

DEFENCE FORCES

TERMS AND CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE 2026 ENLISTMENT OF INSTRUMENTALISTS IN THE DEFENCE FORCES SCHOOL OF MUSIC

IMPORTANT NOTE

A person who wishes to apply for this competition should read this document carefully prior to completing the application form. An application should only be submitted if the applicant is satisfied that they fulfil all of the governing conditions detailed in this document.

The acceptance by the Chief of Staff - Defence Forces, of an application form from a person desiring to enlist as an Instrumentalist in the Defence School of Music should not be regarded as an admission by the Chief of Staff that such a person satisfies all or any of these conditions or that they are not disqualified by law from enlisting in the Defence Forces.

Everything contained in these conditions, notes and annexes is subject to the over-riding authority of the governing statutes, regulations and schemes, including the Defence Act, 1954 (as amended and extended) and statutory provisions made, or to be made, thereunder, and any other relevant provisions, agreements, legislation, public service policy, circulars and/or instructions and any errors which may appear herein are subject to correction at any time.

In addition, all terms and conditions outlined in this document are subject to change under the Defence Forces conciliation and arbitration scheme and public service agreements as may be concluded from time to time.

Appointments are open to all eligible candidates, on an equal basis, regardless of their gender identity.

Exceptions to the governing conditions cannot be made in individual circumstances.

Candidates, when completing their application form, will be required to confirm that they have not:

- *knowingly or recklessly provided false information*
- *canvassed any person with or without inducements*
- *impersonated a candidate at any stage of the process*
- *interfered with or compromised the process in any way*

CANVASSING WILL DISQUALIFY

NOTE FOR FUTURE COMPETITIONS

These conditions apply for the 2026 Instrumentalist Competition only and may be reviewed in advance of any future competition.

1. GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS.

All applicants must:

- a. At the time of application be -
 - (i) a citizen of the State,
or
 - (ii) be any other person who has a lawful entitlement to reside and work within the State for the period of enlistment required for the period of time that is required for the purpose of any such appointment and
 - (iii) be of good character and satisfy any security clearance requirement.
- b. Demonstrate a standard of instrumental competence consistent with performance in a professional military band.
- c. Meet the required minimum standards of medical and physical fitness (as outlined at Paragraph 3.)

2. AGE REQUIREMENTS.

Candidates must be 18 years of age and less than 39 years of age on the closing date for receipt of applications, which for this competition is **DATE TBC**.

Please note that the upper age limit may be the subject of review in advance of future competitions.

3. MEDICAL AND PHYSICAL STANDARDS

Candidates must be in good mental and bodily health and free from any physical defect, abnormality, physiological condition or history of serious illness likely to interfere with the efficient performance of their duties.

The following are the minimum physical requirements:

a. Height

The minimum height requirement is 157.48 cm. Physical standards and weight must be in keeping with height and age.

b. Vision

Both eyes must be free from disfiguring or incapacitating abnormality and free from acute or chronic disease. There must be no evidence of squint or latent squint. Colour vision must meet the standard set out in Administrative Instructions Part 10, Paragraph 110(c).

The eligibility of applicants who have had previous incisional or laser treatment to correct visual acuity will be determined at the Medical Examination. Please see *Annex B* for further information. Vision must be not be less than 6/36 in each eye, corrected to not less than 6/6 in one eye and 6/9 in the other.

c. Dental

Candidates must be free from any serious periodontal disease and possess teeth to a specific standard, which is not less than the equivalent of eleven over eleven natural teeth functionally opposed. In certain circumstances, artificial teeth may be acceptable.

d. Hearing

A good standard of unaided hearing is essential. Candidates will be required to undergo an audiometric test at which:

- i. The sum of the hearing threshold at 1,2,3, 4 and 6 kHz should not exceed the age and gender related warning levels contained in the "Guidelines on Hearing Checks and Audiometry Regulations 2007", issued by the Health and Safety Authority.
- ii. All candidates must be able to hear all measured pure tones up to and including 8 kHz at 20dB in each ear. Candidates must also be free from acute or chronic ear disorders.

Candidates are advised to avoid all sources of loud noise or music for a period of 48 hours prior to this audiometric test, as exposure to such noise may adversely affect the results of the test.

4. APPLICATION FORM

Candidates must apply online to www.military.ie. Candidates wishing to undertake the assessments through Irish must make this request known to the Defence Forces Recruitment Section at recruitment@defenceforces.ie

All correspondence with candidates will be done by email for the duration of the competition. Candidates should ensure the email address given is accurate and correct. Candidates wishing to undertake the assessment process through Irish must highlight this request to Defence Forces Recruitment Section.

