grade II (General Food Technology, Senior Food Technologist Grade II Robotics within CAFRE) and reasons for filling the temporarily to be filled immediately and was there any supply available from live merit list.

DoF Response

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

1. Details of the total number of vacancies in each Department is not held centrally by the 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 it needs filled, the request is referred to NICSHR to initiate the process to fill the post. During the period 7 January 2019 and 12 February 2020 a total of 8 candidates were appointed from Agricultural Inspector Grade II competition IRC232835 (Food),
 - B. Yes, there was supply available to fill Agricultural Inspector Grade 2 (Food) posts from Promotion competition IRC232835 throughout this period.
2. In 2020 all departmental competitions that were due to close up to and including 31 December 2020 were granted an extension of 6 months due to Covid lockdown restrictions.

B. The average length of time of any extensions for other promotion boards is included in the statement above, in that ALL departmental competitions that were due to close, up to and including 31 December 2020 (which includes promotion boards) were granted an extension of 6 months, due to Covid lockdown restrictions.

3. While information is held on the number of candidates appointed, the total vacancies in each Department is not held centrally by Department of Finance, as per Question 1 above.

B. This information is not held

4. There are no costs associated with extending the Inspector Grade II Food, Agriculture, Equine promotion board / merit lists for a six-month period.
5. The costs to run each Inspector Grade II promotion board cannot be disclosed, as it is exempt under Section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) exempts information whose disclosure would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person. The application of Section 43 (2) in this case requires a public interest test (PIT) to be carried out which can be found attached as a separate document.
6. The number of new promotion boards within DAERA from January 2019 until end of September 2021 where existing names from closed/previous lists have been moved to new merit list on a new promotion board e.g. Carry Forward is 2.
7. The total number of employees on temporary promotion in DAERA, at month ending September 2021 is 393 (headcount)
8. At month ending September 2021, there are no temporary promotions to Agricultural Inspector grade II within CAFRE, Food and Technology Branch.

B. This information is not held centrally by the Department of Finance. Temporary promotions are managed by business areas within individual Departments.

9. The role of the NICS HR Vacancy Management branch is to ensure that substantive vacancies declared by NICS Departments are filled in accordance with the Vacancy Management Policy 1.04. This means considering staff from NICS pools lists in the order outlined in the Vacancy Management Policy before considering other methods to fill such as Promotion lists. If NICS HR hold declared vacancies at a particular grade

and/or discipline and have exhausted available supply, consideration of the appropriate method to fill will be in line with this Policy, which includes the potential to launch a new competition to deliver supply for the Grade / Discipline.

10. The process is set out in the [Career Opportunities and Promotion Policy](#), specifically paragraphs 5.25 – 5.32. (Reference to Line Manager's Assessment is no longer valid). Paragraph 5.25 details the scoring of evidence provided at interview. Candidates who achieve the overall pass mark will be ranked in merit order. This is the 'merit list'. A 'published list' will contain the names of candidates recommended for promotion to fill current and **anticipated** vacancies. For example if there are 5 current and anticipated vacancies the top 5 candidates from the merit list will be named on a published list. Subsequent reserve or supplementary lists will be published should further vacancies arise during the lifetime of the competition. Whilst a candidate may have been found suitable for promotion and be held on a merit list, this does not mean they will automatically appear on a 'published listed' for promotion. This will depend on vacancies arising during the lifetime of the competition. Therefore a merit list will not always be exhausted.
11. I can confirm the department does not hold the information requested.
12. Please be advised, you may wish to contact the DAERA FOI team at daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk directly for this information.