

Graduate Employment Series

The Graduate Employment Series comprises four booklets designed to help you with your graduate job search: *Job Search Strategies*, *Resume/CV*, *Job Interviews*, and *Applications / Selection Criteria*.

As well as reading these booklets, we also recommend you attend Graduate Employment Series seminars to maximise your chances in today's competitive job market.

Applications / selection criteria

This booklet focuses on the skills required to develop cutting-edge written applications. Before you begin, you should have already identified your skills, abilities and aptitudes, and developed a professional resume. The following pages describe how to prepare competitive job applications, including: writing letters, addressing selection criteria and developing online applications.

Tips for your graduate job search

It's a competitive world out there with many graduates seeking employment. Keep these tips in mind:

- Employers won't come to you. Take a proactive approach.
- Know your strengths and how to market them to employers.
- Employers value skills gained from university, casual and volunteer work, and life in general.
- Researching organisations will help you make effective applications and find a job that suits you.
- Most jobs are never advertised. You need to explore a range of job search strategies.
- Learn job searching skills and increase your chances of finding a satisfying graduate job.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR GRADUATE JOB SEARCH!

Contents

Types and purpose of written applications	3
Strategies for producing cutting-edge applications	3
Responding to job advertisements - Step-by-step	5
Application letters	6
Applying for unadvertised positions - Targeted applications	10
Addressing selection criteria	11
Hints for addressing common selection criteria	17
Application forms	19
Electronically speaking - The online application form	20
Make the most of application form questions.....	21
Checklist	24
Appendix 1 Strategic writing - Style and editing for impact	25
Appendix 2 Common cues or signposts for the reader	26
Appendix 3 Action verbs that create a positive image	27

Types and purpose of written applications

The goal of a written application is to be selected for an interview. It is possible that only three to five applicants from 100 or more will be interviewed. An effective application markets you to the employer and differentiates you from the other applicants.

Most job applications require a written reply to a range of employer requests. There are expectations about what the application should include and below are some examples.

1. **Advertisement requests resume** - Send a resume and application letter (or cover letter).
2. **Advertisement requests responses to selection criteria** - Send a resume, application letter and a separate document entitled *Responses to Selection Criteria*.
3. **Advertisement refers candidate to an application package** - An application package normally includes a position description, organisational information, selection criteria and an application form. Send a resume, application letter, completed application form and *Responses to Selection Criteria*.
4. **Advertisement refers candidate to an online application** - This generally involves an application form (that needs to be filled out online) requesting resume information and questions regarding selection criteria.
5. **You approach employers before they advertise** - You write speculative letters. See page ten and the Graduate Employment Series booklet, *Job Search Strategies*, for more information.

To stand out from other applicants and be interviewed, you must:

- Clearly identify what you can offer an employer so you can confidently market your skills and abilities.
- Know what the employer is looking for by researching his/her needs and analysing job documentation (including advertisements, position description and selection criteria).
- Match what the employer is looking for with what you have to offer, and present evidence.
- Demonstrate this match effectively in writing. Write for your reader with reader-focussed, strategic writing.

Strategies for producing cutting-edge applications

Strategy 1 - Understand the employer's needs

Employers prefer applications that:

- Follow the specific instructions in the advertisement (e.g. "address the selection criteria", "enclose an academic transcript").
- Are tailored to the specific job and organisation.
- Demonstrate a clear match between the candidate and the position's requirements.
- Are well presented and easy to read.

Some employers will ignore applications that are not tailored to the position, so you need to research the position and the organisation.

Your research should clarify the following:

Organisation

Activities or services
Locations and size
Mission statement
Recent major projects

Position

Job description
Selection criteria (if available)
Major duties/responsibilities
Position in the organisational chart

Employers say many applicants make the mistake of not researching the position and organisation when they are offered an interview. Without research at the application stage, you may not be offered an interview.

Strategy 2 - Analyse what you've done to identify your transferable skills

Brainstorm all your significant jobs, education, activities and events, focusing on the skills and qualities you have developed. Consider all the skills you have that might be relevant and desirable for the position. Voluntary or part-time work, and community, sporting or family activities often develop skills employers value. Don't overlook these skills.

Strategy 3 - Specify examples of your skills and experience

For each of your skills and attributes, write an example that demonstrates how and where you used it. A Career Counsellor can help you identify your skills.

