



Department for the

Economy

An Roinn

Geilleagair

www.economy-ni.gov.uk

Candidate Information Booklet

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRS TO THE GOVERNING BODIES OF BELFAST METROPOLITAN COLLEGE AND NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE

Application forms and this information pack can be made available in other formats – including Braille, Large Print, audio formats, etc.

Please email Public Appointments Unit (PAU) at: PAU@economy-ni.gov.uk or telephone:

028 9052 9461 (Jean Mageean)

028 9052 9282 (Yvonne Green)

028 9052 9212 (Neil Morrison)

All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRS TO THE GOVERNING BODIES OF BELFAST METROPOLITAN COLLEGE (BMC) AND NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE (NWRC)

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The Department for the Economy (DfE) and the FE Colleges are committed to the principles of public appointment based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process.

We are also committed to equality of opportunity and welcome application forms from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief,

gender, race, political opinion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependents.

Female Chairs are currently under-represented across all Bodies sponsored by DfE and applications from females would also be particularly welcome

A public appointment to a Board gives individuals from different backgrounds and with specific skills and experience a chance to help make decisions that affect all our lives. Board appointments are a great opportunity to give something back to the community, whilst developing your own skills.

We are operating a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) in this competition for applicants with a disability. Applicants with a disability who meet all of the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

Thank you for your interest in the position of Governing Body Chair of a Further Education College.

Our Further Education colleges are at the very heart of local communities and play a key role in supporting better outcomes at a regional level and underpinning local economic growth.

Colleges are critical players in delivering a regionally balanced economy, where people are equipped with the skills to access opportunities and meet the needs of employers, with the Chair of the Governing Body being the key link to the Department, providing assurance that my priorities are appropriately reflected in sectoral priorities, college plans and performance.

Collaborative partnerships across the Further Education sector and with other partners will be an important ingredient for future success.

I have visited many college campuses in 2024 since becoming the Economy Minister and I value greatly the work they do in supporting learners, businesses and local communities.

The role of a Governing Body Chair is an exciting opportunity, one that can positively impact the lives of people from all walks of life.

I wholeheartedly encourage anyone who is interested in making a vital contribution to consider applying.

CONOR MURPHY MLA
Minister for the Economy

SECTION ONE

Introduction

DfE is seeking to appoint two Governing Body (GB) Chairs, one to BMC and one to NWRC. Currently, it is anticipated that both appointments will be made in Spring 2025.

A Regulated Appointment

The procedure for these appointments will adhere to the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI). This means that they will be based on merit after a fair, open, and transparent process that involves independent scrutiny and with the DfE Minister making the final decision on who to appoint. In the absence of a Minister, decisions on appointments will fall to the Department's Permanent Secretary.

Further information on CPANI can be found at:

<https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/>

Background to the Further Education Sector and BMC & NWRC

Northern Ireland has six regional FE colleges, including BMC and NWRC. Together these six colleges constitute the FE sector in Northern Ireland, and offer a range of skills provision including professional, technical and academic studies, from Level 0 to higher education. The catchment areas of BMC and NWRC each stretch across multiple Council areas.

All six colleges are classified as Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and carry out their functions at arm's length from DfE, the partner Department. As NDPBs, the colleges:

- Carry out functions on behalf of Government;
- Are legally incorporated with their own legal identity and their own legislation,
[The Further Education \(NI\) Order 1997](#);
- Employ their own staff and are allocated their own budgets;
- Publish their own business plans, annual reports and accounts;
- Are subject to Executive and Departmental priorities including the forthcoming Programme for Government and also the Skills Strategy; and
- Act as a key delivery agent for the Minister's economic vision.

BMC has four campuses, Titanic Quarter, e3 Springvale, Millfield and Castlereagh. The College's vision is *to be a College of Choice for learners, Employer of Choice for talent and Partner of Choice for employers and businesses*. In 2022/23, BMC had 24,960 enrolments (21.3% of total enrolments across the sector), with 19,995 part-time and 4,960 full-time enrolments. In the same period, it employed 839 people (expressed as full-time equivalents) of whom 362 were teaching staff. Further information on the College can be found on its website - www.belfastmet.ac.uk.

NWRC has five campuses, two in each in Derry/Londonderry and Limavady and one in Strabane. The College's vision is *to improve the life chances of everyone, no matter how 'hard to reach'*. In 2022/23, NWRC had 12,885 enrolments (11.0% of total enrolments across the sector), with 10,150 part-time and 2,735 full-time enrolments. In the same period, it employed 594 people (expressed as full-time equivalents) of whom 315 were teaching staff. Further information on the College can be found on its website - www.nwrc.ac.uk.

