



Northern Ireland
Assembly



Senior Research Officer Assembly Grade 4

£62,549 - £64,446

Candidate Information Booklet

Completed Application Forms must be submitted no later than 12 noon (UK time) on Monday 20 November 2023

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

Foreword

Thank you for your interest in the position of Senior Research Officer in the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Assembly Commission).

The Assembly operates in a dynamic political and parliamentary environment, and as a newly appointed Senior Research Officer you will be provided with an excellent opportunity to make an important and valued contribution to Assembly business at Parliament Buildings.

Working at the Assembly offers a rewarding career. This is an exciting opportunity to join a high-profile organisation with a dedicated and inclusive team.

In turn, we offer a competitive salary, excellent pension provision and a range of other [employee benefits listed on the Recruitment website](#).

Please read the information provided in the candidate information booklet carefully and if you are interested in this post, 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 Eileen Regan at Eileen.Regan@niassembly.gov.uk or telephone 02890 521615.

Tara Caul

Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services

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 (or MLAs) 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 MLAs. 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 MLAs 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 MLAs. The Assembly Commission is independent of the Executive and the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

The Assembly Commission has approximately 370 staff and an annual revenue budget of £51m. [Our organisational structure is illustrated on the Northern Ireland Assembly Recruitment website.](#)

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About the Role

The Senior Research Officer (SRO) is a member of the Research and Information Service (RaISe) Management Team (RMT). Three SROs, the Senior Statistics Officer (SSO) and the Head of RaISe form the RMT and are responsible for the delivery of professional, evidence based and non-partisan research and information services to the Assembly and the Assembly Commission. The SRO leads a team of research and information professionals that provide the core subject expertise pertaining to the Assembly's legislative and scrutiny responsibilities. SROs are responsible for ensuring the delivery of evidence-based research analyses that are routinely published and delivered orally in open Committee sessions.

The Person

You will be responsible for leading and managing a team delivering non-partisan evidence-based research and information services directly to Assembly Members, Committees, the Assembly Commission and senior management. As a member of the RMT you will be responsible for inter-team collaboration, improvements to research services and planning of research in support of the Assembly's scrutiny responsibilities.

You should have the ability to communicate clearly and effectively as you carry out your new and important role.

Core Responsibilities

The main duties and responsibilities of the post are to:

- Manage one of the five RaISe teams, including responsibility for managing research and information demands and the delivery of evidence-based research analyses and information products that support the Assembly's legislative and scrutiny responsibilities.
- Effectively manage the team's staff and resources including;

planning and delivering the team's forward work programmes comprising; the Executive's Programme for Government, Committee inquiries, Private Members' Bills, Executive legislation, plenary business and Member enquiries.

- Ensure RalSe service standards are met, business plans delivered within agreed deadlines and research and information products meet customer needs.
- Plan, balance and allocate team workloads through establishing workplans based on engagement with Committee Clerks, Assembly Commission management, departmental officials and/or MLAs regarding a range of issues, including; the Executive Programme for Government, the Executive's legislative agenda, Private Members' Bills, the Assembly's Order Papers, Assembly Committees' forward work programmes and MLA enquiries.
- Ensure good and regular communication with RalSe clients (Committees, MLAs and Senior Management) so that realistic targets are agreed and delivered.
- Proactively identify, nurture, forge and create appropriate networks to support RalSe service development through establishing links with government officials, external research bodies/communities, and other parliamentary library and research services.
- Identify cross team working initiatives for the RMT that enable multi-disciplinary research, address overloads in research demand and enable service improvement.
- Beyond the management of their research team, have lead responsibility for delivery of agreed RalSe initiatives implemented across the teams. These initiatives can, for example, involve the development and management of student placements, joint working with academia, international development work with other parliaments, joint working with legislative research services based in the UK and Ireland and the adoption of new digital technologies.
- Ensure through SRO review and team peer review that all outputs from the team meet RalSe standards of providing evidence-based policy/legislative analysis that is timely, impartial, non-partisan and fit for Assembly business purposes.

- Monitor and review team performance to ensure consistency with RaISe Service standards while providing accountability for RaISe products and support services.
- Plan, manage and deliver bespoke training programmes to MLAs, party support staff and Assembly Commission staff.
- Contribute to RaISe's development to ensure efficient and effective use of resources and continuous improvement of the quality and range of research outputs.
- Contribute to RaISe's budgetary planning, spending and monitoring processes through expenditure profiling, in-year bidding/allocating and reporting, along with identifying financial support requirements, monitoring and profiling expenditure and drafting of business cases for SMT approval where required.
- Ensure the effective use of financial and other resources to meet the needs of customers including the contracting of external research support when appropriate.
- Interface directly with a range of key customers, while maintaining and enhancing relationships through effective negotiating and influencing skills.
- Plan, manage and deliver the training and development needs of staff within their team.
- Manage information and records in accordance with established policies and statutory requirements.
- Comply with all of the Assembly Commission's staff policies and procedures including Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work policies and procedures and all mandatory training requirements.
- Carry out other duties that the Assembly Commission reasonably requires.