Each application is acknowledged automatically within 24hours. If an acknowledgement is not received within 48 hours of applying, candidates should immediately contact the Defence Forces Recruitment Section at: 045 492553 or recruitment@defenceforces.ie

Likewise, if an applicant's email address should change, the onus is on the applicant to make contact with the Defence Forces Recruitment Section immediately, advising them of the change of email address.

5. SELECTION PROCEDURE

Candidates, if eligible, will be required to attend for the various stages of the selection procedure on the dates and times as notified. Applicants who fail to attend for any stage of the selection procedure will be disqualified from participation in any further stages of the competition.

Stage 1. Audition and Interview

This stage of the competition will take the form of an audition followed immediately by an interview.

At the audition, candidates will be required to play two (2) contrasting pieces. The audition will also include a sight-reading test.

Candidates called for interview must provide an original copy of Long Form Birth Certificate (photocopies are not acceptable) and may produce the following to the Interview Board:

- a. Musical Certificates (Degree, Diploma or Grade)
- b. Testimonials (musical or otherwise)

Candidates will also be requested to sign the Declaration Form accompanying the application form at the Interview.

Stage 2. Medical and Physical Examination

Candidates who are successful at the interview stage will be required to undergo a detailed medical examination, including audiometric test. The medical examination will include the provision of urine and blood samples. This detailed medical examination is part of the selection process and does not imply that a candidate has qualified for enlistment. As part of the medical examination a candidate will also be required to give full and accurate information on their family medical history as requested by the examining Doctor.

A panel of candidates who are successful at interview will be formed in order of merit from which future vacancies may be filled. This panel will remain in place for a period of 18 months from the date of its approval by the Deputy Chief of Staff (Support).

6. EXPENSES

Candidates are liable for all expenses incurred in connection with their participation in the competition.

7. EMPLOYEE VETTING BY AN GARDA SIOCHANA.

Candidates who are invited to attend before an Interview Board will be required to complete and sign a Garda Vetting Application Form. This will, pursuant to the Data Protection Act 2018, authorise An Garda Síochána to furnish to the Military Authorities, a statement that there are no convictions recorded against the candidate, or if applicable, a statement of convictions.

8. RANK ON ENLISTMENT

Personnel will be enlisted as Recruits and will complete an Induction Course. The rank on posting to a band is Bandsman/woman (Private 2 Star). Posting to a band is likely to take place approximately 2 months after enlistment. On completion of a nine (9) month continuous satisfactory service period, the rank is that of Bandsman/woman (Private 3 Star).

9. CONDITIONS ON ENLISTMENT

- a) A successful candidate will initially be enlisted for six (6) years' service in the Permanent Defence Force on completion of which they may be permitted to extend the term of their permanent service to nine (9) years and then to (12) years, should they fulfil such criteria as may be laid down by the Deputy Chief of Staff (Support) in regards to such matters as conduct rating, physical fitness and medical category.
- b) A successful candidate may then be re-engaged for such a period as will make up a continuous period of twenty-one (21) years' service should they fulfil such criteria as may be laid down by the Deputy Chief of Staff (Support) in regards to such matters as conduct rating, physical fitness and medical category.
- c) Enlisted personnel may, subject to Defence Force Regulations and to meeting certain criteria and conditions, be permitted to continue in service up to the age of 62 years.
- d) Successful candidates, although posted to a particular band and location, will, from time to time, be required to perform with any of the Defence Forces School of Music bands, or elements of those bands.
- e) Instrumentalists may be eligible for consideration for promotion to Corporal after nine (9) years and to Sergeant after fifteen (15) years' service.
- f) The first nine (9) months of service are regarded as a probationary period. If however, the candidate is found to be unsatisfactory, they may be discharged from the Permanent Defence Force.
- g) Personnel of the Permanent Defence Force may at any time be required to serve outside the State.

Please note: mandatory retirement ages in the Defence Forces are subject to review.

10. PAY, ALLOWANCES AND PRSI OF INSTRUMENTALISTS

Enlisted Personnel pay PRSI contributions under Class H, which insures them for the range of benefits under the Social Insurance code, including the State Pension (Contributory).

The following are the current pay rates for Instrumentalists w.e.f. 01 February 2026. These pay rates will apply to candidates who, on appointment to the Permanent Defence Force under this competition as Instrumentalists, are members of the Single Public Service Pensions Scheme (see **Annex A** for further details):

RANK	POINT	RATE OF PAY w.e.f. 01 February 2026	Military Service Allowance	Total Pay
Recruit	On enlistment	€549.63	N/A	€549.63
Bandsman/woman Private -2 Star		€627.27	N/A	€627.27
Bandsman/woman Private - 3 Star	1	€646.85	€166.98	€813.83
	2	€674.15	€166.98	€841.13
	3	€699.33	€166.98	€866.31
	4	€720.07	€166.98	€887.05
	5	€735.99	€166.98	€902.97
	6	€745.28	€166.98	€912.26
	7	€785.60	€166.98	€952.58

Note: In line with Department of Finance instructions, dated 23 December 2010 starting pay will be at the minimum of the scale.

