



Department
of Health &
Social Care



Committee on Mutagenicity of
Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products
and the Environment

Members of the Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM): information pack for applicants

Closing date: midday on Thursday 30 April 2026.

Reference no: VAC-EC1872

Contents

1. Role description and person specification.....	3
2. The recruitment process	8
3. The assessment process	15
4. Queries	18

1. Role description and person specification

1.1 Role description

As a member of COM you will be expected to:

- contribute to discussions of the committee working alongside recognised experts who assess other aspects of the detailed technical data on genotoxins under consideration (for example, mode of action and/or mechanism studies, traditional and novel toxicity testing strategies, statistics)
- contribute to the committee's discussions, including consideration of detailed statements and conclusions
- contribute to other discussions (such as in working groups or to draft text within your specialism if the need arises)

1.2 Person specification

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) values and promotes diversity. We encourage applications from talented individuals from all backgrounds and across the whole of the United Kingdom. Our committees are most effective when they reflect the diversity of views of the society they serve.

To be considered for appointment, you must be able to demonstrate that you have the qualities, skills and experience to meet all the essential criteria for appointment.

1.3 Essential criteria

All applicants must possess the expertise to provide independent scrutiny and credible advice on the issues that fall within the remit of the COM.

You must:

- demonstrate a strong track record of relevant, significant achievements at a senior level
- have the ability to operate effectively on a national expert scientific committee where you can offer advice and constructive challenge and accept challenge from others
- possess sound judgement, with an ability to critically analyse a wide range of complex information and make evidence-based recommendations

- demonstrate excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to gain the confidence of fellow committee members and of the committee's stakeholders

Expert members

In addition, for the expert member roles applicants must have a track record of achievement in one or more of the following fields:

- genetic toxicology: applicants must have experience in the conduct and interpretation of in silico methods, and in vitro, and in vivo tests. An interest in molecular epidemiology would also be of value
- carcinogenesis: applicants should be able to demonstrate an interest in cancer risk assessment and in the mechanisms of carcinogenesis both genotoxic and non-genotoxic mechanisms
- toxicokinetics and metabolism: applicants should have expertise in interpretation of data on the disposition, metabolism and toxicokinetics of chemicals and low dose effects especially in relation to genotoxicity testing
- computational toxicology and quantitative structure activity relationships (QSARs): applicants must have expertise in the application of computational toxicology and QSARs and their application to genotoxicity
- epigenetics and trans-generational effects: applicants with expertise in epigenetics with relevance to genotoxicity endpoints
- reproductive or developmental toxicology: applicants with expertise in developmental toxicology and adverse reproductive effects of mutagenic and genotoxic chemicals

Lay member

A lay member will be expected to work effectively with expert members of the committee to ensure the committee's advice addresses the concerns of, and can be understood by, the UK population as a whole.

In addition, for the lay member role applicants must have:

- a good track record of communicating scientific issues to a non-technical audience
- experience in the assessment and interpretation of data, and strong analytical skills

Desirable criteria

Applicants might:

- have contributed to national and international forum whose work is within the remit of the COM
- be able to offer additional specialist skills (for example, risk communication to the general public)

1.4 Remuneration

Members are not remunerated.

You can claim reimbursement for reasonable travel and subsistence costs which are properly and necessarily incurred on official business, in line with the travel and subsistence policy and rates of the COM. A copy of the policy and rates can be obtained from the COM.

This is an office holder appointment and does not attract any benefits under any Civil Service Pension Scheme. You will not be eligible for redundancy pay as you are not an employee. No other arrangements have been made for compensation upon the end of your term of appointment because an office holder who is appointed for a limited duration would have no expectation of serving beyond that period.

As this is an office holder appointment, you will not become a member of the Civil Service. You will not be subject to the provisions of employment law.

1.5 Time commitment

Around 3 meetings per annum, plus subgroup meetings. Additional time is also required for reading and preparation.

1.6 Location

Meetings take place either online or in person, with the location varying as required. Hybrid arrangements are available where appropriate.

1.7 Tenure of office

The appointment will be for up to 3 years.

