

Candidate Information Booklet Chief Executive Officer

Closing Date: 12th November 2025



WHO WE ARE

SOLAS is the state agency responsible for Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland. We drive the responsiveness, innovation, transformation, sustainability and success of the FET and apprenticeship systems. We do this by setting strategy, channelling investment, leading implementation, and ensuring accountability across FET providers, with an overriding focus on the needs of their learners and apprentices.

Our Vision

To unlock the potential of individuals, communities, and enterprise through lifelong learning and workforce development.

Our Ambition

With one-in-ten adults now benefiting from learning supported by SOLAS (over 400,000 people), our ambition is to continue to expand access in the years ahead.

Established in 2013 under the Further Education and Training Act, SOLAS is an agency of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), governed by a Board, fulfilling statutory function to build an integrated FET sector to respond to the needs of learners and to that of the Irish Economy. Its mission is to fund, co-ordinate and monitor a range of FET provision to support economic and social wellbeing, while simultaneously playing its part in influencing and supporting the development of a FET sector.



SOLAS has a statutory responsibility for the effective governance and regulation of the FET sector and, in exercising its mandate, its general functions, as set out in the Further Education and Training Act 2013, include:

- Lead the preparation, submission, and implementation of the FET Strategy for delivery to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, ensuring it is responsive to Ireland's evolving needs.
- Promote the value and impact of the FET sector, both nationally and internationally, highlighting its role in lifelong learning, skills development, and social inclusion.
- Coordinate, fund, and support Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and other organisations involved in delivering further education and training, fostering collaboration across the wider FET sector.
- Consult and engage with Ministers, government departments, and public bodies—including Education and Youth, Social Protection, Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, and Enterprise, Tourism and Employment—to set and review priorities for the FET sector.
- Champion equality of opportunity and advance social inclusion within the FET sector and in the wider community.
- Oversee and contribute to the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of all FET programmes, ensuring quality, relevance, and continuous improvement.
- Support and enable continuous professional learning and development for everyone involved in delivering FET, nurturing a culture of excellence and innovation.
- Deliver and share relevant research, data analysis, and knowledge management to inform the future direction of the FET sector and benefit all those impacted by FET.

See <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2013/en/act/pub/0025/index.html> for the full Further Education and Training Act 2013.

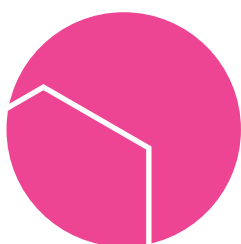
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The Role

The Board of SOLAS wishes to appoint an individual to the position of Chief Executive Officer, to lead the organisation in delivering transformative ambitions of the National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2025–2029, while shaping and driving future strategic direction for the sector beyond this strategy. This is an exciting opportunity for a strong and inspiring leader with credibility in leading complex organisations through growth and change. The post holder will continue to develop effective stakeholder relationships and engage strategically with senior decision-makers to shape the current and future standing of FET in Ireland. The successful candidate will drive outcome-focused delivery and accountability across the system, reporting to the SOLAS Board as the accountable executive for the organisation.

The CEO will provide visible leadership, ensuring SOLAS remains at the forefront of responding to Ireland's evolving skills needs, fostering innovation, inclusion, and excellence in FET. The CEO will build and sustain effective relationships with Government, ETBs, industry, and communities, championing the value and impact of FET nationally and internationally. Beyond delivering the current strategy, the CEO will play a pivotal role in developing and implementing future strategies, ensuring SOLAS adapts to emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in education, skills, and workforce transformation. The CEO will ensure robust governance, compliance, and performance management, upholding the highest standards of probity and value for money. The CEO will inspire and empower staff, fostering a high-performance, learning-oriented culture aligned with SOLAS' mission and values.

The personal qualities of the ideal candidate will include a passion, drive and commitment to improve the quality and experience of learners in the FET sector and with a strong focus on service with exceptional communication, interpersonal, negotiating and influencing skills.



