

Government and Public Sector  
Assurance Services

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# The Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland

Summary Audit Report: year ended 31 March 2007

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**Ranking of areas of non compliance in terms of priority**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>One</b>	Non compliance arising from failure to document or evidence the basis of a decision on a candidate’s or applicant’s suitability OR where there has been a significant breach of the requirements of the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland (the Code).
<b>Two</b>	Non compliance arising where evidence does not fully document or evidence the basis of a decision on a candidate’s or applicant’s suitability.
<b>Three</b>	Non compliance arising from failure to fully record or evidence a step in the appointment process required by the Code or PAT guidance but which is not related to a decision as to a candidate’s or applicant’s suitability.

**Statement of Responsibility**

Our report has been prepared solely for the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments Scotland (OCPAS) in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in our engagement contract. We do not accept or assume any liability or duty of care for any other purpose or to any other party. This report should not be disclosed to any third party, quoted or referred to without our prior written consent. Our work is subject to the inherent limitations set out at Appendix 2.

# Introduction and summary of findings

## **Introduction**

- 1.01 This summary report presents the key findings arising from our review of six selected appointment rounds completed during the year ended 31 March 2007. The findings presented in this report focus on the areas where our audit work identified areas of non-compliance with the Code. Detailed individual reports have been prepared for each appointment round selected for review and the findings were provided in draft to the Public Appointments Team (PAT) and respective sponsor departments of the Scottish Executive for comment. In addition to highlighting areas of non-compliance with the Code, these detailed reports highlight areas where the rounds varied from the PAT's guidance document (entitled Making Public Appointments in the Scottish Executive) as well as commenting on areas of good practice.
- 1.02 Our audit work has been designed to assess compliance with the Code and with any supplementary guidance issued by OCPAS and / or the Scottish Executive Public Appointments Team as to compliance with that Code. It therefore addresses the processes implemented to ensure that the appointment round meets these requirements. Our observations and findings are designed to inform a programme of continuous improvement and do not challenge any decisions regarding the selection of appointable candidates.

## **Background**

- 1.03 OCPAS is responsible for regulating the processes used and procedures followed by Scottish Ministers in the making of public appointments, to ensure that these appointments are made fairly and openly, and are based on merit. In light of this requirement, the Commissioner has developed a Code to regulate the processes to be followed, which was published in April 2006. Independent OCPAS Assessors support the Commissioner and are assigned to appointment rounds to ensure compliance with the Code. Compliance with the Code should ensure equality of opportunity and treatment and ensure that all appointments made are merit-based, with evidence generated and retained to support each part of the decision making process.
- 1.04 The management of the public appointments process is the responsibility of the relevant Scottish Executive department's sponsor team. The team is responsible for initiating the process and managing it through to its conclusion. It is also responsible for generating appropriate documentation at each stage of the appointment round which records decisions taken regarding the selection, or otherwise, of individuals to go through to the next stage of the process.
- 1.05 Within the Scottish Executive, there is a centralised team, entitled the Public Appointments Team (PAT), which is responsible for the Scottish Executive's overall policy in relation to public appointments. PAT acts as the main point of contact within the Scottish Executive for OCPAS. PAT also provides advice and support to sponsor teams with any queries or problems being encountered throughout each appointment process. The PAT guidance states that key documents such as the role description, person specification and publicity for the role must be provided by the sponsor team to PAT for review.

- 1.06 To assist the sponsor teams in conducting the appointments process, the PAT has produced a detailed guidance document (entitled Making Public Appointments in the Scottish Executive) that sets out the steps to be followed at each stage of the appointment round, and includes standard documents for use by sponsor teams. The PAT guidance used for the 2006/07 appointment rounds was not fully compliant with the new Code although there is no evidence that this affected the appointment rounds subject to audit. Following a review of the guidance by the Commissioner, in relation to the requirements of the Code, actions were agreed with Public Appointments Team to amend certain information and advice contained in the guidance. The guidance has now been updated and was re-issued in May 2007.
- 1.07 OCPAS Assessors play a key role through providing assurance that the processes used to make appointments to the boards of public bodies conform to the principles and practices contained in the Code. At the end of each appointment round, the OCPAS Assessor must complete a validation statement confirming that each element of the round that they participated in complied with the Code.
- 1.08 In terms of adherence to the Code we would also highlight the importance of the role of the senior official within the sponsor division who is responsible for ensuring:
- The process fully complies with the Code;
  - The criteria submitted to the Minister for approval meets the needs of the body and its board and are testable; and
  - The Minister is provided with all the information that he/she needs in order to make a decision on appointment that is based solely on the criteria.

At the end of the process, it is the senior official who must provide a formal statement of assurance to the Minister that the process is both Code compliant and meets the relevant requirements of the PAT guidance.

### **Approach**

- 1.09 The overall objective of our review was to consider whether the Code had been complied with during a sample of appointment rounds completed during the year ended 31 March 2007. In all of these reviews we considered each of the stages of the appointment process (as described in more detail at appendix two):
- *Stage 1: Planning*
  - *Stage 2: Encouraging Applications*
  - *Stage 3: Processing Applications*
  - *Stage 4: Interview*
  - *Stage 5: Selection*
  - *Stage 6: Post Appointment*

1.10 Our approach consisted of review of paper files and files stored within the electronic system (eRDM); as well as interviews with key staff involved in the process.

### Key Findings

1.11 Each of the findings identified during the audit process was allocated a priority rating. The findings that were categorised as Priority One - *Non compliance arising from failure to document or evidence the basis of a decision on a candidate's or applicant's suitability OR where there has been a significant breach of the requirements of the Code* – are presented below:

- In one instance additional information was sought and obtained after the interview regarding a candidate that led the selection panel to conclude that the candidate was not suitable for appointment. On review of the audit file, no details were given as to the information in question, or the process followed to verify its accuracy. There was also no mention of whether or not the candidate was notified that additional information had been obtained and used in the appointment process. Whilst it may be appropriate for this information to have been used, there is a specific process to be followed as detailed in **Section 21** of the Code (**Code – Paragraphs 21.1 to 21.8**).
- In five of the six appointment rounds reviewed, the reasons for the Minister's decision to appoint the successful candidate(s) were not formally recorded and retained as part of the audit trail supporting the appointment. In this respect, we would highlight the swift action taken by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth to address this failure. A guidance note to all Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers was issued by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on 18 July 2007 introducing them to their role and responsibilities in relation to the public appointments process. Among other things, this note made it clear that they are expected to record the reason for their decisions in relation to appointments. (**Code paragraph 24.5**).
- In one round, the submission provided to the Minister on the conclusion of the appointment round did not include a candidate summary containing a description of all candidates interviewed or the Statement of Validation signed by the OA. (**Code paragraphs 24.1 and 25.2**)
- In another round, whilst there was no explicit ranking of the candidates deemed suitable for appointment in the submission to the Minister, the wording used in the candidate summary (that was provided as an annex to the submission) could be construed as an implicit ranking of the candidates. It is important that the candidate summary is completed in a way which provides full details of how candidates meet the publicised criteria for the role. The candidate summary must not present candidates in any form of ranked order. (**Code paragraph 24.4**).

### Acknowledgements

1.12 We would like to thank all staff involved in this review for their co-operation and assistance.

# Detailed Findings and Observations

## Stage 1: Planning

2.01 Our findings confirmed that the planning of each appointment round was generally satisfactory, with evidence of good practice noted including:

- √ *Close liaison in one case between the public body and the sponsor team in drafting the person specification and role description and developing a skills matrix to ensure that the round focused on securing the candidates that most closely met the body's requirements.*
- √ *For the set up of a new body, an HR sub-group was established to develop an appropriate person specification and role description for the role.*
- √ *Development of detailed timetables for two appointment rounds which took into consideration availability of personnel at key times (including parliamentary recess), the estimated amount of sponsor team input and the potential risks that could delay or have an impact on the process.*

## Stage 2: Encouraging Applications

2.02 In general, the strategies adopted for appointment rounds were appropriately and proportionately designed to ensure that persons from as wide and diverse an audience as appropriate were encouraged to apply. This included good use of various forms of media and publications. Whilst our review did not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of particular forms of media, we were satisfied that the principles of the Code were being complied with in terms of encouraging individuals to apply; namely that:

- √ *Sources of potential applicants, including individuals or organisations to be advised of the appointment opportunity are considered when determining methods of publicity.*
- √ *Publicity is designed to ensure as wide and diverse an audience as appropriate is made aware of the appointment opportunity. The location and timing of publicity generally takes into account the nature of the post, the people to be attracted and the resources available for publicity.*

### Stage 3: Processing Applications

- 2.03 Of the appointment rounds reviewed only one required to undertake an initial sift due to the number of applications received.
- 2.04 In one round, the directorate allowed a late application to be considered by the panel, after the advertised closing date for the appointment opportunity had passed, without securing the required exception to the Code from the Commissioner.

#### Action Point

The Code requires that:

- No individual from any source will be considered after the advertised closing date for the appointment opportunity in question and sponsor departments will obtain written agreement from the Commissioner in advance of any act or omission which will deviate in any way from the written procedures contained in the Code (**Code paragraphs 17.1 and 32.2**) - **Priority Three**

- 2.05 With regard to the shortlisting process, our review did however identify the need for improvement in the quality and extent of the evidence retained to support decisions regarding individual applicants. The Code requires that a shortlist evaluation form is completed by the selection panel members for each applicant when compiling a shortlist. Furthermore the Code requires that the collective decision made by the selection panel about which applicants to interview and which not to interview must be fully documented. The findings arising from our review highlighted that:
- As the individual panel member's shortlist evaluation forms had not been retained on file for two of the selected appointment rounds there was no evidence that they were completed; and
  - For two appointment rounds, the evidence supporting the collective decision at the shortlisting meeting did not adequately record the basis for the decision made by the panel.

#### Action Point

The Code requires that:

- a shortlist evaluation form is completed by the selection panel members for each candidate when compiling a shortlist (**Code paragraph 19.5**) - **Priority Two** and
- the collective decision made by the selection panel about which applicants to interview and which not to interview must be fully documented (**Code paragraph 19.8**) - **Priority Two**

- 2.06 We also noted one instance where an additional criterion was introduced during the shortlisting meeting that was not specifically incorporated into the person specification disclosed within the application pack. The person specification did not state that the level of application of skills and knowledge demonstrated by applicants would be taken into account in the assessment of applications although the selection panel, including the OA assigned to the round, did so. The panel may only consider the suitability of applicants against the publicised criteria for a role. **(Code paragraphs 6.1c and 19.6) – Priority Two**

#### **Action Point**

The Code requires that:

- Selection panel members must scrutinise application forms and select for interview people who have demonstrated that their skills and knowledge most closely *match the criteria outlined in the person specification. In this respect* new criteria should not be introduced during the appointment round **(Code paragraphs 19.4 and 19.6)** - The importance of this Code requirement should also be re-iterated to all OCPAS Assessors as part of any future briefing **Priority Two**

## Stage 4: Interview

2.07 Our work during this stage focused on ensuring that there was adequate and appropriate documentation retained to support the decisions with regard to the suitability of candidates interviewed in each of the selected appointment rounds. Whilst we were generally satisfied that the evidence on file supported decisions made and provided an adequate basis for the provision of feedback to all candidates, our review identified the following instances where the requirements of the Code were not fully met:

- In one instance additional information was sought and obtained after the interview regarding a candidate that led the selection panel to conclude that the candidate was not suitable for appointment. On review of the audit file, no details were given as to the information in question, or the process followed to verify its accuracy. There was also no mention of whether or not the candidate was notified that additional information had been obtained and used in the appointment process. Whilst it may be appropriate for this information to have been used, there is a specific process to be followed as detailed in **Section 21** of the Code.
- In two instances, the interview evaluation forms recording the assessment of each of the selection panel members were not held on file.
- In one instance, the collective decision of the panel on the outcome of the interviews was not sufficiently detailed.

### Action Point

The Code requires that:

- If a member of the selection panel knows information about one or more of the candidates which is not contained in their application, this additional knowledge will not normally be shared with colleagues on the selection panel. Assessment should be made on the basis of information provided by candidates in their application forms and at interview. However, specific information may come to the attention of a member or members of the selection panel which calls into question a candidate's suitability for appointment or which may affect the credibility of the appointment process or the credibility of the public body concerned. This information may be of a personal nature or it may relate to a candidate's performance or behaviour in a public or private capacity. Where such information is used in the decision making process the requirements of Section 21 of the Code should be complied with (**Code paragraphs 21.1 to 21.8**) - **Priority One**.
- Each selection panel member should record on the interview evaluation form their evidence-based assessment of each candidate's performance at interview (**Code paragraph 22.10**) - **Priority Two**.
- The collective decision of the panel on the outcome of interviews must be agreed and recorded. (**Code paragraph 22.11**) - **Priority Two**.