The possibility of re-appointment for a further term is at the discretion of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) senior responsible officer. Any re-appointment is subject to satisfactory annual appraisals of performance during the first term in the post. There is no automatic presumption of re-appointment; each case should be considered on its own merits, taking into account a number of factors including, but not restricted to, the diversity

of the current committee and the balance of skills and experience it needs both now and in the future. In most cases, the total time served in post will not exceed more than 2 terms or 10 years.

1.8 Accountability

Members are appointed by UKHSA and are accountable to the department via the chair for carrying out their duties and for their performance.

1.9 For a discussion about the role

For further information regarding the role of member please contact Ovnair Sepai via email on com@ukhsa.gov.uk.

1.10 COM role and responsibilities

The Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products, and the Environment (COM) advises government on the mutagenicity of chemicals used in pesticides, pharmaceuticals, and other products.

COM provides independent advice to government departments and agencies on the potential mutagenicity and genotoxicity of chemicals (whether they are likely to cause mutation in cells), from natural products to new synthetic chemicals used in pesticides or pharmaceuticals. It also advises on strategies and research for genotoxicity testing.

The committee also advises on important general hazards (the inherent property of the substance) or risk (the likelihood of mutagenetic or genotoxic effects occurring after a given exposure) and gives recommendations for genotoxicity testing.

COM is an advisory body and has no regulatory status. However, it may provide advice to agencies that have a regulatory role.

Expert members

Genetic toxicology: applicants must have experience in the conduct and interpretation of in silico methods, and in vitro, and in vivo tests. An interest in molecular epidemiology would also be of value.

Carcinogenesis: applicants should be able to demonstrate an interest in cancer risk assessment and in the mechanisms of carcinogenesis both genotoxic and non –genotoxic mechanisms.

Toxicokinetics and metabolism: applicants should have expertise in interpretation of data on the disposition, metabolism and toxicokinetics of chemicals and low dose effects especially in relation to genotoxicity testing.

Computational toxicology and quantitative structure activity relationships (QSARs): applicants must have expertise in the application of computational toxicology and QSARs and their application to genotoxicity.

Epigenetics and trans-generational effects: applicants with expertise in epigenetics with relevance to genotoxicity endpoints.

Reproductive or developmental toxicology: applicants with expertise in developmental toxicology and adverse reproductive effects of mutagenic and genotoxic chemicals.

Lay members

Lay members will be expected to work effectively with expert members of the committee to ensure the committee's advice addresses the concerns of, and can be understood by, the UK population as a whole.

Lay member applicants must have a good track record of communicating scientific issues to a non-technical audience and experience in the assessment and interpretation of data, and strong analytical skills. Applicants might have contributed to national and international forums whose work is within the remit of the COM and/or be able to offer additional specialist skills.

2. The recruitment process

2.1 Making an application

Thank you for your interest in the appointment of Member to the Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM).

DHSC's Public Appointments team is managing this recruitment campaign.

In order to apply, you will need to provide:

- a CV which provides your contact details, details of your education and qualifications, employment history, directorships, membership of professional bodies and details of any relevant publications or awards (see section 2.6 for further details)
- a supporting statement setting out how you meet the criteria for appointment as set out in the person specification for the role (see section 2.7 for further details)

As part of the monitoring form, you will also need to:

- provide information relating to any outside interests or reputational issues
- provide diversity information - this allows us to assess if there are any unintended barriers to applying to become a member of a committee and whether there are any changes that we could make to encourage a more diverse field to apply. You can select 'prefer not to say' to any question you do not wish to answer. The information you provide will not be used as part of the selection process and will not be seen by the advisory assessment panel. tell us if you wish your application to be considered under the Disability Confident scheme
- set out any requests you may have for reasonable adjustments that you would like to the application process (if applicable)

Completed applications should be submitted to appointments.team@dhsc.gov.uk - please quote ref: VAC-EC1872 in the subject field.

If you are unable to apply by email, please contact Ralph Cabrega on 0113 254 5481.

2.2 Deadline

Applications must be received by midday on Thursday 30 April 2026.

The advisory assessment panel reserves the right to only consider applications that contain all of the elements listed above, and that arrive before the published deadline for applications.

