

Regulated Public Appointments

Board Members and Chairs: person specifications and criteria

Scottish Ministers are responsible for making fair and open appointment decisions based on the merit of the people who apply for a 'public appointment'. A public appointee is someone appointed by Scottish Ministers usually to the board of one of Scotland's public bodies. There is more information about being on a board [here](#).

Merit is defined in each 'appointment round' (an appointment round is a phrase to describe a process from start to finish of recruiting new public appointees). Merit is expressed through a set of criteria. Applicants for a public appointment are then tested against those criteria. The principle of appointing on merit means that where one applicant best meets the selection criteria as set out in the person specification, then only that applicant is recommended to Scottish Ministers for appointment.

Member positions on a board (including chair positions) need to be filled on a regular basis. Boards plan ahead for these vacancies and they think about [the future needs of the public body and of the board](#). The Board identifies the skills, the experience and the attributes needed in board members. The appointing Minister gives broad direction about the type of person they want to appoint.

Selection panels

When the planning to find new members starts, a 'selection panel' is created. A selection panel is at least two people. The selection panel designs the appointment round.

The selection panel develops a 'person specification'. The panel uses the information about the skills, experience and attributes needed in board members that the Board and the appointing Minister have identified. The person specification includes a set of criteria. The panel decides on assessment methods to test the evidence people give about how they match the criteria in the person specification, when someone ('an applicant') is applying for the board position. The person specification, criteria, and assessment methods are sent to the appointing Minister, who is asked if he or she agrees with them.

What is the Core Skills Framework?

The [Core Skills Framework](#) is used by selection panels to help them to define and test what is needed in a person to fill a public appointment on a board. It is a way of thinking about categories of priority criteria, the types of skills and qualities that could be listed as essential and desirable criteria, and the depth and breadth that might be needed in those criteria.

Core generic skills

These generic skills are skills and attributes that are common to many board positions. Board members in those positions might have one, some or all of these skills or attributes. Board members will have them at different levels.

In the Core Skills Framework these are:

- Longer term planning / seeing the bigger picture
- Managing performance
- Change Management
- Analysis and decision making
- Constructive and supportive challenge
- Communication and influencing
- Working co-operatively and collaboratively
- Leading the Board
- Governance
- Personal commitment

This list of skills or attributes can be used by people interested in public appointments in order to think about their own skills and experience. There are descriptions of them in the Core Skills Framework, which can be helpful to look at.

Levels of skills or experience

The different skills, qualities or experience that are used to help to develop criteria for selection are defined in the Core Skills Framework at three different levels. These are:

- Core
- Enhanced
- Adept

If we take the skill of 'Change Management' as an example then there will be different levels of experience of change management. Here are examples for those three levels:

Core

- personal experience of change - understanding something about how it should be implemented and the critical factors for success

Enhanced

- direct experience of successfully managing change
- an understanding of what is required to support change
- an understanding of why change might not work and be able to put forward ideas on how proposals could be revised to be successful

Adept

- direct responsibility for successfully implementing change within a large department/function or organisation
- substantial involvement in defining successful change programmes or activities
- an in-depth understanding of why culture change might be important
- experience of putting in place policies to support change

Remember that these three different levels are a way for selection panels to think about the required skills and experience needed to fill the board vacancy, and to design selection criteria. The words 'core', 'enhanced' or 'adept' might not appear in the person specification. The exact wording used for the core skills in the Core Skills Framework might also not appear in the person specification.

Setting criteria

To encourage the maximum degree of diversity within a potential applicant pool, selection panels try to set criteria at the minimum number and the minimum level required to ensure effective performance as a board member in that board's context and needs.

When setting criteria, panels might also set 'priority' criteria. These would be weighted above other criteria when assessing applicants. To help selection panels think about and design priority criteria, there are seven different categories of priority criteria in the Core Skills Framework. A priority criterion could be in one or more of these seven categories:

- **Geographic** – applicants must live or work in a specific area, there may be a need for the interests of specific communities to be represented on a board.
- **Life experience** – applicants who bring relevant first-hand life experience related to the work of the body. For example, homelessness, social exclusion, users of the services the body provides etc.
- **Community experience** – applicants who have been actively engaging with others within a community context. For example, this may include members of community organisations, NHS community health forums, school governors, local charities/fund raisers etc.
- **Work related experience/skills** – applicants with specific work related skills, knowledge or experience. This may include, for example, IT, HR, Finance, customer service, risk management etc.
- **Technical/academic knowledge** – applicants who bring technical knowledge or expertise. This may include, for example, knowledge in science, archaeology and architecture or in languages such as Gaelic etc.
- Skills which are **relevant to board priorities at a specific point in time** – this may include skills which are relevant to a new organisation being formed, major change, where there are specific challenges/issues which need to be addressed etc.
- **General skills** which need to be demonstrated **at a higher than usual level** – the nature, size or impact of the public body may mean that one of the more general skills needs to be demonstrated at a high level.

