

# ~ TLAC ROLE & PROCEDURES ~



*Version 1.3*  
*Effective 1 June 2016*

# 1 | Role of TLAC

The Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) was established in 1984. The Committee's function is to recommend candidates to Ministers and Government for the most senior positions in the Civil Service – at Assistant Secretary level and upwards. By carrying out this function in an independent manner and by making its decisions strictly on the basis of the relative merit of the candidates for the positions concerned, TLAC aims to strengthen the management structure of the Civil Service, and to provide a means by which the best candidates can aspire to fulfilling their potential.

TLAC operates under the license and requirements of the Commission for Public Service Appointments.

- *Government has a policy of open recruitment*
- *The role of TLAC is to support that and ensure that the recruitment and selection process for the most senior Civil Service posts is accessible to the widest pool of qualified candidates from all sectors.*
- *Subject to certain exceptions, TLAC deals with all posts at and above Assistant Secretary level or equivalent in the Civil Service.*
- *TLAC is to identify the best candidate for each vacancy and to make recommendations to the relevant Minister or Government as appropriate.*
- *TLAC operates to highest standards of probity and professional confidentiality.*

In virtually every competition there are a number of very good candidates in addition to the successful candidate. Candidates should be aware that each person is judged on her/his suitability in the context of the particular post being filled and against the particular set of candidates who compete for that post.

TLAC also advises the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) on the effectiveness of appointments to senior positions in the Civil Service. DPER has policy responsibility for recruitment, promotion and human resources management and planning across the Civil Service. In conjunction with the relevant Department, DPER is responsible for approving which vacant or new positions are to be filled and the relevant job specification.

*TLAC comprises six Secretaries General and seven\* external members appointed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform of which one is Chairperson.*

*The current members are:*

- Dr Dorothy Scally, Professional Development Consultant (Chairperson);
- Mr Kevin Empey, Director, Willis Towers Watson
- Ms. Jane Williams, Managing Partner, Sia Partners
- Mr. Tony Keohane, former CEO & Chairman, Tesco Ltd
- Ms. Brid Horan, Non Executive Director
- Mr. Charles Dolan, Director, Consulting Ltd.
- Mr Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
- Mr Martin Fraser, Secretary General to the Government
- Ms. Niamh O'Donoghue, Secretary General, Department of Social Protection
- Mr. John Murphy, Secretary General, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Mr. Maurice Quinn, Secretary General, Department of Defence
- Mr. Jim Breslin, Secretary General, Department of Health

*\* A vacancy currently exists for a member from outside the Civil Service*

While this document is intended to give an overview of the TLAC process, TLAC is responsible for determining its own procedures and remit, subject to Government decisions as appropriate. The information in this document is therefore subject to change either generally or in relation to specific circumstances identified by TLAC as requiring adjustments in the usual procedures.

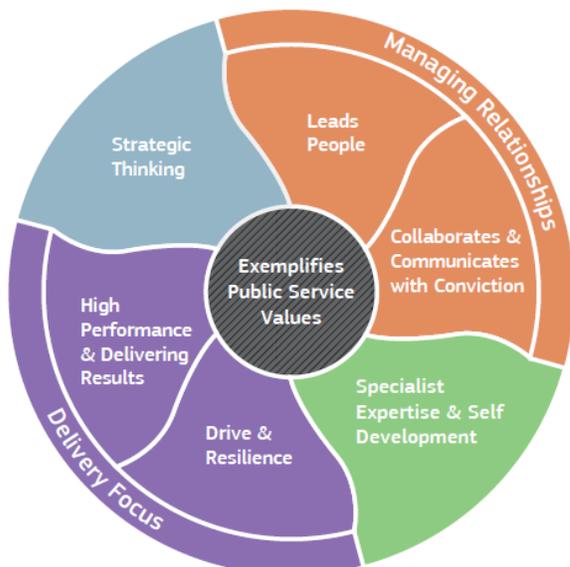
## 2 | Job Specification

Job specifications and person specifications setting out the requirements for the post are the responsibility of the hiring department and DPER, with observations provided by TLAC members. At commencement of the recruitment campaign, these are provided to the Public Appointments Service (PAS) which manages the advertisement and recruitment process for TLAC. In advance of advertising the job, PAS engages with the Secretary General of the parent Department in an effort to ascertain the key skills required for the role and to identify the current and critical issues within the organisation that would be of particular interest to potential candidates. These are summarised in a job specification that reflects the seniority and responsibility of the post and that it is open to applicants from all sectors.