In completing an application, please note the following in relation to:

- disqualification from appointment
- conflicts of interest
- standards in public life and ensuring public confidence

2.3 Disqualification from appointment

In line with the [Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees](#), generally, as the committee is providing advice to government and members are being appointed in an independent capacity, serving government officials would generally not be considered for appointment to COM.

There are no legislative or disqualification criteria for this role. The role is open to all applicants.

2.4 Conflicts of interest

Before you apply you should carefully consider if you or a party related to you have any interests which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be appointed. Please refer to the [Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees](#) for further information.

When you apply you should declare in your supporting statement the details of any relevant interests, highlighting any that you think may call into question your ability to properly discharge the responsibilities of the role you are applying for, or may be perceived as having scope to do so by a reasonable member of the public.

Conflicts of interest may include, without limitation, any outside personal or business interests (including direct and indirect financial interests, such as shares in a company providing services to government) or any positions of employment, other appointments or other positions of authority, that you or any party related to you have and which may influence your judgement in performing your appointment or may be perceived by a reasonable member of the public as having scope to do so. This should include declaring any political roles you hold or political campaigns you have supported.

A 'party related to you' could include, for example (but without limitation), a spouse or partner, a business partner, a close family member or a person living in the same household as you or a close family member.

Many conflicts of interest can be satisfactorily resolved and declaring a potential conflict does not prevent you from being interviewed.

If you are shortlisted, the advisory assessment panel will discuss any potential conflicts with you during your interview, including any proposals you may have to mitigate them, and can record that in their advice to the senior officer who is responsible for making the appointment. If the senior official wishes to appoint you, an offer of appointment may be subject to you giving up any unmanageable conflicts of interest. Any interests that are deemed manageable will need to be formally declared and may be published in line with [committee's] policy regarding declarations of Interest.

Failure to declare a potential conflict of interest may become grounds for withdrawing an offer of appointment. If offered the role, you will also be required to make a declaration of interests and to keep the declaration up to date throughout the tenure of your appointment. The requirement to declare interests will also be included in your terms and conditions of appointment. Failure to disclose an interest, subject to the interest and the circumstances, may become grounds during the tenure of your appointment for the suspension or termination of your appointment.

2.5 Standards in public life and ensuring public confidence

If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment to ministers or the committee, or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you bring them to the attention of the advisory assessment panel and provide details of any issue in your supporting statement.

This should include declaring in your supporting statement if:

- you are, or have been, bankrupt or you have made an arrangement with a creditor at any point, including the dates of this
- you are subject to a current police investigation
- there are any previous or pending personal conduct issues where:
 - a complaint or personal conduct issue has either been upheld or partly upheld

- an investigation that relates at least in part to your personal conduct is to take place but it is yet to start, or a similar such investigation is underway, but it is yet to conclude
- a complaint or personal conduct issue is current, but at the time of your application it is yet to be confirmed whether or how it will be investigated further
- there are any possible reputational issues arising from your past actions or public statements that you have made (including through social media and blogs)
- there are any other matters which may mean you may not be able to meet the requirements of the [Code of conduct for board members of public bodies](#)

Alongside your own declaration, we will conduct reference checks. This will be shared with the advisory assessment panel.

The advisory assessment panel may explore any issues you have raised or have been identified with you as part of assessing your application.

Failure to disclose relevant information requested could result in an appointment offer being withdrawn or the appointment being terminated, as the person appointed to this role will be expected to demonstrate the highest standards of corporate and personal conduct and in line with standards set out in the [Code of conduct for board members of public bodies](#), which includes the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#). As part of agreeing to the terms and conditions of appointment you will be expected to agree to meeting the standards set out in this code.

