

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Job Specification

ASSEMBLY CLERK

SALARY RANGE: £48,224 - £54,664

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Application forms are available on the Northern Ireland Assembly website and should be completed online. Completed application forms, which demonstrate the skills and experience sought, must be submitted by the closing date of **23.59 on 12 March 2017**.
- 1.2 **Applicants are reminded that the application form must be fully completed. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. CVs or other supplementary material will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Commission) is a corporate body established by section 40 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is required to provide the Assembly, or ensure that the Assembly is provided, with the property, staff and services required for the Assembly's purposes. The Commission employs a Secretariat to serve the Assembly. The Assembly Secretariat comprises of the Chief Executive's Office and four Directorates – Legal and Governance Services, Corporate Services, Facilities and Parliamentary Services. The management structure of the Assembly Secretariat is illustrated in the attached chart.
- 2.2 The Commission's vision is of an Assembly which builds a better future for the people of Northern Ireland through fostering a peaceful, stable and prosperous society; and to best serve the Assembly in that task by being at the forefront of providing progressive, effective and efficient parliamentary services.
- 2.3 Assembly Clerks are responsible for providing support for key functions of the Assembly, including the conduct of Assembly business, the passage of legislation and the work of the Assembly's Committees. Assembly Clerks normally carry out duties in one of the following areas.
 - (i) **The Bill Office** supports the work of the Assembly in the management of legislation through its plenary and committee stages and is responsible for ensuring that the Acts, which finally emerge, reflect fully the deliberations and decisions taken by Assembly Members. The Office is also responsible for providing advice to Members on the admissibility of

proposed amendments, to the Speaker, on the selection of amendments to Bills and for supporting the development of Members Bills.

- (ii) **The Business Office** supports the work of plenary sessions of the Assembly. The Office acts as the focus of procedural advice to the Speaker and Members on the conduct of Assembly business and is responsible for the production of Order Papers, proposed Amendments to motions and the Minutes of Proceedings, which are the official legal record of the business of the Assembly. The Business Office supports the Business Committee and processes Assembly questions and the laying of documents in compliance with Standing Orders and Speaker's rulings.
- (iii) **Committee Offices** have responsibility for supporting Committees established by the Assembly. Committee teams prepare committee work programmes, plan inquiries, organise and service committee meetings, events and visits, record committee proceedings, commission research and advice, and draft speeches and committee reports. Committee staff also provide analysis and advice to Committee Chairpersons, Deputy Chairpersons and Members. In addition, the Clerking and Members Support Office is responsible for the implementation of the Commission's Member Development Strategy and provides the Secretariat support to the Independent Financial Review Panel.

3. LOCATION

- 3.1 Secretariat staff are accommodated in Parliament Buildings.

4. JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibility and Reporting Arrangements

- 4.1 The successful applicant(s) will report to one of the two Clerk Assistants and will manage a team of staff.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- 4.2 All applicants must be capable of undertaking any of the functions associated with the work of the Bill, Business and Committee Offices.

The main duties and responsibilities are:

- Leading and managing a team, setting goals and performance targets, evaluating staff performance, and ensuring staff are developed to meet the needs of the Assembly;
- Ensuring the best use of resources, including financial resources, by setting, monitoring and ensuring achievement of strategic performance objectives in a high profile and dynamic environment;
- Developing and applying expertise across a range of business areas, keeping up to date on new and emerging policies and developing an understanding of the impact of such policies;

