

Selection criteria

When you first start to write your applications by addressing the selection criteria it will be time consuming, so allow plenty of time to get your application together. As is the case with most things, 'practice makes perfect' and once you have done one or two the process will become easier.

Selection criteria are all the knowledge, skills/competencies, experience and aptitudes that are required to be successful in a role; they are what the employer requires and your key to getting an interview if addressed well. Selection criteria may be divided into two categories:

- 'essential' or 'key' AND
- 'desirable' or 'other'

Your chances of getting an interview are enhanced if all your application documents:

- Show you understand what the employer is looking for.
- DEMONSTRATE this understanding by identifying how you meet the criteria in your application

Employers will differ in the extent to which they emphasise selection criteria. Some positions will not consider your application if the selection criteria have not been addressed. If selection criteria are provided but you are not specifically asked to address them in your application you should always use them to *target* your application (including resume, cover letter and online answers to specific questions).

Selection for an interview will be made on the basis of your answers to these criteria. Interview questions are formulated on the basis of the selection criteria. In online applications, selection criteria are often presented as behavioural questions.

Examples of selection criteria

Regardless of the specific position you may be targeting, there are generic criteria that tend to apply across nearly all graduate vacancies. Examples include:

- Well-developed communication and interpersonal skills
- Commitment to the delivery of quality customer service
- Analytical, conceptual and research skills
- Self-management, setting priorities, meeting deadlines
- Flexibility and a willingness to adapt to change
- Teamwork skills
- Enthusiasm and a positive attitude

How do I respond?

Preparation

- Research the organisation: understand the culture and frame your responses in their language – look at the job advertisement, recruitment brochure, website, and position description if there is one.
- Read all the available documents carefully, especially position descriptions and recruitment literature - note if there is more than one requirement in each criterion.
- Make sure you understand what each of the criteria mean.
- Highlight the words which indicate the level of skill required (qualifiers).
- Draw upon different evidence in support of different criteria – not the same examples over and over again.
- If you can't think of specific examples to demonstrate a criterion, think laterally. When have you done something that required similar use of your knowledge and skills/competencies?

- If you are asked to address the selection criteria, provide a separate document using 'Statements addressing the selection criteria', or 'Evidence in support of selection criteria' or similar words as headings. (Note: some employers require you to address criteria as part of your letter.)
- Using each of the selection criteria as headings, address each one separately in the language of the employer, as noted in your research above. There may be a specified length/word limit but usually around half a page under each heading is expected.
- Note in point form all the activities that demonstrate your competence in each area, and when you have addressed each of the criteria, write a final draft in your preferred format – sentences, paragraphs or dot points.

Evidence to support selection criteria

Brainstorm your past experiences, study, work and any extracurricular or non-work activities. Consider the best *examples* which demonstrate each criterion, giving *specific examples* from your experiences as evidence. The more similar your example is to what you will be doing in the job, the more strongly it shows your ability to do the job.

Use a behavioural approach, for example, the **STAR** technique as follows:

Situation- What was your involvement or your role?

Task – The exact task you were required to do

Action – What did you do and how did you do it?

Result – What was the result? How was it received?

Refer to your:

- qualifications and knowledge required for the position
- academic performance, related experience, competencies or skills attained
- demonstrated industry experience or in a work environment applicable to the position
- other experiences, including projects, research, positions of responsibility and extracurricular activities that have developed skills that are required for the position.

Some things to consider

- Are you involved in clubs/societies? Were you a participant or did you help run the club? Did things go smoothly or did you have some difficult decisions to make?
- Do you have a part-time job? Do you just turn up or have you actively noticed details about dealing with customers and team-mates? Did you have to deal with complex situations? What did you learn about your strengths and weaknesses?
- Have you been involved in the community? Belong to an organisation? Contribute to fundraising? What did you learn from these experiences?
- Have you held any leadership positions? What did you learn about being a leader, for example in a group, as project co-ordinator or as sporting team coach/captain? Have you resolved a group conflict?
- Have you received any awards? What does this tell you about yourself and how others perceive you?
- Have you: co-published a paper; managed a tutorial; or assisted with peer support programs?

Example topics for some common criteria.

Remember the examples you use may be raised in the interview, so make sure you can back up what you have written. The examples provided are just ideas to get you thinking.

‘Proven capacity to work effectively as a member of a project team with a high level of personal performance and the provision of quality outcomes.’

- Coached a team (eg. in a club/sport/other group).
- Led or participated in a group discussion either during your course or in a work team.

‘Well developed oral and written communication skills including the demonstrated ability to publish and present scientific research.’

- Chaired a meeting, answered a complaint, or delivered a presentation.
- Prepared a submission or reports.

‘Proven ability to operate independently, organise your own workload and to perform duties with the minimum of supervision.’

- Worked well to project, assignment or thesis deadlines.
- Completed a complex multifaceted task (eg a project or thesis).
- Managed your own workload while dealing with other work, travel and family priorities.

‘Knowledge, understanding and commitment to principles of equal opportunity, occupational health and safety and employee participation.’

- Awareness of EO and OH&S policies and what they mean at University and in your employment.
- Implementation of safety standards at your place of employment and/or in your supervision of staff.
- Membership of an occupational health and safety committee or completion of OH&S training.

‘Ability to work in a team’

- Group research projects or as part of your employment.
- Active contribution in sports teams, clubs or committees.

Tips

- Where possible, highlight and quantify results and outcomes.
- Use positive language and avoid qualifiers like ‘quite good’, ‘some’, ‘a little’, ‘average’.
- If you can’t think of specific examples, think laterally. When have you done something that required similar use of your knowledge and skills/competencies?
- State what you can and have done, not what you can’t and don’t know.
- Remember all information in your selection criteria should be accurate and consistent with your resume.
- Do NOT assume you know more than the employer
- NEVER combine two ‘similar’ selection criteria; they are separate for a reason.
- NEVER skip any criteria that you do not have, or don’t understand
- Make sure you have read each selection criteria carefully and your response addresses each component of it.
- Check the word limit – don’t write too much or too little.
- Check for grammar, spelling and typos.
- Proof read to make sure each response has been composed in a logical format.

Further information

How to Write and Talk to Selection Criteria: Improving your chances of winning a job, Dr. Ann Villiers, 2005

Ann Villiers' website www.selectioncriteria.com.au

Write a winning Job Application; A Guide to Responding to Selection Criteria, Lloyd White, 2008

A Degree of Certainty: Career Options for Postgraduate Research Students, GCCA, 2004.