



Northern Ireland
Assembly



Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards Candidate Information Booklet

Completed Application Forms must be submitted no later
than 12 noon (UK time) on Monday 30 June 2025

Please retain a copy of this booklet for your reference
throughout the selection process.

Foreword

Thank you for your interest in the role of Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards (the Commissioner).

The primary role of the Commissioner is to carry out investigations into complaints that a breach of the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Code of Conduct or Ministerial Code of Conduct has occurred, and to report the outcome of those investigations to the Assembly. Therefore, the role of Commissioner is important in ensuring that MLAs and Ministers uphold high standards of conduct in public life.

The Assembly operates in a dynamic political and parliamentary environment and the Commissioner will make an important and valued contribution in building public confidence in the Assembly.

We are looking for a talented individual with a track record of operating at a senior level, conducting independent, robust, evidenced-based, timely investigations and making decisions on complex and sensitive matters in a demanding environment.

You will need to have excellent interpersonal skills to enable you to work and engage with complainants, MLAs, staff and other stakeholders. You will also need strength of character and good judgment and have the resilience and confidence to work under close parliamentary, media and public scrutiny.

This is a role that provides an exciting opportunity to make a real and positive difference to the parliamentary culture of the Assembly.

Please read the information provided in the candidate information booklet carefully and if you are interested in this important role, I would encourage you to submit your application.

If you would like to find out more about the post before making an application please contact Shane McAteer (Clerk of Standards) at

shane.mcateer@niassembly.gov.uk or telephone 02890 521843 / 07789480398.



Edwin Poots MLA

Speaker and Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

About Us

The Assembly is at the heart of political and public life as the democratically elected parliament that represents the interests of Northern Ireland and its people.

Established as a key element of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, the Assembly comprises 90 Members and has three main functions - making legislation, scrutinising the Executive and representing constituents.

In accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the staff, services and facilities which are needed to support the work of the Assembly are provided by the Assembly Commission, a corporate body comprising the Speaker and five Members of the Assembly. The day-to-day running of the Assembly is delegated to the Clerk/Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The Assembly Commission therefore provides the infrastructure (including Parliament Buildings), facilities and staff to allow the Assembly and its Committees to meet and to encourage public awareness of, and engagement with, the parliamentary process. It also pays the salaries of Members and reimburses the expenses which enable them to undertake their duties both at the Assembly and in their constituency offices.

The Assembly Commission is a high-achieving and professional organisation providing impartial support to the Assembly and its Members. The Assembly Commission is independent of the Executive and the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

The Assembly Commission has approximately 400 staff and an annual budget of around £68m. Our organisational structure is illustrated at [Annex B](#).

Contents

About the Role.....	2
Term of Appointment.....	4
The Person	5
Essential Criteria	5
Equal Opportunities Statement	6
Location	6
Completing the form	6
Stages of the Selection Process	7
Disability Confident.....	7
Equality Monitoring.....	8
Conflicts of Interest.....	8
Commissioner for Public Appointments – Code of Practice	9
Merit List	9
Communication during the recruitment process.....	9
Further Information.....	10

About the Role

The office of Commissioner was established by the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (“the Act”) to investigate complaints of alleged breaches of the MLA Code of Conduct.

The Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 extended the role of the Commission to investigate complaints of alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

The Commissioner is an independent officer appointed by the Assembly. Their role is to carry out thorough, fair and transparent investigations into complaints about the behaviour of Ministers and MLAs in relation to their respective Codes of Conduct and to encourage and promote high ethical standards in public life in the Assembly.

[Further information on the work of the Commissioner can be found in their annual reports, published on the Commissioner’s website.](#)

The nature of the Commissioner’s work is unpredictable and demand led, depending largely on the number of complaints received and the number that have to be investigated. The appointee will be required to work such hours as may be necessary to enable the efficient discharge of the functions of the post and if a major investigation is ongoing three or more days per week may be required. Over recent years the Commissioner has worked the equivalent of 80 days per annum.

