

**Appointments to the Board of An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
(SOLAS), the Further Education and Training Authority**

Closing Date: 15:00 on Tuesday 9th January 2024

**State Boards Division
Public Appointments Service
Chapter House, 26 – 30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1**

Telephone Number: 353 1 858 7440

Email: stateboards@publicjobs.ie

stateboards.ie operates under the auspices of the Public Appointments Service and is committed to a policy of equal opportunity.

The Public Appointments Service (PAS), established under statute in 2004, provides an independent shared service in recruitment, assessment and selection to organisations across the Civil and Public Services. PAS also has responsibility for providing an open, accessible, rigorous and transparent system to support Ministers in making appointments to State Boards. Our dedicated website, www.stateboards.ie, is the channel through which the PAS advertises vacancies on State Boards. It is also the means through which accomplished, experienced and qualified people, including people who might not previously have been identified as available for appointment, can then apply to be considered for particular vacancies.

Membership of State Boards

High standards of corporate governance in all State Agencies, whether in the commercial or non-commercial sphere, are critical to ensuring a positive contribution to the State's overall social and economic development.

Members of State Boards are appointed to act on behalf of the citizen to oversee the running of the affairs of state bodies. State bodies must serve the interests of the taxpayer, pursue value for money in their endeavours (including managing risk appropriately), and act transparently as public entities. Members of State Boards, and the relevant management team, are accountable for the proper management of the organisation.

Board members should act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the State body, subject to the objectives set by Government. In that regard and in accordance with 13.2 of the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards, "it is advisable that no member of a State Board should serve more than two full terms of appointment or should hold appointments to more than two State Boards."

The [Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016](#) (the Code) provides a framework for the application of best practice in corporate governance by both commercial and non-commercial State bodies.

In order to be an effective contributor on a State Board it is recommended that members should:

- bring independent and objective scrutiny to the oversight of the organisation;
- be prepared to be challenging when necessary while being supportive to the delivery of organisational strategy and objectives;
- be equipped to offer considered advice on the basis of sound judgement and experience; and
- be prepared to make a time commitment to their work commensurate with their role.

Appointments to the Board of An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS), the Further Education and Training Authority

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Location: | Dublin |
| Number of Vacancies: | 2 ordinary member vacancies. Other vacancies arising in the next 12 months may be filled from this panel. |
| Remuneration: | €11,970. It should be noted that, in line with the 'One Person One Salary' principle, no public servant will be entitled to receive remuneration in the form of board fees, save for situations that are statutorily provided for e.g. Worker Directors. |
| Time Requirements: | There are eight scheduled half day meetings per year. Additional meetings can be convened if required, but this is by exception. Agenda and papers for each meeting are posted on a digital site one week in advance of a scheduled board meeting. Meetings usually last two/three hours and require up to two hours preparation. The successful candidate may be required to sit on one of the four Board's sub committees or advisory committee. |

Candidates' attention is also drawn to the provisions of the Code in relation to Audit and Risk Committee membership which can be found [here](#).

1. Background

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS), the Further Education and Training Authority, was established in October 2013 under the Further Education and Training Act, 2013. Under the aegis of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, SOLAS is responsible for the strategic co-ordination and funding of the Further Education and Training (FET) Sector.

Role of the Board

The legislation sets out the overall structure of SOLAS and provides for its functions in the areas of:

- the development and implementation of a national strategy for the delivery of further education and training;
- consultation with key stakeholders in relation to the provision of further education and training;
- coordination with the National Public Employment Service, Intreo, in the delivery of further education and training programmes to those seeking employment;
- advancing monies to the Education and Training Boards and other training bodies;
- assessing whether bodies engaged in the provision of further education and training programmes perform their functions in an economic, efficient, and effective manner; and
- developing and facilitating the development of new and existing further education and training programmes; conducting research relating to the functions of SOLAS.

Funding for further education and training is provided by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science from the Exchequer (central funds) and the National Training Fund. SOLAS is the main recipient of FET funding and allocates the bulk of this funding to the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to deliver FET programmes and services at local level.

2. The Board

Section 10 of the Further Education and Training Act 2013 states that the Board of SOLAS shall consist of 13 members appointed by the Minister, of whom one shall be the Chairperson, one shall be the Chief Executive Officer, and one shall represent the interests of learners in the further education and training sector.

Of the remaining 10 members, two shall be appointed following their nomination by the Minister for Social Protection, while eight shall be appointed by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science following consultation with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Social Protection.

The Board meets regularly, and members may also be required to serve on committees established by the Board. The current SOLAS Board and Advisory Committees to the Board are:-

- Board Committees: Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), Strategic Planning Committee, Workforce and Organisational Development Committee.
- Advisory Committee to the Board: National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee (NAAC).

The Act provides that members of the Board shall have experience and expertise in matters connected with the functions of SOLAS or matters connected with finance, trade, commerce, corporate governance or public administration.

