



**Appointments to the Student Grant Appeals Board**

**Closing Date: Midnight on 9 May 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 Student Grant Appeals Board

<b>Location:</b>	Tullamore, Co. Offaly
<b>Number of Vacancies:</b>	5 vacancies arising in September 2016
<b>Remuneration:</b>	€295 per sitting of the Board. Travel and subsistence is also payable at the appropriate civil service rate. (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).
<b>Time Requirements:</b>	There are approximately 24 full day meetings of the Board per annum. There will be a minimum of two Board meetings per calendar month during the period September to July. Each meeting requires between a half-day and a day's preparatory work.

### 1. Background

The first independent Student Grants Appeals Board (SGAB) was established by the Minister for Education and Skills on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011 for a 5-year term in line with [Section 25\(5\) of the Student Support Act 2011](#).

The City of Dublin Education and Training Board (ETB) was appointed as the awarding authority on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2012. A business unit of the ETB was subsequently established and called Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). Prior to its establishment, student grants were processed by 66 Local Authorities and Vocational Education Committees (now Education and Training Boards).

Under the 2011 Act, applicants who wish to contest the determination of an awarding authority may appeal to an appeals officer against that determination. Where an applicant is still unsatisfied by the determination of an appeals officer he or she may appeal to the Student Grants Appeals Board against that determination.

Of the cases appealed to the Student Grants Appeals Board in the 2014/15 academic year (c. 550 appeals), approximately 80% of the awarding authority decisions were upheld, 15% overturned and the remaining 5% withdrawn or referred back to the awarding authority.

In the 2015/16 academic year, SUSI is expected to process circa 110,000 applications of which circa 80,000 applicants will qualify for grant support.

### 2. Functions of the Board

The main function of the Student Grants Appeals Board is to hear appeals from applicants/students against decisions on the awarding of grants after such appeals have been heard by the appeals officer and where the applicant / student wishes to pursue their appeal.

In accordance with [Section 21\(4\) of the Student Support Act 2011](#), the Appeals Board

- (a) shall be independent in the performance of its functions under the Act,
- (b) shall not be confined to the grounds on which the determination of the awarding authority or appeals officer concerned was based, but may decide the matter which is the subject of the appeal as if it were being decided for the first time,
- (c) shall, as it considers appropriate, consider written or oral submissions made by the applicant or student concerned and consult with the awarding authority or appeals officer,
- (d) shall make a determination within 60 days from the making of an appeal which may be a determination to –
  - (i) confirm the determination the subject of the appeal
  - (ii) revoke the determination and replace it with such other determination as the Appeals Board considers appropriate, or
  - (iii) refer the matter concerned back to the awarding authority for reconsideration in accordance with such directions as the Appeals Board considers appropriate,

and

- (e) shall notify in writing the applicant or student and the awarding authority and appeals officer concerned, of the determination and the reasons therefor.

The current composition of the Board is:

<b>Name</b>	<b>First Appointed</b>	<b>Expiry Date</b>	<b>Position type</b>
Maureen Waldron	08/09/2011	07/09/2016	Chair
Padraic McNamara	08/09/2011	07/09/2016	Vice Chair
Brenna Clarke	08/09/2011	07/09/2016	Board Member
Eithne Frost	08/09/2011	07/09/2016	Board Member
Kevin Ryan (Prof.)	08/09/2011	07/09/2016	Board Member
Marie Clarke (Dr.)	08/09/2011	07/09/2016	Board Member
Rebecca Murphy	08/09/2011	07/09/2016	Board Member

### **3. Person Specification**

Expressions of interest are invited from applicants who consider they possess the skills and experience necessary to join the Student Grants Appeals Board.

Members are expected to contribute effectively to the work of the Board by balancing a strategic view of key decisions with a specialist or expert perspective, while being committed to the principle of collective decision making that underpins the Board's role by bringing independent and objective scrutiny to the effective delivery of the Student Grant Scheme. Please note that membership of the Student Grants Appeals Board requires a significant time commitment and prospective applicants should consider carefully their availability and willingness to attend Board meetings in Tullamore before submitting an application.

Following a review of the current skills mix on the Board and the anticipated expansion to 11 members, the Minister for Education and Skills invites applications from suitably qualified candidates in one or more of the following areas:

**a) Student Representation**

Candidates must have the demonstrable ability to represent the user perspective either by being a third level student or through some other representative capacity. It is particularly desirable that candidates have previous experience of advocacy and a knowledge of the student supports system.

**b) Accountant/Financial management/business**

Part of the assessment of cases before the board entails a review of financial circumstances consequently candidates should have demonstrable professional experience in financial management/accountancy or an area of business which relies on financial literacy.

**c) Academic administration**

Candidates must have knowledge of the system of academic administration/policy including knowledge of the student supports system as demonstrated by professional experience in 3<sup>rd</sup> level administration or as an academic in a position of responsibility (e.g. Head of Department) which would indicate such knowledge.

**d) Public sector administration**

Candidates must have senior professional experience of administering complex Schemes within the Public Service. This would indicate the ability to read, understand and interpret complex legislation, and to understand the budgetary processes etc. which underpin such legislation.

**e) Voluntary/community sector engagement**

Candidates must have significant experience in the sector, particularly in advocacy. It is also desirable that their experience be in the area of education and include a familiarity with legislative provisions in this area.

In addition it is desirable that all candidates have:

- Experience of more than one of the five areas listed above
- Knowledge of social welfare, health schemes, the education sector and/or income support schemes
- Experience in Information Technology. In this context it should be noted that the Student Grants Appeals Process will be moving to a fully on-line system in the short/medium term.
- Experience in reading, analysing and comprehending various statutes, regulations and complex summaries of evidence in the course of preparing for and holding of a hearing
- Experience in the operation and continuous improvement of complex administrative processes
- Knowledge and demonstrated experience in applying the principles of good administration e.g. fairness, impartiality, consistency, timelines etc.
- Good judgement and a capacity for sound decision making

#### 4. Term of Appointment

Under the Act, appointments to the Board will be for an initial period of 5 years with an option to extend the term of engagement for a second term of 5 years, 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.
- Members of the Board 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 board member shall cease to be a member of the board 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.
- A board member shall cease to be a member if he or she is adjudicated bankrupt, makes a compensation or arrangement with creditors or is sentenced by a court of competent jurisdiction to a term of imprisonment.

## 5. 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 Board 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).

## **6. 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<sup>1</sup>/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.

## **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 Acts 1988 & 2003**

Should your name be forwarded to a Minister for consideration, please note that your cover letter and curriculum vitae will be forwarded to the State Board Liaison Officer in the relevant department and may be retained for up to one year.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The Public Appointments Service will not be responsible for refunding any expenses incurred by candidates.

## 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 Board. You must also confirm that you can make yourself available to attend meetings and to carry out the duties of a Board member.