

Guidelines
for Bishop's agents with responsibility for
determining acceptability for S65 tagged positions ¹
(Approved by the NZCBC October 2013)

Nature of S65 tagged positions.

- S65 tagged positions provide the legal safeguard ensuring that the school can employ a sufficient number of Catholic teachers who understand and live by the Special (Catholic) Character so that the school is truly a Catholic community in everything it says and does and the Principal and DRS need the support of a sufficient number of other Catholic teachers to sustain the Catholic Community of the School" - Appendix 18 NZCEO Handbook.
- The S65 tagged position is one in which the person represents the Catholic Community in a ministry role.
- **The determining of acceptability for a S65 tagged position is for a particular position only and is not transferable.** Equally a person may gain acceptability for a particular S65 tagged position but not for another one. This may be due to changed personal circumstances and/or a different level of responsibility inherent in a particular role, e.g. **beginning teacher** – Scale A tagged **Leadership level** – Principal/Catholic Leader of School community.
- All S65 tagged positions require that acceptable applicants demonstrate a willingness and ability to take part in religious instruction appropriate to the Special Character of the school.

Process of Determining Acceptability

Responsibilities associated with S65 positions:

In a primary school:

- The determining of acceptability is the responsibility of the Proprietor/Bishop and the person undertaking this role must be mandated accordingly.
- This process is in accordance with the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act (PSCIA 1975) and correct process is critical to fulfil legal responsibilities.
- The Board of Trustees, .
"... may consider for appointment only those applicants who have been declared acceptable by the Proprietor". (NZCEO Handbook)
- From the pool of **acceptable** applicants it is then the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to determine the most **suitable** applicant for this particular position.

¹ N.B. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following sections of the Handbook for Boards of Trustees in NZ Catholic Schools (Handbook) Primary - Part 5; Secondary - Part 6; Primary & Secondary - Appendices 16, 17 & 18

- The Proprietor (Proprietor's agent) is not obliged to justify any decision around acceptability. For privacy reasons it is only the applicant who may seek information about the decision regarding acceptability and enquiries need to be directed to the appropriate Proprietor's agent.
- The Bishop/Proprietor can use discretion when determining acceptability for an applicant if there are valid reasons in a particular situation e.g. the applicant is undertaking the RCIA programme and is about to be received into a Catholic Church.
- Acceptability can be granted subject to certain conditions which are then to be included in the person's job description and performance appraisal. Such conditions are usually related to professional development, training and qualifications. (6.2 Handbook)
- The process of determining acceptability is carried out using the S Form and Catholic Character referee process. Diocesan personnel have developed good documentation and procedures around this.

In a secondary school:

- In a secondary school a different process applies and it is the Board of Trustees, often through an appointments committee, which is responsible for determining acceptability. Legally, a Proprietor's Appointee must be part of the appointment committee and process.

General Comments on Acceptability

1. A S65 tagged position is one for which **"a willingness and ability to take part in religious instruction appropriate to [the] school shall be a condition of appointment."** (Private Schools Conditional Integration Act, Section 65).
2. "Religious instruction" is rather more than Religious Education teaching. It implies the ability to support the Catholic religious life of the school by many specific actions, and by providing a personal example of what it means to be a Catholic. It does not necessarily mean that a teacher will teach Religious Education, although in a primary school this would normally be the case.
3. A S65 tagged position represents a specific ministry within the Church. A person in a S65 tagged position is called to transmit the Catholic Faith to the students and help in the building of an authentic Catholic faith community. This is reflected in the statement:
"The NZCBC policy is that the person appointed must be a Catholic who is baptised, active and in full communion with the faith community." ~~(Refer Handbook Appendix 18 p.104)~~. The NZCBC has determined that the definition of **"active and in full communion with the faith community"** means:
"that the person must be a baptised Catholic, active in a Catholic parish or Catholic Eucharistic community, and an authentic witness and role model for Catholic students."

