Applicant Information pack for appointment to the National Library of Scotland

National Library of Scotland | Leabharlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba

The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic is seeking to appoint three new Members to the National Library of Scotland. The Cabinet Secretary highly values the benefits of having different points of view on the public body and welcomes applications from people from all walks of life.

The appointments process for these public body vacancies follows the Code of Practice for Public Appointments and is regulated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner.

Key dates for this appointment round

Closing date	17:00 on 12 January 2027
Sift of applications	8 February 2027
Date applicants will hear about the outcome of their application	W/c 8 February 2027
Interviews *It is unlikely that we will be able to accommodate requests for alternative interview dates. Interview slots are allocated through our online self-service system, where you will be invited to select from the available dates and times.*	3 and 4 March 2027 Interviews will be held in person in Edinburgh.
Ministerial decision	W/C 22 March 2027
Start date	3 May 2027

Welcome letter

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in joining the Board of the National Library of Scotland.

The National Library of Scotland is recognised as a leading collector of Scotland's cultural identity and memory, both nationally and internationally. It is Scotland's largest library, providing access to over 26 million physical items and over 35 million digital items. The Library's collections comprise over 61 million items, including rare books, manuscripts, maps, photographs, music, moving image and official publications.

In September 2025, the Library agreed a strategy, 'The Next Chapter', for the period 2025 to 2030. The strategy can be found on the Library's website. Our vision is for the Library to be a vibrant, inclusive, connected and creative part of Scotland's landscape, adding value to the lives of those who call Scotland their home and those who visit us.

The Library's ambitions also align with the Scottish Government's programme of public sector reform, with a focus on collaboration, digital innovation and delivering greater public value through accessible, sustainable and efficient services.

In 2025, the Library celebrated its centenary. We seek Board members who can bring their lived experience as well as their knowledge and skills to help us continue to develop a National Library fit for the next century and beyond.

We are particularly interested in candidates who can contribute at a strategic level and have the capacity and commitment to grow in the role and develop their skills, whether or not they have prior Board experience. As a Board, we are also looking to recruit individuals who can broaden our collective expertise in areas such as digital technology and cyber security, finance, audit and financial sustainability, and collections, heritage and public engagement. Further information on each of these requirements can be found in the person specification section.

This pack has been designed to help provide you with an overview of key information to help you understand more about the Library and our future plans. If you would like to find out more about being a Board member at the Library after reading the pack, please contact **our Board Support and Compliance Officer by emailing governance@nls.uk.**

You can also find out more about the National Library of Scotland online, and we would encourage you to visit our website and follow us on social media.

We hope that you will give serious consideration to applying. Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely

Professor Christopher Smith
Chair, National Library of Scotland

Information about the role

Remuneration	Appointment as a Member is unpaid. Reasonable travel and subsistence, childcare and carer receipted expenses that appear to the National Library of Scotland to be necessary for the proper discharge of duties as a Member of the Board will be reimbursed.
Time commitment	The minimum meeting time commitment for Board members is 12 days per year, though members are welcome to spend as much additional time as they wish on Board business. The formal time commitment includes: • Attendance at four Board meetings and one Board Away Day a year; • Attendance and participation in the work of one or two committees established to deal with particular aspects of the Board's business (e.g. Audit and Risk, Governance, or Staffing and Remuneration) and/or other related groups (e.g. charitable trust, high-level advisory groups). • Board members are also invited to attend library events, visits or away days from time to time, often in the evenings and occasionally at weekends.
Length of appointment term	Appointments to these roles will be made for a term of up to three years. Applicants should be aware that these positions are held at the discretion of Scottish Ministers and do not constitute employment.