The Board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of SOLAS by leading and directing the Body's activities. It should also have the capability to provide strategic guidance to the organisation, and monitor the activities and effectiveness of its management.

Appointments to the Board of SOLAS shall be made with due regard to best practice in terms of gender balance requirements.

Current composition of the board is:

| Name | Expiry Date | Term | Position | Basis of appointment |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Sean Aylward | 28/11/2024 | 1 st | Chairperson | Section 10(2) FET Act 2013 |
| Catrina Sheridan | 26/10/2025 | 2 nd | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |
| Niamh O'Reilly | 24/03/2024 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(c) Learner Rep |
| Orla Coughlan | 24/03/2024 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |
| Kevin Marshall | 06/07/2027 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |
| Siobhan O'Shea | 06/07/2027 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |
| Paul Cremmins | 24/03/2024 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(b) MSP Nominee |
| Yvonne McNulty | 30/06/2024 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(b) MSP Nominee |
| Sheila Gallagher | 30/05/2028 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Niall O'Donnellan | 30/05/2028 | 1 st | Ordinary Member | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |
| Vacancy | | | | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |
| Vacancy | | | | Section 10(3)(a) FET Act 2013 |
| Andrew Brownlee | 30/08/2024 | | Ex-Officio, CEO | Ex officio - CEO |

3. Person Specification

The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for consideration for appointment to the Board of SOLAS.

Candidates' attention is drawn to the provisions of the Code in relation to the role of a Board member, where the principle states: -

- Each State body should be headed by an effective Board which is collectively responsible for the long-term sustainability of the body.
- Non-executive Board members should bring an independent judgement to bear on issues of strategy, performance resources, key appointments and standard of conduct.

Details on the role of Board Members can be found in Section 3 of the Code which can be found [here](#).

Essential

Candidates must demonstrate evidence of extensive experience in areas relevant to the functions of the Board in their application in one or more of the following areas:

A. Corporate Governance and Compliance

Candidates must demonstrate relevant experience, at an appropriately senior level, that clearly demonstrates knowledge of, and experience in dealing with corporate governance, compliance and accountability issues, including legal issues.

B. Understanding of workplace relations including employees' perspective on skills requirements and development

Candidates must demonstrate proven experience at a sufficiently senior level representing employees in different fora. They must demonstrate a capacity to understand the employee perspective on skills requirements and skills development and demonstrate engagement with employers in meeting employees' skills needs.

C. Senior Management Experience

Candidates must have significant experience in a senior management role, from within the public or private sectors and a career history which demonstrates evidence of knowledge and experience of one or more of the following:

- Government policy and priorities on job creation and tackling unemployment;

- The Further Education and Training sector in Ireland including the Apprenticeship sector; and
- Engagement with employers in meeting skills needs.

D. Representing the needs and interests of Learners

Candidates must have experience of representing the needs and interests of learners in receipt of further education and training, either at local or national level.

E. Capacity for Strategic Thinking in Areas Relevant to the Functions of the Board

Candidates must be able to demonstrate their capacity for strategic thinking in the areas relevant to the functions of the board in one or more of the following:

- A significant experience in the area of policy development and evaluation.
- A significant experience in the area of public service reform.
- A significant experience in the challenges of delivering Further Education and Training effectively in the changing world of work.

Desirable

- Commitment to further education and training including life-long learning;
- Proven ability to critically analyse, and constructively challenge, information;
- An understanding of good governance practices;
- The ability to work effectively and cohesively with others;
- Outward perspective on the needs of major stakeholders, including other areas of Government, enterprise, trade, commerce, research, the community and voluntary sectors and learners;
- Experience of serving as a Board member;

The Minister encourages applications from diverse, qualified candidates to ensure the Board is a true reflection of Irish society and shall have regard to the desirability for gender balance, diversity and inclusion on the Board as the Minister considers appropriate and determines from time to time when making appointments, in line with the updated [Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016](#).

In order to qualify for appointment, a person must not have any legal impediment or conflicts of interest likely to interfere with his/her ability to assume the role of a member of the Board. Please give careful consideration to the possibility of any potential conflict of interest that may exist and address this in your cover letter. The Assessment Panel may decide, based on the perceived level of conflict, not to forward your name for consideration.

The roles and responsibilities of Board Members are described in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 which is available here [Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies](#).

4. Term of Appointment

The two appointments to the Board will be in line with section 6 (a) and (b) of the Act:

- Two members for an initial period of five years with an option to extend the term of engagement for a second term for a period of three years (maximum of eight years in total).

Appointments are subject to:

- The membership of any member of the Board may be terminated by the Minister at any time, on the basis of reasons to be stated by the Minister.
- A member of the Board may resign his or her membership of the Board by notice in writing sent or given to the Minister, and the resignation shall take effect on the day on which the Minister receives the notice.
- A board member ceasing to be qualified for office. Section 11(3) of the Further Education and Training Act 2013 refers.
- A member of Seanad Éireann, is elected as a member of either House of the Oireachtas or as a representative in the European Parliament, elected to the European Parliament.