The person specification: general description

The person specification often has three parts. The first part is usually just a short, general, description about what the public body board is looking for in new members. That part might also describe, again in a general way, what the board's particular priorities might be, and how many of these priorities it might ask applicants to be able to demonstrate. The first part might also describe whether there are groups that the board is very keen to receive applications from. This is the sort of description that is usually in the advertisement.

It's important to look at the 'Applicant information pack' where there will be the detailed person specification.

The person specification: priority criteria

The next part of the person specification is usually where the detail is and it will be in the applicant information pack. The person specification will usually have a description of 'priority criteria'. Priority criteria are those which are most important to the public body board at the current time. When applicants are tested against criteria the selection panel will give most weight to performance against the priority criteria. Note that the words 'criteria' or 'criterion' are not always used and that words like 'skills and experience' might be used instead.

The person specification: essential and desirable criteria

The final part of the person specification is where the essential and desirable criteria are given. These are often, but not always, more general skills, qualities and experience that might be common to board member positions. There will usually be similarities with the Core Skills.

It's important that an applicant has examples to describe how they meet the priority and essential criteria. However, the desirable criteria are just that: desirable not priority or essential. Lack of experience in a desirable criterion should not discourage people from applying.

Descriptors

In the person specification, the selection panel will describe the sorts of experience and the depth of experience that might illustrate how a criterion is met. That is usually under a heading like 'Descriptors' or 'What does this mean?' Remember that these are examples and they are meant to help applicants to understand a bit more about the detail of the criterion.

Methods of assessment: how will the criteria be tested?

The selection panel will match assessment methods against the criteria for selection, and the level needed for any criterion.

The person specification will describe the stage in the application process when a criterion will be assessed. There are two main assessment stages in the application

process and these are usually the application stage, and the interview stage. The application stage might be an application form, or a letter of interest, or something else: the person specification will have the information. The interview stage might include other forms of assessment as well as an interview, like a discussion about a board paper: again, the person specification will have the information.

Here are some examples:

General description and person specification for a Member of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (December 2017: one member sought)

General description taken from the advertisement (this is an excerpt)

Appointment to the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)

If you are interested in or have a background in Transport Accessibility, Transport Scotland's advisory committee to Scottish Ministers on making transport more accessible for disabled people is looking to appoint a new member. If you feel that:

- you are aware and understand the issues that affect disabled people when using public transport;
- you can build and maintain relationships;
- you are able to reflect the views of disabled people, especially people with mental and hidden impairments; and
- you could challenge the Government to do more or to do things differently;

then this may be the appointment for you.

As a Member you will be expected to seek to identify issues affecting disabled travellers in Scotland, with reference to the issues where you have particular knowledge or expertise. You will also be expected to work with other members to:

- provide advice to Transport Scotland about general and specific issues concerning transport accessibility for disabled people in Scotland;
- offer comment as appropriate on consultations undertaken by Transport Scotland and others;
- engage proactively with Transport Scotland and others to try to help solve issues concerning transport accessibility for disabled people in Scotland;
- share knowledge and experience, reporting back on new developments; and
- produce an annual report providing advice to Scottish Ministers on transport accessibility for disabled people.

Ministers are looking to appoint someone who has:

- knowledge of local authority and Regional Transport Partnerships structures and their ways of working; **or**
- understanding of health and social care strategic issues in Scotland; **or**
- awareness of new technology, transport and the built environment.

Person Specification

Priority understanding/experience (applicants must demonstrate at least one of these)

| <u>Understanding/Knowledge/Awareness</u> | <u>What does this mean</u> | <u>Where we will test it</u> |
|--|---|---|
| Knowledge of local authority and Regional Transport Partnerships structures and their ways of working. | A working knowledge of current local authority and Regional Transport Partnerships structures and their ways of working including their role in public transport provision. | Application and at the final assessment stage (if shortlisted). |
| Understanding of health and social care strategic issues in Scotland. | An understanding of current health and social care strategic issues in Scotland and the transport barriers and challenges. | Application and at the final assessment stage (if shortlisted). |
| Awareness of new technology, transport and the built environment. | An awareness of how new technology can enable door-to-door travel. | Application and at the final assessment stage (if shortlisted). |

General Skills (applicants must demonstrate all of these)

| <u>Skills</u> | <u>What does this mean</u> | <u>Where we will test it</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Constructive and supportive challenge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • putting forward views in an objective way; • helping others consider their own position in a non-confrontational way. • challenging and influencing others. | At the final assessment stage (if shortlisted). |
| Analysis and decision making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using information which is available to reach conclusions; | At the final assessment stage (if shortlisted). |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explaining how your conclusions were reached; • identifying some of the implications associated with what they are considering – priorities, risks, opportunities. | |
| Longer term planning/seeing the bigger picture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to look ahead when considering issues and topics within different timeframes; • identifying relevant implications from what is being discussed, including challenges and risks; • seeing beyond your personal experience and giving consideration to other information and views. | At the final assessment stage (if shortlisted). |
| Working co-operatively and collaboratively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appreciating and sharing the knowledge and skills of colleagues; • engaging with partners and stakeholders; • able to accept a consensus decision supporting colleagues whenever possible. | At the final assessment stage (if shortlisted). |

