



INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Houses of Parliament

Education Visits Officer
Department of Information
Services

Competition Ref no 309013

This booklet is divided into 4 sections:

Section 1 Your application and our recruitment process

Section 2 Further information regarding the post

Section 3 The House of Commons

Section 4 The House of Lords

SECTION 1

YOUR APPLICATION AND OUR RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The information you provide in your application is the **ONLY** information we will use in deciding whether or not you will be shortlisted for an interview. Your application form therefore is very important and the following advice is designed to help you complete it as effectively as possible.

Planning your application form

Before filling in the application form, read the job information carefully. Every vacancy is based on the job description which lists the main duties of the post, describing the skills, experience and qualifications we are looking for. Please make sure that you know what the job involves and the range of expertise required.

Completing the application form

Application forms should be filled in as completely and as clearly as possible so that we may consider candidates on the same basis. Do not substitute your Curriculum Vitæ for a completed application form, since this will not be considered.

Make sure that you complete the form clearly, and type it or use black ink (as this produces clearer photocopies). You may wish to continue your application on one or more separate sheets, which should be attached to the application form, with your name and the job reference number clearly marked on the top. **Do not alter the application form, each application form is unique to its job, any alteration to the application questions or job title will mean that your application is deemed incomplete.**

The completed application form can be uploaded via www.houseofcommons-careers.org.uk or sent by e-mail: houseofcommons@hays.com. Alternatively, applications can be posted to **Hays Public Services, 3rd Floor, 1 Southampton Street, London, WC2R 0LR. Applications must be received by Friday 24th April 2009. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.** Hays can be contacted on 020 7520 5988 (weekdays 8am – 6pm) or 0207 240 8519 (answering service outside working hours) or by e-mail: houseofcommons@hays.com

Shortlisting

After the closing date, the application forms are assessed to see how your skills, qualifications and experience relate to the vacancy. Those who best match the criteria will be selected for interview.

Interviews

The interview panel is normally made up of three, perhaps four people, who each ask the candidate questions. The questions are intended to expand on your application so that you can demonstrate how far you meet the essential requirements of the post. Shortlisted candidates may be asked to complete a task or a test either at or before the interview as part of the selection process. Further information will be provided to short-listed candidates. At interview you will have an opportunity to ask questions about the job, the terms and conditions of service etc.



The interview panel have to keep a record of their assessment of each candidate so that the reasons for their decisions are clear and consistent. You should therefore not be concerned about the panel taking notes during the course of the interview.

Shortlisted candidates will be asked to give a short presentation on the day of the interview. This will assess 50% of the first essential criteria for this position. Further details will be provided to shortlisted candidates.

Additional information for candidates with disabilities

The Houses of Parliament welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. We wish to ensure that all candidates have a fair opportunity in the recruitment and selection process so that our decisions are based on your ability to do the job and not on any factor that is irrelevant to the post. In order to help us to do this, if you consider that you have a disability, you are invited to answer the relevant question on the application form. This will help us to make any particular arrangements that you may require if you are selected for interview. We will then contact you to confirm these. At each subsequent stage of the selection process you will be given the opportunity to discuss any specific questions that you may have.

Any information that you provide will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with the Data Protection notice on the application form.

Travelling expenses

Candidates may be entitled to some reimbursement for necessary travelling expenses for interview. Expenses may not exceed the cost of the return fare and candidates are expected to take advantage of any cheap fares which may be available. In order to claim these expenses, you should write to the HRM&D, Department of Resources, House of Commons, 3rd Floor, 7 Millbank, London, SW1P 3JA, after your interview with full details, enclosing tickets or receipts where available.

Expenses for overseas candidates can only be claimed between the place of arrival in the United Kingdom and the House of Commons. Candidates may not claim overnight expenses for nights spent in the UK because flight or sailing times do not match the interview date or because departures are delayed.

Suggestions

It is our aim to ensure that every stage of our recruitment process is fair and properly thought-out. We want all applicants to be treated fairly. If you have any comments or suggestions to make concerning the way in which the recruitment process has been handled, we would like to hear from you.

Outcome of your application

All candidates selected for interview will be notified by the HR Management & Development Directorate, in writing. **If you have not heard from the HRM&D by 15th May 2009 you should assume that you have not been selected for interview.**



SECTION 2

FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING THE POST

Education Visits Officer, Department of Information Services, Band C

This post is permanent.

