

Recruitment and Promotion of Operational Staff in the Office of Public Works (OPW)

Basis for Recruitment and Promotion of Operational Staff

For industrial relations and legal purposes, Operational Staff in the OPW are State Industrial Employees. Grades regarded as industrial are usually skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled workers or civilian employees recruited under the Defence Acts, 1954. State Industrial Employees are excluded from the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration scheme but are covered by the range of general employment laws and have access to the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court on matters of pay and conditions. This access results in the designation of State Industrial Employees under the terms of section 23(3) of the Industrial Relations Act, 1990. Under that section of the Act, the Minister for Finance may designate any person (other than an established civil servant within the meaning of the Civil Service Regulation Act, 1956) employed by virtue of section 30(1)(g) of the Defence Act, 1954 or employed by or under the State. In practice, therefore, State Industrial Employees are regarded as those grades designated under Section 23(3) of the 1990 Industrial Relations Act.

A key criteria in the employment of State Industrial Employees is the assignment of each employee to a base area which may be a visitor site, group of sites, depot, demesne & parklands, district or river catchment area. Positions are designated as base area specific and are not, except under highly exceptional circumstances or with reference to direct entry grades, interchangeable/transferable with comparable positions in other base areas; terms and conditions apply to such instances. While unique divisional grade positions and structures exist in the OPW, a broadly common grade structure applies across the OPW functional areas (National Historic Properties Parklands and Gardens, National Historic Properties Visitor Services, Flood Risk Management Drainage, Flood Risk Management Construction, Building Maintenance Services, Furniture Division, National Monuments Maintenance and National Monuments Visitor Services). That being said, the requirements of each individual OPW base area, person requirements and position requirements are reflected in the specification for the advertised position. Local management, who have knowledge and experience of the specific local fillable position requirements, are also represented on each Interview Board in order to ensure that the selection process achieves the optimum outcome of identifying the most suitable candidate with the skills, knowledge and qualities to meet the requirements of the specific locally-based position.

Legislation referred to, herein, is available to view on www.irishstatutebook.ie.

Recruitment Principles

Appointment processes are based on five recruitment principles. These are:

•*Probity*

Probity is defined as integrity, impartiality, fairness, reliability and ethical conduct. The OPW treats all information, supplied in respect of recruitment and promotion processes, in the strictest confidence and complies with the provisions and requirements of Freedom of Information legislation, National Archives legislation and the Data Protection Acts and Regulations.

•*Merit*

Appointment made on merit means the appointment of the best person to any given post. It results in the selection of individuals whose competencies, abilities, experience and qualities best match the needs of the OPW in respect of the advertised position. Patronage or privilege do not influence any part of the process.

- *Best Practice*

The job specification and person specification are defined objectively, accurately and comprehensively and approved, at minimum, at Higher Executive Officer level, or equivalent, in the OPW, before the selection process begins. The nature, purpose, location, duration and pay rate applicable to any planned appointment are clearly set out. The position(s) is/are appropriately advertised, including compliance with the Official Languages Act, as required. Only those candidates who meet the essential eligibility criteria for the position, the decision on which is made by an appropriately experienced and skilled officer, will be assessed under the selection process.

The OPW applies appropriate objective, assessment mechanisms based on key criteria to identify the most suitable candidate(s) for the position(s). Selection processes may include short-listing to identify those candidates to be invited to competitive interview. The selection process may include an aptitude test and/or a practical test as part of the assessment before a suitable candidate is identified under the process, or, alternatively, following placement on a panel, the appointment of a candidate may be subject to successfully undertaking a practical test.

OPW recruitment and promotion processes, include controls and checks and are under constant review and assessment in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Candidates who knowingly or recklessly provide false information, canvass any person, interfere with or compromise the process including impersonation or behave in an offensive, abusive or threatening manner are disqualified.

- *Fairness*

The selection process adopted and the way in which it is applied is undertaken with full commitment to equality of opportunity. Candidates are treated to a consistent standard and in a consistent manner. The selection process is managed by HR to ensure objectivity, fairness and consistency.