Key Responsibilities and Deliverables

Under the following headings, the key responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer are:

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the organisation through the development, delivery and implementation of the National FET Strategy 2025–2029, Evolving FET: Empowering Futures, and promote the pivotal role that FET plays in Irish economic and social development.
- Provide visible leadership, ensuring SOLAS remains at the forefront of responding to Ireland's evolving skills needs, fostering innovation, inclusion, and excellence in FET.
- Articulate a clear roadmap to developing a better further education system in Ireland and influence how it is achieved through collaboration and strategic dialogue across the FET sector, including ETBs, other providers, and key partners.
- Aid the organisation in the development and implementation of its new corporate values and value statements to move to a high-performance culture by ensuring a set of common and aligned values is modelled across the organisation.
- Provide inspirational leadership to all SOLAS staff that enables a learning and performance-orientated culture, where everyone understands their role in achieving the SOLAS mission and vision.
- Champion system-wide engagement and collaboration, ensuring SOLAS works with ETBs, other FET providers, Government, industry, communities, and wider stakeholders to deliver on the ambitions of the FET Strategy.
- Promote system thinking, encouraging joined-up approaches and collective action across the FET sector and with external partners to address national skills needs and drive innovation.



Operational Management

- Manage the implementation of the policies, decisions, regulatory activities and other programmes approved and/or determined by SOLAS, as well as any programmes and activities assigned to SOLAS by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science or by other members of the Government.
- Ensure the functions and associated authority delegated by the SOLAS Board to the Chief Executive, and further sub-delegated to senior leaders, are governed and discharged in a robust and effective manner with clearly defined accountability, responsibility, and authority to each individual staff member.
- Ensure the senior management team works as a high-performing team that maintains an appropriate balance of focusing on the internal and external strategic challenges and opportunities whilst overseeing the effective implementation of organisational objectives.
- Ensure a performance management systematic approach is implemented and aligns the objectives, development, and performance of individual members of staff to the achievement of the strategic objectives and business plan objectives.

Financial Management

- Maintain the highest level of compliance with legislation, corporate governance, public sector directives and act with the highest level of probity, providing value for money for the resources entrusted to SOLAS.

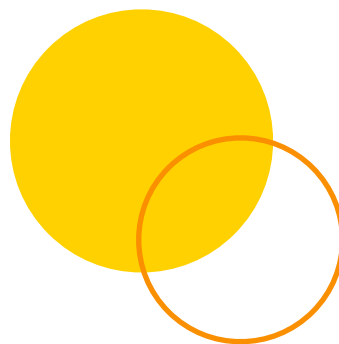
Engagement

- Represent the organisation and its interests as principal spokesperson to government departments, senior civil servants, Oireachtas, employers, unions, other providers, system partners, and public service users.
- When requested to do so, appear before the Oireachtas Committees to account for the work of SOLAS.

General

- As the most accountable person in SOLAS, ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.
- Ensure the objectives as set out in the current FET Strategy are delivered and reported on a regular basis to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.
- Support the Board, and Board Sub Committees, in the discharge of their responsibilities through the provision of advice, corporate performance and risk management reporting as well as structured and precise information regarding the work of SOLAS.
- Such other duties as SOLAS may, from time to time, reasonably require.

This role profile is not intended to be an exhaustive list of duties, and the successful candidate may be required to take on additional work that the Board deems appropriate. The role of CEO will evolve with the continuing development of SOLAS, and this role profile is not contractual and is liable to change over time.



The Individual

SOLAS is seeking an authentic public service leader who has:

- A track record of achievement and delivery at senior management level in complex environments.
- Experience in driving transformation and leading organisations through growth and change.
- Ability to relate effectively with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders, including government departments, Board members, staff representatives, and system partners.
- A system-wide approach, seeing connections, risks, and opportunities for innovation in the wider environment.
- Ability to build and support complex cross-functional and inter-agency teams.
- Demonstrated achievement in managing a varied portfolio in a devolved management structure.
- Strategic thinking and strong analytical skills, with the ability to evaluate complex information, solve problems, and make effective decisions.

- Political sensitivity and understanding of the complexities and drivers within a demanding stakeholder environment.
- Capacity to quickly acquire a well-developed understanding of the FET sector and its relationship to economic and social development at all levels – international, EU, national, and regional.
- Ability to work with professionals and senior decision makers at local and national level within the Irish education system.
- Experience of public speaking and active engagement in the media, with proven ability to communicate effectively and concisely with diverse audiences.
- Passion, drive, and commitment to improving the quality and experience of learners in the FET sector, with a strong focus on service.
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills, with expertise in influencing, negotiating, and networking at senior levels.