	Applicants who have previously served on this public body should refer to the Q&A section on previous service and term limits.
Location of meetings	The Board meetings are usually held in central Edinburgh, with one meeting per year in Kelvin Hall, Glasgow. **The dates of the meetings in 2027** are as follows: Monday 22 March Monday 21 June: Strategy Day (provisionally 1030 - 1700) Tuesday 22 June (provisionally 0900 – 1300) Monday 20 September Monday 6 December
Disqualifications	You are disqualified from appointment if you are: (a) a Member of the House of Commons (b) a Member of the Scottish Parliament. A member of the Scottish Parliament cannot also hold a public appointment for public bodies listed in the Schedule to the Scottish Parliament (Disqualification) Order 2025. Former Ministers and senior civil servants (Director General level and above) should ensure they comply with any applicable business appointment rules. The Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Act 2023 came into force on 31 August 2025, and the

	updated automatic disqualification criteria for charity trustees will apply. Should you have any questions about this disqualification section, you can seek advice by emailing the Public Appointments Team, Public.Appointments@gov.scot

The National Library of Scotland

The National Library of Scotland is the guardian of the printed and recorded memory of Scotland, held on behalf of the nation. It fulfils a statutory role as one of the nation's most significant cultural and research organisations and operates within the context of the Scottish Government's national outcomes and strategic objectives, including public service reform.

The Library's key strategic priorities are:

- **Responsible Stewardship**
- **Connection**
- **Sustainability**

These priorities reflect its statutory functions of safeguarding and developing its collections, providing access and opportunities for engagement, encouraging learning and research, and contributing to the understanding of Scotland's national culture as a country with a rich heritage and a vibrant future. Core funded by the Scottish Government, it is governed by a Board which is accountable to the public through Ministers and the Scottish Parliament for the discharging of the functions defined in the National Library of Scotland Act 2012, and for the overall vision, strategy and corporate performance of the Library.

In 2021 the Library appointed its first female National Librarian and Chief Executive, Amina Shah. Ms Shah, previously a Board member of the Library, is strongly committed to the long term sustainability and development of the Library. She has a strong interest in diversity and inclusion, and the role libraries, literature and culture play in empowering individuals and communities.

Further information about the Library's governance is available here.

Engagement sessions

To give candidates a better understanding of the role of a Board member at the National Library of Scotland, several engagement sessions are planned. These sessions offer an opportunity to meet serving Board members and ask any questions you may have about the role.

- An online engagement session will be held at 16:00 on Thursday 10 December 2026. To attend this session, please email governance@nls.uk.

- Two in-person engagement sessions will also be held, one at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, and one at George IV Bridge, Edinburgh. Dates and further details will be published on our website or can also be obtained by emailing governance@nls.uk.

The role of the Member

The National Library of Scotland is a Non-Departmental Government Body (NDPB). The Board is accountable to the public, through Ministers and the Scottish Parliament, for discharging the Library's statutory functions, specifically:

- Preserving, conserving and developing the Library's collections;
- Making the collections accessible to the public and to persons wishing to carry out study and research;
- Exhibiting and interpreting objects in the collections;
- Promoting collaboration between, and the adoption and sharing of good practice, among other bodies and institutions which provide library and information services.

The Board is supported by three committees: the Audit and Risk Committee, the Staffing and Remuneration Committee, and the Governance Committee.

As a Board or Committee member, you must consider the functions outlined above when making decisions, offer constructive challenge and scrutiny, and work collaboratively with colleagues to advance the Library's strategic priorities. As a Board Member, you are also encouraged to establish and nurture relationships with potential benefactors and sponsors and represent the collective interests of the Library's local, national and international stakeholders, including the public, the Scottish Government, staff and volunteers, and the wider library, educational and local communities. The Board also ensures that the Library

follows best practice as an employer and that staff are competent and effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The charity trustee duties are set out in the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Board members are expected to follow the National Library of Scotland's Code of Conduct.

The selection panel

Chair	Jamie Macdougall, Deputy Director, Culture and Historic Environment, Scottish Government
Panel Member	Professor Christopher Smith, Chair, National Libraries of Scotland
Independent Panel member	Alison Byrne, Chief Executive, National Records of Scotland

Please note that applicants will be asked to declare if they know any members of the selection panel who are named in this pack. The panel will also declare if they know any applicants. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be managed in line with the Ethical Standards Commissioners Code of Practice for Public Appointments.