EVIDENCE FOR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Bar Attendant at Victory Hotel

- ⇒ Operating cash register (money handling)
- ⇒ Serving customers (client service, conflict management)
- ⇒ Supervising new staff (training, interpersonal)

Coaching Warriors under 10's soccer team

- ⇒ Coaching team (training, motivation, problem solving)
- ⇒ Liaising with parents (interpersonal, communication)

Leader of group project at University

- ⇒ Leading a project group (teamwork, leadership, negotiation, liaison)
- ⇒ Managing projects (organisational, analytical, research)

Build evidence of your success

Detailed examples provide persuasive evidence that you have what employers are looking for!

Responding to job advertisements - Step-by-step

1. Note the source and date of the advertisement (e.g. The Australian, 15 September 0000).
2. Check online to see how widely the job has been advertised. This tells you more about the pool of applicants targeted.
3. Check job advertisements to see if the organisation is recruiting for other positions. This tells you more about the organisation (e.g. are they new? expanding?).
4. Read the advertisement carefully to identify the employer's requirements. Underline or circle each point to ensure you fully answer each of the employer's requirements.
5. Write the requirements in a column. Brainstorm your skills, experience and attributes that match each requirement. Include transferable skills as well as direct, relevant experience.
6. **Always** find out more about the job by calling the organisation, using the web and consulting your networks.

Look for:

- **Facts:** Clarification of advertised requirements, focus or context of the position, whether it is a new position or currently filled, etc.
 - **Job description:** Ask for a written job description and selection criteria where available.
 - **Company information:** Seek annual reports (often available online or through the Griffith Library), promotional brochures, organisational charts, etc. Collecting this information in person demonstrates initiative and gives you a 'feel' for the organisation. Research the organisation's performance, staff policy, financial viability etc., through your networks, via the web, and in business or professional journals and newspapers.
7. Review the match between you and the job in terms of your suitability (skills and experience). and, importantly, whether the job and organisation are right for you.

Application letters

An application letter or cover letter should complement your resume and persuade the employer that you are the best candidate for the position. The employer may read your application letter first, therefore it needs to convince the employer to read on and look at your resume.

Your letter should:

- State your interest in the position
- Market you effectively to the employer
- Be personally addressed (find out the name and title of the person to whom you are writing if possible)
- Name the position and where it was advertised
- Link your unique combination of attributes, skills, training and experience to the job requirements
- Be clear and concise (one page only)
- Be position-specific
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the organisation
- State when you are available for an interview
- Be printed on a quality printer
- Contain no spelling or grammatical errors

Structuring a good application letter

This simple formula applies to responses to advertised positions and speculative applications.

- **Opening paragraph**
Attract attention. State why you are writing, name the position (and Vacancy Reference Number, if applicable) and indicate when and where it was advertised. Attract interest, and state why you are applying to the particular organisation (using information gained from research).
- **Middle paragraphs**
Promote yourself. Point out **how** your skills, experience, knowledge, achievements and abilities match the job requirements. Indicate your interest in and knowledge of the organisation, and show you have thought about the job. This section should be the powerhouse of your letter!
- **Final paragraph**
Confirm your suitability and reiterate your interest. Refer to your enclosed resume, application form or academic transcript. Indicate your availability for an interview and your contact details.

The sample application letter on the next page uses this formula.

If you are asked just to send a resume and application letter, write a full-page letter and treat your middle paragraphs as 'mini selection criteria'. Where you are sending responses to selection criteria as well, your letter may be shorter and less detailed.

An application letter is much more than a letter that essentially says “this is me and here’s my resume”. An effective application letter markets you convincingly to an employer by demonstrating that you have the required knowledge, experience, skills and training to match the employer’s requirements.

Sample application letter

Toni Brown
PO Box 27
STRAWBERRY HILLS QLD 4012

Mob: 0408 888 888

29 November 0000

Mr John Fitzgerald
Manager, Human Resources
Smithville Australia Ltd
PO BOX 8888
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Fitzgerald

Name the position (and Vacancy Reference Number if provided); state when and where it was advertised.

I wish to apply for the position of Graduate Trainee with Smithville Australia advertised on the CareerOne website on 26 November 0000. I have successfully completed a degree in Commerce at Griffith University in which I obtained mainly credits and distinctions. My areas of specialisation are marketing and accountancy.

Indicate why you are interested in the position and the organisation (from your research). Attract interest!