2.6 CV

We recommend you limit your CV to 2 pages. Please ensure your CV includes:

- your full name, title, home address, preferred contact telephone numbers, personal email address
- details of your education and qualifications, employment history, directorships, membership of professional bodies and any relevant publications or awards
- contact details for at least 2 referees - one referee should be the person to whom you are or were accountable in your current or most recent appointment or position of employment. Please indicate the relationship of each referee to you. References will be requested for shortlisted candidates prior to interview

- brief details of your current or most recent post and the dates you occupied this role, and any past or present ministerial appointments

2.7 Supporting statement

The supporting statement is your opportunity to demonstrate how you meet each of the criteria set out in the person specification. It will benefit the advisory assessment panel if you can be clear which specific evidence that you provide relates to which criterion. Providing separate paragraphs in relation to each criterion is common practice.

Please also set out details regarding any potential conflicts and/or reputational issues (see above guidance on conflicts of interest and standards in public life).

Please ensure your full name, the role to which you are applying and the corresponding reference number for the post are clearly noted at the top of your statement.

Please write all acronyms in full first, limit your statement to 2 pages and type or write clearly in black ink.

You must inform the department if, during the application and assessment process, your circumstances change in respect to any information that has been or should have been provided by you in your application.

2.8 Monitoring form

Please complete in full and return the monitoring form with your CV and supporting statement.

The form is split into sections, covering:

1. Disqualification, conflicts and standards in public life.
2. Diversity data.
3. Reasonable adjustments.
4. Disability Confident scheme.

Disqualification, conflicts and standards in public life

The form asks to you to confirm and declare any potential issues and directs you to provide further detail in your supporting statement. Further guidance on these topics is set out earlier in this information pack.

Diversity data

We encourage applications from talented individuals from all backgrounds and across the whole of the UK. Boards of public bodies and committees are most effective when they reflect the diversity of views of the public they serve.

We collect data about applicants' characteristics and backgrounds so that we can make sure we are attracting a broad range of people to these roles and that our recruitment processes are fair for everyone. Without this information, it makes it difficult to see if our outreach is working, if the application process is having an unfair impact on certain groups and whether changes are making a positive difference.

The data you provide is used to produce anonymised management information about the diversity of applicants. You can select 'prefer not to say' to any question you do not wish to answer.

The information you provide will not be seen by the advisory assessment panel.

Reasonable adjustments

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to make sure applicants with disabilities, physical or mental health conditions, or other needs are not disadvantaged when applying for committee appointments. This can include assessing whether and how the recruitment process can be changed to enable people who wish to apply to do so.

Some examples of adjustments are:

- ensuring that application forms are available in different or accessible formats
- making adaptations to interview locations
- allowing candidates to present their skills and experience in a different way
- giving additional detailed information on the assessment process to allow candidates time to prepare themselves
- allowing support workers, for example sign language interpreters
- making provision for support animals to attend interviews

When you apply you will have the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments to the application process in this section of the form.

Disability Confident scheme

DHSC values diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity for all and the appointment of disabled people. We are a member of the [Disability Confident scheme](#), which helps recruit and retain disabled people. All candidates who apply under the scheme for one of our appointments and who meet all the essential criteria, will be offered an interview. Indicating that you wish your application to be considered under the scheme will in no way prejudice your application.

To be eligible for the Disability Confident scheme you must have a disability or long-term health condition, which could be physical, sensory or mental and must be expected to last for at least 12 months. You do not have to be registered as a disabled person to apply under this scheme.

If you wish to apply under the scheme, please ensure you complete this section of the monitoring form.

3. The assessment process

We will deal with your application as quickly as possible and will advise you of the likely timetable at each stage.

3.1 Planned timetable

The planned timetable is as follows:

- closing date is 30 April 2026
- shortlisting is on: 14 May 2026
- interviews are on: 2 June 2026

3.2 Advisory assessment panel

Advisory assessment panels are chosen by the senior responsible officer to assist them in their decision-making. They include a departmental official and an independent member. For competitions recruiting non-executive members of a committee (apart from the chair), the advisory assessment panel will usually include a representative from the committee.

The advisory assessment panel will include:

- Professor Gareth Jenkins, Professor of Molecular Carcinogenesis at Swansea University, as panel chair
- Dr Ovnair Sepai, General Toxicology and Biomonitoring Program Lead at UKHSA, as panel member
- Ruth Chambers, independent consultant, as an independent panel member

3.3 Assessment

At the shortlisting meeting, the advisory assessment panel will select for interview only the strongest applicants who it feels have demonstrated that they best meet all the criteria set out in the person specification. However, if you have applied under the Disability Confident scheme and you meet all the essential criteria, then you will also be invited for interview.

