



**Appointments to the Council of the National Council for Special Education**

**Closing Date: Midnight on 14 January 2016**

**State Boards Division  
Public Appointments Service  
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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. On 30 September 2014, the Government decided that the PAS should also be given responsibility for putting in place an open, accessible, rigorous and transparent system to support Ministers in making appointments to State Boards. Our dedicated website, [www.stateboards.ie](http://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](#) 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;
- be prepared to make a time commitment to their work commensurate with their role.

## Appointments to the Council of the National Council for Special Education

<b>Location:</b>	Trim, Co. Meath
<b>Number of Vacancies:</b>	2 for appointment to positions appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills  1 for inclusion in Minister for Health's nominations for appointment to be made by the Minister for Education and Skills
<b>Remuneration:</b>	Nil, but travel and subsistence allowances will be paid in respect of journeys undertaken to attend meetings of the Council or to transact its official business.
<b>Time Requirements:</b>	6 full day meetings per annum. Additional attendance for sub-committee meetings is to be expected.

### 1. Background

The National Council for Special Education was established under the [Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs \(EPSEN\) Act, 2004](#) to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children.

The NCSE provides advice and information on special education to schools and parents; allocates resource teacher and special needs assistant supports to schools; undertakes and disseminates research into special education; and provides policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills on issues relating to special education. The NCSE also has advisory roles in relation to the provision of specialist equipment/assistive technology for students and special school transport arrangements.

The general functions of the Council are set out in [Section 20 of the EPSEN Act](#). The full implementation of EPSEN has been paused because of the national fiscal position and therefore, some of Council functions- as set out in EPSEN – have not been fully commenced e.g. functions in relation to assessment and individual education plans.

On 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015, it was announced that the remit of the National Council for Special Education would be expanded with the establishment of a new Inclusion Support Service to assist schools in supporting children with special educational needs. Planning for the transition of these services is currently underway.

The NCSE currently comprises 100 staff members headed by a Chief Executive Officer, and has a current annual budget of the order of €8.075m. The CEO is responsible for the leadership, management and control of NCSE functions as well as advising the Council generally.

## **2. Functions of the Council**

The Council of the NCSE is appointed by, and accountable to, the Minister for Education and Skills. It has an oversight role to lead and approve NCSE strategic policy and direction, monitor and review performance and ensure accountability. The Chairperson is responsible for the effective and efficient operation of Council business and represents the Council. The Council Members work as a collective to provide objective and independent advice to the Council and also to participate in decision making.

The Council is required to act in accordance with EPSEN and with a range of legislative and other requirements which apply to it in the context of various roles including those of employer, statutory authority and provider of services.

### Sub Committees

Five committees of Council have been established – Audit; Finance; Strategy & Policy; Research and CEO performance.

A Council Member would typically sit on one of the Finance/Strategy & Policy/Research committees and a number of Council Members would also sit on the Audit and/or CEO performance committees. The Chairperson of the Audit Committee is an external appointment and is independent in his role but reports to the Board.

All committees have agreed Terms of Reference. These committees meet a number of times each year with the number of meetings varying depending on work on hand. For example, the CEO performance committee generally meets twice a year; the Audit Committee meets four times a year and the other committees typically meet once between or before Council meetings – but may meet more often.

## **3. Legislative provisions and current composition of the Council:**

The [National Council for Special Education \(Establishment\) Order, 2003](#) provides that the Council shall comprise 13 members, including one Chairperson, all of whom are appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

[Section 21 \(3\) of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs \(EPSEN\) Act, 2004](#), provides that the Minister is required to consult with national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations as well as recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers and principals of schools with a view, where the Minister considers it appropriate to do so, to appointing nominees of these bodies as members of the council. The legislation provides that up to four such nominees may be appointed to the Council in this manner.

Two members of the Council are required to be appointed from persons nominated by the National Disability Authority (NDA) with a further appointee being nominated by the Minister for Health. In relation to any remaining vacancies, the Minister shall have regard to the desirability of having members of the Council who themselves have special educational needs, their parents and representatives.

The current composition of the Council is:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Appointed</b>	<b>Position type</b>	<b>Basis of appointment</b>
Eamon Stack	01/01/2013	Chairperson	Appointed by Minister
Eithne Fitzgerald	01/01/2013	Council Member	Nominee of National Disability Authority. Appointed by Minister
Helen Guinan	01/01/2013	Council Member	Nominee of the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)/ National Association of Councils of Management in Special Education (NABMSE). Appointed by Minister
James O'Grady	01/01/2013	Council Member	Minister for Health nominee. Appointed by Minister
Jenny Ennis	01/01/2013	Council Member	Appointed directly by Minister
Joan Russell	01/01/2013	Council Member	Nominee of Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA). Appointed by Minister
Mary Friel	01/01/2013	Council Member	Nominee of Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI)/Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI). Appointed by Minister
Pat Kinsella	01/01/2013	Council Member	Nominee of The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD). Appointed by Minister
Philip O'Callaghan	01/01/2013	Council Member	Appointed directly by Minister
Seán Ó Murchú	01/01/2013	Council Member	Appointed directly by Minister
Sheelagh Drudy	11/09/2013	Council Member	Appointed directly by Minister
Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	Council Member	Nominee of National Disability Authority.