The Selection Process

Note: Lansdowne Executive Search have been appointed to administer this competition on behalf of SOLAS.

How to Apply

To apply, please email Seán McDonagh, Partner, Lansdowne Executive Search Limited at sean.mcdonagh@lansdownesearch.ie or for a confidential discussion please call Seán on +353 87 796 1062.

What is Required?

You are required to submit:

- i) a short cover letter/ personal statement (i.e.no more than 2 pages) outlining why you wish to be considered for the post and where you believe your skills, experience and values meet the requirements of the role

and

- ii) A comprehensive CV, including an organisation chart (See Senior Executive CV Guidance note [here](#)).

Only applications submitted online by the closing date will be accepted. It is your responsibility to ensure all documents are included in your application for it to be considered. Please note that omission of any or part of the requested application documentation will render the application incomplete.

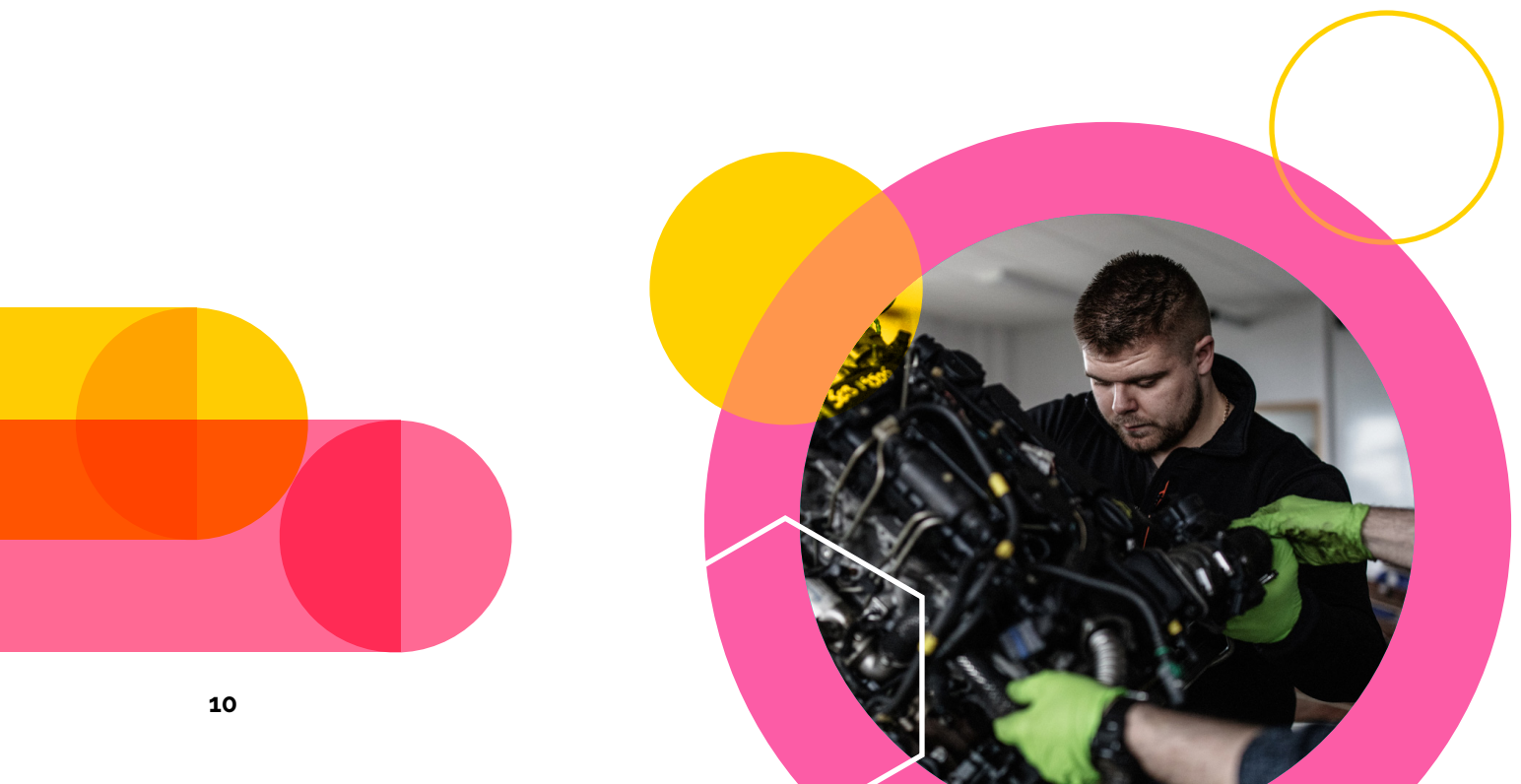
If you feel you would benefit from a confidential discussion about any aspect of this opportunity or if you require assistance or reasonable accommodation during the recruitment process please email sean.mcdonagh@lansdownesearch.ie