## 3 | Competencies

The key competencies below have been developed for use by TLAC and are clustered into main dimensions associated with effective performance at the most senior level of the civil service. These Competencies form the basis of interviews and TLAC's assessment. Full details of the Assistant Secretary competency framework are available in the Advice Centre on the PAS website [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie)

For Assistant Secretary level posts.



### *For Secretary General level posts*

<b>Leadership</b>	Establishing Vision and Purpose   Providing Developmental Leadership
<b>Judgement</b>	Judgement and Systemic Perspective   Steering through the Political Environment   Environmental Awareness
<b>Managing Relationships</b>	Managing Critical Relationships   Communication
<b>Personal Drive for Results</b>	Managing for Results   Personal Drive and Accountability   Performance Focus   Professional Integrity

## **4 | Information Booklet & Application**

### *Presentation*

**C**andidate information booklets are prepared by the PAS in conjunction with DPER and the hiring Department, with the objective of providing easily understandable details for potential applicants from all sectors. Potential applicants can access the PAS website, [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie), for details of the job vacancy, the job title, the location, closing date for applications and a description of the purpose of the post. The Information Booklet provides further details such as the principal duties of the post, the key competencies for effective performance, eligibility requirements and the principal conditions of service. It also gives information on the selection process and attaches guidance notes on preparing a CV for the post.

### *Application*

The application for TLAC posts includes: a comprehensive CV; a cover letter outlining interest and suitability for the role and how they meet the requirements of the post; and a statement of key achievements in relation to the specific competencies for the post under consideration.

## 5 | Advertising

The advertising of all posts is organised by the PAS. The job is generally advertised by placing notices in selected national newspapers, through social media and relevant professional bodies and associations. PAS issues job alerts by email and text message to those who have registered their interest in positions at this level on the publicjobs.ie website, and circulates to Civil Service Departments as well as other Public Service Bodies.

In addition, having analysed the job and person requirements for the role, PAS seek out potential sources of candidates to create awareness of the job opportunity and what the role entails. Relevant opportunities via social media and professional bodies and associations are used by PAS to widen the applicant pool by circulating job information and creating awareness of each campaign as appropriate.

A specialised unit within PAS supplements the advertising of positions with more targeted approaches to generate awareness and interest in TLAC level positions. Contact with potential candidates focuses on raising awareness of the campaign and the opportunity to participate in the process along with all other candidates. It does not provide a commitment to an interview or any other guarantees to a candidate.

## 6 | Executive Search for Candidates

In order to ensure the widest senior level candidate pool is available for consideration, PAS in conjunction with TLAC, may arrange the support of retained Executive Search for all Secretary General positions, and by exception for specific Assistant Secretary General posts.

## 7 | Selection Process

The selection process may include any or all of the following:

- 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/assessment centre, and any other tests or exercises that may be deemed appropriate;
- a competitive interview which may include a presentation conducted by the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC)\*.

\* In the case of specialist posts, the TLAC may make special arrangements in conjunction with the PAS. TLAC may delegate the final interview to a specialist Board with TLAC participation conducted by PAS. Alternatively TLAC may include external expertise to a final TLAC panel.

## 8 | Short-listing

The short listing process is carried out by a selection Board convened by PAS with an independent chairperson. The selection Board also includes a retired Secretary General, an independent person who is a subject matter expert for the post in hand, and a TLAC representative. This process is supported by a PAS representative who oversees the process and records the deliberations of the Board. The Secretary General of the hiring Department is in attendance in an observer role to provide a briefing and clarity on the specific post and the Department.

When the services of an external Executive Search Agency are engaged, the relevant Consultant briefs the Shortlisting Board on the candidates they are submitting to the process.

The Board agrees proposed short listing criteria consistent with the scale, skills, track record and experience required for the post. These criteria are used to assess the candidates in a consistent manner based on the information contained in the applications, CVs and covering letters/personal statements.

Based on the information provided by the candidates, the Board assesses candidates' suitability and provides a short comment to support the assessment. The Board then

compiles a report of the shortlisted candidates going forward to the preliminary interview stage of the process. All candidates are notified of the outcome in relation to their applications.