While colleges do generate some income they are largely funded from the public purse through DfE. In 2023/24 BMC received funding of around £57.7m and NWRC received £34.7m, whilst the total funding for the sector in the same period was £241.0m. In addition to this, capital funding is provided to support a rolling programme of investment in new buildings, minor works and specialist equipment and vehicles.

In 2022/23, the total number of enrolments at NI FE colleges stood at 117,305, of which 18.6% were full-time and 81.4% part-time. There was a total of 64,025 individual students, of whom 45.2% were in the '19 years and under' age group, with 40.9% in the '25 and over' age group.

Strategic context

The DfE Minister is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly for the colleges' performance and in relation to wider government aims reports to the Executive. The DfE Permanent Secretary is accountable for the funds allocated to colleges and designates each college Principal/Chief Executive as the college Accounting Officer. In practice most of the responsibilities of the Minister/Departmental Accounting Officer are delegated to the lead official (the Director of FE) to discharge.

In September 2024 the Northern Ireland Executive published a [draft Programme for Government \(PfG\) for 2024 to 2027](#), setting out the Executive's priorities in the areas of People, Planet and Prosperity. The draft PfG includes a priority to 'Grow a Globally Competitive and sustainable Economy', which encompasses the four key objectives of the Economic Vision set out by the Economy Minister in February 2024:

- [increasing the proportion of working age people in Good Jobs;](#)
- [promotion of Regional Balance;](#)
- [raise Productivity;](#) and
- [reduce carbon emissions.](#)

The FE sector will have a critical role in supporting the achievement of the draft PfG as it is a key delivery mechanism to growing the economy and supporting social inclusion. The objectives of this Economic Vision are the main focus of the [Department's 2024/25 Business Plan](#) which also provides a forward look over the next three years and sets out what DfE needs to do to deliver growth for the economy in Northern Ireland.

The Minister's priority of promotion of Regional Balance is further articulated in the Department's [Sub-Regional Economic Plan](#), published on 1st October 2024, which sets out a new strategic approach to economic policy. FE helps underpin the creation of a successful regional economy by strengthening the skills profile

of Northern Ireland and linking individuals to work through the successful delivery of all skills levels, including significant support towards social inclusion and creating opportunity. As well as supporting workforce development and promoting social inclusion, FE also directly supports businesses, including help with innovation and growth, which in turn increases regional competitiveness. The sector's collaborative offering aligns strongly to economic priorities at regional and sub-regional levels.

The colleges provide skills and opportunities that are essential to building a modern economy and creating a stronger, more inclusive society. The aim for FE in Northern Ireland is to develop a world class FE sector, financially efficient and with strong governance; a sector with state of the art facilities; a sector which is collaborative, and responsive both to learner and employer needs; a sector which plays a vital role in delivering skills for the economy, as well as high quality skills and support services for learners/employers aligned to economic priorities; and which supports social inclusion.

Other key issues for the colleges include:

- The need to consider the current FE sector delivery model, in order to ensure the most sustainably effective model is employed, one which can meet the needs of key stakeholders, and can transition to address evolving strategic economic and societal priorities,
- Establishing the most effective presence in an evolving skills landscape, such as demographic change and other skills avenues (e.g. schools and universities). This will include promoting a clear identity for key FE provision and developing more responsive services to support learners and economic growth priorities,
- Addressing a challenging financial position – ongoing public sector budget constraints require tight controls on spend and a renewed effort on achieving good outcomes within available resources,
- The effective management of a good industrial relations framework with college staff, led by GB Chairs who, in conjunction with College Principals, oversee collective bargaining arrangements in the sector and the wider FE workforce issues.

SECTION TWO

Role Profile

The Chair of the GB of an FE college has particular responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership for their college which aligns with the strategic direction of the Minister, as well as ensuring that the GB works effectively.

The GB is the corporate board of an FE college and is required under the Further Education (NI) Order 1997:

- To ensure the efficient and effective management of that college; and
- To ensure the provision of suitable and efficient FE to students at the college having regard to the needs of industry, commerce and the community and, also, existing educational provision within the local area.

Like all corporate boards, the BMC and NWRC GBs must operate effective governance systems and act in accordance with the highest standards of propriety. The GB's responsibility for the efficient and effective management of the college includes its financial performance and the quality of skills provision. It must ensure the college is managed with probity and integrity and has a responsibility for ensuring that the professional, technical and academic college programmes reflect its strategic direction and mission, as well as meeting the priorities set by the Department. In guiding the strategic direction of the college, the GB provides and exercises both a support and challenge function in respect of the Principal/Chief Executive and college senior management.