- *Transparency*

The requirements, responsibilities, duties, skills, qualities for the position are provided in detail. Candidates are informed of the basis on which selection takes place and of the different stages involved in the selection process. Candidates are informed of the interview result and, if requested, the OPW will supply the candidate with details of the marks awarded by the Interview Board and a copy of the notes taken at interview by the Interview Board. All enquiries are to be responded to adequately and in an efficient and timely manner.

The Interview Board

The standard Interview Board consists of three members; one member from HR or a HR nominee (at least Executive Officer level), the remaining two members are, in consideration of the grade level of the position to be filled, from an appropriate local supervisory/management level or a nominee thereof. Interview Board members understand their role and are equipped with the experience, knowledge and skills to conduct the interview process in line with the five recruitment principles. The Interview Board, which is skilled at properly evaluating candidates, determines which candidate(s) is/are to be appointed and placed on a reserve panel or panel for future appointments, if applicable. The Interview Board may form a panel consisting of the most suitable candidates or all suitable candidates. Appointments and placements on panels are based on order of merit achieved in the selection process. Please refer to the guidance document on the interview process for further information.

If you are unhappy with the decision of the Interview Board

Requests for review of a selection decision and complaints that allege a breach of the provisions set out on this information note and the information note on the interview process, are dealt with in an efficient and timely manner. Requests for review and complaints, from non-OPW candidates should be submitted to HR Management (Operational) Division, OPW HQ, Jonathan Swift St, Trim, Co. Meath and will be processed by a HR Manager who is independent of the relevant recruitment process. Requests for review and complaints, from OPW candidates, while being dealt with under the Code of Practice on Grievance Procedures (available on the OPW Intranet), are processed in the same manner as those submitted by non-OPW candidates. There is no obligation on the OPW to suspend an appointment process while it considers a request for a review or a complaint. However, the OPW will intervene where possible and take appropriate action in cases where it finds that an error is likely to have occurred.

Appointments to positions

Appointments are subject to the candidate agreeing to undertake the full range of requirements, responsibilities and duties attached to the position including those that management consider are appropriate to the position. The appointee must be fully competent, available to perform and capable of undertaking all aspects of the role. Appointments may be subject to the OPW obtaining satisfactory references and, also, satisfactory Garda vetting of the prospective appointee. Once appointed, failure by the employee to comply with the terms and conditions which apply to the employment may lead to the application of the Code of Practice on Disciplinary Procedures under which sanctions up to and including dismissal may be applied.

Appointment procedure

On the basis of an approved appointment proceeding, the candidate who is in line to be appointed, in accordance with the result of the selection process, will be contacted by HR and offered the fillable position. Where a reserve panel or panel for future appointments is formed by the selection process, the relevant candidates will be informed of their position on the panel and the duration of the panel.

The offer of an appointment may be subject to a designated timescale for taking up the position. Inability or failure on the part of the prospective appointee to take up the appointment in line with the designated timescale may result in the OPW deciding to offer the fillable position to the next candidate in the order of merit. The OPW, at its discretion, determines whether a candidate, placed on a panel for fillable positions, remains on that panel, if that person does not take up an offer of employment by the OPW.

Commencement in the approved fillable position is subject to the candidate's agreement to the terms and conditions of employment which are in compliance with employment legislation.

Working Hours

While a standard 39 hour week, excluding lunch breaks, applies to all Operational Staff, various local staff groupings, sites and regions have variations on the working week and working hours. The appointee will be notified of these in detail upon appointment. Some sites and staff groups work a 40 hour week which includes a working up time in lieu arrangement. Start times, finish times, rest periods and lunch breaks are notified to appointees upon appointment.

Arrangements for payment of wages

Operational staff are paid weekly in arrears. The standard pay period is Thursday to Wednesday. The following example will demonstrate how this works in practice:

Employee commences on Thursday 2nd March 2017. Working week ends on Wednesday 8th March 2017. Attendance and resultant pay and allowances for the working week are recorded. Pay and allowances due for week-ending Wednesday 8th March are paid on Thursday 16th March 2017.

Details of the position, person and job specification, pay and work location are contained in the Competition Notice for the advertised position. The terms and conditions of employment are issued to the appointee before the scheduled commencement of employment.