

Association of
Higher Civil
& Public Servants

Comhlachas na
Seirbhíseach Uachtarach
Stáit agus Poiblí



AHCPs

Ruth Cullen
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street
Dublin 2
D02 R583

24 January 2023

Dear Ruth

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Review Body. I will focus on the recruitment aspect and not on pay. As you are aware, the Association represents over 3,500 staff at Assistant Principal and Principal Officer level in the Civil and Public Service. We undertook a consultation process and I wish to apologise for the lateness of the response. There is broad satisfaction with the way in which TLAC operates, however, the Association wishes to make some points which might be considered by the Review Body. I will set these out in bullet point fashion below.

- Observation that there appears to be a misalignment between the SPS internal mobility and TLAC processes in terms of the level of competence, skills and background / experience sought. People being eliminated from TLAC processes for not having certain requisites – does not seem to align with approach regarding certain appointments carried out under SPS mobility.
- A/Sec posts being advertised with specific skills and knowledge required. Potential candidates not applying but the post, once filled, subsequently being moved, or changed requiring different skills etc where candidates would have applied if that end post had been the one advertised.
- Perception that TLAC shortlisting may not be as transparent as it should be. The criteria should be set out in greater detail, to ensure compliance with equality legislation and afford more clarity.
- More meaningful / helpful feedback provided to candidates at all stages.
- Larger pool/panel of interviewers should be considered – appears to be a limited pool where some candidates say they are being interviewed by the same people with the same views. Broader pool would help promote more diversity in approach and potentially in candidates.

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- The role of the SG in the TLAC process needs to be made more transparent. Perception that candidates to be successful must be on the SG's radar.
 - Large majority of appointments to A/Sec coming from internal candidates of the Department. Perception of being in the right place at the right time rather than transparent meritocracy.
 - A/Sec acting up arrangements (without competitive process, selected by SG and payment being made where arrangements exceed 81 days) are causing considerable unease amongst cohort interested in progressing to A/Sec level and damaging confidence in a fair unbiased process. Acting up arrangements being used to address serious delays in running competitions and filling vacancies. (This needs to be fixed as a matter of priority). The Association's policy is that all posts should be filled on a substantive rather than an acting basis. Perception that those acting up being given unfair advantage in competitions and the integrity of the TLAC process being undermined as a result. Furthermore, where interim appointment is in place or an individual is acting up, other candidates are not bothering to apply for the post as the competition is possibly being perceived as a box ticking exercise with a predetermined outcome.
 - View that current extension arrangements on SG 7-year contracts may lack transparency, stifling innovation and dynamic input from the SG role and damaging morale and career prospects for senior civil servants interested in progressing to SG level.
 - Have previous candidates of TLAC competitions been asked for their experience of the process? If so what if any changes if any were identified and what steps are being taken to reform the process?
 - To have confidence in the process the importance of fairness and transparency cannot be overstated.

The Association would be happy to meet with the Review Body to discuss these points in further detail.

Best regards



Ciaran Rohan
General Secretary