Technician Pay: On posting to a band, an Instrumentalist will be placed on Group 2 Technician Pay, at a rate of €35.53 per week.

Military Service Allowance: As per table above.

Note: It should be noted that the rate of remuneration and payment of the allowances outlined above are subject to review and adjustment on an ongoing basis in accordance with changes applicable across the public service generally as per Government policy. Different rates of pay and allowances apply where candidates appointed as Instrumentalists in the Defence Forces School of Music under this competition are not members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

Method of Payment

Currently an Instrumentalist is paid on a weekly basis by means of electronic funds transfer to a designated financial institution.

11. OCCUPATIONAL PENSION ARRANGEMENTS

Members of the Permanent Defence Force may qualify for occupational pension and retirement gratuity (collectively called superannuation benefits) subject to meeting certain terms and conditions. A person's date of first joining the Permanent Defence Force and whether they have any previous Public Service employment will generally decide their specific occupational pension terms. Successful candidates appointed from this competition will be required to pay appropriate employee pension contributions from weekly pay, as well as the 'additional superannuation contribution' (ASC). In general, anyone joining pensionable public service employment on or after 1 January 2013 is a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

Further details are set out in Annex A

See also **Paragraph 9** regarding conditions of enlistment.

12. CLOTHING

Items of Uniform are provided to successful candidates.

It should be noted that the current provisions regarding the issue of a uniform may be subject to change in accordance with Government policy.

13. LEAVE

Subject to the exigencies of the service, annual leave not exceeding thirty-one days may be granted in any one leave year.

It should be noted that this annual leave provision is currently calculated on a 7 day basis. Leave entitlements may be subject to review and adjustment.

14. SICK LEAVE

Sick Leave may be granted in accordance with the provisions of Defence Force Regulation A.12 (Medical Treatment) and Defence Forces Regulation S.3 (Pay and Allowances). Sick leave entitlements may be subject to review and adjustment.

15. HEALTH AND WELFARE

Medical attendance, hospital and dental treatment are provided free subject to the limitations as required by law.

Personnel in the Defence Forces are subject to compulsory random drug testing and personnel failing a drug test are liable to be discharged from the Defence Forces.

16. COURSES

In order to ensure that successful applicants will be competent to carry out the duties of higher rank to which they may be promoted, personnel will be required to undergo such courses as may be laid down from time to time.

Personnel may be required to undergo special courses of training which will be undertaken subject to the provisions of Defence Forces Regulations governing military education and training.

Personnel will be required to subscribe to an undertaking that in the event of their leaving the Permanent Defence Forces within a specified time of completing such training, s/he will be required to refund the cost of the training to the Minister for Defence.”

These conditions apply to the 2026 competition only and will be reviewed in advance of any future competition

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Introduction

In general, anyone joining pensionable public service employment on or after 1 January 2013 is a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. This Scheme applies to all military personnel who join the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) from 1 January 2013 onwards as first-time new entrants to the Public Service. The Single Scheme also applies if you are a former pensionable public servant who re-joins the Public Service in a pensionable position on or after 1 January 2013, with a break of more than 26 weeks between public service employments.

Note: In some circumstances, different pension terms may apply for personnel who join the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) from 1 January 2013 onwards who are not first-time new entrants to the Public Service and/or have previously been in the public service. Specific details are available, if required, on request from the Department of Defence.

Single Scheme – summary of main elements for PDF members

- It is a *defined benefit* scheme based on *Career-Average Earnings*.
- Retirement benefits – pension and lump sum – are primarily based on % of *pensionable earnings* throughout your public service career as a Single Scheme member.
- PDF members pay a 7.5% employee contribution from salary towards their Single Scheme benefits, as well as an *Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC)* – see **Notes 1 and 2 below**.
- Each year, you build up money amounts on a *fast accrual* basis towards your Single Scheme retirement benefits. The total of these amounts at retirement, with some adjustments for increases in inflation, determines what your retirement benefits will be.
- Single Scheme retirement benefits are payable immediately on retirement from the PDF only if you serve to the *minimum pension age* of 50, and have the *vesting period of 2 years*¹.

¹ The *vesting period* for the Single Scheme is 2 years, the minimum length of time you must pay employee contributions into the scheme before becoming eligible for retirement benefits.

