

The Electoral Commission

Performance standards for Returning Officers - self-assessment form

Contact details

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Please refer to Part I of the Commissions guidance manual *Managing a European Parliamentary election in Great Britain: Guidance for Local Returning Officers*, at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-electoral-administrators/european-parliamentary-elections

PLEASE SELECT ONE LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT AGAINST EACH OF THE 7 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Please note at this stage Returning Officers are not required to send any evidence to support the assessment.

Subject area: Planning and organisation

Performance standard 1: Skills and knowledge of the Returning Officer		Supports vision themes:	
Subject: Planning and organisation		Professionalism – a clear and consistent approach to delivery	
This standard aims to ensure that Returning Officers have sufficient skills and knowledge to carry out their statutory duties.			
Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The Returning Officer is aware of the personal nature of the duties and responsibilities of the role but does not meet the criteria outlined below.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Performance standard	<p>2. The Returning Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is aware of the contents of the Electoral Commission’s guidance materials for the administration of elections and has a working knowledge of electoral legislation • is able to identify and oversee the necessary actions to rectify any errors in procedure • commands the required staff and resources required for a well run election • supports the staff administering the election and provides appropriate oversight of their work • oversees the planning, project management and risk analysis elements of the election and provides direction and receives regular feedback on activities and monitors progress • understands the main processes and procedures at the election in order to review the planning, question any aspect of and quality assure the whole election process • ensures that election accounts are completed in a timely manner • has a working relationship with the Electoral Registration Officer 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment agreement including an acknowledgement of role, duties and responsibilities • Election team management structure showing the roles of the Returning Officer and their election team members
Above the performance standard	<p>3. The Returning Officer, in addition to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can demonstrate a strong knowledge of electoral law and both existing and developing practice • undertakes continuous personal development in regards to election management 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of training and briefing events attended • Continuing Professional Development programme/training plan

Please use the free text box below to provide any additional information in support of your self-assessment:

See appendix attached.

Performance standard 2: Planning processes in place for an election

Subject: Planning and organisation

Supports vision themes:

Professionalism – a clear and consistent approach to delivery

This standard aims to ensure Returning Officers have developed robust planning processes for an election.

Performance against the standard

Assessment

Evidence to support assessment

Not currently meeting the performance standard

1. The Returning Officer does not ensure that a written plan is in place, and relies on unstructured management controls such as oral or written updates, and past experience only. Objectives, risks, any external contracts and available resources are not formally documented.



Performance standard	<p>2. The Returning Officer ensures that formal, written plans are in place for an election. These should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly defined objectives and success measures • risks – identification and mitigation • recruitment of temporary/permanent staff where needed • business continuity arrangements • consideration of physical and communication accessibility including a plan of the layout of the count premises • an outline of the roles and duties of all the staff present at the count <p>As well as a written plan, the Returning Officer ensures that contracts are in place for all outsourced functions or supplies and that contingency plans are prepared in case of failure of any of these contracts</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan(s) • Risk register • Business continuity arrangements • Plan of layout of the count premises • Contracts and contingency plans
Above the performance standard	<p>3. The Returning Officer, in addition to the above ensures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a thorough evaluation of all processes outlined in the plan is carried out • feedback is sought from all appropriate stakeholders including candidates and agents, and staff (both temporary and permanent) • the plan is amended, where necessary, for future elections as a result of the evaluation findings 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation plan • Documented feedback

Please use the free text box below to provide any additional information in support of your self-assessment:

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Performance standard 3: Training		Supports vision themes:	
Subject: Planning and organisation		Professionalism – a clear and consistent approach to delivery	
This standard aims to ensure Returning Officers have provided appropriate training for all staff used to deliver an election.			
Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The Returning Officer does not ensure provision of any training to either permanent or temporary staff other than a basic induction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2. The Returning Officer ensures provision of basic training for permanent members of staff only, to ensure awareness and understanding of legislative requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Schedule of training activities
Performance standard	<p>3. The Returning Officer ensures provision of training to both permanent and temporary staff on an ongoing basis, to ensure awareness and understanding of legislative requirements.</p> <p>The Returning Officer has ensured that training for polling station and count staff includes information and a briefing on access issues and procedures, and disability awareness training as appropriate.</p> <p>The Returning Officer ensures that evaluation of individual training activities is carried out.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of training activities • Training materials • Evaluation of the individual training activities

Above the performance standard	4. The Returning Officer, in addition to the above, ensures that a written training plan for both permanent and temporary staff is in place, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan, including identification of training needs for the future, is carried out on a regular basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training plan • Evaluation plan
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Please use the free text box below to provide any additional information in support of your self-assessment:

See appendix attached.