College GBs have up to 18 Members each, 12 of whom, including the Chair, are appointed by the Economy Minister through the public appointments process. The remaining Members are the college Principal/Chief Executive, two staff representatives, a student representative and up to two Members who may be co-opted by the GB to bring added expertise and experience not considered adequately covered by other Members.

Individual GB Members should bring independence, objectivity, impartiality and expertise to both the decision making and challenge processes within the college. All Members have equal voting rights on the GB.

All GB Members must personally subscribe to and uphold the seven principles of public life, set by the Committee on Standards in Public Life - see **Annex A**.

The Chair's specific responsibilities include:

Governance
Ensuring that the GB has sufficient support and information to discharge its functions.
Ensuring the GB adheres to its obligations under its Partnership Agreement with the Department for the Economy and, as appropriate, oversees the college's wider adherence to the Agreement's requirements.
Ensuring that the GB takes due account of all statutory regulations, codes of practice and other requirements.
Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place within the college.
Contributing objectively to the proceedings of the GB and its committees, exercising a challenge role as appropriate.
Approving the arrangements for the appraisal of senior staff, which also complies with sector wide arrangements.
Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Further Education (NI) Order 1997 and adherence to the public sector standards applied to Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

Leadership
Providing strong leadership to the GB, ensuring that individual governors work corporately in a cohesive way.
Enabling all governors to make a full contribution to the affairs of the GB. This includes advising new members on their role and responsibilities.
Representing the interests of the college at meetings with the Minister, senior officials and the general public.
Assessing the performance of the Principal and Chief Executive and GB members on an annual basis.
Ensuring that the college acts as a responsible employer. Contributing to the GB's role in the process of appointing, suspending, dismissing and also, determining the pay and conditions of service of senior staff.
Establishing an agreed framework for the pay and conditions of service of all other staff.
Working collaboratively with all other colleges to develop a cohesive FE sector and develop positive relationships with fellow GB Chairs.
Strategic Direction
Leading in determining the mission of the college, the establishment and maintenance of its general character and its medium to long-term strategic direction.
Setting the strategic direction of the college, aligned with Ministerial strategic priorities.
Ensuring that the college delivers against the strategy and policy for FE in Northern Ireland.
Ensuring that the quality of college education/skills provision meets the needs of students, prospective students and employers.
Budget
Ensuring effective oversight of the college's management of performance, financial controls and staff.
Encouraging high standards of propriety and promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources throughout the college.
Monitoring the college's operational and financial performance.

Critically analysing internal and external information/data sources to establish a robust college evidence base to solve problems and make informed decisions.

You can find further information on the roles and responsibilities of an FE GB, the Chair and the individual governor in the [Guide for governors of Northern Ireland further education colleges | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Period of Appointment

A Further Education College GB Chair will normally serve for a period of four years (one term) but may be considered for appointment for one further term. An annual assessment of the performance of GB Chairs is carried out throughout the period of appointment. Reappointment may be considered subject to satisfactory performance during the initial period of office, continued adherence to the principles of public life and subject to **statutory disqualifications set out in Annex B**. Ultimately, the decision to re-appoint will rest with the Minister responsible for the Department for the Economy.

In accordance with the Code of Practice issued by CPANI, appointments for the same position i.e. on the same GB, are restricted to two terms. An individual who has served for two terms on the GB of one college, is however eligible to apply to serve on the GB of another college should they wish to do so. An existing GB member can be considered for appointment as GB Chair, through open competition. Such an appointment would be to a different position and would count as a new appointment.

Time Commitment and Remuneration

On average, a Chair can expect to commit around one day a week to college business. This includes GB meetings, which are generally held in the evening, as well as regular interaction with DfE. There are seven to nine full meetings of a GB per year. A Chair is expected to attend all meetings and also, to represent the college at other meetings and public events. A Chair may also have involvement in sub committees. Additional meetings may be called as required. Engagement with DfE will primarily be through the Director of Further Education, who is the senior departmental official for the six FE colleges. A Chair, along with the Chairs and Principals/Chief Executives from other colleges, will also participate in the work of the Colleges' Employers Forum, which is responsible for negotiating the terms, conditions of service and remuneration of staff. The operation of this Forum is currently being reviewed.

The post of a GB Chair is remunerated at a rate of £20,000 per annum. Further details are available on request or on the DfE Website at [GB Remuneration](#). You will also be eligible to claim allowances, at Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) rates, for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on GB business. All remuneration and expenses are subject to deduction of income tax and national insurance.

Double Paying

Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that, if appointed, they will be asked to obtain confirmation from their employer that any remuneration due and time worked for this position are truly additional to their existing job role and is not a duplication with salaried employment (unless allowed under the terms and conditions of employment).