Remuneration for the Commissioner will be £595.57 per day (equating to £74.45 per hour). The remuneration is subject to tax and National Insurance (when payable). The Commissioner is not an employee of the Assembly Commission, the post is not pensionable and does not attract annual leave. Remuneration will be reviewed, but not necessarily increased, annually by the Assembly Commission. Travel and Subsistence will be paid in accordance with Assembly Commission rates.

The Functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Although appointed by the Assembly, the Commissioner enjoys operational independence in the performance of their functions, by virtue of section 18 of the Act. The functions of the Commissioner are set out in [section 17 of the Act](#).

The principal aim of the Commissioner in exercising functions under the Act is to promote, encourage and safeguard high standards of conduct in the public office of MLAs and Ministers.

The main function of the Commissioner is to consider, and where necessary investigate, complaints or reports that an MLA has broken the provisions of the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members or a Minister has broken the provisions of the Ministerial Code of Conduct. This is expected to take up around 85% of the Commissioner's time, the remainder being occupied in the giving of advice and ancillary matters.

The respective Codes can be accessed at the following links:

- [MLA Code of Conduct](#)
- [Ministerial Code of Conduct](#)

The Commissioner can initiate an investigation, where no complaint has been received, if the Commissioner believes that a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred.

The Commissioner must report the outcome of any investigation to the [Committee for Standards and Privileges](#) acting on behalf of the Assembly.

A further function of the Commissioner is to give advice – either on the Commissioner's own initiative, or if requested to do so by the Assembly – on any matter of general principle relating to standards of conduct of MLAs or Ministers.

It is possible that the functions of the Commissioner may be extended by the Assembly.

Powers and Duties of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards

The Commissioner's powers are set out in the Act. The Act provides for the Commissioner, when carrying out investigations, to have similar powers to the Assembly to require any person to give evidence, on oath at the discretion of the Commissioner, or produce documents to the Commissioner.

As soon as practicable after the end of each financial year the Commissioner is required to lay before the Assembly a report on the Commissioner's activities, including the use of resources.

For the purposes of the law of defamation, the Act provides that statements by the Commissioner will attract absolute privilege and statements to the Commissioner will have qualified privilege.

The independence of the Commissioner from the direction of the control of the Assembly in relation to any particular complaint is set out in section 18 of the Act. However, in carrying out their duties the Commissioner must comply with general directions given by the Assembly under section 24 of the Act.

Further information about the Commissioner, the complaints process, the Code of Conduct, the section 24 directions and links to the annual reports and investigation reports can be viewed [on the Commissioner for Standards website](#).

It is anticipated that those applicants selected for interview will be invited to appear before a Selection Panel on **10 July 2025**. Whilst requests for alternative interview dates will be considered on the basis of their individual merit, it is not the preference of the Selection Panel to hold interviews on any other dates.

Term of Appointment

The term of the appointment will be for a period of five years. It is anticipated that the appointment will be from 8 September 2025. A person may only be appointed to serve as the Commissioner for a single term; therefore, previous

Commissioners are not eligible to apply. Details of those who are disqualified from being appointed to serving as the Commissioner can be found [in Schedule 3 of the Assembly Members \(Independent Financial Review and Standards\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011.](#)

The Person

The persons appointed will require a combination of appropriate skills and experience and a successful track record built on relevant professional knowledge and experience, good judgement and effective communication.

Essential Criteria

This section sets out the essential knowledge, experience and personal competencies which are necessary to undertake the work of the Commissioner.

At the closing date for applications, applicants must demonstrate on their application form (and subsequently at interview) each of the following:

- i) The ability to personally undertake investigative work and conduct investigative interviews within a statutory/legal framework, in accordance with the principles of natural justice and best practice, and to reach sound conclusions on the basis of analysis and to present them in a clearly-reasoned and robust form;
- ii) The track record, presence and personal integrity needed to command the trust and respect of MLAs, Ministers and the general public;
- iii) A clear understanding of the role of Commissioner for Standards and the provisions of the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of MLAs and the Ministerial Code of Conduct, including the issues surrounding standards in public life;
- iv) A commitment to the development of a parliamentary and standards culture in the Assembly so as to inspire and contribute to best practice in the public service generally in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, and to undertake a review of the complaints and investigative processes to ensure that these remain fit for purpose;

- v) The judgement required to handle complex and sensitive matters in a public and political environment, in an independent manner that enhances the reputation of the Assembly; and
- vi) Excellent communication skills.