The Selection Process may include:

- the shortlisting of candidates, on the basis of the information contained in their application
- a competitive preliminary interview
- completion of an online questionnaire(s)
- work sample/role play/media exercise, and any other tests or exercises that may be deemed appropriate.
- a competitive final interview which will include a presentation
- reference checks and any other checks as to character and suitability deemed appropriate.

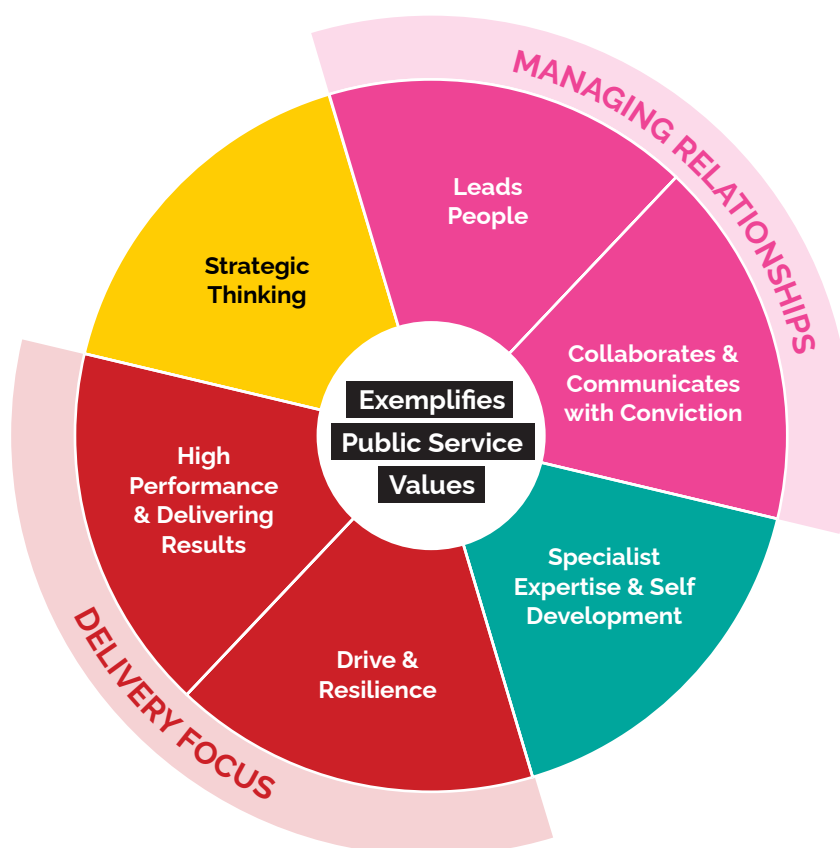
Shortlisting

Normally the number of applications received for a position exceeds that required to fill the position. While a candidate may meet the eligibility requirements of the competition, if the numbers applying for the position are such that it would not be practical to interview everyone, SOLAS may decide to curtail the number of applicants that will be called to interview. In this respect, SOLAS through the Executive Search partner will provide for the employment of a shortlisting process to select a group of individuals for interview who, based on an examination of the application forms, appear to be the most suitable for the position. An expert board will examine the application forms against a pre-determined criteria based on the requirements of the position. This is not to suggest that other candidates are necessarily unsuitable or incapable of undertaking the job, rather that there are some candidates who, based on their application, appear to be better qualified and/or have more relevant experience. It is, therefore, in your own interest to provide a detailed and accurate account of your qualifications/experience on the application.