Person specification

The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic is looking for up to three new members who can put their experience to good use on the public body.

We have identified specific requirements that will complement the skill -set of the existing Board. Depending on the strength of the field, it is intended to appoint up to three applicants, all of whom can demonstrate **ONE** of the priority criteria outlined below, as well as **ALL** of the essential criteria.

Applicants must demonstrate evidence of one of the priority criteria. You may only select **ONE** of the priority criteria so pick the one which is strongest for you. Where two or more applicants have equal merit on the priority criterion, the assessment of essential criteria will be taken into account.

The Cabinet Secretary will appoint the best balance of three applicants across the three priority criteria. In the event that there are no applicants suitable for appointment under one of the priority criteria, the Minister may decide to appoint more than one applicant who has provided strong evidence against one of the other priority criteria.

The table below sets out the skills, knowledge, experience and attributes that we are seeking and explains how the criteria will be tested. You may have gained your experience through work, by being active in your community, in a voluntary capacity or through your own lived experience.

Please note that you are required to choose one of the priority criteria listed below at Section A and provide evidence of this. You must also demonstrate evidence against all of the Essential Criteria at Section B.

Please attach an overarching statement demonstrating evidence for **ONE of the priority criteria and ALL of the essential criteria.** Your statement should be no more than 1,000 words in total.

Criterion	Example indicators	How this will be assessed
A. Priority		
1. Recent experience in digital innovation, information and cyber security	• Understanding of digital delivery and the requirements of cyber resilience • Experience of digital innovation, including opportunities for AI to improve services • Understanding of the requirements of good digital business case development, and ability to help others understand the opportunities and risks of different proposals • Understanding of the risk that cyber incidents present to delivery of a strategy • Understanding of the strategic action an organisation can take to prevent, detect and respond to cyber attacks	This will be assessed at application stage and at interview stage. **In your online application:** Please attach an overarching statement demonstrating evidence for **ONE of the priority criteria and ALL of the essential criteria.** Your statement should be no more than 1,000 words in total.
2. Experience of financial management, income diversification and sustainability	• Experience of financial management, audit and risk in a large organisation in the public, private or voluntary sector • Understanding of the key components of managing an organisation through a time of significant change and development. • Providing effective challenge on financial sustainability and value for money. • Knowledge of environmental sustainability, climate related	This will be assessed at application stage and at interview stage. **In your online application**: Please attach an overarching statement demonstrating evidence for **ONE** of the priority criteria and **ALL** of the essential criteria. Your statement should be no more than 1,000 words in total.

	risks, net zero ambitions and sustainable operations. • Experience of fundraising, philanthropy, sponsorship, commercial partnerships or income diversification.	
3. Knowledge and experience in collections, heritage and public engagement	• Ability to contribute to the development of a collections strategy and the use of collections to educate, engage and inspire the public. • Experience of co-production with communities and stakeholders to maximise reach, relevance and impact. • Knowledge of the needs and expectations of a Library's audiences, users, members and visitors, and the importance of accessible, welcoming and responsive services. • Knowledge of building and storage facility management, capital projects, regulatory compliance, and health and safety responsibilities.	This will be assessed at application stage and at interview stage. **In your online application:** Please attach an overarching statement demonstrating evidence for **ONE** of the priority criteria and **ALL** of the essential criteria. Your statement should be no more than 1,000 words in total.
B. Essential		
1. Ability to review information, assess evidence and contribute to informed decision making	• Ability to offer challenge that supports effective decision making • Able to analyse and review complex issues, weighing up conflicting information and opinions, appreciate strategic implications including	**In your online application:** Please attach an overarching statement demonstrating evidence for **ONE** of the priority criteria and **ALL** of the essential criteria. Your statement should be no

