



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Standards Commission for Scotland - Convener

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## Information for applicants

To apply for this appointment, you should read the information below and complete and return your application form by **12 noon on 14 February 2024**.

## Context

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) is to sit as a selection panel to appoint, with the agreement of the Scottish Parliament, an individual to be the Convener of the Standards Commission for Scotland to fill a vacancy which will arise when Paul Walker demits office on 6 May 2024.

## Statutory framework

The Standards Commission for Scotland (the Commission) is a body corporate established under the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. It is supported by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB).

The Commission's role is to encourage high ethical standards in public life. It promotes and enforces the Codes of Conduct for Councillors and Members of Devolved Public Bodies and issues guidance to councils and devolved public bodies. The Commission adjudicates on cases of alleged contravention of the Codes of

Conduct referred to it by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland, and on finding a contravention it has statutory powers to impose sanctions.

The Commission is required to submit annually to the Parliament, a general report on its activities. The Commission must also, in respect of each 4-year period, lay before the Parliament, a strategic plan setting out how it proposes to fulfil its functions during that time.

The Act provides that the Commission will have at least 3 Members appointed by the SPCB with the agreement of the Parliament and that the SPCB will appoint one of the Members as the Convener.

The Convener of the Commission is Paul Walker and the Members are Ashleigh Dunn, Suzanne Vestri, Anne-Marie O'Hara and Helen Donaldson.

Further information about the Commission can be found at-

<http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/>

## **Finance and staffing**

The SPCB pays any expenses properly incurred by the Commission, approves its annual budget and indemnifies the Commission in respect of any liabilities incurred in the exercise of its functions.

The Commission employs four members of staff who are based in Edinburgh.

The Commission's annual budget for 2023/24 is £338k.

The Executive Director is the Accountable Office for the Commission and is directly answerable to the Parliament in the exercise of the following functions-

- a) signing the accounts of the expenditure and receipts of the Commission
- b) ensuring the propriety and regularity of the finances of the Commission; and
- c) ensuring that the resources of the Commission are used economically, efficiently and effectively.

## **Key responsibilities and duties**

The role of the Commission is outlined above. As the Convener, you will promote and encourage high ethical standards in public life and lead the Commission to ensure it operates efficiently and effectively.

In particular you will -

- lead, motivate and work closely with the other members and staff to set and monitor the strategic direction of the Commission

- promote observance of the Codes of Conduct for Councillors and Members of Devolved Public Bodies and produce and issue guidance and contribute to training sessions
- represent the Commission by meeting with stakeholders and attending conferences
- consider reports received from the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland
- with two other members, conduct Hearings (as a member or the chair) into alleged breaches of the Codes and impose an appropriate sanction where it has been determined that a breach (or breaches) of the Codes has occurred
- set agendas and chair Commission meetings
- oversee the systems of governance and internal controls and ensure that they are working well and consistent with best practice, and
- assess the performance of the Members and the Executive Director on a continuous basis and undertake a formal evaluation exercise on an annual basis

## **Person specification**

Suitability for the post will be tested through the following essential and desirable criteria -

### **Essential**

- demonstrable commitment to high ethical standards
- experience of working with a Code of Conduct
- the ability to efficiently and effectively assimilate complex information to reach sound and impartial decisions
- excellent interpersonal skills to work as part of a team providing support and constructive challenge
- experience of successfully leading an organisation, including overseeing the systems of governance and internal controls, setting the strategic direction and chairing meetings
- experience of managing senior staff, and
- board experience in an executive or non-executive capacity.

### **Desirable**

- local government experience, or
- legal awareness, or
- devising and delivering training programmes, and
- awareness of the remit and role of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland ([About us | Ethical Standards Commissioner](#)).

## **Application and selection process**

All applicants must complete an application form.

An on-screen version of the application form can be found on our website at

[Members of the Standards Commission for Scotland | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

The application form is split into two sections to ensure anonymity during short-listing. Part A contains personal information, such as your name and address - this is not seen by the selection panel. Part B is the only part of your application the selection panel will receive.