Key Competencies for the Role of Chief Executive Officer

The attention of candidates is drawn to the key competencies model that has been developed for posts at CEO level (equivalent to Assistant Secretary Level) which reflects the complex environment in which this position will operate.



Exemplifies Public Service Values

Effective Performance is:

- Serving the Government and people of Ireland.
- Acting at all times with integrity.
- Treating others with respect.
- Being responsible for own actions.
- Operating with professionalism and probity.

Strategic Thinking

Effective Performance is:

- Creating a vision for the organisation and sector and anticipating the requirements to deliver it.
- Analysing complex issues quickly and anticipating knock-on consequences.
- Taking a system-wide approach and seeing connections, risks and the potential for innovation in the wider environment.
- Leading on the implementation of risk assessment practices and engaging in balanced risk taking.
- Showing courage in making difficult decisions.

Managing Relationships: Leads People

Effective Performance is:

- Being a visible and energetic leader who fully engages others.
- Building and supporting cross functional and interdepartmental teams.
- Delegating responsibility and ensuring accountability in others.
- Setting challenging goals and implementing effective performance management.
- Coaching and supporting others to optimise their contribution and development.

Managing Relationships: Collaborates and Communicates with Conviction

Effective Performance is:

- Playing a full and active part on the senior team in shaping and leading the Authority.
- Communicating professionally and credibly, managing the expectations of others.
- Skilfully negotiating and influencing with conviction.
- Anticipating political sensitivities and complexities and responding in an informed and constructive manner.
- Building and maintaining effective working relationships with key stakeholders.
- Facilitating collaboration, partnerships and networks internally and externally to achieve common goals.

Delivery Focus: High Performance and Delivering Results

Effective Performance is:

- Assuming accountability for own actions and decisions.
- Ensuring the full range of management disciplines are used to deliver quality services at pace and within budget.
- Challenging processes to improve organisational capacity, responsiveness and citizen focus.
- Ensuring successful implementation through a range of delivery methods, including use of external parties.
- Focusing effort on priority tasks to maximise results.
- Ensuring a strong feedback loop between policy development and operations.

Delivery Focus: Drive and Resilience

Effective Performance is:

- Showing initiative and sustaining high levels of personal drive and energy.
- Leading and managing multiple complex priorities effectively.
- Speaking own mind with confidence and conviction.
- Keeping perspective and utilizing personal support strategies to help maintain focus and bounce back from disappointments.
- Staying positive and professional in the face of difficult situations.

Specialist Knowledge and Self Development

Effective Performance is:

- Maintaining a sound knowledge of organisational, sectoral, political and
- Continuously updating and demonstrating expertise in relevant areas.
- Being self-aware and seeking opportunities to act on areas for own development.
- Seeking feedback and reviewing own practices and behaviours.
- Being regarded as an expert in own area(s) of specialism.

SOLAS is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to fostering an inclusive workplace which values and benefits from the diversity of the workforce.



APPENDIX

Principal Conditions of Service

General

The appointment of Chief Executive Officer of SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna) is made under the Further Education and Training Act (2013), specifically as set out under Section 23 of said Act (Chief Executive). Recruitment will be carried out in line with the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) Code of Practice for the Appointment to positions in the Civil and Public Service.

Probation

A probationary period of nine months applies to this role.

Remuneration

The rate of total remuneration for the post of Chief Executive Officer (effective 01 August 2025) is as follows:

Personal pension contribution (PPC) rate: €236,893 per annum.

This rate will apply where the appointee is newly recruited to the civil or public service or is an existing civil or public servant appointed on or after 6th April 1995 and is required to make a personal pension contribution.

A different rate may apply where the appointee is a civil or public servant recruited before 6th April 1995 and who is not required to make a personal pension contribution.

Tenure

This appointment will be on a fixed-term contract basis for five years.

Location

The headquarters of SOLAS are currently based in Castleforbes House, Dublin 1.

Hours of Attendance

Hours of attendance will be fixed from time to time but will amount to not less than 35 hours per week, excluding lunch breaks. 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 their 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.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public holidays, the annual leave for this position is 30 working days.

Sick Leave

Pay during properly certified sick absence, will be in accordance with relevant SOLAS policies and the requirements of the Public Service Sick Leave Scheme.





