

# Recruitment and Selection

## 1. Introduction

Our employees need to be aware of the Recruitment & Selection Policy. The aim of this procedure is to:

- provide clarity on the recruitment options that are available;
- ensure that an open and fair procedure is consistently used across the Forestry Commission; and
- ensure that selection will be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

## 2. Identifying a Vacancy

A vacancy may be identified in the following ways:

- an employee is leaving a role and it has been established that there is a continued need for that role;
- a new project or area of work is identified and additional resources and/or skills are required; or
- management identifies that a lack of resource in a particular skill is impacting delivery of business objectives.

It is the responsibility of the recruiting manager to comply with any recruitment authorisation procedures before progressing with any recruitment. Advice can be obtained from local HR teams.

## 3. Preparing a Person Specification

The person specification is drawn from the Forestry Commission Competency Framework, the common set of criteria defining the skills and behaviours needed to be effective in the Commission. The framework will be the basis for a person specification identifying the skills, abilities and knowledge that applicants will require to carry out the key work areas of the post.

The person specification is the key to effective recruitment because it:

- ensures managers think thoroughly about the job to ensure that they are getting the best person and reduce subjectivity in the recruitment process;

- helps prospective applicants self select and produce focused applications;
- makes it easier for managers to compare applicants who have followed the direction of a structured person specification;
- provides a structure for the interview by establishing the main question categories; and
- helps identify training needs and provides direction for the successful candidate's Forward Job Plan.

### 3.1 Creating a New Post

If a recruiting manager is proposing to create a post that is new to the Forestry Commission, the person specification and proposed Forward Job Plan will be used to evaluate the appropriate grading of the post.

Before starting any recruitment exercise local HR teams will provide advice on the Forestry Commission Trade Union engagement actions that will be necessary and recruiting managers should also contact the Staff Inspection Team within HR to enable evaluation of the role. Grading guidance is available to recruiting managers on e-Connect.

## 4. Types of Recruitment

There are different methods of recruitment that can be selected depending on the specific requirements of a role. HR will support a recruiting manager to decide on the appropriate method for their vacancy.

### 4.1 Internal Trawl

This method is used to advertise a role internally within the Forestry Commission. All employees who were recruited to the Commission through fair and open competition are eligible to apply. HR Services can provide advice to anyone unsure about their eligibility.

### 4.2 Interdepartmental Trawl

This method is used to advertise a role within the Forestry Commission and other Government Departments. All employees who were recruited to the Commission and other Government Departments through fair and open competition are eligible to apply. HR Services can provide advice to anyone unsure about their eligibility.

### 4.3 Civil Service Vacancies

The Forestry Commission, along with all other government departments, is committed to supporting the redeployment of surplus staff across the Civil Service. CSVacs is a website giving exclusive access and priority to surplus staff.

If a Forestry Commission vacancy cannot be filled internally, the job must be advertised on CSVacs for a minimum of 10 working days before any external recruitment can begin.

### 4.4 External Recruitment

This method is used to advertise a role in external media, including using online recruitment sites, recruitment agencies, press, the Forestry Commission website and Job Centres. Consideration will be given to where and how to promote vacancies externally in order to encourage applications from a diverse range of backgrounds. Anyone who feels they have the skills and experience as defined in the person specification, and is permitted to work in the UK and the Civil Service, is eligible to apply.

## 5. Applications

The Forestry Commission uses standard application forms. The form captures personal details, qualifications and also requires applicants to address each of the competencies identified in the person specification, providing evidence of their knowledge, experience, skills and abilities under each competency heading.

### 5.1 Internal Applications

Candidates looking for a level transfer or promotion must have achieved a Good Performer or Top Performer rating at their last performance assessment.

Internal applicants must also ask their Reporting Officer to comment on their suitability for the post. If the Reporting Officer is unavailable or is applying for the same post then the Confirming Officer can provide comments on suitability.

## 6. Selection

An interview board will make selection decisions. An interview board will consist of a minimum of two people and include, where possible, an independent manager from a separate unit.

There are no limitations on the grades of interview board participants however, for internal trawls, board members would normally be of a higher grade than the role being filled.

The interview board members are responsible for ensuring they have the skills necessary so that selection is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. To support this, the Learning & Development team within HR provides a Selection and Interviewing Skills training course.

In order for selection to be fair and open, the impartiality of the interview board must be maintained. Board members will not discuss any aspect of the recruitment with applicants and any attempt to influence an interview board will result in disqualification and possible disciplinary action.

## 6.1 Short Listing Applications

After the closing date, the interview board will short list (sift) all applications. The board will assess each applicant against the essential and desirable criteria of the person specification. A short list of candidates who best match the criteria will progress to the next stage.

## 6.2 Guaranteed Interview Scheme

The Forestry Commission is positive about the employment and career development of individuals with a disability. Therefore any applicant who declares a disability (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010) and meets the essential competencies set out in the person specification must be given an interview.

## 6.3 Making Decisions after Short Listing

If an internal trawl results in only one suitable applicant, and the interview board can confidently justify and document that the individual is suitable for the post, it is possible for a 'paper board' to be carried out, i.e. appointing the candidate without interview.

Internal trawls for posts at Pay Band 6 level will typically use a 'paper board' consisting of the Reporting and Confirming Officer for the post, who will review the applications received to select the most suitable candidate.

HR will review the documented justification of a 'paper board' in order to ensure that the principles of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition have been satisfied.

## 6.4 Interview Board

The final stage of selection will normally involve a competency-based interview where candidates are assessed against the person specification and asked questions about their experience. This gives the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate the behaviours or skills required for the role and allow board members to assess suitability for the post.

If a candidate is unable to attend for interview (e.g. because of sickness or because they are on secondment) it is possible for them to be considered in absentia.

Other assessment techniques may also be used, examples include:

- Practical assessments
- Presentations
- Knowledge, aptitude or attitude tests (Psychometric tests)
- Group discussions
- Assessment centres (combining a range of techniques)

HR will work with the recruiting manager to ensure that the assessment technique used is suitable for the role being filled and will not disadvantage any particular group.

Candidates will be given sufficient time and information to enable them to prepare for the Interview Board.

## 6.5 Reasonable Adjustments

The Forestry Commission is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all candidates and requests for reasonable adjustments in relation to all strands of diversity will be considered. Requests for a reasonable adjustment at the selection stage should be made to HR Services.

## 6.6 External Candidate Documentation

In order to establish identity and nationality for the purposes of preventing illegal working and establishing eligibility to work in the Civil Service, external candidates will be provided with a list of suitable documents that they will be required to produce at their interview.

If appropriate, candidate should also produce academic certificates and/or marriage certificates.

## 6.7 Expenses

Candidates will be advised when invited to interview if they can request a refund of travel expenses. It is at the Forestry Commission's discretion to pay expenses incurred in travel to this country from abroad.

## 7. Recording and Notifying Board Decisions

The Interview Board will complete paperwork that objectively justifies their selection decisions.

Once the board has made its decision, all interviewed candidates will be notified of the results.

### 7.1 Procedural Appeal

If a candidate feels that the recruitment & selection policy or procedure has not been followed correctly they can appeal in writing to the Head of HR Operations. The right of appeal will assess compliance with the procedure and will not review the recruitment decision.

Following an internal procedural appeal, if the candidate remains dissatisfied, they can appeal to the Civil Service Commission. Further details on appealing to the Civil Service Commission will be provided in the letter notifying the candidate of the outcome of their internal appeal.

### 7.2 Feedback on Recruitment Decision

Candidates may request feedback from the Interview Board after the results have been announced. Requests for feedback should be made via HR Services.

## 8. Pre-appointment Enquiries

All external recruitment offers are conditional on the satisfactory completion of our standard pre-appointment enquiries. The checks necessary will depend upon the post being filled and could include:

- employment references;
- academic references;
- nationality and right to work in the UK;
- health checks; and
- criminal record checks.

Successful external candidates will be provided with information on the checks necessary for their role at the time of offer.

## 9. Alternative Options to Fill a Vacancy

There will be circumstances when it will not be necessary to go through the standard recruitment and selection processes, as follows:

- placing staff from any Forestry Commission location to avoid redundancies;
- selection of an individual from the transfer register to fill a role at their current Pay Band;
- placing staff returning from maternity leave, career breaks or other periods of special unpaid leave;
- disciplinary transfers; or
- level transfers to address a specific business or management need e.g. management postings.