I have been interested in working for Smithville Australia since meeting your Brisbane staff at the 0000 Griffith University Careers Fair. I was impressed by your stated attitude to developing staff, and also with the strong client focus your literature suggests as the key to Smithville Australia's market success. This accords with my own philosophy regarding the importance of customer service. I noted with interest that your organisation is expanding rapidly and will open a new facility in the Northern Territory in late 0000.

Demonstrate how your skills, knowledge, achievements and experience from your degree, employment and other activities match the job's requirements (the key section of your application)

I have demonstrated a strong sense of purpose, a desire to succeed and excellent communication skills through having been a successful public speaker since high school and gaining debating awards during my senior years. Further, I have held a part-time customer service position over the last three years with Woolworths, and the attached reference supports my success in dealing with customers and management. I am a highly effective team member as demonstrated through successful working relationships with my peers both at work and at university. I believe obtaining a credit average while working up to 15 hours a week and maintaining an active involvement in competitive sport illustrates my determination and time-management skills.

As a coach with the Swifts junior basketball team, I supervise weekly training sessions and competition games. To do this effectively, I must maintain team motivation and manage conflict among the players. I also interact with referees and coaches from other teams and am responsible for developing agendas, taking the minutes of meetings and helping with the annual fund-raising event. As the team reached the metropolitan finals two years in a row, the Committee asked me to continue in the position for 0000. Being passionate about the game and the team environment, I accepted their invitation. I'm confident that the leadership, interpersonal and negotiation skills I've developed through my work with the Swifts would enable me to make a positive contribution to your organisation.

Closing remarks: repeat your interest and supply any other relevant information.

Should the traineeship be based interstate, I would be pleased to relocate. I can be contacted at any time on 0408 888 888. I look forward to meeting you at an interview to further discuss my application, and would be pleased to supply any other particulars you might require.

Thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely

Toni Brown

Toni Brown

Which letter best meets the employer's criteria?

The following two letters were written in response to the advertisement for a Commercial Graduate Scheme (see below).

Considering what application letters should include, think about which one best promotes the applicant and why?

Excerpt from Courier-Mail job advertisement

SAMPLE ONLY

SOUTH BLACKWATER COAL COMMERCIAL GRADUATE SCHEME

Reporting to the Mine Accountant, it is essential that applicants:

- Have completed a degree in Commerce (a double degree with Law is desirable but not essential).
- Have the ability to use spreadsheets and be computer literate.
- Have the ability to work in a small team environment to undertake a wide variety of commercial tasks.
- Can demonstrate a practical, 'hands on' approach with a high level of self-initiative.

The successful applicant will participate in our Commercial Graduate Scheme that provides opportunities for graduates to undertake a two-year fixed-term contract. It is expected that graduates will have furthered their career prospects at the completion of the term by gaining a broader appreciation of the operation of business in a dynamic commercial environment.

Letter one

Brisbane Rd,
Brisbane Q 4000
Ph. 3377 2212

30 November 0000

Human Resources Manager
South Blackwater Coal Limited
Private Mail Bag
Blackwater Q 4717

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to apply for your position of Commercial Graduate, advertised on the CareerOne website on 28 November. As you will note from my resume (attached), I have recently completed a Bachelor of Commerce at Griffith University. I have also enclosed a transcript of results obtained throughout my degree. Through my degree I have developed skills and knowledge in business, as well as computing skills.

I believe I meet the requirements of the position. I have had experience in a major mine through my work experience with MIM in mt isa over the Christmas vacation last year. The work experience was a requirement of my degree.

In addition, I have worked as a Christmas casual at Target, Indooroopilly for the past three years, as well as having a part-time job at Hungry Jacks for the past three years. As an employee, I am dedicated, punctual and always willing to learn. My strengths are in communication skills and team leadership. Supervisors have provided feedback to me on the high standard of my work.

I would welcome the opportunity to attend an interview to discuss my application and hear more about the Commercial Graduate Scheme. My contact details are listed above.

Yours faithfully

Ron McDonald

Ron McDonald

Excerpt from job advertisement

SAMPLE ONLY

SOUTH BLACKWATER COAL COMMERCIAL GRADUATE SCHEME
(Underlining relevant points in the advertisement helps you target your letter to the position's requirements).

Reporting to the Mine Accountant, it is essential that applicants:

- Have completed a degree in Commerce (a double degree with Law is desirable but not essential).
- Have the ability to use spreadsheets and be computer literate.
- Have the ability to work in a small team environment to undertake a wide variety of commercial tasks.
- Can demonstrate a practical, 'hands on' approach with a high level of self-initiative.