In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying to occur the Department reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

Nationality

DfE have no public appointments which are restricted to UK nationals only. However, there is a mandatory requirement to ensure that those appointed do not contravene immigration legislation.

- Republic of Ireland (RoI) citizens may be appointed to any post.
- Commonwealth citizens who have immigration status allowing them to work in the UK may be appointed to any post.
- There is an onus on non-UK and non-RoI citizens to provide proof of their right to work in the UK and an onus on the appointer to check that.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the individual to provide evidence that they have the appropriate permission if being offered a post. The Department will check the individual's passport, share code or other documents to confirm if they can legally work in the UK.

Qualifications

No specific academic qualifications are required for these appointments.

Training

Appointees to FE College GBs are expected to undergo appropriate training in corporate governance and board membership. You will be expected, as a condition of your appointment, to participate in appropriate training provided by DfE or the college. All appointees will be supported with additional development needs or training as necessary.

Person Specification

The person specification addresses the qualities, experience, background and competences sought. A criteria-based selection procedure is employed by DfE. This process requires applicants to provide evidence which demonstrates that they can meet the requirements. The mere mention of a skill or attribute is insufficient. Neither can selection panel members make assumptions from the title of a post or the nature of an organisation as to the experience, qualities and skills gained. **For that reason, CVs will not be accepted.**

Make sure that you take full advantage to provide practical evidence and examples of how you feel you are suitable for this appointment. **It is strongly recommended that you read the 'Public Appointments Guide' which**

contains guidance on the completion of criteria-based application forms and can be found at:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/public-appointments-guide-overview-public-appointments-northern-ireland-and-helpful-information>

DfE will recognise less traditional career patterns and experiences found within the employment field. Therefore, in your application form, you may use examples from your working or personal life e.g. part-time activities or leisure activities, including any voluntary or community work you are or have been involved in.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Eligibility

[Schedule 3](#) of the FE (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 requires that applicants should be, or have previously been, engaged or employed in business, industry or any profession. This is a basic eligibility requirement and candidates must demonstrate how they meet this criterion. Please note the legislation does not set a minimum time period for this criterion.

For the purposes of this criterion:

- **'business'** means any type of enterprise and includes organisations in the community, voluntary and public sectors; and
- **'any profession'** is defined as an occupation, practice or vocation requiring significant understanding and experience of applying a complex set of knowledge and skills through professional learning and/or practical experience.

Please be aware that DfE employs a broad interpretation of this criterion. **A background in education is not required to undertake the role of GB Chair and is not a criterion for appointment.**

Selection is also based on the essential criteria set out below.

Essential Criteria

Candidates must provide evidence (by way of example) to demonstrate that they have the following skills and knowledge. They will need to show, both on the application form and at interview, how they meet the following criteria:

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE - How **you** have demonstrated experience of implementing effective governance in the operation of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation, including safeguarding its values and reputation and being accountable for its actions and decisions.

DELIVERING STRATEGY AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS – How **you** have analysed complex information to make evidence based decisions to inform the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation in order to deliver improvements in a dynamic and challenging environment.

LEADERSHIP – How **you** have acted as a strategic leader of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation to ensure focus and direction, and deliver results successfully.

COLLABORATING AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING- How **you** have demonstrated effective communication, strong interpersonal skills and the ability to develop and maintain constructive working relationships and networks with key stakeholders/partners.

A more detailed explanation of the essential criteria can be found in **Annex C**.

The criteria are all of equal weight. Only those candidates who have provided evidence of sufficient quality to meet the eligibility criterion will be considered for interview.

Applications from Civil Servants/former Civil Servants

It is possible that conflicts of interest could arise in relation to government policy, strategy, or the fair administration of public services and justice during the course of College business. Civil servants, or former civil servants, are welcome to apply for the post of a FE College GB Chair. However, they should be aware that a judgement will be made by the interviewing panel as to whether the nature of his/her employment could lead to a perceived or real split of loyalties of a sufficiently serious nature to render appointment as GB Chair an unmanageable conflict of interest.

Former civil servants are subject to rules on the acceptance of outside business appointments, employment or self-employment for a period of up to two years after leaving the NICS. Individuals in this category, who wish to apply, should check their eligibility to do so with NICS HR Employee Relations. You can contact HRConnect using the contact details below:

Email: NICS@HRConnect.nigov.net or External Dial: **0800 1 300 400**

Candidates who are current employees of the NICS are advised, should you be offered an appointment, you will be asked to confirm that you have obtained the necessary approval to undertake private work with another public sector body (including another Government Department) from NICS HR Employee Relations. Further information on this can be found in the [NICS HR Handbook](#), **Section 6.01: Standards of Conduct, Sub Section 6: Private Occupations.**

Current and Former Civil Servants are advised to seek the required authorisation at the start of their application process.

