

## MANAGEMENT BOARD

### Suitability for Promotion Assessments.

*A paper by the Director of HR Services*

#### Purpose

At its April 2011 meeting the Management Board asked for consideration to be given to the idea of having a separate “suitability for promotion” appraisal which could be shared with promotion boards.

2. This paper considers the pros and cons of introducing such an assessment at this time.

#### Action for the Board

3. The Management Board are invited to agree:
  - further guidance be included in the PDM process, to help line managers facilitate discussions about career development (using the pay band descriptors) (Option Four, paras 33 - 35). This is similar to the discussions already part of the SCS system.
4. The Management Board are invited to also consider:
  - assessment of promotability is included in the line manager’s assessment form for promotion to A-D vacancies, and promotions from bands A to D into the SCS (Option One, paras 8 - 21)
  - or
  - deferring a decision on the inclusion of promotability assessments, which would instead be considered as part of the work commissioned by DCCS (Option Two, paras 22 - 25 ).
5. The Management Board are invited to reject introduction of a wider regular formal assessment of promotion exercise (Option Three, paras 26 - 32).

#### Issues

6. We have been asked whether it is possible to have a separate “suitability for promotion” appraisal that could be shared with promotion boards. This is indeed possible but the issues involved are set out below.

7. It was not clear from the April minutes how the Management Board envisaged this should be done so a number of scenarios are explored below.

Option One: As part of the Line Managers' assessment for Promotion Boards (See Annex A)

*Promotion Board Perspective.*

8. Board members have expressed the view that promotion boards are at a disadvantage because they do not have the line manager's assessment of promotability. At present we ask line managers to supply an assessment of an applicant's competency each time one of their staff apply for a post. This means that the assessment is specifically tailored to the essential criteria for the post in question.
9. The line manager's assessment asks them to consider whether, based on their knowledge of the applicant's performance in their current job, they consider the candidate to be a "good match", "close match" "partial match", "not suitable", or "unable to comment".
10. These assessment forms require managers to explain the reasons for not giving a good or close match. This is particularly used where there is a requirement for technical/professional skills and expertise in the new job which the applicant does not use in their current job so the line manager is unable to comment.
11. Over the last 10 campaigns we received 35 line manager assessments<sup>1</sup>. The spread of markings are shown at Figure One.

Figure One:

Assessment <sup>1</sup>	Passed Board	Failed Board
Good /Close match	24 (80% of good/close matches)	6 (20% of good/close matches)
Partial/ Not suitable/	2 (60% of partial/ not suitable/)	2 (40% of partial/ not suitable/unable to comment)
Unable to comment	1 <sup>2</sup>	-
Total	27 (77%)	8 (23%)

12. Overall:

- line managers assessed **86%** of applicants as a good or close match to the job applied for. Boards found only **77%** of applicants suitable.<sup>3</sup>
- the Board **disagreed with line managers** assessments in **23%** of cases.

<sup>1</sup> Assessments provided under previous system for interview stage only

<sup>2</sup> Manager unable to comment as candidate was a cleaner and did not use the skills in current job but had acquired the skills outside the House of Commons

<sup>3</sup> Even then Boards may "over mark" perhaps to avoid demotivating staff i.e. marking candidates as "C"/ Satisfactory" who they would not in reality accept to the post.

- **75%** of applicants that Boards did not find suitable for promotion had been assessed by line managers as a good or close match for the job <sup>4</sup>
  - **9%** of applicants that Boards found suitable had been assessed by line managers as only a partial match/ not suitable.
13. From a Board's perspective therefore they do not always agree with the line managers' assessments.
14. It is an integral part of the promotion assessment that the line manager with the vacancy sits on, or is represented at, the Board, and they have to be prepared to take the candidate selected for their post. There have been no reported instances of concerns about performance of newly promoted appointments.
15. From the point of view of the line manager with the vacancy there does not appear to be a pressing need for a further assessment of promotability.