See
NZCBC
letter
dated
Oct 2011

4. **Qualities required for teachers in S65 positions as outlined on the associated “S” form are:**

- **Response to Call.**
Teachers with a responsibility for religious instruction respond to a call to share in the work of the Church. They should be willing to give their time and talent, not only to students, but to their own continued growth and understanding in their faith.
- **Witness to Gospel**
Such teachers need to be committed to Jesus Christ, and to have an aptitude and ability to communicate the gospel message. They are people of prayer and reflection, and individuals who witness to a life of faith.
- **Commitment to Church**
They represent the Church and so they need to be in communion with the Church and the Bishop of their diocese. They test and validate their faith understanding and insights in the light of the gospel message as presented by the teaching authority of the Church.
- **Involvement in the Community**
They are called to foster the concept of Christian community that people can experience in practice. A Christian community is nurtured especially through sharing in the Eucharist. Teachers holding tagged positions experience unity with the Catholic Church through weekly participation in the celebration of the Eucharist within the Catholic community. They also seek to co-operate with other parish leaders in making the parish itself a focal point of community in the Church.
- **Servant to the Community**
They are committed to serving the Christian community, particularly in their parish and in the community at large. Such service means not only responding to people’s needs when asked to do so, but also taking the initiative in seeking to identify the needs of individuals and groups in the community, and then encouraging students to do the same.
- **Knowledge, skills and ability**
They seek to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities to communicate the gospel message effectively. They are required to have a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship, familiarity with Scripture, to have good teaching skills and a general appreciation of the curriculum requirements appropriate to the position. They also demonstrate an appreciation of the most suitable ways of communicating the teaching of Jesus Christ to others, at their level of understanding and according to their life situations and their social and religious backgrounds.

5. ***“The applicant must be judged “acceptable” for the level of responsibility inherent in the position. Different levels of ability to “take part in religious instruction” are to be expected from Scale A teachers and those in positions of leadership, in particular Directors of Religious Studies (DRS) and Principals”. (Appendix 18, 6.1 NZCEO Handbook for Board of Trustees of Integrated Schools 2010.)***

Particular Guidelines for Scale A, S 65 positions

To hold a Scale A tagged S65 position as a Teacher, Head of Department (not R.E.), Dean or syndicate leader the person must be:

- Catholic
- A regular attendee at Sunday Eucharist
- Possess acceptable experience, qualifications and qualities to fulfil the requirements of the position, which may or may not include the need to teach Religious Education.
- Be prepared to take an active role in witnessing to the faith through a readiness to take part in staff and classroom prayer, school liturgies and retreats etc.

It is generally agreed that the criteria for determining acceptability for Scale A S65 tagged positions could be more flexibly interpreted than would be appropriate for Leadership S65 tagged positions. **(i.e. the applicant must be judged acceptable for the level of responsibility inherent in the position and accordingly for the degree of “willing and able”.** Note wording on page 104 Handbook.

Some Points for Consideration and Discernment

- a) In the consideration process, “The applicant’s likely development in religious understanding and commitment needs to be taken into account.” This inherent flexibility would allow for an applicant who may not currently be a regular attendee at Sunday Eucharist but who has been in the past, and who now has the desire to recommit to being a visible and active member in a parish or Eucharistic community recognising the need to nurture themselves spiritually and provide an authentic witness and role model for Catholic students. **This may be the case with some beginning teachers or those moving into the Catholic system for the first time or those returning to the Catholic school system.** Such a commitment to re-engage in a faith community needs support by all concerned.
- b) Equally, for those applicants who do not fulfil the requirements in terms of ability (training and qualifications) but who are committed to undertake the necessary study and professional development, they, too, could be considered for a S65 tagged position. When this is the case, Boards of Trustees assume the responsibility for monitoring this requirement and for providing the support and opportunity for this professional development to occur.
- c) A higher degree of expectation, particularly in relation to the applicant’s level of qualifications, professional development and experience and their Catholic witness and practice would be expected of those who have been teaching in a Catholic school for some time and/or who are in a S65 tagged position currently when they are applying for another tagged position in a different school. They would be expected to already have understood the role of a S65 tagged teacher and the expectations of faith practice and professional development that go with such an appointment.