Integrity & Conflicts of Interest

DfE must ensure that potential appointees are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.**

DfE must take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. Therefore, applicants, in their application form, must disclose information or personal connections, which, if they were to be appointed, could lead to a conflict of

interest or be perceived as such. Conflicts of interest may not be a barrier to appointment but both real and perceived conflicts must be discussed with all candidates by the selection panel at interview. This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in the GB's independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointee.

Please refer to the attached **Annex A** for further information on this subject.

SECTION THREE

Application Form

The application form is designed to ensure applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements. You can apply for either one or both Chair positions through the completion of one application form. You will be assessed against the criteria on pages 12/13 and as detailed in **Annex C** of this document. You can use examples from your working life, including any voluntary or community work you are, or have been, engaged in or, if preferred, you can use examples from your personal life.

Braille, large print, and audio formats are available on request.

Data Protection

As much of the information involved in the appointment process will be of a personal nature, the provisions of Data Protection legislation will be followed. To ensure that you are aware of how and why your personal information is to be used, and with whom it may be shared, a DfE Public Appointments 'privacy notice', is available on the following link for your information and reference:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/privacy-notice-public-appointments>

Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

The Department is required to monitor the gender, ethnic origin, community background and disability of applicants to ensure that equal opportunities measures are effective. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a person with a disability as someone who has, or has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment which has had a substantial long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This includes sensory impairments, people who have had a disability in the past even though they are no longer disabled, people whose disability is likely to last for twelve months or rest of their life, and people whose condition is likely to progress or recur. Severe disfigurement is also acknowledged as a disability.

You are therefore asked to complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Information section of the application form. The information is not made available to the panel members and does not play a role in the decision-making process. It will be detached from your application form by PAU

administration staff and sent to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for analysis and will be treated in strict confidence.

Application procedure

You can complete an online application by using the following link:

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/bmc-nwrc-joint-chair-application>

Alternatively, you can request a hardcopy from the DfE Public Appointments Unit at pau@economy-ni.gov.uk or by telephoning:

Jean Mageean on 028 9052 9461 (Textrelay: 18001 028 9052 9461) or Yvonne Green on 028 9052 9282 (Textrelay: 18001 028 9052 9282) or Neil Morrison on 028 9052 9212 (Textrelay: 18001 028 9052 9212)

Written applications should be posted to:-

Department for the Economy
Public Appointments Unit
First Floor
Adelaide House
39-49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD

For information on the expectations of the role or if you require any clarification on a particular aspect of the role or the criteria being assessed contact Brian Patterson at fegovernance@economy-ni.gov.uk

To ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:

- CVs, letters, or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms **will not be accepted**;
- There is a maximum word count of **400 words** per criterion. Anything over and above that will be redacted by the PAU Administration Team and not seen by the selection panel;
- Submitted application forms must be presented in **Arial format, Font 12**, and within the box provided;
- Applications will be automatically rejected if the box size is changed or the text is not in required format/font size. (Please note you can work in a different font size when drafting before submitting in Font 12); and
- Applications will not be examined until after the closing deadline.

Sift and Shortlisting

An anonymised sift and short-listing process will be employed (for each background type). The Selection Panel will use a Marking Frame to determine how an applicant's skills, knowledge and experience meets each of the criteria. Applications which do not meet all of the selection criteria will be sifted out. The eligibility criterion will be assessed on a met/not met basis.

The Selection Panel reserves the right to apply a scoring system to further short-list for interview, based on the quality of evidence provided using

aggregated marks.

If shortlisting is required, the Selection Panel has agreed that the initial pass mark to be invited for interview will be an overall score of **22** out of a possible score of **28**. Candidates must also have achieved the agreed pass mark of **four** or above out of the available **seven** marks in all four criteria to be considered eligible for interview.

Should there be an insufficient pool of candidates achieving the required score of **22** the Selection Panel may consider reducing the required aggregated pass mark by one mark each time until a sufficient pool of candidates eligible for interview is in place.

Time Frame for Process

The closing date for receipt of all applications is **12.00 Noon (GMT) on Thursday 6 February 2025**.

Applications received by post will be individually date-stamped and the time of receipt formally recorded. It is the responsibility of the applicant, taking into account their chosen method of delivery, to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with DfE on or before the deadline. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

Your application will be acknowledged immediately after submission if applying online, or within 2 working days if applying via an email or hardcopy application form.

If you have not received an acknowledgement within this timescale, please contact the DfE Public Appointments Unit by phone to Jean Mageean on 028 9052 9461 or Yvonne Green on 028 9052 9282 or Neil Morrison on 028 9052 9212.