The successful applicant will participate in our Commercial Graduate Scheme that provides opportunities for graduates to undertake a two year fixed term contract. It is expected that graduates will have furthered their career prospects at the completion of the term by gaining a broader appreciation of the operation of business in a dynamic commercial environment.

Letter two

Kim Smith
117 Margate Road
GRANGE Q 4307
Telephone (07) 3333 4444

30 November 0000

Mr Bill Smith
Manager, Human Resources Department
South Blackwater Coal Limited
Private Mail Bag
BLACKWATER Q 4717

Application — Commercial Graduate Scheme

Dear Mr Smith

I wish to apply for a position in your **Commercial Graduate Scheme**, as advertised on CareerOne's website on Saturday 28 November 000. I am keenly interested in the Australian coal mining industry, and believe that I meet all your essential requirements, as demonstrated in my enclosed resume.

I have recently completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree at Griffith University, gaining a credit average throughout my course. I also successfully studied five elective subjects with the Faculty of Law (one of which was International Law). As a result of studies in the degree, I am competent in the use of a range of computer programs, including Microsoft Office (0000), Lotus 1-2-3 and MYOB.

I was successful in my application to undertake eight weeks' vacation work (December/January 0000) at the head office of Selwyn Gold Mine, near Charters Towers. This gave me an insight into the daily operations of a major North Queensland mine, and further fostered my strong interest in the commercial side of mining. During this period, I researched companies that were looking at opening new mines in Queensland. I was interested to read in your annual report that South Blackwater Coal Limited (a subsidiary of BHP) has recently expanded its operations to include mining a small deposit of phosphate in North-West Queensland, and is looking to gain access to new markets in South East Asia.

During five years of part-time employment at the Cannonvale Pizza Hut, I worked as a member of a small team of floor staff. Last December, I was promoted to the position of Assistant Manager (weekends) following a three-month training program. My current role involves supervising a team of eight kitchen workers. In semester one, I undertook a Practicum Placement (six months) at the accountancy firm of Blackman and Doyle. I gained practical experience in a wide range of commercial activities, including assisting in the development of business advisory briefing materials, preparing preliminary tax returns on behalf of a number of small businesses and involvement in two consultations with major corporate clients.

As a result of my commerce studies and vacation work, I believe I am in a position to gain maximum benefit from the graduate scheme you offer, and would value the opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to your organisation. I would welcome the chance to discuss my application further and am available for an interview at your convenience. I can be contacted during office hours on 0144 694 684 (and after hours on 3838 8888), and could commence in your Commercial Graduate Scheme any time from 1 January 0000.

Thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely

Kim Smith

Applying for unadvertised positions - Targeted applications

Up to 70 per cent of positions are never advertised. Targeted applications can be a very effective job search strategy!

Targeted applications are applications in which you initiate contact with an organisation, rather than waiting for a position to be advertised. The first step is to research the organisation, and identify your skills and abilities that would interest the employer. Networking, workplace interviewing and web-based research are useful for this approach. Once you've completed this research, your application can be written in a similar manner as for advertised positions. See the sample letter below for some ideas.

Targeted letter – an example

[Your name]
[Your address]
[Your telephone]

[Date]

Mr Bill Bloggs,
Human Resources Manager
Speedy Motor Company
[Their address]

Dear Mr Bloggs,

Standard opening and your present circumstances.

I am writing about the possibility of a graduate position with Speedy Australia. I am completing a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Marketing and Management at Griffith University, and will be available for full-time employment in November. I am keen to commence a successful long-term career in business.

Indicate your interest in this organisation and support your interest.

I would be particularly interested in obtaining a position with Speedy. I am impressed by your market success, your stated commitment to staff development and your strong client focus. This accords with my own philosophy regarding the importance of customer service.

Match what the company requires (based on your research) with what you have to offer.

I have read a range of graduate recruitment literature distributed by Speedy and noted that you are interested in articulate graduates with a strong sense of purpose, excellent interpersonal skills and a desire to succeed. I have been a confident public speaker since high school, having represented my school with considerable success in inter-school debating at senior secondary level.

Further, I have held a part-time customer service position over the last three years, and the attached reference demonstrates my interpersonal skills in dealing with a range of customers and management. To help prepare for a career in business, I have actively sought work experience in the field, and this year I gained paid employment for one day a week in the marketing department of the Logan City Council. My role involved assisting in the Olympic Torch Relay project, with responsibilities for drafting a marketing plan and addressing community groups. During my studies, I consistently obtained a credit average while also working 12 hours per week, and I believe this demonstrates the effectiveness of my time-management skills.

