



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

Candidate Information Booklet

Higher Executive Officer, Reviews & Examinations at the Office of the Planning Regulator

About the Office of the Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) is an independent oversight body that was established by Government to oversee the functioning and policy consistency of Ireland's planning process to ensure quality outcomes in relation to proper planning and sustainable development.

Functions of the OPR

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 established the legal basis for the OPR and outlines its role and functions, which include the following:

- assessment of local authority county/city development plans and local area plans, and regional assembly regional spatial and economic strategies to ensure consistency with relevant regional or national policies;
- reviews of local authorities and An Bord Pleanála in the performance of their planning functions; and,
- research, training and education programmes that support the progressive development of Ireland's planning process.

The Role

The OPR's Reviews & Examinations Team is responsible for the delivery of the OPR's statutory function to conduct planning reviews in relation to local authorities and An Bord Pleanála. The Team also oversees the examination of complaints in relation to the systems and procedures used by local authorities to deliver their planning functions. The Team works with the wider planning and regulatory compliance sectors with a view to enhancing the overall national planning system.

Reporting to the Assistant Director, the key responsibilities of the Higher Executive Officer in the Reviews & Examinations Team include coordinating the OPR's case-handling service in respect of complaints, submissions and queries received in relation to local authority planning matters and ensuring the delivery of quality customer service. The Higher Executive Officer also supports senior management in coordinating the delivery of the OPR's programme of reviews with regard to the systems and procedures used by local authorities and An Bord Pleanála in the delivery of their planning functions.

This is an exciting opportunity for a suitably experienced individual to take their career to the next level by taking key responsibility for the coordination of a regulatory body's customer interface and contributing to the promotion of continuous improvement in the national planning system.

The role entails:

- coordinating the management of the OPR's case-handling service through effective working with technical advisors and administrative support staff;
- delivering quality customer service to the public by ensuring the efficient examination of, and the timely response to, a variety of case-types lodged with the OPR;
- managing direct-reports to ensure the delivery of the Team's overall work programme;
- producing useful management information and analysis to support the Team's engagements with the local authority sector, stakeholders across the planning system and counterparts in other agencies;
- supporting the Team's senior management in the coordination of a multi-annual programme of reviews in respect of systems and procedures used to deliver planning services. These reviews involve detailed engagement with local authorities across the country and An Bord Pleanála; and
- other duties as may be assigned from time to time.

Essential criteria

Candidates must, on or before **14 December 2022**, possess or demonstrate:

- applicable project delivery and / or case management experience;
- proven experience in delivering quality customer service or successfully providing information to the public;
- strong analytical skills, including proven experience of decision-making and problem-solving in relation to complex information;
- evidence of successful relationship-building through effective communication skills, with an ability to express themselves articulately, concisely and persuasively;
- excellent time management skills including the ability to meet numerous deadlines;
- experience at working both independently, with minimum supervision and in a team oriented, collaborative environment; and,
- good report writing and presentation skills.

Desirable qualities

- experience and / or qualifications in the area of public administration, planning, internal audit, governance / compliance or complaint-handling;
- staff management experience; and,
- familiarity with, or the capacity to acquire quickly, a clear understanding of the planning and development sector and the general statutory framework within which the OPR operates.

Location of the post

The post will be located at the OPR offices at Park House, Dublin 7, however it is the intention that a blended approach will be in place incorporating a mix of office-based and home-based working.

Principal Conditions of Service

The appointment is to a permanent post in the Civil Service and is subject to the Civil Service Regulations Acts 1956 to 2005, the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004, and any other Act for the time being in force relating to the Civil Service.

Tenure and Probation

The appointment is to a permanent position on a probationary contract in the Civil Service.

The probationary contract will be for a period of one year from the date specified on the contract. Notwithstanding this paragraph and the paragraph immediately following below, this will not preclude an extension of the probationary contract in appropriate circumstances.