All those sifted out or short-listed out will be provided with feedback on request based on the agreed panel's assessment of their application. If you wish to contest the decision not to short-list you for interview you should do so within 5 working days of the date issue of your regrets letter. Further details about the process will be provided in the letter.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews will last approximately 50 minutes. It is expected that interviews will be held on **18th, 21st 25th, 28th March and 1st April 2025** in the Belfast area.

Those invited to interview are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses incurred within the UK and the ROI. All reasonable receipted dependant carer and/or childcare expenses will also be reimbursed where applicable.

The interview process will consist of a presentation and a competency-based interview.

Presentation

Candidates will be required to make a presentation, relevant to the responsibilities of the post, lasting no longer than seven minutes. This will be followed by questions from the panel.

Candidates will be advised of the presentation topic when they report for interview and will be given a maximum of 30 minutes to prepare for their presentation. Candidates will be allowed to bring their speaking notes into the interview for assistance only during the presentation part of the assessment. No other materials, visual aids or handouts will be permitted.

Candidates will be required to report for interview approximately 45 minutes earlier than their scheduled interview appointment to allow time to prepare their presentation.

Competence-Based Interviews

Competence-based interviewing tests candidates against the specific selection criteria for a particular appointment. The application form gives you an opportunity to provide examples relevant to the specific criteria. These, in turn, provide the interview panel with information and evidence about you, and a deeper understanding of your abilities.

The interview is a crucial part of the appointment process and thorough preparation is essential. You can prepare for the interview by:

- reading and thoroughly understanding the selection criteria;
- reminding yourself of the examples you used in your application form and being prepared to expand on these at interview, if asked;
- rehearsing how you might relate your experiences to the interview panel, emphasising your own role and responsibilities; and
- not assuming that your qualities and experience will speak for themselves.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)

The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet or exceed the pass-marks set for the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

Pre-appointment Checks

Before the names of suitable candidates are presented to the Minister a Company Director's disqualification check and a bankruptcy check will be carried out. In addition, a cross-departmental check will be carried out on the probity and performance of those candidates who currently hold or have held public appointment roles.

Presentation of Results

Ministerial choice is a key element of public appointment policy that enables Minister(s) to indicate if they wish to have the names of candidates suitable for appointment presented in a ranked (strict merit order) or unranked (alphabetical) list. The DfE Minister, Conor Murphy, has made it known that his preference on the presentation of results is an unranked list.

Publicising Appointments

A press release will be published to announce the appointment. Upon appointment, a candidate will be required to complete a political activity form and provide a short biography for publication. The press release will include, the candidate's name, a short description of the body to which they have been appointed, a brief summary of the skills and knowledge the candidate brings to the role, the length of the appointment term and details of the candidate's response to the political activity questionnaire.

Complaints Procedure

The Public Appointments Unit (PAU) within the DfE is committed to the principles of public appointments as set out in the CPANI Code of Practice.

If at any stage you feel you have reason to complain, details of the Department's PAU Complaints Procedure can be found at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/public-appointments-unit-complaints-procedure>

Integrity and Conflicts of Interest – Guide for Candidates

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the information contained in the leaflet 'Guidance on Conflict of Interest, Integrity and How to raise a Complaint' produced by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, Northern Ireland, which provides examples of the types of issues that may give rise to conflicts of interests.

1. In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life **defined seven principles**, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

Selflessness: Members should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity: Members must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity: Members must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability: Members are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness: Members should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty: Members should be truthful.

Leadership: Members should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

2. All candidates who put themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the principles and values of public service. One of the issues which might arise in relation to this is that of conflict of interest.

What is a conflict of interest?

3. Public Appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared. There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.
4. No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives a lot of media attention. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?

5. The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual and the Board that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a Board Member can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that a member acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?

6. You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give selection panel members as much information as possible.

If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?

7. No - each case is considered individually. If you are short-listed for interview, the panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially on the Board and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings where an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. However, if, following the discussion with you, the panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the Board or the appointment, they can withdraw your application from the competition.

8. The report on the outcome of the interview process which is put to the Minister will include clear written reference to any perceived or actual conflicts of interest or integrity issues connected to any candidate put forward as suitable for appointment. It will include sufficient information to ensure that the Minister is fully aware of any of these matters and can make an informed decision.

What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by the Department after my appointment?

9. Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life and may terminate your appointment.

What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?

10. This situation may arise where the candidate is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?

11. This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work on the Board becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.
12. In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Chair of the Board and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Partner Department, to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.
13. It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue on the Board, if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body's routine business. In such cases, the member may be asked to stand down from the body.

