

Judicial Appointments Commission

Strategic Plan 2016–20

incorporating the Business Plan 2018–19

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April 2018

Section 1: Purpose and aims

This document sets out the aims that the JAC intends to achieve over a 4-year period, 2016–17 to 2019–20, and the specific objectives that we will pursue in support of these aims during 2018–19.

This plan will be adapted as necessary to take account of the internal and external factors that may affect us, such as HMCTS reform, changes to staff and the Commission, new legislation, the UK's exit from the EU, new ways of working, pay and recruitment controls, all within overarching financial spending control limits.

Business plans for 2016–17 and 2017–18 are on the [JAC website](#).

Purpose

The JAC is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice. Our purpose is:

- to be an independent selection body for judicial appointments in courts and tribunals in England and Wales and for some tribunals with UK-wide jurisdiction
- to run a selection programme agreed with the Ministry of Justice and respond to individual requests from the Lord Chancellor
- to make selections solely on merit
- to select only persons of good character and
- to have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of persons available for selection

Aims

We will achieve the following aims in order to fulfil our purpose, whilst recognising the government's overall objective to reduce public expenditure:

- flexibly support the evolving business need
- increase confidence in the selection process and selections
- promote and encourage diversity throughout the selection process
- continually improve the candidate experience
- make the JAC a centre of excellence in selection
- be digital by default

Section 2: Objectives for 2018–19

The JAC intends to deliver 4 main objectives during 2018–19:

1. Effective delivery of the 2018–19 selection exercise programme agreed with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and the judiciary
2. Review and refine JAC selection processes in support of Commission aims and changing business need
3. Active role in encouraging and coordinating support to develop a strong and diverse candidate pool
4. Cross-cutting support of Commission aims through effective analysis, communications, human resources, and digital plans and processes

Plan for addressing objectives

The following detail sets out what is to be delivered in 2018–19.

1. Effective delivery of the 2018–19 selection exercise programme agreed with the Ministry of Justice, HM Courts & Tribunals Service and the judiciary

Actions	Timetable
1.1 Ensure effective and timely planning and delivery of selection exercises, in accordance with the annual programme agreed with partners, to meet short- and long-term business needs. This includes demonstrating flexibility by absorbing changes to the selection programme.	Ongoing
1.2 Deliver selection exercises in line with the Commission's selection policy, agreeing any minor variations through the internal Selection Exercise Programme Board (SEPB).	Ongoing
1.3 Ensure effective delivery of senior judicial selection exercises (Court of Appeal and Heads of Division) to meet statutory and stakeholder requirements.	Ongoing
1.4 Ensure the JAC's digital strategy (including the Judicial Appointments Recruitment System (JARS)) supports the effective delivery of all exercises.	Ongoing
1.5 Enhance panel member support including through panel training, and recruitment of senior panel secretaries to provide additional support to panels on large exercises.	March 2019

2. Review and improve JAC selection processes in support of Commission aims and changing business need

Actions	Timetable
2.1 Explore further measures aimed at supporting diversity, in addition to ongoing 'equality-proofing' of selection exercise materials, design of process and delivery, and review of progression of target groups throughout the process.	June 2018
2.2 Review the selection process used for large exercises, focusing on shortlisting tools that are effective in large exercises.	May 2018
2.3 Review the selection process, programming and candidate attraction strategies for senior exercises.	July 2018
2.4 Evaluate and refine selection processes to ensure continuous improvement, including through analysis of candidate feedback surveys.	Ongoing
2.5 Review relevant JAC policies to ensure they support the senior judiciary in their deployment of successful candidates.	May 2018
2.6 Lead joint work with partners to strengthen the integrity of the process, ensuring any breaches of confidentiality are reported to the relevant professional bodies.	April 2018

3. Active role in encouraging and coordinating support to develop a strong and diverse candidate pool

Actions	Timetable
3.1 Deliver both selection exercise-specific and broader outreach to potential candidates, including our target groups. Review and evaluate selection exercise outreach as part of closedown for all exercises.	Ongoing
3.2 Review outreach strategy and process to ensure outreach is targeted and effective for the future.	June 2018
3.3 Work with Judicial Diversity Forum partners to support the design and delivery of professional development programmes aimed at potential candidates from under-represented groups.	September 2019
3.4 Work with partners to develop clear guidance on judicial pathways and any additional criteria that candidates will be expected to meet.	November 2018
3.5 Introduce improved, more targeted feedback to candidates, to inform potential future applications; underpinned by clear advance communication about when and what feedback will be provided.	July 2018
3.6 Work with partners, including through the Judicial Diversity Forum, to continue to break down barriers to application to ensure strong, diverse candidates apply and progress.	Ongoing