Subject area: Integrity

Performance standard 4: Maintaining the integrity of an election Subject: Integrity		Supports vision themes: Integrity – a secure process for registration and voting	
This standard aims to ensure Returning Officers have a process in place to identify any patterns of activity that might indicate electoral malpractice and any security issues that may arise.			
Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The Returning Officer does not ensure that there is a system in place to assess risks of electoral malpractice when planning for an election.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	2. The Returning Officer ensures that there is an informal system in place to assess risks of electoral malpractice but does not document this.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Performance standard	<p>3. The Returning Officer has ensured that links have been developed with the local police/SPOC to enable any concerns around electoral malpractice and any public order and safety issues to be referred.</p> <p>The Returning Officer ensures that there is a written plan outlining what steps are to be taken to deal with concerns about electoral malpractice. The plan contains a risk assessment that will identify and note action to take to tackle any concerns about electoral malpractice.</p> <p>The Returning Officer ensures that work with political parties and independent candidates is carried out as well as working with other relevant bodies including the Electoral Registration Officer.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of meetings/ discussions/ correspondence with local police/SPOC, political parties, independent candidates and other relevant bodies including the Electoral Registration Officer • Plan • Risk assessment documentation
Above the performance standard	<p>4. In addition to the above, the Returning Officer carries out an evaluation of the processes outlined above and implements initiatives to protect those who may be at risk of electoral malpractice.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation document • Documented details of initiatives

Please use the free text box below to provide any additional information in support of your self-assessment:

See appendix attached.

Subject area: Participation

Performance standard 5: Planning and delivering public awareness activity	Supports vision themes:
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Subject: Participation		User focus – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors	
This standard aims to ensure Returning Officers effectively plan and deliver public awareness activity to communicate election information to electors.			
Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The Returning Officer has not ensured implementation of any public awareness activity and only provides statutory information to electors. There are no response mechanisms in place (such as phone, website or email) to ensure that information is correctly and appropriately communicated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Performance standard	2. The Returning Officer ensures that a written public awareness strategy which covers internal and external communication is in place. The Returning Officer ensures that all outgoing communication provides appropriate contact details to allow interested parties to respond and find out further information. The Returning Officer ensures that there is active engagement with other departments of the local authority.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written strategy • Examples of outgoing communication • Records of meetings/ discussion/ correspondence with other departments
Above the performance standard	3. In addition to the above, the Returning Officer ensures that external bodies (such as other authorities, other Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers, local media and community groups) have been identified and consulted with to determine whether working with partners to pool resources and communication channels with other partners is worthwhile and, where appropriate, this joint work has been undertaken.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of meetings/discussions/ correspondence with external bodies • Record of work undertaken (if determined to be appropriate)

<p>4. The Returning Officer, in addition to the above ensures that an evaluation methodology for all activities undertaken, including those with external partners, the public awareness strategy and different dissemination methods used has been developed.</p> <p>Future work is planned taking account of the outcomes of this evaluation.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation methodology
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Please use the free text box below to provide any additional information in support of your self-assessment:

See appendix attached.

<p>Performance standard 6: Accessibility of information to electors</p> <p>Subject: Participation</p>		<p>Supports vision themes:</p> <p>User focus – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors</p>	
<p>This standard aims to ensure that Returning Officers provide a simple and user friendly way for electors to access information.</p>			
Performance against the standard	Assessment	Evidence to support assessment	
<p>Not currently meeting the performance standard</p>	<p>1. The Returning Officer ensures that information is provided in one format and has not taken account of the needs of different audiences (for example translation or alternative formats).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Performance standard</p>	<p>2. The Returning Officer ensures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant research (in consultation with appropriate organisations) has been carried out to determine the 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of how the appropriate languages and formats have been decided • Details of what demographic

	<p>appropriate languages and formats required to communicate with relevant audiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are responsive to changes in the demographics of the electoral area and takes note of research as to whether further formats or languages are necessary • information is produced and disseminated in a number of mediums appropriate to the audience • signage (both internal and external) and information to be provided to all polling stations are in appropriate formats and easily accessible 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>monitoring takes place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of dissemination methods • Record of polling station inspector reports of signage
Above the performance standard	<p>3. The Returning Officer, in addition to the above, ensures a process is in place for consultation with local organisations (including disability groups) about ways in which election documents can be improved and ensures that an evaluation of the accessibility of information is carried out.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of meetings/discussions/correspondence with those consulted

Please use the free text box below to provide any additional information in support of your self-assessment:

See appendix attached.

Performance standard 7: Communication of information to candidates and agents		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Participation		User focus – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors
This standard aims to ensure that Returning Officers effectively communicate election information to candidates and agents.		
Performance against the standard	Assessment	Evidence to support assessment

Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The Returning Officer does not ensure that candidates and/or election agents are issued with any written guidance on the nomination process or count procedure. Briefing sessions with candidates and/or election agents are not offered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Performance standard	2. The Returning Officer ensures briefing sessions for candidates and/or election agents are offered and that all candidates and/or election agents are issued with written guidance on the election process. The Returning Officer ensures that candidates have the opportunity to have their nomination papers informally checked prior to formal submission of their nomination.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of information given to candidates and/or agents • Log of appointments/meetings with candidates
Above the performance standard	3. The Returning Officer, in addition to the above, ensures that an evaluation of the effectiveness of all information provided to candidates and agents and the communication methods used is carried out.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of evaluation of information provided

Please use the free text box below to provide any additional information in support of your self-assessment:
See appendix attached.

Please email completed submissions to your relevant devolved or English office, details of which can be found on the attached circular.

