How to Address Selection Criteria

What are Selection Criteria?
Selection criteria are specific job requirements describing knowledge, skills, qualifications, experience and attributes identified by selectors as important for effective performance in a particular job.

These specific job requirements are used to objectively and consistently assess applications and shortlist suitable candidates for interview. They also assist in choosing the candidate who ultimately gets the job.

Selection criteria common to many graduate jobs include:
- planning and organising
- ability to work as part of a team
- excellent written and oral communication skills
- problem-solving skills and analysing data

Why address selection criteria?

Having candidates address identical selection criteria assists organisations with recruitment-related Equal Employment Opportunity considerations.

For you as the candidate, addressing selection criteria clearly and effectively increases (although doesn’t guarantee) your chance of an interview.

Your completed application is also useful for interview preparation, as interview questions will be based on the selection criteria for that role.

Private sector roles

Private sector organisations usually require the applicants to address selection criteria in the online application form and/or the cover letter. Your resume should also be tailored to match the skills required.

Selection criteria are usually stated in the job advertisement; however, because some advertisements are very short, you may need to read between the lines, e.g. if the advertisement mentions ‘an energetic ideas person’ the selection criteria might include initiative, leadership ability, creativity or all of these.

If the advertisement does not specifically list selection criteria then imagine yourself as an employer describing the ideal candidate for that position, and tailor your letter and resume accordingly.

If the advertisement gives you the name of the employing organisation, refer to its website for possible information on the skills and attributes that organisation values.

To address selection criteria, write about the skills and knowledge gained through your degree, work experience, extracurricular activities and other activities you have been involved in, ensuring that you relate these to each criterion, where relevant.

You need to give the employer specific examples that demonstrate each of the selection criteria. It is not sufficient to include general comments stating that you have all the skills being sought.

It is also important that you address all the selection criteria and that you write concisely as employers will be assessing your written communication skills. For more information about what to include in a letter, refer to our handout on Cover Letters.

Graduate recruitment roles

Employers offering graduate programs will usually participate in on-campus activities such as careers fairs and employer presentations. This is your chance to clarify information about their organisation and selection criteria.

You’ll also find useful information about selection criteria in the graduate recruitment section of the employer’s website and in graduate recruitment literature at the Careers Centre.

Public sector and other roles

It is more common for public sector positions and those in health, welfare, professional associations and educational institutions to clearly state selection criteria in the job advertisement.

You can often obtain further information, such as a duty statement or detailed list of selection criteria, on enquiry.
The application you send is likely to consist of:

- a cover letter;
- a resume; and
- a separate document called ‘Statement of Claims against Selection Criteria’, or ‘Statement of Claims’ outlining specifically how you meet the role’s requirements.

If asked to submit a Statement of Claims or similar document, you must do so to have any chance of an interview. If you do not provide a statement for each criterion the recruiter is not able to make an assessment of your suitability for the role.

Selection criteria are classed as either essential/critical or desirable. All essential criteria must be met to reach the interview stage. For highly sought-after positions, desirable criteria are also considered. See the section below about How to write a Statement of Claims.

Making a good first impression

If the advertisement includes a contact name and number (or an e-mail address), contact this person to discuss the vacancy.

For government positions and some private sector organisations you may be able to first download an information pack containing a duty statement, list of selection criteria and other useful information from the organisation’s website.

Whether or not you believe the contact person is one of the selectors, it’s important to make a good first impression:

- Before you call, research the organisation and be prepared to talk about how you meet the main criteria, as you may be asked some questions about your experience.
- Indicate your enthusiasm and clarify any areas where you have questions.
- If possible and appropriate, ask if you can visit the organisation and have a look.

If no contact details have been included in the advertisement, use your judgement as to the selection criteria and address them in your application.

How to write a Statement of Claims

To begin your Statement of Claims, open a new blank document and include your name as a header on each page, with your contact details on the first page. Use the title the organisation has given this document and include the job title and the reference number, if applicable.

List criteria as headings in bold print, and address each criterion in a couple of paragraphs or a list of bulleted points (provide more information if requested). For criteria with more than one part e.g. ‘Effective Written and Verbal Communication Skills’, ensure you address each part.

Deal with the criteria in the same order as in the advertisement or duty statement.

If you’ve been provided with the relative weighting of criteria, give more detail for the more important ones.

Use clear language with specific and relevant examples from your current or past work (paid or unpaid), university, extra-curricular activities or other experience. If you have experience in tasks mentioned in the advertisement and/or other documentation, they’re good examples to use.

Quantify your experience or skills if you can, e.g. ‘three years experience in creating monthly budgets using Microsoft Excel.’

Use action-oriented words e.g. ‘assessed’, ‘implemented’, ‘organised’, ‘developed’, and include the results of these actions.

A good way of addressing selection criteria is to use the STAR formula:

- Situation - where, when and context of your example
- Task - the task or problem to be solved
- Action - how you solved the problem, fulfilled the task or handled the situation
- Result - the outcome achieved as result of your action/s

To see an example using the STAR formula, visit the Bureau of Meteorology website (www.bom.gov.au/careers/guide2SC.shtml).

Further Information

You can find further information in the book ‘How to Address Selection Criteria’ by Dr Ann Villiers, in the Careers Resource Centre.

For information about applying for jobs in the Australian Public Service, including a Fact Sheet on addressing Selection Criteria, visit the Public Service Commission link at http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications07/crackingthecode.htm.