Disqualifications associated with positions on Governing Bodies

There are statutory disqualifications associated with positions on GBs. You are not eligible for **appointment** as Chair of a GB:-

- Where, in regard to a college you intend applying for, you have previously served two full terms of office of four years each, whether or not consecutive, as Chair of the GB. This condition does not apply if you served as Chair prior to 2007.
- If you are a Chair or Member of the GB of another college
- If you are a full-time student at the College
- If you are a member of staff of the College or if you are a member of staff of another institution of further education established under the Further Education (NI) Order 1997
- If you are a Member of the NI Assembly
- If you have been removed from the membership of a GB of an institution of further education established under the 1997 Order
- If you have been removed from the GB or its equivalent in any organisation grant-aided for the purposes of providing education
- If you have, within five years of the date your appointment would take effect, been convicted in a court in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Irish Republic of any offence and have been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine
- If you are included in a list kept by the Department of Education under Regulation 8 of the Education (Prohibition from Teaching or Working with Children) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007
- If you are included (other than provisionally) in the list maintained as required by Article 6 of The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- If your estate has been sequestrated, you have been adjudged bankrupt, you have made an arrangement with your creditors, or you have granted a trust deed for your creditors or a composition contract
- If DfE reasonably believes that you are not fit to hold office

These disqualifications are applicable on appointment and will not impact on your eligibility to submit an application if your circumstances are due to change before the appointment starts. For example, if you are a Member/Chair of the GB of another college, a full-time student at the College you wish to apply for or a member of staff of any college at the time of submitting your application, you could be considered for appointment if you will no longer be in this position when the appointment is due to start.

The central concept is that you **cannot** serve as a GB Chair **at the same time** as any of the circumstances listed. If you wish to seek clarification on the impact of this from a personal perspective, please contact us.

Where any person is disqualified, the disqualification shall cease:-

- a. if that person's estate had been sequestrated, when the sequestration is recalled or reduced or they are discharged under or by virtue of The Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989;
- b. if adjudged bankrupt, on the discharge from bankruptcy or from the date of annulment if the bankruptcy order is annulled;
- c. if disqualified because that person had made an arrangement with creditors, or granted a trust deed for creditors or a composition contract, the disqualification shall cease when the arrangement or, as the case may be, the trust deed or composition contract is no longer in force; or
- d. if that person is no longer included:
 - i. on a list kept by the Department of Education under Regulation 8 of the Education (Prohibition from Teaching or Working with Children) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007; or
 - ii. in the list maintained as required by Article 6 of The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.

Detailed Explanation of Essential Criteria

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE - How you have demonstrated experience of implementing effective governance in the operation of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation, including safeguarding its values and reputation and being accountable for its actions and decisions.

DELIVERING STRATEGY AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS – How you have analysed complex information to make evidence based decisions to inform the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation in order to deliver improvements in a dynamic and challenging environment.

LEADERSHIP – How you have acted as a strategic leader of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation to ensure focus and direction, and deliver results successfully.

COLLABORATING AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING - How you have demonstrated the ability to create and maintain positive professional relationships both internally and with external stakeholders to achieve organisational goals. Demonstration of the ability to respectfully challenge the status quo, encourage collaboration and resolve conflict to achieve positive outcomes.

More detail is set out below.

1 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

in the operation of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation, including safeguarding its values and reputation and being accountable for its actions and decisions.

In this context, governance is about the direction and supervision of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation. It means making sure that the organisation is well run (or governed), complies with the governance framework associated with its legal status (FE colleges are Non-Departmental Public Bodies) and carries out the work it was set up to do. This involves planning for the future, guarding the organisation's values and reputation, looking after the resources and being accountable for the organisation's actions and decisions.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- ensure effective governance;
- embed an effective risk management approach;
- effectively monitor and analyse college performance;
- respond to underperformance;
- safeguard the college's values and reputation;

- plan for the future;
- behave with integrity, be open, objective and accountable; and
- positively challenge established thinking.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- understanding **your** role and collective responsibilities in the promotion of effective governance within an organisation;
- **your** ability to deliver results in line with organisational values and purpose, on an individual basis and through the organisation's people;
- **your** ability to identify, understand, evaluate and manage risks which may have an adverse impact on the performance of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation;
- **your** ability to ensure systems of internal control are in place to support the achievement of policies, aims and objectives.

2 DELIVERING STRATEGY AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS

How you have analysed complex information to make evidence based decisions to inform the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation in order to deliver improvements in a dynamic and challenging environment.