- If you finish employment with the PDF before age 50 and have completed the vesting period, payment of your retirement benefits is normally *deferred* to the State Pension age².
- Retirement pension (but not lump sum) is *integrated* with the Social Insurance system – see paragraph (a) below.
- There is no cap on the length of time over which members can build pension benefits under the Single Scheme.
- Transferring retirement benefits to Single Scheme from other employments:
 - The option for a member of the Single Scheme to transfer-in benefits from private sector pension schemes is generally available, subject to certain terms and conditions.
 - If, before joining the Single Scheme, you hold deferred retirement benefits from previous employments under a ‘pre-2013’ Public Service pension scheme, you cannot transfer those benefits to the Single Scheme. Those benefits remain to be administered under your earlier pre-2013 pension scheme.
 - If you hold deferred benefits under the Single Scheme from an earlier Single Scheme employment, you do not need to arrange for their “transfer” because it is the same Single Scheme in place across the Public Service.
- There is provision for immediate retirement benefits if compulsorily retired on medical grounds, and for death in service benefits (dependents pensions and death lump sum).
- Following retirement, increases to Single Scheme pension are linked to inflation.

(a) Integration of retirement pension with the Social Insurance system:

New entrants to the Public Service are insurable for full PRSI. For this reason, public service retirement (or spouse's / civil partner's) pensions are subject to *integration* with the State Social Insurance system in accordance with standard Public Service arrangements. This means that a person's entitlement to the range of Social Insurance benefits (including the Contributory State Pension) is taken into account when calculating the amount of retirement pension payable.

² The current qualifying age for all State Pensions is 66.

In an integrated pension scheme, the Contributory State Pension (CSP) is regarded as part of the employee's total pension package.

Under standard Public Service arrangements, this integration of retirement pension with the Social Insurance system applies from the time the retirement (or spouse's / civil partner's) pension commences payment. This means the retirement pension is adjusted (reduced) from the start by a Social Insurance State Pension *offset*, regardless of whether the person has reached Contributory State Pension age.

Integration applies to retirement pension and also to employee contributions, but not to retirement lump sum.

(b) Employee pension contributions:

- **Note 1** – The 7.5% Single Scheme contribution is comprised of 4.2% of *net pensionable remuneration* (which means pensionable remuneration less twice the maximum rate of State Pension Contributory payable from time to time to a person who has no adult or child dependants) plus 3.3% of pensionable remuneration.

Note 2 – Subject to certain exemption thresholds, all Public Servants who are in pensionable employment – including members of the PDF – are also liable to pay an *Additional Superannuation Contribution* (ASC). The ASC is separate from the standard employee pension contributions mentioned above. No additional superannuation benefits are earned as a result of the ASC. The ASC applies to pensionable earnings above certain thresholds at different bands and % rates depending on the pension scheme applicable to the member. From 1 January 2020, the ASC bands / rates are as follows

Additional Superannuation Contribution	
All Public Servants who are members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme	<i>Fast Accrual</i> members of pre-2013 Public Service Pension Schemes
First €34,500 of pensionable earnings – exempt	First €28,750 of pensionable earnings – exempt
Next €25,500 @ 3.33%	Next €31,250 @ 10%
Balance @ 3.5%	Balance @ 10.5%

(c) Declarations:

Under the *Public Service (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012* (the 2012 Act), candidates are required to declare:

- any prior Public Service employment, or
- any pre-existing entitlements to a Public Service retirement benefit (whether already paid, in payment or deferred), or
- any existing remuneration from any other Public Service employment, or
- any such employment in which they received a payment-in-lieu of pension for that service.

(d) Pension abatement:

If a person was employed previously in the Public Service and is in receipt of a pension from the Public Service, the 2012 Act provides for the *abatement* (i.e reduction / suspension) of any Public Service pension on re-employment within the Public Service, even where the new employment is in a different area of the Public Service. The outcome will depend on factors such as a person's ongoing overall earnings from the Public Service by way of salary plus pension.

(e) Further information

Detailed information on Defence Forces pension arrangements can be found on the Department of Defence website at

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/f65fb1-defence-forces-pension-information/>

and

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/2a3969-pension-schemes/> - see Single Scheme booklet for Enlisted Personnel

See also the following link to a website by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation at **<https://singlepensionscheme.gov.ie/for-members/>** **which gives detailed information on the Single Scheme, and includes a scheme booklet for Fast Accrual (Uniformed) Members at <https://singlepensionscheme.gov.ie/for-members/scheme-information/scheme-booklet/#>**

Annex B

Laser Eye Surgery

Applicants, for whom any one or more of the following criteria apply, will be deemed unfit to join the Permanent Defence Force:

- (a) Applicants who have had their visual acuity corrected by non-laser surgery or laser surgery involving the raising of a corneal flap
- (b) Applicants who have had corrective laser surgery not involving the raising of a corneal flap, within 12 months of the advertised closing date for receipt of applications
- (c) Where there continues to exist, beyond one year of corrective laser surgery not involving the raising of a corneal flap, significant visual impairment or side effects related to the surgery, or both
- (d) Where, following corrective laser surgery not involving the raising of a corneal flap, the residual corneal stromal thickness is less than 300 microns.