	priorities, opportunities and risks. • Confidence and self-awareness to chair, or participate as a member of, committees that support good governance.	more than 1,000 words in total.
2. Ability to see the bigger picture	• Able to look ahead and consider issues within different timeframes. • Identifying relevant implications such as challenges and risks. • Seeing beyond your own personal experience or specialism and considering other information and perspectives. • Not taking a short term or parochial view. • Ability to understand the impact and appreciate the opportunity of Public Service Reform as a change driver for NLS alongside other public bodies, and demonstrate experience of change management.	**In your online application:** Please attach an overarching statement demonstrating evidence for **ONE** of the priority criteria and **ALL** of the essential criteria. Your statement should be no more than 1,000 words in total.
3. Ability to communicate clearly, advocate effectively and influence others constructively	• Ability to be focussed and succinct in your communications • Ability to listen to diverse voices and respect views that are different to your own • Ability to put your view across clearly and respectfully, and	**In your online application:** Please attach an overarching statement demonstrating evidence for **ONE** of the priority criteria and **ALL** of the essential criteria. Your statement should be no more than 1,000 words in total.

	influence group decision making. • Ability to engage with a diverse range of people and stakeholders.	

Finally, you should provide a tailored CV/career history setting out your experience. This should be **no more than two A4 pages** and show how the roles/positions you have held, and/or activities you have undertaken, are relevant to this role. **Please ensure you check the 'How to Apply' section for further details on how to upload this.**

How to apply online

1. Download and save this applicant information pack to refer to.
2. Read the 'person specification' section in this pack, and write a supporting statement and tailored career history, noting the absolute word and page limits.
3. Save a copy of your supporting statement and tailored career history to your device on **one PDF document** ready for upload.
4. Navigate back to the job advert and click 'apply'.
5. Complete the personal information and conflict of interest questions.
6. Attach your **one PDF document**. Your PDF should be uploaded using the 'Drop Resume Here' box that appears on the Supporting Documents and URLs section, or you can use the link function.
7. Submit your online application by 17:00 on 12 January 2027.
8. **Please Note:** you do not have the option to edit your application once you click 'submit'. If you have submitted previous applications the online system will prepopulate your previous responses so please ensure that these are not included with your application. You must have all your information and attachments to hand before submitting your application.

We strongly recommend that you draft your answers in a word document and check that you are happy with them before copying and pasting your answers in the relevant sections of the online application.

Please note that any content exceeding the stated word limits will not be considered by the selection panel.

Late applications will not be accepted by the selection panel.

The online system has been extensively tested for compatibility with a range of assistive technologies. However, should you experience any difficulties accessing or using the system, please contact the Public Appointments Team at: Public.appointments@gov.scot.

Application Advice

The selection panel will not make assumptions – for example from a job title – as to the skills, knowledge, experience and attributes you have gained. The Panel will review the evidence provided and invite to the second and final assessment stage those applicants who most closely meet the criteria being tested at this first stage of assessment. By the end of the selection process, you must have demonstrated that you have met the essential criteria to the satisfaction of the selection panel to be considered for appointment.

You should provide clear and succinct information about yourself and how you meet the criteria that are being tested at this application stage. When being asked to demonstrate knowledge, understanding or experience, you should describe how you gained this, the breadth and depth of this knowledge, understanding or experience and any situations where you have used this.

Please use specific evidence to support your answers that is relevant to the requirements being tested. Draw on evidence from your working and/or personal life, or through your participation with a private, public, voluntary, charity or community organisation. Please note that there are word limits at each of the sections.

Suggested preparation

- Take time to think about each of the criteria and think about the situations you have recently been involved in.
- Think how your actions and experiences led to results that demonstrate the criteria.
- Prepare your answers.

Your evidence

- Please be clear and succinct. You may be asked to expand on your answers at interview.
- Draw on evidence which best demonstrates your skills, knowledge or abilities in that area.

In providing your evidence, it would be helpful if you could explain your personal contribution, what you did and how you did it – use "I" not "we." Give the outcome – what happened? How effective was the result? How influential were your role, actions and interventions? What impact did you have?

Using the STARR method

When providing evidence against the criteria, you may find it helpful to structure your responses using the STARR method. This helps you present clear, concise, and relevant evidence and allows the selection panel to understand your individual contribution and impact.