This is a joint House of Commons and House of Lords post, however for employment purposes the postholder will be in the House of Commons structure.

Overall Purpose of Job

The Education Service works on behalf of both Houses of Parliament to provide resources and support for students and teachers to increase their knowledge and understanding of the role, work and history of Parliament. It also advises and supports MPs and Peers in their work with young people.

This is an excellent opportunity to join a rapidly growing and ambitious service working within Parliament at the heart of the public engagement agenda. The service has over 20 staff working on Inward Visits, Outreach, Online provision and Projects and Partnerships development. Plans are under consideration to build a dedicated Education Centre which will enable inward visits to rise from an expected 40,000 within current resources (by 2009) to up to 100,000 per annum. A programme of technology integration is underway, with voting pods and interactive whiteboards now in place for workshops and a new online education channel was launched in October 2008.

Your main responsibility will be to deliver high quality, engaging and inspiring education sessions to the thousands of young people who visit Parliament each year. The programme of visits has been recently redeveloped and its aim is to support teaching and learning of the political literacy elements of the National Curriculum for Citizenship. Alongside this work, you would be expected to contribute constructively to the development of new resources to supplement the experience offered by the visits programme and to support the work of the Education Service as a whole.

With a considerable amount of expansion due to take place in this area of the Service, we strive continually to improve the quality of our offer and we are looking for people to join our team who share this commitment.

Accountability

The postholder will be responsible to the Education Visits Manager.

Experience and skills relevant to the job

Essential

- Excellent presentation skills in order to deliver high quality, engaging and inspiring education sessions to students aged 7 to 18.
- Recent experience of delivering educational content to primary and/or secondary students in a school, heritage or comparable environment.

- A good understanding of the requirements of the national curriculum, in particular Citizenship, with recent experience of applying this knowledge
- Experience of working with new and developing technologies such as interactive whiteboards and the ability to use them to enhance learning
- Good written communication skills in order to contribute to the creation of resources which can be published by Parliament in a variety of formats
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team, often under great pressure, to support the development and expansion of the Service's education programme
- A clear understanding of what constitutes excellent customer service

Desirable

- Some knowledge of the work, practises and history of Parliament, and an interest in current affairs.
- Proficiency in the use of the suite of MS Office applications, particularly PowerPoint, Word, and Outlook.

Duties and Responsibilities

- To deliver a diverse programme of education sessions for students aged 7 to 18, maintaining high standards of learning and facilitating young people's participation in the work of Parliament.
- To contribute to the development of resources to supplement the programme of visits to Westminster e.g. downloadable pre and post visit activities and resources, seasonal visits programmes to diversify the offer.
- To collaborate with others within the Education Service to assist with the delivery of events and projects as required.
- To occasionally assist with the range of shared tasks in the office including answering telephone enquiries, taking bookings for visits, despatching publications, researching answers and replying to e-mail enquiries.
- To act as a proactive ambassador for the Education Service inside and outside Parliament, to increase awareness and understanding of our work.

Hours (Full time)

Net conditioned full-time working hours for staff of the House are usually 36 per week (this excludes daily meal breaks of one hour). The hours of attendance for this post are **34 net** per week, exact hours of attendance each day are to be agreed with line management. You may be allowed to work shorter hours during recess at management discretion.

Consideration will be given to candidates who wish to work part-time or as part of a job share. If you are selected for interview please inform the panel of the days/hours you are available to work.



Date of Appointment

Confirmation of the appointment will be subject to the satisfactory outcome of the normal pre-employment checks which include: security clearance (to Counter Terrorist Check level), health clearance, references and proof of educational and professional qualifications. The successful candidate cannot start work until our pre-employment checks have been completed.

Security Clearance

If you are invited to attend for interview you will be sent a green security clearance application form to complete. The minimum period of residence in the UK for a non EU national, or a national from a country where there is no vetting liaison with the UK, is 12 months. If you are unsure whether your country of origin has a vetting liaison with the UK, please make a note of this on the form and we will check this for you. We will only inform you if there are likely to be any difficulties with obtaining security clearance.

In some instances it may also be necessary to provide character references to assist with completion of the security clearance procedure. Should this be necessary you will be contacted by the Human Resources Management & Development Directorate.

References

We require references to cover the past **three years**; these should be from your current and previous employers and/or academic tutors. Please provide accurate and up to date contact details and if possible let your referees know that we may contact them.

If you are currently employed by the House of Commons or the House of Lords your referee must be your manager.

Please note that referees cannot be relatives.

Educational and Professional Qualifications

If selected for interview, you will be required to provide original copies of all educational and professional qualification certificates for those qualifications listed as essential (see above) for this post. Those listed as desirable for this post (see above) will only be required if attained.

Probationary Period

The successful candidate will be on probation for nine months from the date of appointment. If the probationary period is not satisfactory the appointment may be terminated.

Salary Scale

The salary scale starts at £21,769 per annum to £28,755 per annum. The starting pay is normally at the minimum of the scale. Progression through the pay band will be dependent on satisfactory performance. In addition, a performance related non-pensionable bonus may be payable.



Annual Leave

A pro rata leave entitlement based on 28 days until 31 October following your date of appointment. In the 1st full year entitlement of 28 days leave rising by 2 days for the next 2 years and 1 day a year until a maximum of 40 days is reached.

House of Commons and House of Lords employees should refer to the vacancy notice.

Eligibility

You will be required to provide evidence of your right to work in the UK. The HR Management Directorate will request the appropriate documents should you be invited for interview. If you have any queries about your eligibility to work please contact the HR Management Directorate.

Registration

If you are a national from Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia or Slovenia you may be required to register with the Home Office if you are offered employment with the House of Commons.

If you are a national of Bulgaria or Romania you do not need to be registered with the Home Office but you may require a work permit to take up employment in the UK. You should indicate this on your application form.

Notice

Except in the case of dismissal on disciplinary grounds, termination of the appointment is normally subject to one month's notice and at least 5 weeks' notice by the House of Commons.

Sickness Absence

Absence due to sickness may be allowed on full pay, less any National Insurance benefit received, up to a maximum of six months in any period of twelve months, and thereafter on reduced pay for a further period, subject to a deduction of National Insurance benefit in certain cases, and an overriding limit of twelve months' sick leave in any period of four years.

Political Impartiality

Staff of the House of Commons are required to serve with complete political impartiality; the person appointed may therefore be expected to adhere to certain restrictions on their political activities for the duration of their appointment. The degree of restriction is dependent on the nature of the post. More specific information may be requested at the interview stage, if required.

Pension Scheme Arrangements

Pensions Questionnaire

The successful candidate will be asked to complete and return a House of Commons Staff Pension Scheme Pensions Questionnaire. We shall then advise you of your pension options. In general the following options are available:

Your appointment will be pensionable from the outset. You will be covered by the House of Commons Staff Pension Scheme (HOCSPS) during the appointment. The



HOCSPS arrangements are by-analogy to those in the Civil Service. The following pension arrangements are available.

1. Membership of the Nuvos section of the HOCSPS, a defined benefit occupational pension scheme, operated on a career average basis, with a 3.5% member contribution rate. This scheme is contracted out of the State Second Pension, (previously SERPS), under the Pensions Schemes Act 1993.

Or

2. Membership of the Partnership section of the HOCSPS, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution based on your age. Employer contributions range from 3% if you are under 21 years old, to 12.5% if you are 46 years or older. You do not have to contribute, but if you do, the House will match your contributions up to 3% of pensionable pay. This scheme is contracted in to the Second State Pension, (previously SERPS), under the Pensions Schemes Act 1993.

If your post lasts for 12 months or more you will automatically join Nuvos, but may opt out or join the Partnership scheme instead.

If your post lasts for less than 12 months you will not automatically join Nuvos. If you wish to join either of the schemes, you will have to choose to do so.

You can obtain further information about both pension schemes from the following website: www.civilservice-pensions.gov.uk

Previous membership of the Civil Service Pension scheme or a by-analogy scheme

Different eligibility criteria may apply if you have previously belonged to the Civil Service pension scheme, or a by-analogy scheme. You will be advised of any options once you have completed and returned the Pensions Questionnaire.

Transfers

The HOCSPS is able to accept transfers from all UK pension schemes public or private (on favourable terms from certain public sector bodies), subject to certain time limits and documentation being provided by your previous scheme.

Season Ticket Loan

There is provision for interest-free loans for the purchase of season tickets for travel between home and office within certain limits. Such loans are available to staff when they have completed two months' service.

Bicycle Loan

There is provision for interest-free loans for the purchase of bicycles for travel between home and office within certain limits. Such loans are available to staff when they have completed two months' service.