5. Submitting your Application

Having considered the general suitability criteria for membership of a State Board, you should consider carefully how your background and experience fits with the specific appointment criteria set out in the Person Specification section in this booklet.

Your submission should be made via the following link www.stateboards.ie together with your **Curriculum Vitae** and a **cover letter** (see Appendix 1 of this booklet for help with the online process).

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please take care when submitting your expression of interest. As the Assessment Panel will generally make its recommendation(s) based on consideration of the documentation which you submit, it is most important that you do the following:

1. *Ensure your Cover Letter (and supporting CV) clearly specifies how your particular background and experience meets the requirements of the Board position(s) specified in this booklet, and*
2. *Fully answer any supplementary questions which are presented to you as part of our online application process.*

This will help ensure that the Assessment Panel is as informed as possible as to the basis for your candidature and why you believe you are a person who could potentially be appointed to this State Board. **Please only include information that is directly relevant to the particular role for which you are applying.**

If you have any questions regarding the application process please email stateboards@publicjobs.ie

6. Assessment Process

An Assessment Panel (the “Panel”) will be convened by PAS to consider and assess the applications received by PAS. The Panel will:

- review and discuss the expressions of interest received against the specific appointment criteria for the role, as advertised in this Information Booklet;
- assess potential candidates further once they meet the specified appointment criteria by undertaking any or all of the following steps:
 - Consideration of the written applications; and/or
 - Meeting/conference call; and/or
 - Referee checks; and/or
 - Any other selection or verification method deemed appropriate (this may include PAS requiring statutory declarations from shortlisted applicants as to the bona fides of the qualifications and experience contained in their applications).
- arrive at a shortlist of the most suitably qualified candidates (based on the information provided by the candidate) to be sent forward for consideration by the Minister.

Candidates who have been brought forward in this process may form a panel from which future vacancies may be filled during the course of the year.

Please note that PAS will not be responsible for any expenses incurred by candidates as part of our selection process.

7. Confidentiality

Subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts, 2014, applications will be treated in strict confidence. All enquires, applications and all aspects of the proceedings are treated as strictly confidential and are not disclosed to anyone, outside those directly involved in that aspect of the process.

Certain items of information, not specific to any individual, are extracted from computer records for general statistical purposes.

8. Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 provides that the processing of personal data shall be lawful where such processing is necessary for the performance of a statutory function of a controller. PAS is mandated by statute under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act, 2004 to act as the centralised assessment and selection body for the civil service and to carry out all the procedures necessary to undertake the recruitment, assessment and selection of suitable candidates for appointment. By submitting your personal data (including your name, address, contact details and details of your education and work history contained in your curriculum vitae and cover letter) via publicjobs.ie, you acknowledge that such data may be used by the PAS and disclosed to and used by client departments, in connection with its statutory roles to assist and advise relevant Ministers in relation to appointments to the boards of State bodies. The information contained in your publicjobs profile is yours to manage, amend, update or delete as appropriate. For more detailed information on our Data Protection Policy, please see our [Code of Practice for the Protection of Personal Data in the Public Appointments Service](#).

If your application is assessed and you are considered to be suitable for appointment your C.V. and cover letter, (and any additional supplementary information requested as part of the application process), will be forwarded to the State Board Liaison Officer in the relevant Department. Once it obtains your personal data, the Department will act as data controller of

such data and will retain it for up to one year following the appointment/s. Unless you request the withdrawal of your application, such data may be used in considering your suitability for other similar vacancies/roles that arise for a period of up to one year for this Board.

APPENDIX 1

Submitting your application:

In order to submit your application, you should take the following steps:

1. Go to www.stateboards.ie.
2. On the bar at the top of the page click on "Available Appointments".
3. This brings you to a page with all our advertised vacancies. Select whichever position you would like to apply for (you are welcome to apply for more than one position if you wish).
4. On the relevant page please click on the "apply for position" button at the bottom of the page
5. This will bring you to a page on www.publicjobs.ie and, if you already have a publicjobs.ie account, will prompt you for your username and password. If you do not have an account, you will be asked to create one.
6. Once you input your details you will be brought to a page where there is a prompt in the middle of the page which says "apply here". Click on the link to the online application form beside it.
7. A form will appear on your screen, some of the text boxes will be populated with information from your publicjobs.ie profile (Name, address etc.). You will need to complete the rest of the fields and enter your name and the date at the bottom of the form.
8. If there is a supplementary question, ensure that your response complies with the word limit and that it does not contain any special characters (i.e. %, & etc.) or you may receive an error message and will be unable to submit your application.
9. Click on "continue".
10. You will then be brought to a screen where you should upload your CV and Cover Letter. These are required documents and your application cannot be processed without them. Once you have selected these and uploaded them, please click on the "submit" button at the bottom of the page.
11. You will receive an e-mail confirmation (to the address listed in your publicjobs.ie profile) to confirm that your application has been submitted.