Please note that there is a specific requirement set out in legislation concerning the gender composition of the NCSE Council. A minimum of 6 men and 6 women are required to be appointed to the 13-person Council. Gender may therefore be a significant factor when filling vacancies to the NCSE Council. It is also desirable that both primary and post-primary education perspectives be represented on the Council.

One of the vacancies arises under Section 21 (4) (b) of the EPSEN Act which reads:

4) The Minister shall appoint to the Council—  
 (b) 1 member from among persons nominated for such appointment by the Minister for Health (and equal numbers of men and women shall be nominated by that Minister of the Government for that purpose).

#### **4. Person Specification**

##### **(i) Appointment to positions appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills**

The Minister for Education and Skills invites expressions of interest, from suitably qualified candidates, for positions on the Council of the National Council for Special Education.

The EPSEN Act requires all Council Members to have a special interest or knowledge relating to the education of children with special educational needs.

Interested candidates for this position must have a special interest or knowledge relating to the education of children with special educational needs as required by the EPSEN Act 2004.

Interested candidates for this position must also have knowledge and experience at either management level, board level or other capacity, of one or more of the following:

- **Corporate governance and compliance**

and/or

- **Finance and/or audit committee work**

Candidates should have experience with financial statements and control requirements.

It is desirable that candidates applying can demonstrate knowledge and experience, at a senior level, of one or more of the following:

- Strategic planning including risk management
- Law and knowledge or experience of the education sector
- Previous experience of board membership.

##### **(ii) Nominations by Minister for Health for appointment to be made by the Minister for Education and Skills**

The Minister for Health invites expressions of interest from suitably qualified candidates for inclusion in his nominations for appointment to be made by the Minister for Education and Skills, who will choose one of these for appointment to the NCSE.

The EPSEN Act requires all Council Members to have a special interest or knowledge relating to the education of children with special educational needs.

Interested candidates for this position must have a special interest or knowledge relating to the education of children with special educational needs as required by the EPSEN Act 2004.

In order to inform the Council of the health dimension to the work of the NCSE the candidate must have or have had extensive senior management level experience of children's disability healthcare services in Ireland ( within the HSE or otherwise) or abroad, which would demonstrate a deep understanding of the importance of close intersectoral collaboration.

It is also desirable that candidates have:

- Previous experience of board membership

## 5. Term of Appointment

Under the Act, appointments to the Council will be for an initial period of 3 years starting in January 2016 with an option to extend the term of engagement for a second and final term of 3 years, subject to:

- The membership of any member of the Council may be terminated by the Minister at any time, on the basis of reasons to be stated by the Minister.
- A member of the Council may resign his or her membership of the Council 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.
- Members of the Council shall, subject to the provisions of this Schedule, hold office upon such terms and conditions as the Minister may, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, from time to time determine.
- The roles and responsibilities of Board Members are described in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2009 which is available on the website of the Department of Finance ([Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies](#)).
- A Council member shall cease to be a member of the Council if he or she is nominated as 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, or becomes a member of a local authority.

## 6. Submitting your Expression of Interest

Before submitting your expression of interest, please review the self-assessment questionnaire which can be found [here](#). This questionnaire is designed to help you in considering whether to submit an expression of interest - you are not required to submit the questionnaire as part of the application process.

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. Please give careful consideration to the possibility of any potential conflict of interest that may arise if appointed to this board.

Your submission should be made via the following link [www.stateboards.ie](http://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 Council position(s) specified in this booklet, and*
2. *That you 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.

If you have any questions regarding the application process please email [info@stateboards.ie](mailto:info@stateboards.ie).

## 7. Assessment Process

An Assessment Panel (the "Panel") will be convened by PAS to consider and assess the expressions of interest 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 suitable candidates to be sent forward for consideration by the Minister.

## 8. 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.

## 9. Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003

For further information on Data Protection please follow the [link](#)

## APPENDIX 1

### Submitting your expression of interest

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

1. Go to [www.stateboards.ie](http://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](http://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. Click on "continue".
8. 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.
9. You will receive an e-mail confirmation (to the address listed in your publicjobs.ie profile) to confirm that your application has been submitted.

You must confirm that you do not have any conflicts of interest or legal impediment which would be likely to interfere with your ability to play a full part on the Council. You must also confirm that you can make yourself available to attend meetings and to carry out the duties of a Council member.