During the period of your probationary contract, your performance will be subject to review by your supervisor(s) to determine whether you:

- (i) Have performed in a satisfactory manner,
- (ii) Have been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- (iii) Are suitable from the point of view of health with particular regard to sick leave.

Prior to the completion of the probationary contract a decision will be made as to whether or not you will be retained pursuant to *Section 5A(2) Civil Service Regulation Acts 1956 – 2005*. This decision will be based on your performance assessed against the criteria set out in (i) to (iii) above. The details of the probationary process will be explained to you by the Office of the Planning Regulator and you will be given a copy of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's guidelines on probation.

Notwithstanding the preceding paragraphs in this section, the probationary contract may be terminated at any time prior to the expiry of the term of the contract by either side in accordance with the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts, 1973 to 2005.

In certain circumstances your contract may be extended and your probation period suspended. The extension must be agreed by both parties.

- The probationary period stands suspended when an employee is absent due to Maternity or Adoptive Leave
- In relation to an employee absent on Parental Leave or Carers Leave, the employee may require probation to be suspended if the absence is not considered to be consistent with the continuation of the probation
- Probation may be suspended in cases such as absence due to a non-recurring illness

The employee may, in these circumstances, make an application to the employer for an extension to the contract period.

The appointee will serve a one-year probationary period. If an appointee who fails to satisfy the conditions of probation has been a serving civil servant immediately prior to their appointment from this competition, the issue of reversion will normally arise. In the event of reversion, an officer will return to a vacancy in their former grade in their former Department.

Hours of attendance

Hours of attendance will be fixed from time to time but will amount to not less than 41 hours 15 minutes gross per week. The successful candidate will be required to work such additional hours from time to time as may be reasonable and necessary for the proper performance of his/her duties subject to the limits set down in the working time regulations. The rate of remuneration payable covers any extra attendance liability that may arise from time to time.

Salary Scale

The salary scale for the position (rates effective from 1 October 2022) is as follows.

Higher Executive Officer (PPC)

€52,897 - €54,443 - €55,986 - €57,529 - €59,077 - €60,619 - €62,164 - €64,394¹ - €66,619²

The PPC pay rate applies when the individual is required to pay a Personal Pension Contribution (otherwise known as a main scheme contribution) in accordance with the rules of their main/personal superannuation scheme. This is different to a contribution in respect of membership of a Spouses' and Children's scheme, or the Additional Superannuation Contributions (ASC).

A different rate will apply where the appointee is not required to make a Personal Pension Contribution.

Long service increments may be payable after 3(LSI1) and 6(LSI2) years satisfactory service at the maximum of the scale.

Important Note

Entry will be at the minimum of the scale and the rate of remuneration will not be subject to negotiation and may be adjusted from time to time in line with Government pay policy.

Different terms and conditions may apply if you are a currently serving civil or public servant.

Subject to satisfactory performance, increments may be payable in line with current Government Policy.

You will agree that any overpayment of salary, allowances, or expenses will be repaid by you in accordance with Circular 07/2018: Recovery of Salary, Allowances, and Expenses Overpayments made to Staff Members/Former Staff Members/Pensioners.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public holidays, annual leave for this position is 29 working days rising to 30 after 5 years' service.

Sick Leave

Pay during properly certified sick absence, provided there is no evidence of permanent disability for service, will apply on a pro-rata basis, in accordance with the provisions of the sick leave circulars.

An officer who will be paying Class A rate of PRSI will be required to sign a mandate authorising the Department of Social Protection to pay any benefits due under the Social Welfare Acts directly to the employing organisation. Payment during illness will be subject to the officer making the necessary claims for social insurance benefit to the Department of Social Protection within the required time limits.

Superannuation and Retirement

The appointee will be offered the appropriate superannuation terms and conditions as prevailing in the Public Service at the time of being offered an appointment. In general, an appointee who has never worked in the Public Service will be offered appointment based on membership of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ('Single Scheme'). Full details of the Scheme are at: www.singlepensionscheme.gov.ie

¹ After 3 years satisfactory service at the maximum.

² After 6 years satisfactory service at the maximum.

