

Recruitment of new public Commissioners

Advert

Applications are invited for three new public members of the PCC, the body that deals with complaints about the editorial content of UK newspapers and magazines and their websites (including audio-visual material). The appointment - which is made by the full Commission, following recommendations by the Nominations Committee of the PCC, working in conjunction with an Independent Adviser, is for an initial term of three years. Membership - which comes with fees of £11.5k per annum, plus reasonable expenses - involves nine board meetings in central London each year (usually on a Wednesday afternoon), and occasional adhoc Committee work. In addition, Commission members are sent papers for consideration each week.

Applicants will need to demonstrate a number of criteria, including: a record of achievement in their own walk of life; an understanding of the principles of self regulation, and its legal and political context; an understanding of the problems faced by those caught up in the media spotlight, in particular vulnerable groups of people, and a commitment to the public service of helping them. A full list of criteria is available [here](#).

Because of the importance of the Commission's independence, applicants should not have been employed in the newspaper and magazine publishing industry - at management or editorial level - for the last ten years.

A description of the role, and further information about the applications process, is available on the PCC's website [here](#). Applications must take the form of a CV and covering letter (addressing specifically how the candidate can meet all of the stated criteria) to be received by 5 pm Tuesday February 1st 2011. Interviews of a shortlist of candidates are expected to take place in the weeks beginning 14th and 21st February. For those with difficulty accessing the internet, application information can be obtained from Ms Tonia Milton, PCC, Halton House, 20/23 Holborn, London, EC1N 2JD.

Description of the role and application process

The Press Complaints Commission has openly advertised three positions for public members of the PCC. [Click here](#) for the advertisement. Please see below for the job description and details of the applications process.

Applicants will need to demonstrate:

- a record of achievement in their own walk of life;
- an understanding of the principles of self regulation, and its legal and political context; and an understanding of, and commitment to, the role of the PCC in maintaining press standards;
- an understanding of the problems faced by those caught up in the media spotlight, in particular vulnerable groups of people, and a commitment to the public service of helping them;

- an understanding of the impact of technology (especially online) on the dissemination of information;
- an interest in, and appreciation of, the dynamics of a free press and freedom of expression; and the recognition of the need to balance that with other rights;
- an ability to analyse and digest a large amount of written material, and argue cogently about the merits of individual cases;
- an ability to work collegiately, balancing independence of thought with a willingness to assume collective responsibility;
- the capability to command the respect of the newspaper and magazine industry.

In addition, it would be helpful if one of the candidates could demonstrate expertise in financial and risk management.

Because of the importance of the Commission's independence, applicants should not have been employed in the newspaper and magazine publishing industry - at management or editorial level - for the last ten years. The PCC is committed to making appointments on merit by fair and open process, and principles of diversity and equal opportunities for all.

Applicants should submit a CV (of no more than 3 pages) with a covering letter, specifically addressing how they meet each of the stated criteria, and providing details of two referees. Referees will only be contacted after the shortlisting stage, and only with permission. The closing date for applications is 5pm 1st February 2011.

Applications should be addressed to Ms Tonia Milton, and sent to recruitment@pcc.org.uk, or to Halton House, 20-23 Holborn, London, EC1N 2JD.

THE APPLICATIONS PROCESS

- The Press Complaints Commission has agreed that, although these appointments do not come within the remit of the Commissioner of Public Appointments, they are being made using a process which takes into account the Commissioner's Code of Practice as best practice. The key principles include appointments being made on merit, being subject to independent scrutiny by the independent assessor, and having due regard to equal opportunities, probity, openness and transparency and proportionality.
- The PCC has now instituted a Nominations Committee to make recommendations for the appointments and reappointments of lay Commissioners, and to liaise with PressBof (the funding body for the system) over the appointments and reappointments of editorial Commissioners.
- The Nominations Committee consists of three lay members, including the Chairman of the PCC (who is Chairman of the Nominations Committee). An independent assessor has been appointed from outside the PCC to ensure the selection process of lay members is robust and fair in accordance with sound diversity and equal opportunities principles.
- The PCC will appoint a panel of independent assessors from which to draw in subsequent rounds of appointments.
- The Chairman of PressBof will be consulted at two stages: before the criteria for the role are agreed; and before the finalisation of the shortlist.

- At the end of the process, the Committee will make a nomination for approval by the full PCC. Appointment will be made via a consultancy agreement, and will not constitute an employment contract.
- Appointments will be for an initial term of 3 years with the possibility of a second term without open competition. Reappointment is at the discretion of the PCC and subject to satisfactory performance.
- The independent assessor will be involved in all stages of the process and will have direct access to the Chairman.
- The Nominations Committee, following consultation with PressBof, has determined the criteria against which the appointments will be made.
- Confidentiality will be maintained at all stages of the process and only the successful candidate(s) and terms of their appointment will be published at the end of the process.
- A full audit trail of the appointments process will be kept by the PCC and feedback will be given to unsuccessful shortlisted candidates if requested.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLE OF PUBLIC MEMBER OF THE PCC

A public, or lay, member of the Press Complaints Commission is one of the 17-strong adjudicating panel that makes up the PCC. There are 7 editors and 10 public members on the Commission, ensuring that it is clearly independent of the newspaper industry.

The Commission's task is to consider complaints brought by members of the public under the 16-clause Editors' Code of Practice, which covers issues such as accuracy, privacy and discrimination. Rulings are made either at full meetings of the Commission - which take place every 6 weeks or so - or considered in correspondence. Such correspondence-based rulings are dealt with on a weekly basis.

In each case, Commissioners are presented with a draft ruling which has been prepared by the case officer dealing with the complaint, based on their knowledge of the Code and PCC precedents. This recommendation is for the Commissioners to comment upon and a decision is not final until it has been endorsed by all members of the Commission. It is estimated that the workload for Commissioners is in the region of a minimum of two hours every week, although it can sometimes be more. In addition, Commission meetings (generally taking place in Holborn, London) last for about three hours every six weeks, although with travel to London they can consume an entire day for some members.

Commissioners are also presented weekly with details of complaints which either do not raise an issue under the Code or which have been resolved by the case officer following investigation. Commissioners may raise queries about any of these complaints with case officers at any time. Other papers are put to members of the Commission from time to time.

Members of the Commission are also company directors of the PCC, although their liability is limited to just £1. There are also sub-committees of lay members which consider financial matters, any Code changes and complaints handling. Lay members will usually sit on one of these committees each.

The post comes with fees of 11,500 pounds per annum (plus reasonable expenses), paid monthly in arrears.