Each application is assessed in the same way, against the same agreed criteria for the appointment in question. "Criteria" means the key skills and knowledge we think you need to be able to do the job. The evidence and examples that you provide in Part B of your application form, are the only information we will use in deciding whether to shortlist you for interview.

Please do not send us your Curriculum Vitae or any supporting documents as they will not be considered. This is to ensure that all application forms are assessed equally.

Before filling in part B of the application form you should read the information provided above under the headings '*Key responsibilities and duties*' and the 'Person Specification'. This is to make sure that you know what the appointment involves and the criteria that will be used to assess the applications.

### **Completing Part B of the Application Form**

Part B of the application form is your chance to demonstrate that you have the skills, experience and knowledge required. Please address each criterion by providing specific examples to support your statements. You must provide evidence of what you did, the reasons for your action, what happened, what you took into account and the outcome.

The selection panel will not make any assumptions about your skills and abilities, for instance through a job title.

You should use no more than 250 words per criterion.

### **Political Activity Form**

The information provided in the political activity form will remain confidential until the panel has agreed who it wishes to nominate. At this time, the information will be released to panel members to make them aware of any activity.

The information provided by applicants regarding their political activity **is not** a determining factor in the selection process.

### **Additional Information**

Please indicate if you have ever been convicted of any offence (other than minor motoring offences) which are not spent in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 or if any charges are outstanding; been adjudged bankrupt or made a composition or arrangement with your creditors over the past 10 years; been dismissed from any office or employment over the past 10 years; ever been disqualified from acting as a company director or in the conduct of a Company; ever been a director, partner or manager of a company which has gone into liquidation, receivership or administration; any other facts to declare which you feel might be

raised in public in future in relation to your suitability to hold appointment for which you are being considered, for example, because they could be presented as a conflict of interest.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment and to eliminating unfair discrimination in its employment/appointment practices.

If you require any of the documentation in an alternative format, or you have any queries about the post or the selection process, please contact Janice Crerar, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP (telephone 1013 348 6851) or at [janice.crerar@parliament.scot](mailto:janice.crerar@parliament.scot)

### **The Panel**

The SPCB panel members are Claire Baker MSP, Jackson Carlaw MSP and Maggie Chapman MSP.

The SPCB's Independent Assessor, Louise Rose will oversee the process and be present at the sift meeting and the interviews, to ensure the appointment process conforms to good practice.

### **Selection Process**

Short listing will take place on 22 February 2024. Those applicants who appear from the evidence and examples provided to have the best skills and knowledge for the post will be invited to interview.

Applicants selected for interview may be required to make an oral presentation to the panel.

Interviews will be held on Monday 4 March 2024 at the Scottish Parliament.

**Please note** we do not reimburse travel or other expenses to attend interview but we would be happy to explore alternative arrangements if this causes you difficulty.

Pre-appointment checks will be undertaken prior to the Motion being considered by the Scottish Parliament.

### **Submitting your application**

Please ensure you complete and return all the necessary documentation-

- Parts A and B of the Application Form
- the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form (this is voluntary)
- the Political Activity Form
- any additional information.

Applications can be e-mailed to:

[officeholder.applications@parliament.scot](mailto:officeholder.applications@parliament.scot)

**If you submit your application via e-mail, please ensure that you receive an e-mail acknowledgement from us.**

Completed application forms can be posted to

The Scottish Parliament  
Officeholder Services  
Room Q2.03  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

The closing date for applications is **12 noon on 14 February 2024.**

Late applications will not be accepted.

## **Annex A: Terms and Conditions of Appointment**

### Status

The Commission shall not be regarded as the servant or agent of the Crown or have any status, immunity or privilege of the Crown, nor shall its members and employees be regarded as civil servants.

### Disqualification

A person is disqualified from being appointed as, or from being, the Convener of the Commission if the person is disqualified under any enactment (including the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000), from being elected, or being a councillor, or being a member of any devolved public body.

### Tenure

The SPCB has determined that the length of appointment will be 6 years.

If the Commission is dissolved, the Convener's period in office ends on the date of dissolution or such other date as may be specified in any enactment. If any change is made to the Commission which requires the Convener's period in office to end, it will end on such date as the SPCB may, by written notice, specify.

### Daily/hourly fee rate

The daily fee for the Convener is £332.35 and the hourly fee rate for attendance at Hearings is £37. The daily fee rate may be reviewed by the SPCB.

### Expenses

Expenses actually and necessarily incurred in connection with official duties will be reimbursed e.g.,

- travel to and from home to the Commission's normal meeting venue, and
- travel and subsistence when required to work at other locations.

### Location

The Commission is based at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. Hearings and the delivery of training may necessitate travel across Scotland.

### Time Commitment

The Convener must be able to make a firm commitment to spend at least 36 days per year on Commission business (working on average 3 days per month but this may vary depending on workload), plus additional days, as and when required, for Hearings.

Details of the time commitment is set out below

- Commission meetings – 6 per year, (usually half a day) 4 online and 2 in Edinburgh
- Development sessions – 3 per year: 1 online and 2 in Edinburgh

- As an observer, attend at least one Audit and Risk and Human Resources Committee meetings per annum – 1 day
- Commission business (meeting with the Executive Director to set meeting agendas, replying to emails from staff on policy, guidance, governance etc) – ad hoc throughout the month
- Providing training on the Code of Conduct for Councillors and Members of Public Bodies and representing the Commission/attending conferences/stakeholder engagement - around 3-6 days per year
- Decision making on referrals from the Ethical Standards Commissioner (mainly by email) – ad hoc throughout the month
- assessing the performance of the members and the Executive Director on a continuous basis and undertaking a formal evaluation exercise on an annual basis – ad hoc plus 5 days per annum for evaluation meetings with the members and the Executive Director and writing up their evaluation reports.

There is a further variable time commitment, not included in the 3 days per month and separately remunerated, to participate in Hearings (usually in person, though some are held online), to attend pre-Hearing briefings and pre-Hearing meetings (usually on-line).

There is an average of 12 Hearings per year: pro rata around 7 Hearings per year.

Training will be provided in the initial 2-3 months, spread across a number of sessions and dates (approx 2 days).

#### Resignation/removal from office

The Convener may resign from office at any time by giving at least 3 months' written notice to the SPCB.

The Convener may be removed from office if the SPCB is satisfied that they have breached their terms of appointment and the Parliament resolves that they should be removed from office for that reason or, the Parliament resolves that it has lost confidence in the Convener's willingness, suitability or ability to perform their functions.

Any resolution must be voted for by a number of members not fewer than two thirds of the total number of seats for members of the Parliament.

#### Other Appointments

The Convener must seek the approval of the SPCB before accepting any new office, employment or appointment or engaging in any other occupation. Requests will be considered on a case by case basis.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The Convener must abide by the Standard Commission's policy in relation to conflicts of interest. Failure to do so may be deemed a breach of terms and conditions of appointment and could result in removal from office.



### Subsequent Appointments

On ceasing to be the Convener of the Commission, the Convener may not, without the approval of the SPCB, be employed or appointed in any other capacity by the Commission; be a member or an employee or appointee of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland or be, an employee or appointee of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman; or hold any other specified office, employment or appointment or engage in any other occupation, being an office, employment, appointment or occupation which they could not have held or, as the case may be, engaged in when they were a member of the Standards Commission.

The restriction starts when the Convener demits office and ends on the expiry of the financial year following the one in which it started.

### Evaluation

The Convener's performance will be evaluated annually by the SPCB's Independent Assessor. A copy of the report will be sent to the SPCB.

Failure to engage in the evaluation process may be deemed a breach of terms and conditions of appointment and could result in removal from office.

### Political and Outside Activities

This appointment is politically sensitive which means that the Convener is completely barred from taking part in either national or local political activities.

The Convener may not take part in any activity which would in any way conflict with their responsibilities to the Parliament or be inconsistent with their official position as the Convener of the Commission.

### Pension

This appointment is non-pensionable.