

Common errors made in charity registration applications

Since compulsory charity registration commenced in Northern Ireland in December 2013, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland has received more than 5,300 registration applications. The Commission has produced a range of guidance to support organisations through the process. However, a number of common errors continue to be made in applications.

These errors cause delays in processing applications and may ultimately result in applications being returned in order to be properly and fully completed and resubmitted.

Before submitting your application for registration, we recommend that you review the list below to make sure you do not make the same errors when completing your application.

Further information on each of the issues below is available in the range of guidance published on the Commission's website and by clicking on the 'i' information buttons throughout the online application system.

1. Incorrect/incomplete attachments

- ✗ Error: Applications submitted without the correct PDF attachments, or the attachments are incomplete.

Solution: Ensure the three required documents are attached at the end of the application:

1. Governing document

- ✓ Signed and dated
- ✓ Complete (no pages or clauses missing)
- ✓ Legible

2. Bank/building society account statement

- ✓ Recent (within the last 3 months)
- ✓ Account held in full name of charity

3. Trustee declaration

- ✓ Using [template](#) from Charity Commission for Northern Ireland website

Guidance on how to create a PDF can be found [here](#) on our website.

2. Incorrectly selecting approved governing document

- ✗ Error: Applicants incorrectly select that they are using an approved governing document. An approved governing document is one that has been pre-approved by the Commission and a parent or umbrella body as suitable for registration – it does not mean, for example, that the governing document has been approved internally within your organisation.

Solution: Please answer "no" to this question unless you are using a governing document which has been pre-approved by the Commission. If you answer "yes", there will be a drop down list of the governing documents approved by the Commission. If you do not see your governing document in the list, you should change your answer to "no". Please note that it is most unlikely that your governing document will appear in the drop down

list. The UK Association of Parent and Teacher Associations governing document is the only approved governing document at present (August 2014).

3. Purposes in application do not match those in your governing document

- ✗ Error: Applicants enter purposes into the application which are not identical to those in the governing document of the organisation.

Solution: The purposes stated in your application should be a direct replica of the purposes (sometimes referred to as objects or objectives) stated in your organisation's governing document. Refer to the [purposes and public benefit](#) toolkit for further guidance.

4. Poor public benefit statement

- ✗ Error: Applicants submit a poor public benefit statement that does not adequately explain the public benefit flowing from each of the organisation's purposes.

Solution: Please ensure you read the Commission's [Public benefit requirement: statutory guidance](#) and refer to the [Purposes and public benefit toolkit](#) to assist you in drafting your organisation's public benefit statement.

Trustees are required to give an account of the benefits which flow from the purposes of the organisation. A statement of the organisation's activities will not be considered as a public benefit statement.

5. Poor 'What your organisation does' response

- ✗ Error: Applicants do not adequately explain what their organisation does in order to further its purposes in a way that would be clear to any individual viewing the online *register of charities*.

Solution: This response should supplement your public benefit statement. In answering this section, you should refer to the activities that the organisation carries out in furtherance of its purposes.

6. Inaccurate what, how and who classification selections

- ✗ Error: Applicants do not select the correct classifications for what the organisation sets out to do, how it does this and who it helps. For example, they select classifications that are not relevant or they do not consider the full lists and select all that apply.

Solution: Your classification selections should accurately reflect what the organisation does, how it does this and who the beneficiaries are. In particular, your organisation's 'What' classification selections must **only** include those descriptions of charitable purpose that the organisation's purposes fall under.

7. Incorrect number of trustees

- ✗ Error: Applicants enter details for trustees on the application form, but there is a difference between the trustee details given and the number of trustees provided for in the governing document.

Solution: Prepare for your registration application in advance by checking your governing document to see whether there is a requirement for a minimum number of trustees. If so, please ensure the details of the correct number of trustees are provided in your application and that all trustees have signed the [trustee declaration](#).

8. Trustee declaration completed incorrectly

- ✘ Error: The trustee declaration is not correctly filled in, details of trustees are missing, dates are entered incorrectly or the declaration boxes are not ticked.

Solution: Ensure that:

- ✓ **All** trustees listed in the application have signed and dated the trustee declaration, and likewise, all trustees who have signed the trustee declaration are listed in the application
- ✓ Signatures are dated with date of signature. Please note that we are **not** asking for a date of birth in the trustee declaration
- ✓ Declaration boxes A and B are ticked **if** the organisation works with children and/or vulnerable people
- ✓ **Both** pages of the trustee declaration are attached at the end of your application.