- **Situation** – Briefly describe the context or background.
- **Task** – Explain your specific role or responsibility.
- **Action** – Describe what you did (use "I", not "we"), including how and why you took those actions.
- **Result** – Set out the outcome of your actions and what was achieved.
- **Reflection** – Where appropriate, reflect on what you learned, what you would do differently, or how this experience is relevant to the role of a Non-Executive Public body Member.

Using this approach will help you demonstrate not only what you did, but how you applied your skills, judgement, and values, and the impact of your contribution.

The assessment process

The assessment process will happen as follows:

1. The selection panel will assess all applications against the criteria for appointment (see the person specification). Those who demonstrate evidence that most closely meet the criteria tested at this stage will be shortlisted for interview.
2. The selection panel will interview candidates, the questions they ask will relate directly to the criteria for appointment. Candidates will also be provided with a question in advance of the interview and asked to prepare and deliver a short verbal response to the panel.
3. The selection panel will also ask questions relevant to the fit and proper person test (see below) which will include questions about the Principles of Public life in Scotland.
4. The selection panel will review the evidence provided and agree on which candidates have most closely met the criteria for selection and should be recommended to the appointing Minister.
5. The appointing Minister will make a decision about whom to appoint based on evidence from the selection panel. The appointing Minister may request to meet with candidates before making a final decision.
6. Appointees will be asked to complete pre-appointment checks which will include a Disclosure Check (there is no charge for this). Appointment is conditional on satisfactory completion of these.

Guaranteed interviews

This appointment round will provide guaranteed interviews for disabled people who meet the criteria for the role being tested at the application stage. The selection panel will not know which applicants have requested a guaranteed interview until the shortlisting is complete.

Fit and proper person checks

In the context of public appointments, a fit and proper person is someone who is suitable because they meet the requirements of the role, and their past or present activities and behaviour means they are suitable. Tests are built into different stages of the appointment process to ensure that:

- Conduct to date has been compatible with the public appointment

- Membership is not barred by the body's constitution e.g., criminal record or bankruptcy (see disqualifications)
- There are no unmanageable conflicts of interest
- Political activity is declared
- There is agreement to abide by the Principles of Public life in Scotland
- There is confirmation that the time commitment required for the role can be met.

Media checks for candidates invited to interview

The selection panel may consider publicly available information about candidates, including posts on social media platforms. Any findings that the selection panel agree are pertinent to the role or that may call into question suitability for the appointment, credibility of the appointments process or the public body will be discussed with candidates at interview. Consideration of any issues will take place openly and transparently to establish the facts. Candidates will be given an opportunity to respond to any concerns. This information will be handled in line with the Privacy Notice for public appointments.

Gender Representation on Public Body Boards (Scotland) Act 2018

The Gender Representation on Public Body Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 sets a gender representation objective that 50% of non-executive members of public body boards should be women.

Where two or more candidates are assessed as equally qualified for appointment, and at least one candidate is a woman and one is not, section 4(3) of the Act requires the appointing Minister to appoint the woman where this would help the public body achieve, or make progress towards achieving, the gender representation objective*.

Once you apply, the Scottish Government will write to you to collect the required information regarding your sex.

*To note, under section 4(4) of the Act, the appointing Minister may instead appoint a candidate who is not a woman where another characteristic or circumstance appropriately justifies doing so.