#### *Candidates' Perspective*

16. From the applicants' perspective some candidates have expressed concern about the lack of information boards have about their current performance, and suitability for promotion. This was partially addressed through decisions by the Management Board last month to ask for line managers' assessments of suitability for the role to be available at the short listing stage.
17. The overall assessment of suitability for a role is linked to the competencies required of the advertised posts, and both the applicant and the line manager is asked to provide information, against these competencies, of the applicant's current and previous performance. Where the vacancy also represents a promotion, the skills and competencies required should be consistent with those required of the new pay band. The line managers' assessment, and board marking should be assessing the candidate against that required level (i.e. it is not inconsistent for an individual to be an excellent performer in their current job but still not be considered suitable for promotion).
18. The House uses "Behavioural Based interviewing technique<sup>5</sup>" which is based on examining, through questions, how candidates have behaved in the past as an indication of their future behaviour. All Board members should have been trained in, or have significant experience of, these interviewing and selection techniques and there is an HR representative on each board to assure adherence to House procedures. As such there is

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<sup>4</sup> In some cases line managers may "over mark" because of a lack of knowledge about the role/competencies required of the pay band above, or a lack of skill/ experience in making these assessment. In some cases line managers also may "over mark" to avoid difficult conversations.

<sup>5</sup> This interviewing and selection technique has been found to have the greatest correlation of actual versus assessed performance.

a considerable amount of information available to the Board about the candidates' present performance.

19. At present line managers are not specifically asked whether they consider the candidate is fitted for promotion.
20. An additional section could be inserted in the line manager's assessment form, in which the line manager would state whether they believed the candidate was fitted for promotion, and give an explanation where they felt this was not the case (see Annex A – insertion shaded in orange as an example).
21. The House has pay band guidance which sets out characteristics of the pay bands which could be used to inform such an assessment (see: <http://intranet.parliament.uk/Documents/intranet/finances/assets/pay-band-guidance-2009.pdf> ) but this does not provide specific competencies on which to base assessments. If line managers are asked to provide an assessment of promotability they may require some upskilling so they can reasonably answer whether a candidate is fitted for promotion, and are willing to say honestly when they do not think they are. Otherwise the gap between line managers' assessments and board assessments might widen further.

Option Two: Deferring decision on assessment of promotability and inclusion in work commissioned by DCCS

22. Some line managers have already expressed concern about the additional work load of having to supply line managers' assessments at the short listing, rather than the interview, stage. The Management Board may consider the reintroduction of the line managers' assessments at the short listing stage to be sufficient to mitigate against the concerns that Boards do not have sufficient information about current performance.
23. In addition the DCCS Management Board has recently commissioned work "to agree and communicate a clear statement of the criteria which internal promotion and recruitment boards are expected to apply for posts [within the DCCS] and to improve the system of quality assurance of Board reports and outcomes".
24. It is recommended that, as part of this work, we consider more consistent introduction of testing across the House as part of the selection process, which would provide additional, and consistent, information for Boards on candidates competencies. Use of testing might be considered a more objective approach to skills assessment than line managers' assessment of promotability.
25. Management Board are invited to consider deferring decision on the inclusion of promotability assessments, which would instead be considered as part of the work commissioned by DCCS.

Option Three: As a wider regular formal assessment of promotability exercise

26. Any wider regular formal assessment of promotability at this time is not recommended.
27. Whether or not a discussion on promotability would be considered motivational in the short term, it can have detrimental effects in the longer term, particularly where organisations are facing a period of downsizing, and therefore promotion opportunities may be fewer.
28. Assessments of promotability can be seen by individuals as a tacit indication that they are actually operating, and being paid, at a pay band below where they should be. Individually it may be the case that some individuals are capable of operating satisfactorily in higher pay bands, but organisationally the person should be doing the job required of them at that time.
29. If there are fewer promotion opportunities available individuals could also potentially receive “fitted for promotion” assessments for a number of years, where realistically there is little possibility of getting a promotion.
30. An assessment of promotability is an *absolute* assessment – whether the line manager considers the individual meets the criteria for the next pay band. Getting promotion is a *relative* assessment – is the candidate the best person applying for a vacancy at a specific time?
31. The aim of the House’s PDM system is an open and honest dialogue of strengths and weakness, which should then lead to discussion about any developmental requirements. Inclusion of any specific promotability assessment as part of that system would potentially undermine the willingness of either party to have this dialogue. However, in a similar fashion to the current SCS system a discussion on career aspirations is already included in the PDM system and guidance on how this should be conducted could be strengthened (see Option Four below)

*Comparability with the Civil Service*

32. We are required to be broadly in line with the Civil Service. For the last two years House of Commons staff can apply for lateral moves, and promotion, via the Civil Service Recruitment Gateway. To facilitate moves we have benchmarked performance management and annual report systems against those used in the Civil Service. Of the 13 bodies which responded as part of our Nexus Benchmarking group none said they use fitted for promotion assessments (list of respondees at Annex B).

Option Four: As part of a developmental discussion - already included in the PDM process

33. Part of the PDM process includes a developmental discussion (See Figure Two: Section E illustrated below) relating to the long term

development needs or career aspirations of the individual. Development needs here are those not directly related to the objectives or tasks undertaken as part of their normal job, as these will have already been covered.

34. Again line managers can use the pay band descriptors to facilitate discussions on the skills and competencies needed at the next pay band, and what developmental activities the individual might undertake to gain them. It does not however need an explicit assessment of current promotability. Further guidance could be included in the PDM process, to help line managers facilitate such discussions (using the pay band descriptors).

Figure Two:

E. DEVELOPING FOR THE FUTURE		See Guidance section 6.E
Long-term development or career aspirations		
Development needs		Development method
1.		1.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

35. The Management Board are invited to agree to:

- Option Four - further guidance be included in the PDM process, to help line managers facilitate discussions about career development (using the pay band descriptors).

36. The Management Board are invited to also consider:

- Option One - assessment of promotability is included in the line manager's assessment form for promotion to A-D vacancies, and promotions from bands A to D into the SCS.

or

- Option Two - deferring a decision on the inclusion of promotability assessments, which would instead be considered as part of the work commissioned by DCCS.

37. The Management Board are invited to reject Option Three - introduction of a wider regular formal assessment of promotion exercise.

Heather Bryson  
Director of HR Services

June 2011

Annex A: **Extract from Internal Application Form Band A-E Vacancies**

*(Proposed new section shaded in orange below)*

**14. Manager’s Assessment Form**

Please could you complete the form below outlining some examples of the candidate’s performance in the specified areas. Your assessment should be based on your knowledge of the candidate in the role in which you have managed them. Please be aware that you should provide what you feel to be a fair and accurate assessment, and that this information will be shared with the candidate.

**Once completed, this form should be forwarded to the countersigning officer.**

<b>Your Name</b>	
<b>Your Job Title</b>	
<b>Name of Candidate</b>	
<b>Candidate’s Current Job Title</b>	
<b>Candidate’s Current Pay Band</b>	
<b>How long have you managed this person?</b>	
<b>Please provide examples/evidence of achievements and behaviours against the areas outlined below:</b>	
<b>Competence 1</b>	
<b>Competence 2</b>	
<b>Competence 3 etc</b>	
<b>How closely does the candidate meet the essential requirements of the role for</b>	

**which they are applying?**

Please carefully read the enclosed job description and briefly outline your view on the candidate's suitability for the role. Your feedback will be considered alongside all of the other evidence collected by the panel during the selection process.

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Please tick the box that best matches your assessment of the candidate's suitability for the post. This box should reflect the above feedback.

Good Match		Close Match		Partial Match		Not suitable		Unable to Comment	
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Is the candidate currently undergoing any formal performance, disciplinary or absence management process?	<b>Yes/No</b>
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Please tick the box that best matches your assessment of the candidate's suitability for promotion. This box should reflect the above feedback.

Exceptionally fitted		Fitted		Not Fitted		Unable to Comment	
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If your assessment of promotability is "not fitted" or "unable to comment" please explain why below.

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*I declare that the information I have provided above is accurate to the best of my knowledge.*

<b>Signed Reporting Officer</b>	
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<b>Date</b>	
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<b>Signed Countersigning Officer</b>	
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<b>Date</b>	
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<b>I confirm that the countersigning officer has seen and agreed this manager's assessment form</b> <i>(If this form is to be emailed, line manager please tick box as confirmation)</i>	
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**Annex B: List of departments:**

Department of Work and Pensions  
Treasury Solicitors  
Attorney General's Office  
HM Prosecution Service Inspectorate  
Home Office  
Department of Transport  
Crown Prosecution Service  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
National Policing Improvement Agency  
Ministry of Justice  
Department of Energy and Climate Change  
GCHQ  
British Library