As Chair part of your role will be to provide strategic leadership to the college. This will include, taking full account of the requirement to implement key Executive and Departmental objectives which underpin the direction of the FE sector. This will require you to analyse issues using relevant information sources, assessing risks and generating options, in order to make effective and timely decisions.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- understand and influence and develop strategy;
- maintain a broad perspective;
- take account of Executive and Departmental priorities,
- have organisational and business acumen;
- lead in developing and ensuring the successful delivery of the college's strategy, business plan and objectives;
- analyse complex data to provide clarity;
- listen/gather feedback;
- make timely and quality decisions based on the evidence;
- solve problems; and
- challenge constructively.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- **your** involvement in the preparation, monitoring and review of the strategic plan of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation;
- **your** ability to contribute to the processes by which a sector strategic plan and an implementation/business plan are agreed and progress monitored towards the targets which they contain;

- **your** ability to address and respond to competing and changing priorities in developing and implementing the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation;
- **your** ability to demonstrate the skills required to analyse complex information, contribute to effective corporate governance, to understand the quality of own thinking and decisions and seek feedback where appropriate;
- **your** preparedness and ability to make evidence informed decisions quickly;
- **your** ability to analyse issues in the face of problems, decide who needs to be involved and generate options;
- **your** ability to articulate options, weigh up competing views, challenge constructively to reach good decisions.

3 LEADERSHIP

How you have acted as a strategic leader of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation to ensure focus and direction, and deliver results successfully.

As Chair, you will have responsibility for leading the governing body. Within this context, leadership should be understood as the process by which chairs establish and demonstrate the values and mission of the sector and college.

As an effective Chair you will be expected to:

- lead and motivate others;
- manage diversity and build effective cohesive working relationships;
- lead the setting of strategic vision and purpose for the college;
- promote and fully engage with collaboration across the FE sector;
- effectively resolve conflict;
- interface constructively with college senior management and senior departmental officials;
- create a culture of adaptability, flexibility and responsiveness; and
- build a strong network of collaborative relationships across the governing body and FE sector.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for are:

- **your** ability to provide clear strategic direction and guidance and develop individuals to work together in a cohesive and effective way;
- **your** ability to set a compelling vision and lead from the front to achieve outcomes responding effectively to changing requirements;
- **your** ability to ensure that business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation is effective and that the skills and experience of all individuals are harnessed, so that every individual contributes;
- **your** ability to effectively resolve conflicts or disagreements between individuals;
- **your** ability to demonstrate strong values and be adaptive, flexible and resilient leadership;
- **your** ability to build partnerships and work collaboratively across a broad range of settings to achieve outcomes;
- **your** ability to develop and maintain effective working relationships with a broad range of stakeholders.

4 COLLABORATING AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

How you have successfully demonstrated effective communication, strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to develop and maintain constructive working relationships and networks with key stakeholders/partners.

It is essential that the post holder is skilled in creating and maintaining positive and trusting professional relationships with a wide range of people, both internal to their College as well as the wide network of College stakeholders, in pursuit of the dual mandate of the FE sector- economic and social inclusion. This means that collaborative working will be the natural means of achieving the goals of the organisation, with the promotion of transparency and evidence-based decisions and having the confidence to challenge assumptions. This will mean acting as a leader on behalf of the entire FE College sector (six colleges), and playing a role in developing, articulating and delivering policy objectives. It is important that challenge, when required, is conducted respectfully and for the good of the sector, and that conflict is appropriately managed and resolved. The post holder will be able to develop effective working relationships with senior departmental officials, as well as demonstrating how their organisation builds collaborative alliances to achieve the Minister's stated priorities.

An effective Chair will be expected to:

- represent the interests of the college at meetings with the Minister, senior officials, employees/their representatives and the general public;
- build a strong network of collaborative partnerships across and beyond the FE sector to deliver on Ministerial priorities
- Drive a diverse and collaborative working culture, encouraging transparency, respectful challenge and open communication.
- have an open communication style, engage positively in debate and seek to balance views and resolve difficult and complex issues;
- gain/enhance the commitment of stakeholders/partners in support of the organisation's aims;
- work constructively and collaboratively within the FE sector to achieve wider sectoral objectives/priorities on a range of policy and operational issues;
- effectively support the college's management and development of its workforce; and
- engage constructively with internal and external stakeholders to develop positive relationships.

Examples of evidence the panel will be looking for from candidates are the ability to:

- actively create, develop and maintain constructive and collaborative working relationships and networks, with both internal and external stakeholders/partners;
- use persuasive and compelling arguments which influence others to understand and accept different approaches and perspectives;

- communicate with conviction and clarity, identify suitable communication methods and style depending on the audience and the situation;
- communicate effectively with a wide range of individuals, including senior leaders and key stakeholders/partners, such as workforce representatives;
- positively influence and negotiate with others, challenging constructively where necessary and, at the same time, maintain effective working relationships and networks.