Where the appointee has worked in a pensionable (non-Single Scheme terms) public service job in the 26 weeks prior to appointment or is currently on a career break or special leave with/without pay different terms may apply. The pension entitlement of such appointees will be established in the context of their public service employment history.

The key provisions attaching to membership of the Single Scheme are as follows:

- career average earnings are used to calculate benefits (a pension and lump sum amount accrue each year and are up-rated annually by reference to CPI);
- pensionable age - The minimum age at which pension is payable is the same as the age of eligibility for the State Pension, currently 66;
- retirement age - Scheme members must retire at the age of 70;
- post retirement pension increases are linked to CPI.

Pension Abatement

- If the appointee has previously been employed in the Civil or Public Service and is in receipt of a pension from the Civil or Public Service or where a Civil/Public Service pension comes into payment during his/her re-employment that pension **will be subject to abatement** in accordance with Section 52 of the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. **Please note: In applying for this position you are acknowledging that you understand that the abatement provisions, where relevant, will apply. It is not envisaged that the employing Department/Office will support an application for an abatement waiver in respect of appointments to this position.**
- However, if the appointee was previously employed in the Civil or Public Service and awarded a pension under voluntary early retirement arrangements (other than the Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement (ISER), the Department of Health Circular 7/2010 VER/VRS or the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government Circular letter LG(P) 06/2013, any of which renders a person ineligible for the competition) the entitlement to that pension will cease with effect from the date of reappointment. Special arrangements may, however be made for the reckoning of previous service given by the appointee for the purpose of any future superannuation award for which the appointee may be eligible.

Department of Education and Skills Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers Circular 102/2007

The Department of Education and Skills introduced an Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers. It is a condition of the Early Retirement Scheme that with the exception of the situations set out in paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3 of the relevant circular documentation, and with those exceptions only, if a teacher accepts early retirement under Strands 1, 2 or 3 of this scheme and is subsequently employed in any capacity in any area of the public sector, payment of a pension to that person under the scheme will immediately cease. Pension payments will, however, be resumed on the ceasing of such employment or on the person's 60th birthday, whichever is the later, but on resumption, the pension will be based on the person's actual reckonable service as a teacher (i.e. the added years previously granted will not be taken into account in the calculation of the pension payment).

Ill-Health Retirement (IHR)

Please note any person who previously retired on ill-health grounds under the terms of a superannuation scheme are required to declare, at the initial application phase, that they are in receipt of such a pension to the organisation administering the recruitment competition.

Applicants will be required to attend the CMO's office to assess their ability to provide regular and effective service taking account of the condition which qualified them for IHR.

Appointment post ill-health retirement from Civil Service

If successful in their application through the competition, the applicant should to be aware of the following:

1. If deemed fit to provide regular and effective service and assigned to a post, their Civil Service ill-health pension ceases.
2. If the applicant subsequently fails to complete probation or decides to leave their assigned post, there can be no reversion to the Civil Service IHR status, nor reinstatement of the Civil Service IHR pension, that existed prior to the application, nor is there an entitlement to same.
3. The applicant will become a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (SPSPS) upon appointment if they have had a break in pensionable public/civil service of more than 26 weeks.

Appointment post ill-health retirement from Public Service:

1. Where an individual has retired from a Public Service body his/her ill-health pension from that employment may be subject to review in accordance with the rules of ill-health retirement under that scheme.
2. If an applicant is successful, on appointment the applicant will be required to declare whether they are in receipt of a Public Service pension (ill-health or otherwise) and their Public Service pension may be subject to abatement.
3. The applicant will become a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (SPSPS) upon appointment if they have had a break in pensionable Public/Civil Service of more than 26 weeks.

Please note more detailed information in relation to pension implications for those in receipt of a Civil or Public Service ill-health pension is available upon request to the Public Appointments Service.

Pension Accrual

A 40-year limit on total service that can be counted towards pension where a person has been a member of more than one existing Public Service Pension Scheme would apply. This 40-year limit, which is provided for in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Act 2012 came into effect on 28 July 2012. This may have implications for any appointee who has acquired pension rights in a previous Public Service employment.