Closing remarks.

I am confident that the skills I have gained through tertiary study, together with my employment experience and strong career focus would enable me to make a worthwhile contribution to the future of your organisation. I look forward to discussing my interest in a graduate position with Speedy. I will phone next Tuesday afternoon to explore the possibility of a brief meeting with you to discuss options that may exist.

Thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely

[Your signature]

[Your name, printed]

Addressing selection criteria

Many organisations including local, state and federal government departments, and many government-funded organisations (e.g. public hospitals, universities and some welfare organisations) use selection criteria in their recruitment processes. The job advertisements below demonstrate the different recruitment styles in the public and private sectors. Note that one requires applicants to send for selection criteria while the other simply asks for a resume and academic transcript. All applications should include an application letter or cover letter and a resume; however, if you are making an online application, follow the employer's instructions. Selection criteria may be embedded within a Position Description, an example of which is on the following page.

Carter Newell is a growing Queensland based firm of specialist legal and business advisers with an enviable national and international client base of large corporations and public sector agencies. We currently have over 100 staff and 9 partners practising in 4 core business areas, namely Insurance, Construction & Engineering, Corporate & Commercial and Commercial Dispute Resolution.

Our Graduate Lawyer program involves:

- Three rotations to build your experience
- Regular CLE's and on-the-job training to enhance your skills and knowledge
- Experienced mentors to support your development
- Meaningful work and file load
- Competitive salary and working conditions
- Great career prospects

We are seeking graduate lawyers who have just completed their university studies and wish to complete the PLT program in a progressive environment. Candidates must be able to commence full-time work from August 0000 Our culture is open, progressive, friendly and social, a perfect environment to progress and grow with the firm.

If you are interested in joining our progressive firm please forward your resume and academic transcript to Annabel Gelina, Human Resources Coordinator at recruit@carternewell.com or contact us on (07) 3000 0000. For more information about Carter Newell, please go to www.carternewell.com

SAMPLE ONLY

Graduate Auditor

Public Sector Auditing - Brisbane

We are seeking graduates with:

- An appropriate tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline (eg commerce, business, accountancy, management, information systems/information management) or anticipated completion of such qualification by commencement of the GRADtecs program.
- Planning, research and organisational skills.
- Working effectively within a team.
- Applying technical proficiency and problem solving skills.

Our Graduate Program

GRADtecs will help you use and develop the knowledge and skills you learned at university. Formal training is combined with carefully planned job placements to ensure you are exposed to a broad variety of audit processes.

Applications close: 9 April

For more information about these opportunities please call Jill Smith on (07) 3400 0000. Also, if you'd like to know more about our GRADtecs Program, please contact us at [@qao.qld.gov.au](https://www.qao.qld.gov.au). To apply, please refer to additional information about the position, selection criteria and application process at: <http://www.qao.qld.gov.au/p/age/s/recruit/recruitgrad.html>

SAMPLE ONLY

Sample position description

POSITION DESCRIPTION (sample only, Graduate Program, Queensland Audit Office)

1. ROLE IDENTIFICATION

DESIGNATION	Graduate Auditor
DIVISION	Public sector auditing
LOCATION	Brisbane
CLASSIFICATION	AO2 (7) - AO2 (8)
TENURE	Permanent
VACANCY REFERENCE NUMBER	AO10/04
CLOSING DATE	23 April

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The position encompasses the following responsibilities which are required to be undertaken with a high level of professional integrity.

- Complete the training and on-the-job requirements of the Graduate Development Program.
- Performance of financial and regularity audits, audits of performance management systems and other special investigations under supervision, in accordance with the defined audit strategy and as required by the Auditor-General.
- Identify issues and offer recommendations for improvement for review by the Team Manager.
- Effectively utilise information technology resources in the conduct of audits.
- Ensure personal productivity and time management to achieve planned outcomes within budgeted hours and specified milestones.
- Contribute in team planning activities and support the maintenance of a work environment which maximises team effectiveness including communicating effectively within the team.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

Direct reporting

Within Financial and Compliance audit, a matrix approach is adopted to reduce duplication and ensure effective devolution. The Graduate Auditor reports formally to the Audit Manager for administrative, performance and developmental issues. On a day-to-day basis, the Graduate Auditor reports to the Team Manager or on-site Team Leader for the assigned audit.