If a manager wants to appoint a candidate who meets the criteria covered by one of the alternative options, they must discuss this with the HR Services team before taking any action.

## 10. Exceptions

The Forestry Commission recognises certain exceptions from the principle of appointment on merit through fair and open competition.

These exceptions are:

- Short-term temporary appointments
- Research posts in Forest Research, or other roles with highly specialised skills and experience, of up to two years.
- Secondments and detached duty of up to two years
- Re-appointment of former Civil Servants
- Transfer of an organisation into the Forestry Commission
- Transfers of individuals into the Forestry Commission
- Expressions of interest for temporary development opportunities
- Upgraded posts as a result of job evaluation
- Using agency staff for short term work
- Exceptional circumstances, required for public interests. In these circumstances the Director General may work outside the normal procedure.

Apart from the above exceptions, no employee will be moved substantively into a higher pay grade except through selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. Alternative arrangements apply to researchers in Forest Research (see Appendix 1)

HR will provide advice and guidance to any manager making an appointment covered by these exceptions.

## 11. Monitoring and Review

HR Services will audit a sample of recruitment exercises to ensure that the principles of the recruitment & selection policy are being followed and undertake regular reviews of the procedure to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the business.

HR will also carry out equal opportunities monitoring to assess the Forestry Commission's delivery of its commitment to recruit people from a diverse range of backgrounds to reflect wider GB society.

## 12. Data Protection

All documentation will be kept and stored in line with Data Protection Act guidelines. Applications will normally be retained for a period of twelve months and the successful applicant's form placed on their personal file.

## Appendix 1

# Forest Research Promotion Procedure

## 1. The Purpose

These research promotion procedures are open to all Forest Research (FR) staff who are progressing original and creative research on a personal basis in line with FR's objectives as set out in its Framework Document and Corporate Plan. These are to provide research, development, survey and related services to the forest industry and to provide authoritative advice in support of the development and implementation of UK forestry policies.

## 2. Eligibility

Eligible staff will normally be in FR's Science Centres and will be PB5 to PB3. PB6s who consider they satisfy the criteria of the research promotion procedures can apply by exception. Those staff eligible for the research promotion procedures, including any PB6s considered to meet the criteria, will not have access to JEGS except if it is requested by management as part of the grade maintenance procedures or by the Research Promotion Board or Confirming Authority.

## 3. Annual Call

Applications for promotion will be made in response to an annual call and will be considered by a Board. The Confirming Authority for the Board is the Chief Executive, Forest Research.

## 4. Applications

Following the annual call for applications, staff should discuss their suitability for consideration with their line manager and Head of Centre and, having taken into account the views expressed, should make a written case for promotion to the next Pay Band.

The case should not exceed two sides of A4 (not including any appendices such as a publications record, PMS forms etc.). Applicants should also submit a short CV which sets out their full professional history. Applications should include anything that is considered salient to the discussions of the Board which is not immediately apparent and which does not appear in the documents before the Board.

## 4.1 Significant Achievements

Significant achievements to be highlighted could include:

### 4.1.1

- evidence of original and creative research
- contracts successfully completed
- contracts, grants and other new business won
- publications record (both peer reviewed and others – see the FR supplement to the FC Grading Guidance)
- evidence of managerial competency or formal training in personnel, project and financial management
- technology transfer, including presentations given, the organisation of workshops, user groups, etc., and the filing of patents and development of intellectual property
- improvements initiated which have contributed to the efficiency/effectiveness of the Agency and/or the forest industry
- past income generated

(The above list is not intended to be exhaustive. A supplement to the FC Grading Guidance serving to guide applicants, Heads of Centres and Promotion Boards is available and will be sent out with notice of the promotion board. This should be read in conjunction with the FC Grading Guidance which can be found on the HR website).

### 4.1.2

- changes in the nature of the research e.g. expansion, new direction, increased responsibility, since the applicant was appointed to the present Pay Band.