4. Cross-cutting support of Commission aims through effective analysis, communications, human resources, and digital plans and processes

Actions	Timetable
4.1 Develop JARS to enhance flexibility and support data analysis, and define future requirements for new contractual arrangements.	March 2019
4.2 Maintain robust data security arrangements and ensure high resilience of all JAC security systems.	Ongoing
4.3 Develop and implement longer-term communications and stakeholder engagement strategy with the overarching aim to increase awareness and understanding of the JAC selection processes and confidence in merit-based decisions.	March 2019
4.4 Continue to implement the JAC People Plan, and further refine to reflect staff feedback, including through the annual people survey and mid-year pulse survey.	March 2019
4.5 Develop analytical tools to enhance understanding of the eligible pool of candidates, factors associated with successful application, and evaluation of selection tools.	December 2018
4.6 Provide enhanced support to the Commission Board and sub-committees, including by completing the periodic review of the Commission's guidance to candidates on 'good character'.	March 2019

Section 3: Resources

This sets out the details of resources used over recent years, and those planned in 2018–19:

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 forecast
Applications	4,637	5,591	2,356	2,588	2,199	5,125	8,000
Recommendations	597	806	310	340	290	749	1,200
Average applications per recommendation	7.8	6.9	7.6	7.6	7.6	6.8	6.7
Number of exercises reported	36	35	30	22	26	28	26
Staffing average FTE over year	68	67	59	50	49	47	56
Cash funding available (£000)	5,120	4,911	4,683	4,375	4,120	5,005	5,840
Expenditure (£000)	4,894	4,180	4,016	3,725	3,581	4,858	-
Non-cash charges (£000)	1,801	1,388	1,427	1,153	1,290	892	-
Total spend (£000)	6,695	5,568	5,443	4,878	4,871	5,744	-

The JAC's programme of work is determined by the demand for judicial recruitment in consultation with the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice and HMCTS. In 2017–18, the JAC made 749 recommendations compared to only 290 in the previous year. This is reflected in the increased level of expenditure last year.

The JAC's programme of work for 2018–19 is expected to increase further due to very high indicative numbers of appointments for large fee paid exercises. This has also meant that additional staff have been recruited to support delivery of the programme.

Section 4: Measures

Success will be measured through the delivery of the selection exercise programme, as agreed through the MoJ and HMCTS. Summary details of the selection exercise programme (as delivered to the Lord Chancellor) are provided below, as well as the diversity of JAC selections and the end-to-end appointments process time.

The JAC also publishes a wide range of information on its policies, processes, operations and official statistics. In addition, it publishes an annual report and the minutes of all Commission Board meetings.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 forecast
Applications	4,637	5,591	2,356	2,588	2,199	5,125	8,000
Recommendations	597	806	310	340	290	749	1,200
Average applications per recommendation	7.8	6.9	7.6	7.6	7.6	6.8	6.7
Number of exercises reported	36	35	30	22	26	28	26
Average cost per application	£1,444	£996	£2,310	£1,885	£2,215	£1,121	-
Average cost per recommendation	£11,214	£6,908	£17,558	£14,347	£16,793	£7,669	-
End-to-end appointments process*	24 weeks	21 weeks	17 weeks	22 weeks	21 weeks	23 weeks	-
Recommendations % women candidates	48%	50%	43%	42%	39%	-	-
Recommendations % BAME candidates	12%	11%	13%	9%	20%	-	-
Recommendations % disabled candidates	3%	12%	4%	3%	6%	-	-

The end-to-end time is the time from the launch of an exercise to the Judicial Office sending out offer letters.

In line with central government departments we are transparent with information on our operations, where this does not affect personal data of those applying for judicial appointment. For example, we will continue to publish generic reports on performance in qualifying tests to support unsuccessful candidates and inform future applications.

We will continue to manage the operation of the JAC using the measures captured under previous key performance indicators, including diversity of applications, timeliness of exercises and levels of complaints.

Section 5: Risks

The following sets out the key risks as currently provided in the JAC Corporate Risk Register, which may affect our ability to deliver the Business Plan.

