

Job Application Forms

Many employers use application forms rather than CVs so that they can ask questions and get information specific to their own needs and the job requirements.

Application forms are designed to:

- Gather key academic and personal information
- Elicit evidence of the competencies/skills required for the job
- Reveal attitudes or insights into current issues
- Deter those who do not meet the criteria by making the process challenging

This handout is designed to help you complete both paper and online application forms.

To answer the competency questions successfully you will be asked to provide evidence of how you meet the job criteria.

The key strategies and examples will help you to create captivating applications by targeting your strengths to the employer's criteria.

Paper or Online

If you are applying for a job which recruits a large number of candidates in one recruitment cycle, you will usually be offered the option to apply Electronically.

For some employers this is the only method they will allow you to use. Should you require a printed document, say with larger fonts, or another? Alternative form of application, contact the employer direct for advice.

Some employers still use paper forms, particularly in the not for profit or public sectors. Whether you are applying online or on paper, the same principles apply to completing any application form.



Preparation

Before starting on the application form find out what the employer really wants. This is what one employer says and this is a fairly typical response,

“we need employees who have the competencies we seek, together with the personal and academic qualities to achieve high standards of performance in the job, and ultimately contribute to the effectiveness of our organisation”

You can discover the exact requirements by:

- Analysing the job advert
- Researching the organisation via their website/employer brochure
- Meeting the employer at fairs and other careers events
- Talking to careers advisers, tutors, alumni,

How to prove you have what employers really want

Your task is to match your experience and achievements to the selection criteria. This sounds so simple, and with practice it does become easier, but your first few applications may take a lot of redrafting to reach the standards required.

A Skills Audit will help you to harness all of your relevant experiences and identify your competencies.

What have you done and what skills have you gained through these activities? Remember to consider all areas of your life - jobs, interests, study, voluntary work etc.



Completing the application form

Top tips for all applications:

- Read the whole form before attempting to complete it
- Take a photocopy (or print out an online form) and draft your answers on the copy so you can be sure your answers fit into the space provided
- Draft your responses first
- Give examples for all aspects of your life e.g. education, work, voluntary activity, interests and hobbies
- Make sure you answer all parts of the question
- Don't leave gaps in your life – it looks as though you have something to hide. Explain what happened honestly and positively.
- Remember recent, relevant and robust – your answers must stand up to scrutiny
- To give a framework to your answers use CAR (context, action, result) when answering competence questions
- Tell the truth, don't enhance your grades – you will be found out!
- Check for grammar and spelling mistakes (make sure your spell checker uses English UK language)
- Get your form checked by a friend or someone who knows about job applications
- Ask your referees' permission before you use them
- Keep a copy of your final version for interview preparation