To enable the Selection Committee to compare your application with others to determine who will be short-listed for an interview, you should address the following **selection criteria** concisely, describing, with examples, your abilities and experience against each criterion.

KSC1 *Professional qualifications which are recognised as adequate criteria for professional membership of CPA Australia or the Institute of Chartered Accountants or near completion of such qualifications or other tertiary or post-graduate qualifications relevant to the functions of the position.*

KSC2 *Demonstrated possession of research, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.*

KSC3 *Well-developed planning and organisational skills with demonstrated ability to efficiently complete high quality work within demanding timeframes.*

KSC4 *Ability to use information and apply judgement to make decisions.*

KSC5 *Demonstrated sound interpersonal skills including the ability to contribute effectively in a team-based environment.*

KSC6 *Ability to identify opportunities to improve work practices.*

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This job description details the minimum outcomes required for the position.

Experienced staff at this level graduate to areas of increasing complexity and, as appropriate, work with greater day-to-day autonomy.

The position required the incumbent to travel within Australia or overseas and sometimes at short notice.

Membership of a relevant professional body together with post-graduate or additional tertiary qualifications in a relevant field would be highly regarded.

Why have selection criteria?

Selection criteria are the skills, experience, knowledge and/or attributes an employer considers essential or desirable for an advertised position.

To demonstrate equity and accountability, more and more employers are requiring applicants to address selection criteria in their applications. To do this, employers:

1. **Shortlist applicants** – Only those who best meet the criteria will be interviewed.
2. **Enact equal employment opportunity requirements** – Only relevant criteria will be used for selection to ensure the best person gets the job.
3. **Demonstrate accountability** – Employers can show why one applicant was selected over others.

Examples of Selection Criteria

Selection criteria may be incorporated into an application package, which typically includes role identification, a job description, reporting relationships and responsibilities, and other information. The package may also contain an application form. Some examples of selection criteria are illustrated below.

SC1	Sound knowledge of, or the ability to acquire a sound knowledge of existing and emerging factors impacting on major economic development projects in Queensland.
SC2	Good communication and liaison skills and an ability to demonstrate client focus.
SC3	Good time management skills and the ability to demonstrate tact and ethical behaviour.
SC4	Demonstrated ability to work both independently and as an effective member of a multi-disciplinary project team.
SC5	Proven capacity to work under pressure, establish priorities and meet deadlines.

SC1	Sound level of communication skills including interpersonal, consultation, negotiation, assertiveness, and writing reports and briefing notes.
SC2	Demonstrated commitment to excellence through application of continuous quality improvement, innovation and best practice principles.
SC3	Competence, or the ability to rapidly acquire competence in identifying and implementing administrative solutions through the advanced use of desktop applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel and Access.
SC4	Sound knowledge of marketing and communication principles and practices.
SC5	Demonstrated organisational skills, including the ability to work in a demanding environment and effectively plan and prioritise work programs for self.

You are only required to provide responses to the selection criteria but you need to consider all the information in the application package. Respond to each criterion separately. It's not essential to have the specified qualifications/knowledge/skills/experience for each criterion, but you're more likely to be short listed if you do.

'MUST DOs' for Selection Criteria

1. Allow plenty of time to prepare your response. Even experts take many hours to produce good responses! Your first attempt could take as long as a university assignment! Be clear on the topic, research what's required and how each criterion relates to the position, gather evidence of your abilities, then put forward a cogent argument. Request the information package as soon as you see the advertisement.
2. Read the information provided about addressing the selection criteria. Although the process of addressing selection criteria is generally similar, different organisations have different requirements. The length of response required can vary from a couple of paragraphs to two pages. If no guidance is provided, a half to one page for each criterion is acceptable, but you may wish to phone the organisation to check on their expectations.
3. Write your responses to each criterion, in order, using the criteria as headings. You'll then have a document entitled *Responses to Selection Criteria* or *Evidence in Support of Selection Criteria* (or similar). This document is part of your application, along with your resume and application letter.
4. Provide evidence of your skills/experience/qualifications/knowledge/abilities for each criterion. You must provide examples that demonstrate these. Avoid writing "I can ..." or "I have ..." - anybody can say this. Give specific examples of *how*, *what*, *when* and *where* you demonstrated each assertion. For example: "My strong analytical skills are demonstrated by my involvement in ...".
5. Never leave criteria unanswered. If you don't meet the criterion, convince the employer you have the *potential* to gain the skill/knowledge by your motivation, enthusiasm, initiative, willingness to learn new things and be challenged, etc. Demonstrate how you have shown this.
6. Always proofread your responses, and get some feedback, preferably from someone who understands the requirements of the job/industry.
7. Always keep a copy. You'll need it to prepare for the interview!