Additional Superannuation Contribution

The appointment is subject to the Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC) in accordance with the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. **Note;** ASC deductions are in addition to any pension contributions (main scheme and spouses' and children's contributions) required under the rules of your pension scheme.

For further information in relation to the Single Public Service Pension Scheme please see the following website: www.singlepensionscheme.gov.ie

Secrecy, Confidentiality and Standards of Behaviour: Official Secrecy and Integrity:

During the term of the probationary contract, an officer will be subject to the Provisions of the Official Secrets Act, 1963, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2014. The officer will agree not to disclose to unauthorised third parties any confidential information either during or subsequent to the period of employment.

Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour:

The appointee will be subject to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

Ethics in Public Office Acts:

The Ethics in Public Office Acts will apply, where appropriate, to this appointment.

Prior approval of publications:

An officer will agree not to publish material related to his or her official duties without prior approval by an appropriate authorised officer.

Political Activity:

During the term of employment the officer will be subject to the rules governing public servants and politics.

Please note;

As an Employer of Choice the Civil Service has many flexible and family friendly working policies including some opportunities for remote working which in the civil service is on a blended basis. Please note, successful candidates may request flexible working opportunities, however, this is at the discretion of the employer and decided in line with the business needs of the organisation, and on a case by case basis.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

When your application is received, we create a record in your name, which contains much of the personal information you have supplied. This personal record is used solely in processing your candidature. Such information is subject to the rights and obligations set out in the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018.

If you have any queries related to the processing of your data, or if you wish to make a request under the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018, please submit your request in writing to dataprotection@opr.ie.

General Information

Candidates should note that canvassing will disqualify them. The OPR will not be responsible for any expenses, including travelling expenses, that applicants may incur in connection with their application for this post.

Should the person recommended for appointment decline, or, having accepted it, relinquish it or if any additional vacancy arises, the OPR may, at its discretion, select and recommend another person for appointment on the results of this selection process.

The OPR is committed to a policy of equal opportunity.

Subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, applications will be treated in strict confidence.

Important Notice

The foregoing represents the principal conditions of service and is not intended to be the comprehensive list of all terms and conditions of employment which will be set out in the employment contract to be agreed with the successful candidate.

Competition Process

How to Apply

Applications should be submitted via email to oprjobs@ascension.ie by **14 December 2022 at 5pm.**

Candidates should submit a completed application form and a covering letter, as separate documents, in pdf format, in a single email.

Please note that omission of any or part of the two requested documents, as set out above, will render the application incomplete. Incomplete applications will not be considered for the next stage of the selection process.

An acknowledgement email will be issued in respect of all applications received (this email will acknowledge receipt of the application but will not confirm eligibility or otherwise). If an applicant does not receive an acknowledgement email within 3 working days of the date of submission, the applicant should contact the OPR to ensure their application has been received.

Closing Date

Deadline for applications: **14 December 2022 at 5pm.**

Applications will not be accepted after the closing date.

Selection Process

The selection process may include:

- shortlisting of candidates (on the basis of the information contained in their application);
- a competitive interview;
- assessment testing may be held;

Please note that any offer of employment made to a successful candidate will be subject to satisfactory:

- reference verification;
- pre-employment medical declaration.

Shortlisting

The OPR will carry out a shortlisting process to select a group of applicants who, based on an examination of the applications submitted, appear to be the most suitable and qualified for the position.

An expert panel will examine the application forms against agreed shortlisting criteria based on the requirements of the position. The shortlisting criteria may include both the essential and desirable criteria specified for the position. It is therefore in an applicant's interest to provide a detailed and accurate account of their qualifications/experience in their application.

Interviews

The interviews for this post are likely to be held in January 2023. Interviews will be semi-structured in format, with candidates asked to provide examples of the **competencies for the role as outlined in Appendix 1**. We will endeavour to give as much notice as possible of interview dates.