Essential Criteria

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications, have:

1. An honours degree (of minimum 2:1 classification) or a degree of an equivalent or higher standard in any subject area. The onus is on the candidate to demonstrate how their degree meets this criterion;

AND

2. At least 5 years' professional experience as a researcher or professional information provider. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have experience of conducting non-partisan, evidence-based peer reviewed research and producing research and information briefings/reports involving the proficient application and publication of evidence-based analysis;

AND

3. At least 2 years' experience of having managed research tasks, including managing competing, concurrent priorities and leading improvements.

AND

4. At least 3 years' professional experience of making oral presentations based on their research.

Shortlisting Criteria

Should shortlisting be required, the following shortlisting criteria will be applied:

- At least 12 months' experience of managing or leading a team in order to deliver a significant piece of research.

Assembly Skills and Behaviours

The following Assembly Skills and Behaviours will be assessed during the selection process:

Delivering a quality service

...is about providing a high-quality and efficient service to our customers. It is thinking ahead, managing resources effectively and delivering work on time and to a high standard. It is also using professional or technical expertise to enhance service delivery.

Building relationships and effective communication

...is creating and maintaining positive, professional and respectful internal and external working relationships through effective and appropriate communications.

Initiating improvement and delivering change

...is looking for and being open to new and innovative ideas and improvements to the service provided. It is being flexible and adapting positively and professionally to sustain performance when the situation changes, workloads increase or priorities change. It is about forming sound, evidence-based decisions and being accountable for results.

Managing and leading self and others

... is setting high standards for ourselves. It is about guiding, motivating and developing others to achieve high performance. It is about engaging others in delivering a corporate vision of excellence, expertise and innovation in support of the Assembly as a legislature.

Equal Opportunities Statement

The Assembly Commission is committed to equality of opportunity in employment 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 for employment will be considered on the basis of merit.**

Location

The successful applicant will be based in Parliament Buildings, Belfast.

The Assembly Commission operates a Hybrid Working Policy and the balance between working in Parliament Buildings and working at home will vary depending on the post and business need within the parameters of the Policy.

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 20 November 2023**.

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

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

Recruitment and Selection Framework

There are five elements within the Recruitment and Selection Framework:

Experience – the knowledge or mastery of an activity or subject gained through involvement in or exposure to it.

Ability – the aptitude or potential to perform to the required standard.

Technical – the demonstration of specific professional skills, knowledge or qualifications.

Assembly Skills and Behaviours – the actions and activities that people do which result in effective performance in a job.

Strengths – the things we do regularly, do well and that motivate us.

The elements that will be assessed for this role are Experience, Technical, Assembly Skills and Behaviours and Strengths and the selection method(s) that will be used are detailed below. Further information on the [Recruitment and Selection Framework](#) are included in the [Guidance on Recruitment and Selection for Applicants](#).

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 post.

Shortlisting

The Selection Panel reserve the right to use shortlisting as part of the selection process for this post. Should shortlisting be used, the shortlisting criterion listed above will be applied. If shortlisting is not necessary, all applicants who have demonstrated the essential criteria will proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

Interview Stage

Applicants invited to interview will be assessed using the information contained in this booklet.

Part of the interview process will be the delivery of a presentation. The subject of the presentation will be advised to the applicant on the day of the interview and the applicant will be expected to present information to the selection panel.

Interviews are planned for week commencing: Monday 04 December 2023

Further Interview Stage

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

Further information on the Recruitment and Selection process is available in the [Recruitment and Selection Framework](#) and [Guidance on Recruitment and Selection for Applicants](#).

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

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 and which means that they cannot meet the shortlisting criteria. In these instances, provided that they have demonstrated in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the role, the applicant will be invited to interview. 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.

When considering applications made under GIS, the Human Resources Office reserves the right to request medical information from the applicant's general practitioner (through the applicant and with their consent).

If you are disabled and consider that you require reasonable adjustments to enable you to participate in any part of the selection process, please indicate this on the application or contact us at recruitment@niassembly.gov.uk.

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.](#)

Key Employee Benefits

We offer an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing by one day per year up to a maximum of 30 days. In addition, we offer 12 days of public and privilege holidays.

The Assembly Commission will enrol you into the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme from the first day of employment. Staff contribute between 4 and 9% of salary and the Assembly Commission contributes a further 28 to 35% of salary, depending on your rate of pay.

We also offer a range of non-salary benefits which include hybrid working; supportive family friendly policies; flexi-time; health and wellbeing initiatives

including an Employee Assistance Programme; supported learning and development; Cycle to Work Scheme; Payroll Giving; and volunteering opportunities.

The successful applicant will be given suitable training, including formal specialised courses as necessary.

[View further details of our employee benefits.](#)

Terms and Conditions of Appointment

This is a permanent appointment. The successful candidate will be an employee of the Assembly Commission. All appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period.

The standard working week is 37 hours, (excluding meal breaks). Working hours will be dictated by the mode of operation of the Assembly and may involve work into late evenings and on occasions, at weekends and on public holidays.

The taking of annual leave may be influenced by the parliamentary timetable.

Equality Monitoring

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

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 permanent or fixed term opportunities for the same post.

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 521699.

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.