Sources of Evidence

When considering evidence that demonstrates how you meet each criterion, think about the following hierarchy:

- Have you demonstrated this in a similar job?
- Have you demonstrated this in any job?
- Have you demonstrated this in voluntary work, work experience, community or other activities?
- Have you gained a good knowledge of this through your degree?
- Have you demonstrated something like this through work, university or other activities?
- Do you have the aptitude/ability to demonstrate this?

Consider your:

- **Experience**, including your studies, work experience (professional, casual and voluntary), awards, and community or sporting involvement.
- **Transferable skills** (i.e. skills acquired in one situation that can be generalised and transferred to another situation). You don't need to have worked in the exact type of job for which you are applying for your work skills to be valid.

- **Knowledge** gained through your degree and elsewhere - an important part of your evidence.
- **Values, philosophy or preferred approach.** These may also be part of your evidence.

Always give *specific examples*. Name the subject or position and outline *dimension* (how many, how often) and *quality* (grade received, supervisor's feedback). For example: "As an administrative assistant with ..., I acted in my manager's role for one month annually, supervising four administrative staff. I received positive feedback for my supervisory skills on my performance review" (quote, if appropriate).

Steps in responding to selection criteria

1. **Be clear about the skills/experience required for each criterion.** Selection criteria often have multiple components. Underline the key factors, e.g. 'Written and oral communication skills, including public speaking'.
2. **Refer to the job description** or your research into the position to identify how the required skills and/or knowledge are used. This will inform you about the most appropriate examples to use.
3. **Take one criterion at a time, and brainstorm anything that might be relevant.** Start with quantity rather than quality and be creative. Do this for each component of the criterion. Here's an example of brainstorming for a criterion.

SC 4. Excellent written communication skills, particularly the ability to write reports, agendas and minutes.

BRAINSTORMING NOTES

- ⇒ Very good results for uni assignments (mostly distinctions)
- ⇒ Premier's Short-Story competition
- ⇒ Working as a tutor for first-year students
- ⇒ Employment experience with reports, agendas and minutes
- ⇒ Writing minutes for the Griffith Debating Club
- ⇒ Redesigning the report format at work – improving layout

4. Refine your evidence.

Choose examples that best address each criterion and the requirements of the job. You can use the same example for different criteria, if that's the best way to demonstrate your skills/knowledge, but ensure each example focuses on a different aspect.

5. Draft your answer.

- Write a strong statement on why you meet the criterion.
- Provide examples (based on your brainstorming) of how you meet each criteria.
- Logically link and summarise your claims. Don't just list what you've done in the past. (Appendix 2 - Common cues or signposts for the reader has more ideas).

6. Edit your responses to polish the result.

- Combine narrative and point form.
- Use short, simple, straight-forward sentences.
- Ensure your writing is clear, concise and dynamic (Appendix 1 - *Strategic Writing* has tips).
- Ensure your responses specifically address the employer's requirements.
- Check spelling and grammar.
- Ask someone to review your work.

Here's one applicant's final response from the previous example.

SC 4. *Excellent written communication skills, particularly the ability to write reports, agendas and minutes.*

I possess excellent written communication skills and am experienced in writing concise and effective reports, meeting agendas and minutes. During my tertiary studies, I consistently achieved a distinction average for essays, laboratory reports and other written assignments. Consequently, I was encouraged to apply for a position as tutor for first year students in the core subject "Report Writing", where I have been employed on a casual basis since early 0000.

In my role as administrative assistant, I redesigned the report format for our department, creating a much more effective communication tool and improving the dissemination of intra-department information. I prepared all meeting agendas, recorded accurate minutes and ensured that the information was distributed appropriately. This year, I have assumed responsibility for keeping the minutes of the Griffith University debating club, of which I am a foundation member.

I have always enjoyed writing and during my first year of university, I was shortlisted for the Premier's Short-Story Competition which attracted 100 entries state wide.

As a result of my university and employment experience, I have developed great proficiency in written communication and the ability to produce concise, effective written work to a high academic standard.

Hints for addressing common selection criteria

Communication skills (oral and written)

Definition:

The ability to express yourself clearly and logically both orally and in writing, and communicate effectively with a wide range of individuals. Selectors assess your written communication skills by the clarity and relevance of your response.