- Developing and maintaining effective relationships with key personnel, for example, in Government Departments and agencies, press, media and private and voluntary organisations;
- Developing and maintaining effective relationships with colleagues in other Assembly Secretariat services including researchers, parliamentary reporters, lawyers, and communication specialists to ensure that the necessary expertise is utilised effectively to support procedural, policy and legislative decisions;
- Providing comprehensive and authoritative advice and guidance on a range of procedural, policy and legislative matters to inform key decision makers. This may include the provision of timely and accurate briefs to the Speaker, Deputy Speakers, Committee Chairpersons, Committees and Members;
- Managing a very demanding and wide-ranging workload of complex tasks, often to be completed within very tight deadlines. The nature of issues will be uncertain or problems will have to be dealt with in rapidly changing situations where accurate interpretation, judgement and political awareness is required;
- Preparation of complex briefing documents to support plenary, committee and legislative business;
- Preparation of briefing papers, draft speeches, speaking notes, and press releases for the Speaker, Committee Chairpersons and others and management of online and social media output;
- Planning and managing the committee stage of Bills;
- Planning and managing committee inquiries, including drafting terms of reference and inquiry/scrutiny plans, identifying key stakeholders, organising evidence sessions, analysing evidence and preparing detailed draft committee reports outlining the committee's key findings and recommendations;
- Organising, commissioning and undertaking research to inform scrutiny and/or policy development and preparing requests for legal advice;
- Supporting members to develop legislative proposals or amendments to legislation by providing procedural, policy development and/or drafting advice;
- Attending plenary sessions of the Assembly to support the Speaker and Committee Chairpersons by providing procedural advice and factual responses;
- Any other duties reasonably required.

5. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POST

Essential Criteria

5.1 At the closing date for applications, applicants **must** have: -

at least a primary degree in any subject and at least 3 years' experience, in each of the following areas;

OR

at least 5 years' experience, in each of the following areas;

- (a) prioritising, planning and organising a very demanding and diverse workload of complex tasks and managing the resources available to ensure compliance with tight deadlines;
- (b) leading, managing and motivating a team of staff to ensure effective service delivery; taking personal responsibility for the delivery of high quality results and for the improvement and development of both processes and people;
- (c) applying strong analytical and interpretative skills and the ability to produce well-judged decisions/solutions within deadlines;
- (d) contributing directly to the development or scrutiny of policy or legislation, including research or consultation and preparing recommendations for change or improvement;
- (e) providing authoritative written and oral advice on complex or politically sensitive matters directly to elected representatives or senior managers.

5.2 In addition, applicants must also be able to provide evidence within their application form, and demonstrate at interview stage; -

- A thorough understanding of the role and functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the political environment in which it operates.

Relevant or equivalent qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc. so that a well-informed decision can be made.

6. **SHORTLISTING CRITERIA**

The Assembly Commission reserves the right to use shortlisting as part of the recruitment process for this post. Should shortlisting be required, the following shortlisting criteria will be applied:

- (a) Applicants must demonstrate 3 years' experience of contributing directly to the development or scrutiny of **public** policy or legislation*, including research or consultation and preparing recommendations for change or improvement.

*Public policy/legislation refers to policy or legislation developed by, or on behalf of a branch of government (local, regional, or national), in seeking

to address problems encountered by, or the needs of, the population or a section of the population.

7. CORE COMPETENCES

- 7.1 In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria at 5.1 and 5.2 above, the following core competences apply to this post. Full details of the core competences, relevant to the post, can be found at www.niassembly.gov.uk/jobs

Services

The ability to plan for and manage service delivery to champion customer requirements and to manage changes and improvements in operational activities and service.

People

The ability to develop teams and individuals to enhance performance, encourage innovation and meet/exceed business objectives; monitor and manage the performance of the team, its individuals and self; create, maintain and enhance effective working relationships; assess own development needs and develop self to improve job performance and fulfil future potential and select personnel.

Information and communication

The ability to develop management information and communication systems in order to meet customer needs; analyse information, make critical decisions, influence and gain the commitment of others and to identify customer/audience needs and communicate required information.

Resources

The ability to bid for resources needed to deliver the office plans and to determine and control the effective use of resources.

8. STAGES OF SELECTION

- 8.1 The following information provides detail on each stage of the selection process for the post of Assembly Clerk.

8.2 Job-related Skills Test

A job-related skills test may be held prior to any assessment of application forms. The results from the tests will be used to decide which applicants will proceed to the eligibility sift. Only those applicants who meet the minimum standard in the test, and who score highest in the tests, will be considered for the next stage of the selection process. Therefore, invitation to test does not imply that an applicant possesses the essential criteria.