Superannuation and Retirement

The successful candidate 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, this means being offered appointment based on membership of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ("Single Scheme"). Full details of the Single Scheme can be found at <http://www.singlepensionscheme.gov.ie/>. The maximum retirement age for most Single Scheme members is age 70.

Different terms and conditions related to superannuation and retirement may apply to candidates who have 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 is on special leave with or without pay. The pension entitlements and maximum retirement age, if applicable, of such appointees will be determined in the context of their public service employment history.

Important Notice

Candidates should note that different terms and conditions may apply if, immediately prior to appointment, the appointee is already a serving civil or public servant.

The above outlines the principal conditions of service and is not intended to be a 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.

Eligibility to Compete and Certain Restrictions

Citizenship

Candidates should note that eligibility to compete for posts is confined to citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) or to non-EEA nationals with a valid work permit. The EEA consists of the Member States of the European Union along with Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Swiss citizens under EU agreements may also apply.

Certain Restrictions on Eligibility

Eligibility to compete may be affected where applicants were formerly employed by a Public Sector body and previously availed of a Public Service Redundancy or Incentivised Retirement Scheme including:

- **Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER)**
- **Department of Health and Children Circular (7/2010)**
- **Department of Environment, Community & Local Government Circular (Letter LG (P) 06/2013)**
- **Collective Agreement: Redundancy Payments to the Public Service**

Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER):

It is a condition of the Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER) as set out in Department of Finance [Circular 12/2009](#) that retirees, under that Scheme, are debarred from applying for another position in the same employment or the same sector. Therefore, such retirees may not apply for this position.

Department of Health and Children Circular (7/2010):

The Department of Health Circular 7/2010 dated 1 November 2010 introduced a Targeted Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme and Voluntary Redundancy Schemes (VRS). It is a condition of the VER scheme that persons availing of the scheme will not be eligible for re-employment in the public health sector or in the wider public service or in a body wholly or mainly funded from public moneys. The same prohibition on re-employment applies under the VRS, except that the prohibition is for a period of 7 years, after which time any re-employment will require the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. People who availed of either of these schemes are not eligible to compete in this competition.

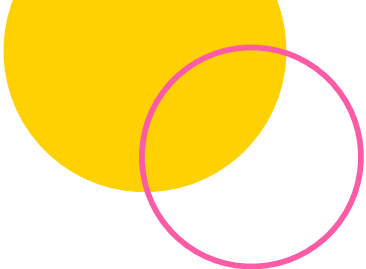
Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (Circular Letter LG (P) 06/2013)

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 Sector 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. Thereafter, the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation will be required prior to re-employment. 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).

Collective Agreement: Redundancy Payments to Public Servants

The Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation letter dated 28th June 2012 to Personnel Officers introduced, with effect from 1st June 2012, a Collective Agreement which had been reached between the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation and the Public Services Committee of the ICTU in relation to ex-gratia Redundancy Payments to Public Servants. It is a condition of the Collective Agreement that persons availing of the agreement will not be eligible for re-employment in the public service by any public service body (as defined by the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts 2009 – 2011) for a period of 2 years from termination of the employment. Thereafter the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation will be required prior to re-employment. People who availed of this scheme and who may be successful in this competition will have to prove their eligibility (expiry of period of non-eligibility) and the Minister's consent will have to be secured prior to employment by any public service body.





Declaration

Applicants will be required to declare whether they have previously availed of a Public Service scheme of incentivised early retirement. 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.

Additional Superannuation Contribution

This appointment is subject to the Additional Superannuation Contribution (**ASC**) in accordance with the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017

Pension Accrual

The Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Act 2012 introduced a **40-year limit on total service** that can be counted towards pension where a person has been a member of more than one pre-existing public service pension scheme. This may have implications for any appointee who has acquired pension rights in a previous public service employment.

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 their re-employment that pension will be subject to **abatement** in accordance with 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 body 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 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

Please note that where an individual has retired from a Civil/Public Service body on the grounds of ill-health their pension from that employment may be subject to review in accordance with the rules of ill-health retirement within the pension scheme of that employment.

Candidates should note that canvassing will disqualify.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The above 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(s).

**SOLAS – An tSeirbhís Oideachais
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SOLAS
learning works



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-Funded by the
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