General description and person specification for a Member of Skills Development Scotland (October 2019: 3 members sought)

General description taken from the advertisement (this is an excerpt)

Skills Development Scotland Member Appointments

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland's national skills body enabling the people and businesses of Scotland to develop and apply their skills.

We are looking for three board members to ensure a diversity of skills and experience within our board. Each of the new board members will bring one of the following priority skills to our members, and all will bring the general skills:

Priority skills

- Knowledge and understanding of how the skills system can support industry and employers, inclusive growth and broader economic development
- Knowledge and understanding of the skills necessary to deliver Digital Development and Business Transformation Experience
- Knowledge and understanding of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) industry experience (in particular Life Sciences)

General skills

- Ability to work co-operatively and collaboratively in order to influence and drive change in a complex environment
- Governance, Risk and Performance Management
- Effective Communication

Members' role and responsibilities

The main duties of SDS Board Members are to provide leadership, governance, direction, support and guidance to ensure that SDS delivers its functions effectively and efficiently and in accordance with the aims, policies and priorities of the Scottish Ministers. Members' corporate responsibilities, under the leadership of the SDS Chair, include:

- taking forward the strategic aims and objectives of SDS as agreed by the Scottish Ministers;

- dealing with changes which are likely to impact on the strategic aims and objectives of SDS or on the attainability of its operational targets;
- promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of budget, staff and other assets and resources by SDS consistent with the principles of [Best Value](#), including, where appropriate, participation in [shared services](#) arrangements;
- ensuring there are effective arrangements to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control;
- regularly reviewing financial and other information concerning the management and performance of SDS;
- demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times, including openness and transparency in decision making;
- acting as an ambassador for SDS and engaging with key internal and external stakeholder groups to support and advance SDS's strategic aims and objectives.

Person Specification

Priority Criteria - all applicants must provide evidence for **one** of these priority areas:

| Priority Criteria | What does this mean | How will this be tested |
|---|--|---|
| Knowledge and understanding of how the skills system can support industry and employers, inclusive growth and broader economic development | <p>We need someone who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has knowledge and understanding of industry and/or commerce in relation to the economy, preferably in one of Scotland's key sectors, and • can demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the link between skills development and inclusive growth. | This will be tested through your written application and your responses at interview. |
| Knowledge and Understanding of the skills necessary to deliver Digital Development and Business Transformation Experience | <p>We need someone who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has the knowledge and understanding necessary to oversee and/or lead a digital transformation programme of work. | This will be tested through your written application and your responses at interview. |

| Priority Criteria | What does this mean | How will this be tested |
|---|---|---|
| Knowledge and understanding of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) industry experience (in particular Life Sciences) | We need someone has knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEM related industry and/or • Life Sciences industry. | This will be tested through your written application and your responses at interview. |

Note: All of these positions require someone who has senior leadership experience in relevant areas - to be tested through your tailored career history/CV and your responses at interview.

GENERAL ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

General Skills and Personal Qualities – all applicants must demonstrate all of these.

| General Skills and Personal Qualities | What does this mean | How will this be tested |
|---|--|--|
| Ability to work co-operatively and collaboratively in order to influence and drive change in a complex environment | We need someone who can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work collaboratively and constructively across boundaries and organisations, breaking down barriers where needed to achieve success; • provide evidence of drawing on a range of influencing strategies in order to reach shared objectives; • reach consensus taking account of the views of others. | This will be tested through your written application. At interview, you will be asked to provide a prepared response to a question which will be provided to you in advance – full details will be provided in the invitation to interview. You may also be asked follow up questions by the selection panel. |

| General Skills and Personal Qualities | What does this mean | How will this be tested |
|--|---|--|
| Governance, Risk and Performance Management | <p>We need someone who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can demonstrate a successful record in identifying and managing operational risk; • can demonstrate ability to work in a strategic context; • can manage resources and demonstrate sound financial stewardship to ensure strong performance and enable continuous improvement. | <p>This will be tested through your written application and your responses at interview.</p> |
| Effective Communication | <p>We need someone who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can effectively express views and opinions and demonstrate active listening skills; • is engaging, enthusiastic and can confidently challenge and debate issues; • can help others to consider their own position in a constructive and non-confrontational way; • can scrutinise reports and ask the right questions. | <p>This will be tested through your written application, your prepared response and performance at interview. No specific questions will be asked.</p> |