Risk	Mitigating action
<p>Failure of JARS and/or associated IT support</p> <p>Risk: That the Judicial Appointments Recruitment System (JARS) and JAC website are not available to candidates, referees or staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JARS Programme Board with Commissioner Chair formed to provide governance and oversight. • Helpdesk arrangements in place with supplier • Service management arrangements in place between JAC/ CACI (hosting provider) • Security accreditation of JARS completed for 3 years, subject to annual review • Emergency Response Plan approved by Senior Leaders Team
<p>Progression and diversity of selection</p> <p>Risk: Target groups do not apply or progress in line with the eligible pool</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panels briefed on diversity, fair selection and unconscious bias at annual training event and before each exercise • Outreach plan developed for all exercises • Website refreshed to make it easier to find candidate resources, including revised guidance on competency-based applications • Independent occupational psychology and diversity experts have reviewed previous qualifying tests and other selection materials, and all recommendations have been implemented, including in improved commissioning brief. • JAC Advisory Group provided with all selection materials for comment • 'Am I Ready' tools on website to enable candidates to assess their readiness to apply
<p>Confidence in the selection process</p> <p>Risk: That stakeholders including candidates; the judiciary; commissioners; panellists; MoJ; and staff do not have sufficient confidence in the selection process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant policy developments subject to approval of Commission Board • Minor policy developments subject to approval by Selection Exercise Programme Board chaired by Head of Operations and Head of Strategy and Policy • Customer feedback is collected on candidate experience in all selection exercises, and taken into account when reviewing and developing selection processes • All major changes to the selection process are piloted, evaluated against business plan aims, and only taken forward if they deliver improvements
<p>Confidence in the effective delivery of the selection exercises</p> <p>Risk: That stakeholders do not have sufficient confidence that the JAC can deliver a selection exercise or that it fails to deliver on merit and from a diverse field of candidates in an efficient and effective manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed 2018–19 exercise programme aligned to available resources • Agreed rolling programme of key exercises to 2022 • Introduced lessons learned meetings to review operational issues • Created an operations manual covering due process and emergency/recovery protocols • A new operational training team has been created to ensure new and existing staff are able to deal with a range of responsibilities

Risk	Mitigating action
<p>Staff engagement and morale</p> <p>Risk: That staff engagement and morale reduces due to increased workloads, reduction in staff complement and poor performing systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings with senior leaders to discuss HR related issues, including staff resources and deployment of existing staff at each senior leaders' meeting • Further flexibility provided regarding when and where staff can work through enhanced IT delivery. • People Plan launched in Sept 2017. Reviewed in December 2017 to incorporate findings from 2017 People Survey • Regular CEO stand-up meetings with staff, providing opportunity to disseminate information and hear views from staff
<p>Loss of corporate knowledge</p> <p>Risk: That sufficient experience/knowledge of staff/commissioners remains to ensure that business delivers its priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-appointment of a cadre of Commissioners for a further 6 months, with further extension requested. Recruitment of 7 new Commissioners to take place by the end of the year • Appropriate knowledge transfer when staff leave to incoming staff, or to others to ensure business interruption kept to a minimum • Job opportunities are advertised when required. • Cadre of panel members now up to 65 with appropriate induction undertaken • Start of a rolling programme of recruitment of panel members to enhance capacity to meet the requirements of the high-volume selection exercise programme in 2018–19
<p>Financial resources</p> <p>Risk: That financial resources are insufficient, either in current year, or next year, especially if large exercises are rolled forward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings with MoJ Sponsorship team to review the financial position and upcoming programme of work. There is an agreed understanding that the JAC is a demand led organisation and therefore the required budget is subject to change during the year • Management accounts are reviewed monthly by senior leaders team • FOM agreement with MoJ that includes support from 2 financially qualified persons • Regular contact with budget managers to ensure accurate forecasting • Approval of business case submitted to MoJ requesting additional financial resources for 2017–18
<p>Information security</p> <p>Risk: That data will be lost/purported or obtained by unauthorised persons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service management process in place for JARS suppliers to carry out regular security updates • Anti-virus software embedded in JARS platform • Laptops and devices covered by MoJ security updates • Security policy and guidance to staff reviewed regularly
<p>Delivery of the agreed selection exercise programme</p> <p>Risk: That the JAC is criticised for failing to deliver the agreed selection exercise programme with sufficient candidates of necessary quality to fulfil vacancy requests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of judges, HMCTS and Judicial Office as early as possible • 2018–19 programme of exercises agreed with HMCTS • Rolling programme of main court and tribunal exercises to 2023 agreed and published • Re-organisation of the Operations team in effect from January 2018, focusing most experienced staff resource on high profile competitions