## Stage 5: Selection

2.08 In respect of the selection process there were two specific areas where improvement is required in order to demonstrate compliance with the Code:

- In five of the six appointment rounds reviewed, the reasons for the Minister's decision to appoint the successful candidate(s) were not formally recorded and retained as part of the audit trail supporting the appointment. In this respect, we would highlight the swift action taken by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth to address this failure. A guidance note to all Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers was issued by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on 18 July 2007 introducing them to their role and responsibilities in relation to the public appointments process. Among other things, this note made it clear that they are expected to record the reason for their decisions in relation to appointments.
- In one round, a submission to the Minister was made with details of the one candidate noted as suitable to appoint. No information was provided on the other candidates not deemed suitable nor did the submission contain the signed Statement of Validation from the OA to confirm that the process had followed the Code

### Action Point

The Code requires that:

- The Minister's decision on which candidate(s) is (are) to be appointed, and the reasons for this decision, must be recorded and retained as part of the audit trail for the appointment round **(Code paragraph 24.5) - Priority One.**
- The validation statement signed by the OCPAS Assessor must be passed to the Minister with the candidate summary. The candidate summary will contain a description of all candidates interviewed. **(Code paragraphs 24.1 and 25.2) - Priority One**

2.09 While there was no explicit ranking of the candidates deemed suitable for appointment in the submission to the Minister, in one round, the wording used in the candidate summary (that was provided as an annex to the submission) could be construed as an implicit ranking of the candidates. It is important that the candidate summary is completed in a way which provides full details of how candidates meet the publicised criteria for the role. The candidate summary must not present candidates in any form of ranked order.

### Action Point

The Code requires that:

- Candidates' information should not be presented in the candidate summary in a ranked order. The Minister should consider the merit of each suitable candidate in relation to the criteria identified during the planning stage of the appointment **(Code paragraph 24.4)**. The importance of reviewing the use of wording within the candidate summaries should also be re-iterated to all OCPAS Assessors as part of any future briefing - **Priority One.**

## Stage 6: Post Appointment

2.10 With regard to the processes to be followed post appointment, our review identified the following areas where adherence to the Scottish Executive guidance supporting the implementation of the Code could be improved. None of these instances however constituted a breach of the Code and commitment has been given by the Public Appointments Team to further strengthen the communication links with candidates and the audit trail supporting each appointment round:

- In four instances, there was no evidence of confirmation being received from the appointed candidate(s) as to the factual accuracy of the press release announcing their appointment.
- In two instances where feedback was provided, no record was retained to confirm that the feedback provided was based on the evaluation form(s) completed on the individual at each stage of the appointment round. There was also one instance where unsuccessful candidates were not informed of the decision prior to the press release announcing the appointment.
- There were two appointment rounds where candidates were not informed of delays in concluding the process after interview.

# Appendix 1 – Development Areas

Recommendation	Reference	Response	Deadline
<b>Stage 3: Accepting late applications</b>			
<p>No individual from any source will be considered after the advertised closing date for the appointment opportunity in question and sponsor departments will obtain written agreement from the Commissioner in advance of any act or omission which will deviate in any way from the written procedures contained in the Code.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Paragraphs 17.1 and 32.2</p> <p><b>Priority Rating</b> Three</p>	<p>The Scottish Government has amended its guidance to stipulate that applications by fax or e-mail in addition to applications received by post must be received by 5 pm on the closing date in order to be accepted.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> Already implemented.</p>
<b>Stage 3: Completion of shortlist evaluation form</b>			
<p>A shortlist evaluation form should be completed by the selection panel members for each candidate when compiling a shortlist.</p> <p>It is recommended that the central public appointments team provide guidance for sponsor team members on the Code's evidence requirements. OCPAS is happy to assist with this process if required.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Paragraph 19.5</p> <p><b>Priority Rating</b> Two</p>	<p>Scottish Government guidance already provides an example of a shortlist evaluation form for use by selection panels. The Scottish Government will advise selection panel chairs in advance of the shortlist meeting on the completion of this form, by all members of the panel, to ensure a complete audit trail of the selection process is kept that complies with OCPAS Code requirements.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> Already implemented</p>