Common questions and answers

Who can I contact to speak about this role?	Please contact our **Board Support and Compliance Officer** by emailing governance@nls.uk.
Who can I speak to about a disability related reasonable adjustment?	Please contact the Public Appointments Team Email: Public.appointments@gov.scot Deaf, deafblind and BSL users can contact the team via contactSCOTLAND-BSL
I am having a problem with the application process who can I speak with?	Please contact the Public Appointments Team (see contact details above).
Do you have any advice for candidates attending interviews?	Yes. More information is provided here: Introduction - Public appointments: guide - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
I can't attend the interview in person, can I attend remotely?	Yes. You can request to attend the interview using MS teams as a reasonable adjustment, at the selection panel's discretion. Please contact the Public Appointments Team. Email: Public.appointments@gov.scot
Will you reimburse expenses for attending an interview?	Yes. You can claim reasonable expenses. A claim form will be issued with your invitation to interview, along with instructions.
What does 'appointed on merit' mean?	Appointed on merit means that the people who are appointed most closely meet the criteria that is sought for the public body vacancy at a point in time. People are assessed on the evidence that they present in the appointments process and the findings of the fit and proper person test.
What role does the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC) have in the appointments process?	The ESC regulate and monitor the public appointments process. The Commissioner plays a role in ensuring appointments are made on merit and use fair methods. More information about the Commissioner's role is provided here: Public appointments Information leaflet | Ethical Standards Commissioner

Can I apply if I am not a British citizen?	Yes. You can apply if you are not a British citizen. However you must be legally entitled to work in the UK.
Would remuneration for a public appointment impact on my benefits?	Possibly. Taking up a remunerated public appointment may affect benefits payments. This will depend on individual circumstances and you should seek advice from your benefits provider. More information is provided here: Public appointments and welfare benefits: information - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
Do the selection panel see information from the diversity monitoring form?	No. Diversity monitoring information provided by applicants is not shared with the selection panel. If applicants opt for a guaranteed interview this information will be shared with the selection panel. Information about a reasonable adjustment may be shared with the selection panel to ensure that requirements are met (e.g. if a BSL interpreter is required).
Do I need to provide an email address and contact details at application stage?	Yes. You must provide your contact details, including an email address, when submitting your application. This information is required so that we can contact you regarding your application and, if you are successful, to support the appointment process. As part of the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) requirements, the Scottish Government may need to verify the identity and credentials of candidates who are recommended for appointment. Contact details are also needed by the public body to arrange induction. Applications submitted without the required contact information will be rejected.
How will my personal information be handled?	All personal information will be handled with great care and in line with UK GDPR and data protection requirements. Further information can be found in the Privacy Notice.
Can I get feedback on my application or interview?	Yes. You can request feedback. Candidates have 20 working days from the date of notification of the

	outcome of their application to make the request in writing to Public.Appointments@gov.scot.
Is any training provided if I am offered and take up an appointment?	Yes. Each public body has their own induction process and training offer, they will make contact directly should you be appointed. New appointees are also invited to attend an induction day hosted by the Public Bodies Support Unit of the Scottish Government.
Can I apply for a role on a regulated public body if I have previously served on that public body?	Yes. Previous service on a public body does not prevent you from applying for a new appointment. Time served as a Member, Trustee or Commissioner and time served as Chair are treated separately. Each role is normally subject to a maximum of eight years' service. **If you have previously held the same role on the public body, any earlier periods of service will count towards the eight-year limit, even if there has been a break between appointments.**
Is it possible to hold more than one public appointment?	Yes. It is possible to have more than one public appointment. **However, please check the disqualification section in this pack for further details related to this specific public body.** You should also check that you can make the time commitment for an additional appointment and that there are no unmanageable conflicts of interest.
Are public appointments announced?	Yes. Every appointment is announced here: Public appointments: news releases - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) The public body may also announce new appointments on their own website and social media platforms. Information published will include a biography and details of any political activity within the last 5 years.
What standards are expected of public body members?	The conduct expected of public body members of Scottish public bodies is set out here: Members of devolved public bodies: model code of conduct - December 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)(this includes the Principles of Public Life)

How can I complain about the public appointments process?	Further information about the complaints process for public appointments can be found here: How to apply - Public appointments: guide - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Anyone concerned about public appointments can raise a complaint and have it independently investigated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner. Investigation process public appointments | Ethical Standards Commissioner

For further information

Please contact the Public Appointments Team, Scottish Government

Email: Public.appointments@gov.scot

Deaf, deafblind and BSL users can contact the team via contactSCOTLAND-BSL

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba