

APPLICATIONS GUIDE

THE SELECTION PROCESS



Ways you may need to apply

When applying for a job, it is important that you follow any instructions provided so that you are applying in the correct way. If you don't, your application may not be accepted.

What information do I need to send?

Many vacancies will ask you to apply with a **CV** and **covering letter** but this may not always be the case. Some companies/organisations may have their own **application form** for you to complete which may include some open-ended questions on your competencies and why you want the job, as well as more factual information about your qualifications and previous employment. Sometimes you might be asked to provide a **personal statement** or a **supporting statement** demonstrating your relevant skills and experience. If you are just asked for a CV with nowhere to provide any additional information, it is a good idea to also include a covering letter so that you have a chance to address why you want the job and to demonstrate your motivations.

How should I send my application?

Again, pay attention to the instructions provided and make sure you follow these in full. You may need to email your application to a specified email address with your CV and other required documents included as attachments. Alternatively, some companies/organisations will require you to complete and submit an online application form, perhaps uploading your CV as an attachment. Always make sure you email or submit your application well in advance of the deadline. This means you have time to deal with any technological problems, and you also limit the chances of your application being ineligible should the vacancy close early.

How does the selection process work?

Usually a vacancy will attract many applications! Therefore, the aim of the selection process is to, by a number of exercises, select and recruit the best candidate for the role who will fulfil its key requirements, fit well in the organisational structure and share the company's values. Normally, the employer advertises the position, usually (but not always) providing a job description, listing skills and aptitudes required for the role (selection criteria), outlining responsibilities and a summary of relevant contractual information.

Typically, the selection process involves a number of steps and may include:

- a) CV, cover letter and/or application form - to find out if the candidate meets the essential (and desirable) criteria, has the right motivation to join the company/apply for the position.
- b) Telephone or a video interview - to gauge candidate's personality and motivation, find out how well the candidate has researched the company, test verbal communication skills.
Video interviews have now become a common feature early on in the selection process with generally two types, (i) a video interview, which is conducted face to face, e.g. via Zoom or Skype, in real time or (ii) a pre-recorded interview, where questions appear on a screen and candidates must respond within a time constraint.
- c) Online tests- for example to check if the candidate has the numerical, verbal and logical capabilities required for the job and to gauge how he/she performs under pressure on time-limited tasks; to assess the candidate's thought process.
- d) Assessment centre - tasks given during an assessment centre are directly related to the requirements of each role and you will be assessed on how well you demonstrate your ability/potential for that role. This also allows employers to see how well the candidate interacts with others in group exercises and will he/she be a good fit for the company.
- e) Interview - to gather evidence that the candidate fulfills the essential and desirable criteria; assess candidates motivation, gauge personality and test communication skills

Not all of the above steps will be used by every employer for every vacancy but a selection of a few of them might be used (for example: CV and cover letter, followed by an online test, followed by a panel interview).

What are employers looking for?

The World Economic Forum has identified the top 10 skills for the future as:

- Analytical thinking and innovation
- Active learning and learning strategies
- Complex problem-solving
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Creativity, originality and initiative
- Leadership and social influence
- Technology use, monitoring and control
- Technology design and programming
- Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
- Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

In addition to this employers also want to see a positive mindset or a can do attitude, motivation for the role and the organisation by demonstrating that you have undertaken industry research and digital capability. It is worthwhile developing proficiency in the Microsoft packages particularly Excel.

Employers are looking for candidates who can provide evidence for and demonstrate a range of skills gained through education, employment, voluntary work or extra-curricular interests. Apart from the job-specific skills when, for example, a knowledge of a particular software or a laboratory technique is required, employers are interested in applicants with so-called “transferable or “soft” skills. Those typically, but not exclusively, consist of communication skills, time management, teamwork, problem solving, decision-making and self-management. For a more comprehensive list please see our Hot Tips leaflet, '[SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES – what are employers looking for?](#)'

On many occasions employers list essential and desirable skills in the job advert or the job description. However, sometimes there is no list of criteria the candidate needs to fulfil but instead the employer provides a list of tasks that the candidate will do on the job. In such situations, you have to deduce for yourself what skills they are looking for.

For example, if the advert says:

“You will be working to strict deadlines, liaising with colleagues from different departments and daily interacting with clients”

you can assume that the employer is looking for someone with good time management and prioritising skills who is capable to work as a part of a team and has great communication skills to interact with both other colleagues and clients.

How to gather evidence

Job applications which stand out have **evidence** of how you are using skills that are required in the job. You may not even realise it, but you may well have been using some of the skills already!

Employers typically identify skills or competencies that they want to see from applicants. To make an impact on them, it will help to look at a wide range of experiences and what you did there, what difference it made, and what you learnt or might do differently because of your experience.

- Do look at any **work experience** you have done. This could be just for a few days, a more structured short term internship (a few weeks to three months), or a longer term work placement (6 - 12 months).
- Undertake a 'no-negativity' brainstorm - consider any ways in which you may have practised some skills (however imperfectly!).
- Write everything down - you can evaluate your ideas a bit later!
- Remember that even if you haven't used a particular skill, you may have observed others using these skills and learnt something new or had the chance to talk about that with them.
- **Other experiences** such as part-time work, volunteering, roles in student societies or sports clubs, or acting as a course rep or student ambassador.
 - **Part-time work** may not seem like graduate level experience, but think through ways in which you have shown skills such as time management, effective communication and problem solving.
 - Acting as a course / programme representative or as a student ambassador may have given you valuable experience of using skills such as listening to others, providing a service or consulting people on their experience and needs.
 - Have you taken on any responsibilities, for example in **sports clubs** or other **student societies**? What did you do? Note down any actions you have taken to do these tasks: what steps did you take to ensure an event was properly organised, a budget was managed or it was successfully marketed?
 - Even though **voluntary work** is for free, you may have been using some skills that will impress an employer!
 - Don't dismiss any experience you may have gained from **taking on responsibilities** in your community, social or faith groups - do you run Guides or a choir? Have you organised a big community event? Itemise everything that is involved in making this happen. Or have you had experience of promoting someone's business or managing their bookkeeping?

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- It can help to produce a [mind map](#) or spider diagram to visualise times you used a particular skill and any details that you can recall. For example, with any of the above experiences, ask yourself questions like:
 - In what ways did I take initiative?
 - What types of problems did I resolve?
 - What types of clients have I gained experience of? What needs or concerns did they have, and how did I support them?
 - What have I learnt there? What knowledge or commercial awareness have I gained during your experience? (Insights can come from trying things out that you aren't yet expert at, and from valuable conversations with others that you worked alongside!)
 - Our Hot Tips leaflet '[SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES – what are employers looking for?](#)' gives further suggestions.

Exercise: complete a skills audit

Completing a skills audit is a good way to identify what experience you have gained that could be evidence of using a competency the employer requires. Rate yourself (1 - poor, to 5 - excellent) and note what you've done. Facing up to the gaps should lead to action - find out what you can do next to improve and develop a skill if you don't have much experience. If you get stuck with this, contact us - we can help you find ways forward! Here is a taste of our skills audit (the full version can be accessed [here](#)).

Your Skills / Attributes	Your rating (1-5)	State current evidence for and/or Identify potential opportunities for development
Self-management and Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well organised, good time management Taking responsibility Dealing with challenges or setbacks Adaptability and Flexibility Developing through feedback and reflection 		
Teamwork and Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respecting others Co-operating to achieve goals Negotiating / persuading 		
Decision-making and Problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysing facts and situations Using logical and methodical processes Applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions 		
Communication and interpersonal skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral literacy, including presentations, listening and questioning Relationship management Collaboration Receptiveness to feedback 		

Your Skills / Attributes	Your rating (1-5)	State current evidence for and/or Identify potential opportunities for development
<p>Application of Information Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word processing, file management and search engines • Using Excel, and pivot tables to analyse data • Engaging with social media particularly LinkedIn 		

Our Hot Tips leaflet '[Skills and Attributes Audit](#)' provides a more detailed audit worksheet to help you work through an audit of where you have used your skills, to help you self-assess your experience and consider further action you may need to take to address any gaps.