Recommendation	Reference	Response	Deadline
<b>Stage 3: Adequate documentation of collective decisions at short listing stage</b>			
<p>The collective decision made by the selection panel about which applicants to interview and which not to interview must be <b>fully</b> documented.</p> <p>It is recommended that the central public appointments team provide guidance for sponsor team members on the Code's evidence requirements. OCPAS is happy to assist with this process if required.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Paragraph 19.8</p> <p><b>Priority Rating</b> Two</p>	<p>Selection panel chairs will be reminded to complete a composite shortlist evaluation form for each candidate when considering them for interview.</p> <p>Officials will offer advice to selection panel members on their responsibilities via the panel chairs prior the selection panels commencing their work. This will include advice on the recording of evidence.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> Already implemented</p>

Recommendation	Reference	Response	Deadline
<b>Stage 3: Completion of shortlist evaluation form</b>			
<p>Selection panel members must scrutinise application forms and select for interview people who have demonstrated that their skills and knowledge most closely <i>match the criteria outlined in the person specification</i>. Additional training should be provided to the selection panel members to ensure that this is done.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Paragraph 19.4 <b>Priority Rating</b> Two</p>	<p>The Scottish Government amended its guidance in May to offer further support to selection panel members.  Training for selection panel members will have to be considered in the context of any future centralisation of public appointments procedures.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government  <b>Deadline</b> Open</p>
<b>Stage 4: Use of additional information</b>			
<p>If a member of the selection panel knows information about one or more of the candidates which is not contained in their application, this additional knowledge will not normally be shared with colleagues on the selection panel. Assessment should be made on the basis of information provided by candidates in their application forms and at interview. Where such information is used in the decision making process the requirements of Section 21 of the Code should be complied with. Selection panel chairs must be briefed on and take responsibility for the Code to be followed in these circumstances.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Paragraphs 21.1 to 21.8 <b>Priority Rating</b> One</p>	<p>As stated above Scottish Government officials will offer advice to panel members via panel chairs. OCPAS Assessors should also play a part in providing guidance to panel members.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government/ OCPAS Assessors  <b>Deadline</b> Scottish Government has already implemented. All OCPAS Assessors have been retrained recently on this area of Code compliance.</p>

Recommendation	Reference	Response	Deadline
<b>Stage 4: Record of evaluation of candidates interviewed</b>			
<p>Each selection panel member should record on the interview evaluation form their evidence-based assessment of each candidate's performance at interview.</p> <p>It is recommended that the central public appointments team provide guidance for sponsor team members on the Code's evidence requirements. OCPAS is happy to assist with this process if required.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Paragraph 22.10</p> <p><b>Priority Rating</b> Two</p>	<p>Scottish Government guidance advises members of selection panels to each complete interview evaluation forms immediately after an interview has concluded and before any general discussion of the candidate by the panel begins. The Scottish Government will offer more direct support to selection panels prior to them commencing their work.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> Already implemented</p>
<b>Stage 5: Record of Ministerial decision</b>			
<p>The Minister's decision on which candidate(s) is (are) to be appointed, and the reasons for this decision, must be recorded and retained as part of the audit trail for the appointment round.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Section 24.5</p> <p><b>Priority Rating</b> One</p>	<p>The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth issued guidance to other Ministers on their responsibilities on public appointments in July. This included the need to record the reasons for their decisions on appointments.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> Already implemented</p>

Recommendation	Reference	Response	Deadline
<b>Stage 5: Inclusion of OA validation statement with Ministerial submission</b>			
<p>The validation statement signed by the OCPAS Assessor must be passed to the Minister with the candidate summary.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Section 25</p> <p><b>Priority Rating</b> Two</p>	<p>Scottish Government guidance stipulates that the validation statement should form one of the annexes to the final submission to Ministers. Scottish Government officials will continue to advise sponsor teams to include the validation statement along with the candidate summary form in the final submission.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> Already implemented</p>
<b>Stage 6: Ranking of appointable candidates</b>			
<p>Candidates' information should not be presented in the candidate summary in a ranked order. The Minister should consider the merit of each suitable candidate in relation to the criteria identified during the planning stage of the appointment. As panel chairs are ultimately responsible for this, additional briefing and / or training for panel chairs should be undertaken on this issue.</p> <p>The importance of reviewing the use of wording within the candidate summaries should also be re-iterated to all OCPAS assessors as part of any future briefing.</p>	<p><b>Code Reference</b> Section 24.4</p> <p><b>Priority Rating</b> One</p>	<p>Officials in the Scottish Government's Public Appointments Team look out for and request correction of instances of ranking if there is evidence of it in submissions to Ministers. Scottish Government Guidance already stipulates that candidate information should not be presented in ranked order or extend to descriptive ranking.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b> Scottish Government</p> <p><b>Deadline</b> Already implemented</p>