- d) With respect to the person's ability to support and authentically bear witness to the Church's teaching in terms of their personal/living relationships, discretion needs to be applied on a case-by-case basis. Ideally they are living a life consistent with Church teachings and are therefore providing an authentic witness and role model for Catholic students. Those with an obvious contradictory situation, as a matter of justice, need to be made aware of the fact that while it may be possible for them to be determined acceptable for a Scale A S65 tagged position, their current situation, if it remains unchanged, would prevent them from holding an S65 tagged leadership position (Principal or DRS) in the future.
- e) Acceptability – with qualification conditions:
When acceptability has been granted subject to certain conditions placed around qualifications, these requirements need to be formally acknowledged in writing by the Board of Trustees and the Proprietor / Diocesan agent. Ongoing support for the successful candidate to fulfil these conditions is essential as is the follow up by both the Board and Diocesan personnel

Particular Guidelines for Leadership, S65 positions, e.g. Principal and DRS

S65 tagged Leadership positions are ones where the person is in a Catholic Leadership role and therefore they must be active in their faith community and in communion with the Church and the Bishop of their Diocese.

To hold a S65 tagged position as a Principal or Director of Religious Studies or Head of a Religious Education Department the person needs to be:

- Catholic
- A regular attendee at Sunday Eucharist
- Living a life consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church
- Possess acceptable experience, qualifications and qualities to fulfil the requirements of this leadership position, which may or may not include the need to teach Religious Education.

At the Leadership level of S65 tagged positions, the visible and authentic witness and role model for Catholic students is crucial. They hold the position of the Catholic faith leader of the school and undertake important religious, pastoral and professional responsibilities. These positions need to be viewed in terms of witness, commitment and qualifications. The person appointed is required to recognise and accept a responsibility to maintain, strengthen and protect the Special Character of the school. They are required to give guidance and provide effective leadership in religious instruction and observances throughout the school. They are leaders and stewards of the Catholic Faith.

Some points for consideration:

- a) The visible witness and commitment to the Church needs to be strong and authentic for these leadership positions. However there may arise particular situations where a past action by the candidate has occurred which is contrary to Church teachings. The

candidate has gone on to rebuild their Church connection and is now in a strong witnessing situation fulfilling the requirement to be “active in a Catholic parish and... an authentic witness and role model for Catholic students”. In this situation **the Bishop of the Diocese may choose to use discretion when determining acceptability.**

- b) The ability to be a Catholic leader is highly essential and suitable qualifications are necessary (see Handbook section 5.1.1, 5.2). If an applicant does not have this level of certification, the Board can request (condition of appointment) that studies be undertaken to gain the qualification within an agreed timeframe and in doing so must offer to support and assist. Such an undertaking needs to be actively monitored, supported by both Board and Diocesan personnel.

Additional Information for Consideration

Education and training for personnel charged with determining “acceptability”

- At the primary school level, the Director of the Diocesan Education Office (which acts as the Proprietor’s agent) is responsible for determining acceptability. Most Dioceses have 2 or 3 personnel involved in this process and they are generally well informed on the nuances and possibilities of interpretation, whilst maintaining the integrity of the process, positions and all concerned.
- At the secondary school level the responsibility lies with the Board of Trustees. Boards are strongly encouraged to seek guidance from Diocesan Education personnel. The often changing nature of members of the Boards of Trustees, and Proprietor’s appointees, makes the transference of knowledge, institutional memory and consistent practice difficult. The Proprietors and Boards have expressed concern about the lack of full understanding and consistency of application of the criteria and in some cases secondary school personnel have sought advice and ongoing support from Diocesan Offices.

Therefore it is essential that regular and on-going training by the relevant Diocesan Education personnel be offered to secondary personnel. Secondary school Boards would need to be approached with sensitivity alerting them to the complexities of the situation and offering support by way of professional training in the area. Secondary school Boards of Trustees may wish to delegate responsibility to the Diocesan Education Office to undertake the “S” Form Catholic Character referee process on their behalf and determine acceptability of any applicant(s) for a particular position.

This would also provide an opportunity to strengthen the Diocesan Bishop’s relationship with the Religious Institute (Proprietor) legal entities and the Chairperson of secondary schools Boards of Trustees.