If you apply under the Disability Confident scheme and you are not shortlisted for interview, we can provide a summary of the assessment of your written application, if you choose to request feedback. However, we regret that due to the volume of applications

received, we are only able to offer feedback to candidates who have been unsuccessful at the interview stage.

After shortlisting, you will be advised (by email) whether you have been shortlisted. Those shortlisted will be invited to an interview. We would then confirm interview arrangements to shortlisted candidates in due course. Interviews will be conducted either face-to-face, in central London or by video/teleconference. If you are invited to interview and are unable to attend on the set date, then an alternative date can only be offered at the discretion of the advisory assessment panel.

Prior to interviews, the advisory assessment panel may choose to share the opening question with you in advance to allow you to prepare your answer. During the interview, they will go on to question you about your skills and experience, including asking specific questions to assess whether you meet the criteria set out for the post. The advisory assessment panel will also explore with you any potential conflicts of interest or any other issues arising from your personal and professional history which may impact on an appointment decision (see section '2.1 Making an application' for further details).

Details of the advisory assessment panel's assessment of interviewed candidates are provided to the senior responsible officer, including whether they have judged a candidate to be appointable to the role. It is then for the senior responsible officer to decide who should be appointed. In some circumstances, the senior responsible officer may choose not to appoint any candidates and re-run the competition.

The senior responsible officer may choose to meet with candidates before making a decision. Candidates should therefore be prepared for a short time gap between interview and a final appointment decision being made. Candidates who have been interviewed will be kept informed of progress.

Once the decision on the appointment has been made, interviewed candidates will be advised of the outcome of their application, including whom they may approach for feedback, if they wish. We appreciate it takes a lot of time and effort to apply for roles, and prepare for and attend an interview, and that feedback is a valuable part of the process.

3.4 Offer of appointment

If you are successful, you will be contacted by officials to inform you of the offer and to confirm if you would be willing to accept. If you would, then you will receive a letter from the senior responsible officer appointing you as Member, which will confirm the terms and conditions on which the appointment is offered.

3.5 Announcement

The appointment will be announced, and the announcement will include the length of your appointment, time commitment and any remuneration for the role. We would share a draft announcement with you before it is made.

4. Queries

For any queries about your application status or the selection process, please contact Ralph Cabrega in DHSC's Public Appointments team via email on ralph.cabrega@dhsc.gov.uk.

If you choose to apply, we would like to thank you in advance for your time and effort in making an application.

All applications will be acknowledged by email after the closing date. If you have not received your application ID reference number within 3 working days of the advertised closing date, please contact us quoting reference VAC-EC1872.

4.1 If you are not completely satisfied

DHSC will aim to process all applications as quickly as possible and to treat all applicants with courtesy. If you have any complaints about the way your application has been handled, please contact Ben Jones via email on ben.jones1@dhsc.gov.uk.

4.2 How we manage your personal information

Your personal information will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. You will not receive unsolicited paper or electronic mail because of sending the DHSC any personal information. No personal information will be passed on to third parties for commercial purposes.

When we ask you for personal information, we promise we will:

- only ask for what we need, and not collect too much or irrelevant information
- ensure you know why we need it
- protect it and insofar as is possible, make sure nobody has access to it who shouldn't
- ensure you know what choice you have about giving us information
- make sure we don't keep it longer than necessary
- only use your information for the purposes you have authorised

We ask that you:

- provide us with accurate information

- inform us as soon as possible of any changes or if you notice mistakes in the information we hold about you

DHSC will process personal data relating to you in accordance with the Department of Health and Social Care data protection policy at [DHSC privacy notice](#).

If you apply for a post, we will share some of the information you provide with the members of the advisory assessment panel for the post to which you are applying, so that your CV and supporting letter can be assessed.

The diversity information you provide will not be used in the selection process and will therefore not be shared with the advisory assessment panel assessing your application at any stage.