# Appendix 2: Background information on each stage

## **Stage 1: Planning**

It is important that the planning starts in good time, with appointments taking on average 6 months to complete. An appointment timetable must be produced, which will assist in the planning of the appointment round, setting deadlines for various stages of the process.

A key part of the planning process is to identify the skills, knowledge and personal qualities that are required to complement existing members of the board in question. The skills, knowledge and personal qualities identified will be used in both advertising the position, and also to assess the quality of applicants at both the application stage, and candidates at the interview stage. It is therefore important that an appropriate amount of effort is put in to identifying these requirements. The relevant Scottish Minister is ultimately responsible for public appointments, and it is therefore important that they are involved in this stage. The Minister is required to agree the specific requirements of the board and organisation in question, the role description, the person specification and the appointment timetable.

An OCPAS Assessor (OA) is assigned to each appointment round to ensure that it complies with the Code throughout the process. Early involvement of the OA is advised to allow time to take into account any comments raised.

## **Stage 2: Encouraging Applications**

The information contained within advertisements should enable readers to make an informed decision as to their suitability for the appointment. Consideration also has to be given to the approach to publicity to encourage the largest number of suitable candidates from a wide and diverse audience to apply. As with the development of the person specification, it should be ensured that the advertisement is not discriminatory in any way, either through language or methods of publicity used.

The Minister may be asked to provide the name of any potential applicants or avenues to identify applicants. All suggestions of potential applicants are welcomed as a means of improving diversity and obtaining a satisfactory number of applicants. However any such individuals can not be favoured, and will be treated in the same way as all other applicants.

### **Stage 3: Processing Application**

This stage involves a review of the applications received to select the candidates found to demonstrate the skills and knowledge stated in the person specification. A requirement of the Code, which differs in this respect from the Code that preceded it, states that the consideration of application forms must be anonymous, with all personal information separated from the main body of the application form. The process of selecting candidates suitable for interview can be a two stage process, starting with an initial sift undertaken by the sponsor department if a significant number of applications are received. The remaining applicants, or all applicants if an initial sift is not conducted, will then be considered by the selection panel to produce the shortlist of candidates to interview.

There must be documentation as to why decisions were taken at this time, so that feedback could be provided if requested, or so there is appropriate evidence should a complaint be received. Applicants should be kept informed and receive timely notification of the outcome of their application.

### **Stage 4: Interview**

The interview stage of the process gives the selection panel the opportunity to further evaluate the suitability of candidates against the person specification. It is important that questioning is consistent across the candidates to ensure that the selection panel are able to provide assessment of each candidate on an equitable basis. The questioning should therefore be agreed in advance of the interviews taking place. As with the processing applications stage, it is essential that there is appropriate documentation retained as evidence to support any decision as to the suitability of the candidate. Feedback must be offered to any unsuccessful candidates, based on the evidence retained from the interview.

### **Stage 5: Selection**

The ultimate decision to appoint is the responsibility of the Minister. The Minister should make this decision based on a candidate summary received from the selection panel, which should provide an objective analysis of each candidate's suitability for the appointment based on information obtained throughout the process. So as not to influence the Minister, the information on candidates in the summary must not be provided in any form of ranked order, allowing the Minister to make an objective decision as to who to appoint. The decision made by the Minister of who to appoint must be recorded along with the reasons for the decision.

### **Stage 6: Post Appointment**

The evidence retained throughout the process should be used but to provide any feedback requested by any unsuccessful applicants or candidates. Any individuals that were found suitable to appoint but who were not appointed should receive additional feedback provided by the Minister as to their decision.

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