

Your Guide to... Completing Applications

Most large employers require you to complete either an on-line or paper application. Whichever it is, completing an application well can be time consuming so allow plenty of time to make a good job of it.



Top Tip – Identify the employer’s requirements, and give evidence of how you match up.

Employers have a “shopping list” of skills, knowledge, experience and qualities that they will be short-listing against. Understand what they are looking for and make sure that your application ticks off all of the things on their shopping list, or you won’t get short-listed.

Do your homework on the employer and the job role and highlight your relevant skills, knowledge, experience & personal qualities. Give examples to show how / where you gained them.

What do employers look for?

Identifying the employer’s “Shopping List”

- Employers usually provide a job description & person specification.
- Alternatively they may detail their “core competencies” or “behaviours”.
- Look for clues on their website e.g. in case studies or profiles.

Evidence

- Employers want to know that you possess the skills and competencies relevant to the post and are motivated to do the job.
- Recruiters don’t just want to read buzz words and woolly statements; they will want evidence that you have the potential to do the job.
- When completing applications you need to address the employer’s requirements giving specific examples which demonstrate that you meet their selection criteria.
- Your examples could be drawn from a variety of areas and might be academic related; from positions of responsibility; outside interests; or from work experience; volunteering or part-time jobs.

- Teamwork / Managing and Leading People
- Communicating and Influencing
- Customer / Client Experience
- Innovation / Commercial Acumen
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Decision Making and Problem Solving
- Planning and Organisation
- Job / Sector Specific Skills.

Personal Statements

- Many applications require you to complete a personal statement in support of your application. Typically they may ask ‘*Explain how you meet the selection criteria providing evidence of your suitability*’.
- Personal statements give you the ‘space’ to explain why you are applying for the position and provide evidence that you meet the selection criteria.
- Some employers will restrict you to a strict limit, whilst others will be happy for you to continue onto additional pages.
- Address all of the employer’s requirements providing detailed evidence for the competencies, experience and knowledge required.
- Your statement needs to be well written, easy to understand with succinct short sentences. The action words listed at the end of this guide will help you write in a concise way.
- Try to address the criteria in the same order as they appear.
- Make it easier for the employer to tick off their “shopping list” by breaking up the text through using key headings and /or bullet points which relate to the selection criteria.

Skills, Competencies and Behaviours

Employers will use different terminology but essentially they will have identified key characteristics that they are looking for evidence of.

Typical competencies may include:

Education / Qualifications

- Unless the application tells you to do otherwise it is usually best to detail your education in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- If space is short you may need to summarise your modules / grades or it might be possible to detail them separately.
- If your qualifications don't easily translate to UCAS points and there is no room for explanation then you may need to contact the employer for advice.
- Advice on the equivalency of overseas qualifications is available at www.naric.org.uk

Employment / Work Experience

- As with education it is generally best to detail your jobs / work experience in reverse chronological order, you would not normally need to give full addresses of employers.
- Describe your responsibilities and achievements in your roles being sure to highlight your skills. If space is limited then go into detail on the most relevant roles and summarise the rest.
- Don't forget to detail volunteering, work shadowing and part-time jobs.

Interests and Achievements

- This section gives you the chance to expand on things that you enjoy doing outside of work or study. These interests could relate to the job or career you are interested in, or simply give the employer a more rounded perspective of you, your personality and what motivates you.
- Sometimes you will see an achievements' section in an application where you can promote things that you are particularly proud of. These could be academic, sporting, or entrepreneurial achievements, positions of responsibility, being an active member of a club, raising money for charity or work related achievements.
- It's important to highlight your achievements throughout your application (not just in the 'Achievements' section) as this will help you stand out from the crowd and gives an employer evidence of your ability to perform a task or role to a high standard.

Competency Based Questions

Skills or competency based questions are designed to look for evidence of key skills / behaviours (competencies) identified by the employer as essential for the job role.

Within a strict word limit the employer will require you to give an example which demonstrates the competency e.g. 'Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others.'

What were the circumstances? What did you do to make a difference? When tackling the skills or competencies based questions, think of a positive example that illustrates the skill required. You could use the **STAR** technique to help you structure your response:

Situation

- Briefly give the background to the example or situation you were in.

Task

- Briefly explain the nature of the task / problem / activity you were involved in.

Action

- Explain what you did to make a difference, highlighting the skills you used.

Results

- Describe the outcome – hopefully a positive outcome, and what you learned from the experience.

Some advice

Research the Employer and Job Role

- Before you start writing anything, be sure you understand what the employer is looking for.

Give Evidence

- Don't just say that you have particular skills or experience, back it up with examples.

Be Clear and Concise

- Your application should be well written and include concise and positive language.

Spelling & Grammar

- This is the first example of your work an employer will see, be sure to give a good impression.
- Always check spelling and grammar before you send your applications – and don't trust spell checking software.

Allow Enough Time

- Completing an application well can take time, make sure you allow yourself enough time to do a good job.

Keep a Copy

- Always keep copies of your applications, you'll need these when you are invited for interview.

Additional help and information

Application Resources

- View our application resources on the careers website www.southwales.ac.uk/careers

Get it Checked Out by a Careers Adviser

- You can get your applications checked out by a careers adviser before you send them off – either in an appointment or using the “Ask a Question” online service. Details on our website www.southwales.ac.uk/careers

Action Words – using action words will help you write in a concise and dynamic way

| | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Ability | Demonstrated | Improved | Perseverance | Revised |
| Achieved | Designed | Improvise | Pioneered | Re-vitalised |
| Acquired | Determined | Increased | Planned | Saved |
| Administered | Developed | Initiated | Positioned | Scheduled |
| Advised | Devised | Initiative | Positive | Secured |
| Analysed | Directed | Inspired | Practical | Selected |
| Anticipated | Documented | Inspected | Prepared | Self Sufficient |
| Appointed | Doubled | Instigated | Presented | Simplified |
| Appraised | Edited | Instructed | Prevented | Solved |
| Approved | Effected | Integrated | Prioritised | Specified |
| Arranged | Effective | Interpreted | Processed | Staffed |
| Attained | Efficient | Interviewed | Procured | Standardised |
| Assessed | Eliminated | Introduced | Proficient | Stimulated |
| Audited | Employed | Invested | Promoted | Streamlined |
| Augmented | Enforced | Investigated | Proved | Supervised |
| Averted | Engineered | Lead | Provided | Supported |
| Avoided | Enhanced | Liaised | Published | Surpassed |
| Built | Ensured | Lightened | Purchased | Surveyed |
| Captured | Enthusiastic | Launched | Recommended | Taught |
| Centralised | Established | Maintained | Recruited | Terminated |
| Combined | Estimated | Managed | Rectified | Tested |
| Completed | Evaluated | Marketed | Re-designed | Thorough |
| Composed | Exceeded | Modernised | Reduced | Tightened |
| Conceived | Executed | Monitored | Regulated | Traded |
| Controlled | Excellent | Negotiated | Rejected | Trained |
| Converted | Extracted | Obtained | Related | Translated |
| Co-ordinated | Forecast | Operated | Remedied | Tripled |
| Corrected | Formed | Opportunity | Re-organised | Utilised |
| Counselled | Formulated | Ordered | Researched | Vitalised |
| Created | Generated | Organised | Resilient | |
| Decreased | Guided | Originated | Resolved | |
| Defined | Implemented | Performed | Re-vamped | |

This document is available in Welsh. Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.

If you require this leaflet in an alternative format please contact the Student Services Department.

Careers & Employability Service • www.southwales.ac.uk/careers

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