Childcare Voucher Scheme

The House of Commons, in furtherance of its policy of Equal Opportunities, provide Childcare Vouchers/Playscheme Vouchers to assist with the cost of care for employees' children while they are at work (subject to certain criteria). The House scheme is run by Childcare Vouchers Ltd.

Westminster Gymnasium

Membership to the in-house gymnasium is available, on payment, to employees of the House of Commons.

Health and Safety

You are required to comply with all health and safety rules issued by personal notification or via displayed notices. You must have regard for your own safety at work and that of your colleagues. A no smoking policy operates in all internal areas on the Parliamentary estate. Smoking is only permitted in designated external areas which are clearly signposted. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings being started. You are also responsible for ensuring that your visitors adhere to the policy.



SECTION 3

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Staff of the House of Commons are employed by the House of Commons Commission. Approximately 1,700 members of staff work across the following departments.

DEPARTMENTS OF THE HOUSE

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE – The Office of the Chief Executive supports the Clerk of the House in his role as chief executive of the House of Commons Service. It provides the secretariat of the Board of Management and its sub-committees; co-ordinates the work of the Board with that of the House of Commons Commission and the Finance and Services Committee; and is where the House's media relations and internal communications functions are based.

Head of Department: **The Clerk of the House (Chief Executive).**

DEPARTMENT OF CHAMBER AND COMMITTEE SERVICES – Responsible for providing advice and services to the House, the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers, to the Committees appointed by the House, and to individual Members. Other responsibilities include ceremonial; security services the production and publication of reports of proceedings in the House of Commons chamber and committees in the form of official reports. These reports are generally known as Hansard.

Head of Department: **The Clerk of the House.**

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SERVICES – Responsibilities include providing research, analysis and information services for the House of Commons and its Members and their staff; and most of the public services for the House. Its main units include research, information and library services for Members; the House of Commons Information Office; the Parliamentary Education Service; Visitor Services; Online Services; Works of Art and the Media and Communications Service.

Head of Department: **Director General of Information Services.**

DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES – to provide corporate HR and finance services. It is also responsible for the payment of salaries, pensions and allowances to Members, and for medical, health & safety, welfare and travel services.

Head of Department: **Director General of Resources.**

DEPARTMENT OF FACILITIES – is responsible for the management of the parliamentary estate. This includes long term planning and strategy for the estate and providing expert curatorial advice on the preservation of the Palace of Westminster as a world class heritage site. Also responsible for delivering maintenance within the parliamentary estate. This involves placing contracts, planning and delivery of in-year maintenance work and management of capital



projects throughout the estate. Other responsibilities include providing meals and other refreshments to Members, staff and others who work in or visit the Parliamentary Estate. Plus providing banqueting services and managing the souvenir kiosks.

Head of Department: **Director General of Facilities.**

In addition the following body will support the House of Commons:

PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (PICT)

PICT works for Parliament in delivering a superior IT service, expertise on business process change and greater training opportunities to Members of the House of Commons, Members of the House of Lords and staff of both Houses. PICT has combined expert knowledge and skills from both Houses, covering disciplines such as IT, Project Management, Business Analysis and Change Management. Our aim is: "To be a world leader in the provision, support and exploitation of ICT within Parliaments".

Head of Department: **Director of Parliamentary ICT.**

SECTION 4

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

The House of Lords is the second chamber of the United Kingdom Parliament. It plays an important part in revising legislation and keeping a check on Government by scrutinising its activities. It complements the work of the Commons, whose members are elected to represent their constituents. Members of the Lords are not elected and are unpaid. They have a wide range of experience and provide a source of independent expertise. The House also has a judicial role as the final Court of Appeal.

OFFICES OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

The House of Lords comprises 13 Offices. Over 430 staff are employed in the House in a variety of functions, largely mirroring the range of activities in the House of Commons. Some are dealing with the business of the House such as in the Committee, Legislation and Judicial Offices and Hansard. Others, such as HR Management Directorate, Library and Accounts staff, work in support of the House. Black Rod's Office provides ceremonial, security and housekeeping services for the House of Lords and liaises with the Parliamentary Estates Directorate and the Works Services Directorate. The Refreshment Department provides meals and other refreshments to Peers and staff and other people who work in or visit the Parliamentary Estate. It also provides banqueting services and manages the souvenir kiosks.

Further information on Parliament can be found at www.parliament.uk