## 9 | Preliminary Interviews

### *Attendance*

**P**reliminary interviews are usually conducted by the same selection Board that undertook the short listing process with the exception of the hiring Secretary General. A TLAC member participates for Secretary General Posts and, by exception, for specified Assistant Secretary General posts. The PAS prepares an interview guide for the role which is referenced by the selection board in conducting the preliminary interviews. A PAS representative is also in attendance for the purpose of ensuring that the interviews are conducted in a fair and consistent manner in accordance with PAS recruitment license and the Commission for Public Service Appointments Code of Practice. The PAS representative provides assistance and guidance to the Board and takes the official record of the process.

The interview will explore each candidate's CV, track record, competencies and suitability in regard to the post under consideration. Based on the interview and documentation, the Preliminary Interview Board identifies those candidates who in the Board's judgement are suitable for progression to final interview, generally to a maximum of five candidates.

### *Notification of candidates*

**T**he Preliminary Interview Board is asked for feedback comments for each candidate and these comments are recorded by the PAS representative. The result of the preliminary interview is issued by PAS by telephone and/or email following the preliminary interviews.

On request from candidates, PAS will provide feedback on their performance at the preliminary interview when the competition has been completed.

## 10 | Information flow from Preliminary Interview to

### TLAC

- For each candidate being sent forward for final interview, the Preliminary Interview Board are asked to summarise the reason the candidate is being sent forward for consideration, areas of strengths or challenges, and whether there are areas in which the Board is of the view that the candidate should be subject to further probing.
- For posts at Assistant Secretary level, candidates are required to complete an occupational personality questionnaire the results of which are shared with the TLAC panel. Candidates are provided with a report on request when the competition has concluded.
- Candidates are also requested to prepare a presentation on a given topic relating to the post.
- The PAS application documentation for each candidate is provided to TLAC. In advance of the TLAC interview the PAS will collect three references for each candidate. The PAS Representative will brief the TLAC panel on the references in order to confirm the candidate's track record of achievement, delivery and suitability.
- For posts at Secretary General level, candidates are required to complete an in-depth executive assessment process. The assessment process is undertaken by appropriately qualified professionals. The Assessor will meet with the TLAC panel in advance of the interview and brief it on the results of the assessment. Candidates will be provided with feedback on their assessment on request following completion of the process.

## 11 | TLAC Interviews

### *Attendance*

- TLAC interviews are generally conducted by sub-panels of the Top Level Appointments Committee, each comprising two Secretaries General, two external members and chaired by the TLAC Chairperson. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform gave an undertaking to ensure that there is adequate rotation among the

members in the composition of interview boards. The PAS Representative will attend to brief TLAC on the preliminary stages of the process, candidates' references and the occupational personality questionnaires, and to provide support to TLAC and candidates during the process.

#### *Secretary General Role*

- The retired or retiring Secretary General does not attend at their successors' interview; he/she briefs the TLAC panel about the role in advance of the interviews and attends the conclusion of TLAC deliberations.
- For Assistant Secretary General posts, the Secretary General of the hiring Department may participate in the TLAC interview and the later deliberations.

In the case of specialist posts, the TLAC may make special arrangements in conjunction with the PAS. TLAC may delegate the final interview to a specialist Board with TLAC participation conducted by PAS. Alternatively TLAC may include external expertise to a final TLAC panel.

#### *Format of Interviews*

- TLAC assesses who best out of the number of candidates before it should be recommended to the Minister/Government for a particular post.
- In advance of the interview, candidates are provided with a relevant topic/question and allowed 8 -10 minutes at the start of the interview to present on the topic. The interview will then proceed and, as the interview concludes, candidates will be asked if there is anything further they wish to say to the panel.

#### *Interview Duration:*

- Typically, TLAC interviews are 45-60 minutes in length.

### *Number of candidates recommended*

- TLAC will recommend one candidate for appointment to the relevant Minister in the case of posts below Secretary General level. For Secretary General posts, TLAC will recommend up to three names in alphabetical order to the Government of those candidates considered to be of the standard required for the post.

### *Notification of Candidates and Feedback*

- All candidates are contacted by either a Secretary General member of TLAC or the TLAC Secretary with news of the outcome of their interview.
- Candidates may seek feedback from the Chair of TLAC and from the Secretary General of the hiring Department for candidates within the Department.

## **11 | Support & Development of the Senior Public Service**

**T**he Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with the Senior Public Service carries out programmes of development for existing and newly appointed civil servants. These include: formal induction, coaching / mentoring support, management development, succession planning, etc. Such programmes and supports are of great benefit to new and serving senior civil servants in carrying out the standard of achievement needed in their roles.