The test may be held online and instructions and further information will be issued to applicants after the closing date for applications.

8.3 Eligibility Sift

The essential criteria reflect the experience and knowledge that an applicant must possess in order to be able to undertake the role. An eligibility sift will be carried out on the basis of the information contained in the essential criteria section of the application form. You must therefore demonstrate clearly in your form how, and to what extent, you meet with the essential criteria for the post.

8.4 Shortlisting

The selection panel reserve the right to use shortlisting as part of the selection process for this post. Should shortlisting be used, the shortlisting criterion listed above will be applied. The selection panel reserve the right to set a minimum standard for the shortlisting criterion which applicants must achieve in order to be invited to the interview stage of the selection process. If shortlisting is not necessary, all applicants who have demonstrated the essential criteria will proceed to the interview stage of the selection process.

8.5 Criteria-based Interview Stage

A selection panel will interview applicants who have met the required standard at the eligibility sift. The interview will address the essential criteria and competencies listed in sections 5 and 7 above.

Part of the interview process will be the delivery of a presentation. The subject of the presentation will be advised to the applicant on the day of the interview and the applicant will be expected to present information to the selection panel. The interview process may also include a written exercise. Details will be provided in the invite to interview letter.

8.6 Further Interview Stage

The selection panel reserves the right to hold a further interview stage if deemed necessary.

9. GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME

- 9.1 In line with the Equality Commission's Positive Action for People who are Disabled guidance, the Assembly Secretariat operate a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS). The GIS has been developed for applicants with disabilities or those with a long term impairment or health condition, that is expected to last for at least 12 months and which means that they cannot meet all of the shortlisting criteria. In instances where tests will be used as a shortlisting tool, provided that the applicant has demonstrated in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the post and reach the minimum standard in the test, the applicant will be offered a guaranteed interview.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 10.1 Offers of appointment will be made in order of merit based on performance at the criteria-based interview(s).
- 10.2 If you require more information on the recruitment process, please contact the Human Resources Office on 90520325.
- 10.3 Further information about the NI Assembly can be obtained on the Internet at website: www.niassembly.gov.uk.

11. COMPLETION OF APPLICATION FORMS

- 11.1 It will be the responsibility of applicants to demonstrate clearly on the application form how you satisfy the essential criteria.

12. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT

- 12.1 These appointments are permanent and will be made by the Commission. The successful candidate(s) will be employees of the Commission. All appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period.
- 12.2 The standard working week is 37 hours, excluding meal breaks (42 hours gross). Working hours will be dictated by the mode of operation of the NI Assembly and, during sitting days, will involve work late into the evening and, may involve work at weekends and on public holidays. Applicants should be aware that a major influence in determining when leave can be taken will be the parliamentary timetable.
- 12.3 The salary scale for this post is £48,224 to £54,664. The starting salary for the successful candidate(s) will be £48,224 per annum.
- 12.4 In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 26 days after 4 years of service and to 30 days after 5 years of service. Applicants should be aware that a major influence in determining when leave can be taken will be the parliamentary timetable. In practice, this means that Assembly Clerks may generally take leave only when the Assembly is in recess.
- 12.5 Subject to eligibility, a childcare voucher scheme is available.
- 12.6 The successful candidate(s) will be given suitable training, including formal specialised courses as necessary.

13. PENSIONS

- 13.1 The Assembly offers all employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:

www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/working-northern-ireland-civil-service/civil-service-pensions-ni

If you are unable to access the website or require the information in another format, please contact:

The Pensions Manager
Human Resources Office
Room 402
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BT4 3XX
Tel: 028 9052 1685

13.2 Please note that the NI Assembly does not use HR Connect.

14. APPLICATIONS

14.1 Under fair employment legislation, the Commission is required to monitor the community background of those applying to fill vacancies. Applicants must, therefore, complete the equal opportunities monitoring section of the application form.

14.2 The Commission is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of gender, marital or family status, religious belief, political opinion, disability, age, race, nationality or sexual orientation. **All applications for employment will be considered on the basis of merit.**

This job specification does not constitute any term or condition of employment.