## 4.2 Head of Centre Comments

The application will be passed to the Head of Centre (HoC) who will provide a short commentary on the accuracy of the information in the application and the applicant's general competency to operate over a range of posts at the higher level. Where the HoC does not see the day-to-day work of the applicant, s/he is required to consult with the applicant's Reporting Officer about the applicant's suitability for promotion before completing the commentary. The Head of Centre will indicate whether the candidate, in his/her opinion, is 'Fitted', 'Likely to become fitted in the next two years', or 'Not fitted for promotion'.

## 5. Promotion Board

The Boards will usually comprise three or four members, FC/FR's Chief Scientist, (as senior scientist), an HR Member, a Head of Centre and an External Professional (to ensure consistency with other Institutes). One member (usually the HR member) will be external to Forest Research and will represent the Forestry Commission. Each member will be at least one Pay Band, and the Chair at least two Pay Bands, above that to which promotions are being made. The Departmental Trade Union Side will be informed in advance of the names of the Chair and Board members. Depending on the number and grading of applicants, there may be either one Board or two.

### 5.1 Tests for Promotion

There will be two tests for promotion:

1. That the key tasks of the post are consistent with the responsibilities of posts in the higher pay band, based on the Forestry Commission's internal Grading Guidance, the Forest Research supplement to this and the 'additional skills for professional scientists' as defined by the OST.
2. That the individual displays the general competencies and characteristics required to operate over a range of posts at the higher pay band, based on the criteria and standards used for the Forestry Commission's general recruitment procedures and set out in the new 'Professional Skills for Government' initiative (2005).

### 5.2 Short Listing Applicants

The board will consider the applications and, after examining the following, will sift and invite those candidates it thinks fitted for interview:

- the individual's application, CV, publication list and FJP;
- the commentary and promotion rating of the Head of Centre; and
- the criteria set out above and the FC Grading Guidance.

Note: An individual will not be denied promotion on grounds of a lack of continuing need unless there is clear and tangible evidence of the work coming to an end and no comparable research arising e.g. a major contract coming to an end in a few months with no prospect of the contract being renewed.

### 5.3 Promotion Interview

Where appropriate, those candidates called for interview will be invited to make an eight minute presentation (for which due notice will be given) describing their current professional activities. This will be followed with questions from Board members.

Following the interviews, the Board will make recommendations for promotion where it considers that evidence exists for progression to the next Pay Band.

## 6. Equality & Diversity

Where an individual has disclosed a medical condition/disability which is shown to have an affect of their ability to do things or where such a medical condition is known to their manager and the individual is in agreement, the Board will make reasonable adjustments for that individual when attending the Board and when assessing their outputs/performance. The level of reasonable adjustment will depend on the condition and how it is presented and could depend on advice from our Occupational Health Service provider and/or discussion with the individual. Reasonable adjustments will be written and agreed with the individual before the Board.

Where the applicant is a part-time member of staff or has been absent due to extended sick/special/maternity/career break leave, due consideration of this will be made by the Board when considering outputs (publications, etc.).

Where it is known or the applicant makes it known that s/he is a member of a faith, the applicant will be consulted about the date and timing of their interview.

## 7. Promotion Decision

The Board's recommendations will be submitted to the Confirming Authority who will authorise promotions after considering the Board's report.

All candidates will be notified of the result, following which a list of successful candidates will be published.

## 8. Feedback

Following the interview, a candidate will have the opportunity to receive verbal feedback on the Board's judgement and should receive this feedback not less than five days prior to the closing date for appeals. Where there is a delay in providing feedback, some flexibility will be allowed in submitting appeals.

## 9. Appeals

Appeals against non-selection for interview or non-promotion will be considered by the Confirming Authority.

If the Board turns down an application on the grounds that the application fails the test described at 5.1 1. above and the candidate appeals against this decision, the Confirming Authority may accept the appeal, reject the appeal or, if further clarification is required, request a JEGS evaluation.

Candidates whose application is turned down on the grounds that they have not met the requirements described at 5.1 2. above may appeal. It should be noted that even if the post satisfies these requirements, the evidence of a satisfactory performance assessment rating will not in itself meet the requirements.

## 10. Job Evaluation

If the Board is unsure whether a post passes the test outlined in 5.1 1. above, they will request a JEGS evaluation.

Where the Board request a JEGS evaluation, the candidate will be invited for interview along with the other candidates.