Equal Opportunities Statement

The Assembly Commission is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or people with dependents or without. **All applications will be considered on the basis of merit.**

Location

The Commissioner will be linked into the Assembly's IT network and so will be able to work from any location, although he/she will need to attend meetings at the Assembly from time to time. Suitable office space will therefore be provided at Parliament Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast.

Administrative and Other Support

The Assembly Commission will provide the Commissioner with such administrative and other support, including staff, services and accommodation, as well as access to legal advice, as the Commissioner may reasonably require.

Completing the form

Only the information presented in the application form will be considered by the selection panel. CVs or other supplementary material will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms. Completed online forms must be submitted by **12 noon (UK time) on Monday 30 June 2025.**

[Launch the application portal and complete the application form.](#)

Application forms submitted after the closing time and date will not be

accepted.

Stages of the Selection Process

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 role.

Interview Stage

Applicants invited to interview will be assessed using the Essential Criteria as outlined above; and will include the preparation and delivery of a presentation to the selection panel.

Interviews are planned for 10 July 2025.

Further Interview Stage

The Selection Panel reserves the right to hold a further interview stage if deemed necessary.

Disability Confident

The Assembly Commission is a Disability Confident Committed Employer and for our recruitment, we have committed to:

- ensuring our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible;
- communicating and promoting vacancies;
- offering an interview to disabled people who meet the essential criteria for the role (the Guaranteed Interview Scheme); and
- anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required.

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) supports applicants with disabilities or those with a long-term impairment or health condition, that is expected to last for

at least 12 months by offering an interview to disabled people who meet the essential criteria for the role. If you are applying under GIS it is therefore important that you include all relevant information in your application form. You should refer to the Guidance on Recruitment and Selection for Applicants for more information.

Applicants applying under GIS will be offered a guaranteed interview, provided that they demonstrate in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the role.

If you wish to submit your application under the GIS, or if you require adjustments to enable you to participate in any part of the selection process, please indicate this on the application form or contact us at recruitment@niassembly.gov.uk.

Please note that you will be required to provide written confirmation of your disability or long-term health condition from a general practitioner or an appropriate specialist, by the closing date for applications.

You can get advice or assistance with making an application from your local Jobs and Benefits Office – contact details are available on NIDirect: [Find contact details for your local Jobs and Benefits Office](#).

Equality Monitoring

Under Fair Employment legislation, we are required to monitor the community background and gender of those applying for roles. You must therefore complete the equal opportunities monitoring section of the application form when applying for the post.

Conflicts of Interest

It is essential that the person appointed is able to maintain public confidence at all times.

Applicants are required to declare whether they have any actual or potential

conflicts of interest and whether they are aware of anything in their private or professional life that would, or have, the potential to undermine their ability to maintain public trust and confidence as the Commissioner for Standards or which could, or have the potential to, bring the Commissioner for Standards into disrepute.

The Commissioner will be [directed by the Committee on Standards and Privileges on a Code of Conduct and Requirement to Register Interests](#) on which they might have a conflict or perceived conflict of interest.

Further guidance on probity and conflicts of interest is contained in [Annex A](#).

Commissioner for Public Appointments – Code of Practice

Although the appointments to Commissioner for Standards do not fall within the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, in the interests of good practice the appointment competition is being managed in accordance with the principles set out in the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The code can be viewed online at www.publicappointmentsni.org

Merit List

The merit list of applicants deemed to be appointable will remain “live” for 18 months from the date it is signed and may be used to fill any further opportunities for the same role.

Communication during the recruitment process

The Assembly Recruitment Team will issue most communication electronically. You should therefore regularly check your email account to make sure you do not miss any important communication. Please note, sometimes the Recruitment Team emails are automatically filtered as spam by email providers.

Further Information

If you require more information on the recruitment process, please contact the Assembly Recruitment Team on 02890 521741 or email us at

recruitment@niassembly.gov.uk.

Further information about the Assembly can be obtained on the [Northern Ireland Assembly website](#).

The Candidate Information Booklet does not constitute any term or condition of employment.