Candidates who do not attend for interview, as scheduled, or who do not furnish such evidence as required in regard to any matter relevant to their application, will have no further claim to consideration in this process.

A panel of successful candidates may be formed.

References

Candidates should start considering names of people who would be suitable referees that we might consult. The referees do not have to include your current employer but should be in a position to provide a reference for you. Please be assured that we will only contact referees should you come under consideration after interview stage. Please note, should you be successful in this competition, we will require a reference from your current employer.

Appendix 1: Competencies



Higher Executive Officer Level Competencies

Effective Performance Indicators

Team Leadership	Works with the team to facilitate high performance, developing clear and realistic objectives and addressing and performance issues if they arise
	Provides clear information and advice as to what is required of the team
	Strives to develop and implement new ways of working effectively to meet objectives
	Leads the team by example, coaching and supporting individuals as required
	Places high importance on staff development, training and maximising skills & capacity of team.
	Is flexible and willing to adapt, positively contributing to the implementation of change
Analysis & Decision Making	Gathers and analyses information from relevant sources, whether financial, numerical or otherwise weighing up a range of critical factors
	Takes account of any broader issues and related implications when making decisions
	Uses previous knowledge and experience in order to guide decisions
	Makes sound decisions with a well reasoned rationale and stands by these
	Puts forward solutions to address problems
Management & Delivery of Results	Takes responsibility and is accountable for the delivery of agreed objectives
	Successfully manages a range of different projects and work activities at the same time
	Structures and organises their own and others work effectively
	Is logical and pragmatic in approach, delivering the best possible results with the resources available
	Delegates work effectively, providing clear information and evidence as to what is required
	Proactively identifies areas for improvement and develops practical suggestions for their implementation
	Demonstrates enthusiasm for new developments/changing work practices and strives to implement these changes effectively.
	Applies appropriate systems/ processes to enable quality checking of all activities and outputs
Practices and promotes a strong focus on delivering high quality customer service, for internal and external customers	
Interpersonal & Communication Skills	Builds and maintains contact with colleagues and other stakeholders to assist in performing role
	Acts as an effective link between staff and senior management
	Encourages open and constructive discussions around work issues
	Projects conviction, gaining buy-in by outlining relevant information and selling the benefits
	Treats others with diplomacy, tact, courtesy and respect , even in challenging circumstances
	Presents information clearly, concisely and confidently when speaking and in writing
Specialist Knowledge, Expertise and Self Development	Has a clear understanding of the roles, objectives and targets of self and team and how they fit into the work of the unit and Department/ Organisation and effectively communicates this to others
	Has high levels of expertise and broad Public Sector knowledge relevant to his/her area of work
	Focuses on self development, striving to improve performance
Drive & Commitment to Public Service Values	Strives to perform at a high level, investing significant energy to achieve agreed objectives
	Demonstrates resilience in the face of challenging circumstances and high demands
	Is personally trustworthy and can be relied upon
	Ensures that customers are at the heart of all services provided
	Upholds high standards of honesty, ethics and integrity

Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (Circular Letter LG(P) 06/2013)

The Department of Environment, Community & Local Government Circular Letter LG(P) 06/2013 introduced a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for Local Authorities. In accordance with the terms of the *Collective Agreement: Redundancy Payments to Public Servants* dated 28 June 2012 as detailed above, it is a specific condition of that VER Scheme that persons will not be eligible for re-employment in any Public Service body [as defined by the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts 2009 – 2011 and the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012] for a period of 2 years from their date of departure under this Scheme. These conditions also apply in the case of engagement/employment on a contract for service basis (either as a contractor or as an employee of a contractor).

Declaration

Applicants will be required to declare whether they have previously availed of a Public Service Scheme of Incentivised Early Retirement and/or the collective agreement outlined above. Applicants will also be required to declare any entitlements to a Public Service pension benefit (in payment or preserved) from any other Public Service employment and/or where they have received a payment-in-lieu in respect of service in any Public Service employment.