Draw on:

Oral: Public speaking, debating, tutorial discussions, presentations, asking questions, responding at public lectures or conferences, explaining solutions to convince audiences, facilitating discussions, customer service, job placements.

Written: Research papers, reports, essays, assignments, story writing (cite work published), case notes, business correspondence, minutes, editing newsletters / student magazines. Consider the variety and styles of reports you have written - statistical, scientific/laboratory, graphs, essay-style - and how you have communicated information using a variety of media. If you've had a human services placement, list program plans, assessment reports, lesson plans, etc.

Teamwork skills

Definition:

The ability or potential to contribute effectively to a team to achieve team goals, share information and work cooperatively with other team members. An understanding of how team dynamics and relevant factors can affect team performance.

Draw on:

Group work (assignments/presentations), supervision, leadership, goal setting, communication, listening, problem solving, participation, negotiation, maintenance, motivation, continual improvement, training, understanding and valuing difference, using team members' strengths, balancing weaknesses, sports, theatre, committee work, working with a multidisciplinary team on a job placement, organising an event, choir/ensemble participation. Demonstrate your understanding of team roles, supported by examples of your effective contributions as a team member/leader.

Critical Self Awareness

Definition:

The ability to manage and evaluate your performance. Awareness of your capacity to contribute and a commitment to continuous professional development.

Draw on:

Your productivity, honouring commitments, maintaining confidentiality, flexibility, time management, willingness to accept responsibility, ability to work with minimal supervision, adapting to change, career aspirations, commitment to further development, recognising your impact on others.

Problem solving and innovation skills

Definition:

The ability to analyse and synthesise information in various forms (e.g. verbal and quantitative) to assist in problem solving; the ability to identify key issues, trends and interrelationships between issues; the ability to place information in a broader context and identify likely implications; and the ability to generate new ideas and creative approaches.

Draw on:

Problem Solving: Your capacity to understand and solve complex problems and provide analysis for informed decision making, ability to research and analyse convincingly, identifying key issues, formulating counter arguments, setting out ideas, identifying and collecting information, internet skills, using journals, books and research papers, reading and listening.

Innovation Skills: Diversity of approach, open mindedness, introducing new ideas and approaches into existing working practices, original and lateral thinking, adapting to change, going the extra step, making a difference, thinking on your feet, implementing new ideas and activities, adopting/devising new skills.

Leadership and influencing skills

Definition:

The capacity or potential to lead and develop individuals and teams; the ability to provide direction and feedback to others; and the ability to motivate, influence and engage others to achieve goals.

Draw on:

Cultivating a productive working environment, supervising and coaching others, providing leadership and direction, achieving results, shaping strategic thinking, communicating with influence, personal drive and integrity and influencing issues with excitement and commitment.

A desire to work in the organization / department / public sector

Definition:

A genuine interest in, and commitment to, working for the employer; an awareness of one's ability to contribute to the organisation; and a commitment to, and interest in, the industry/sector.

Draw on:

Interest in the organisation's field, knowing the organisation's goals, aims and objectives and how your studies are relevant, the contribution you can make, what can the organisation do for you - i.e., training, career, etc. (but don't appear selfish - consider how you can contribute to the organisation's needs).

(Adapted From: Hints and Tips for Writing Public Service Applications (Department of Defence) and Hints for Answering the More Commonly Cited Criteria - Flinders University Careers and Employer Liaison Centre)

Application forms

Many employers require applicants to fill in a job application form. These are predominantly online and help employers to have consistent data on file for all prospective employees. Filling in application forms requires as much effort as writing application letters or responses to selection criteria. These forms usually combine selection criteria-type questions and other questions designed to challenge you to reflect on your skills and achievements.

The forms are usually completed online, however a few employers use hard-copy application forms that must be posted or hand delivered (i.e. for legal internships), but these are being phased out with the development of technology.

'MUST DOs' when completing online and hard copy application forms

1. **Read the form carefully** to determine exactly what information is required, and the skills you must demonstrate.
2. **Allow plenty of time to gather the relevant information** (grades, academic transcripts, references, company research) and determine the examples you'll use for each question.
3. **Don't just list what you have done - spell it out.** Explain how it's relevant and what you have to offer.
4. **Focus on your achievements** and how they relate to what employer wants.
5. **Sell yourself** using *Supporting Statements* and *Other Relevant Information* as you would in an application letter (see examples on page 7 & 9).
6. **Don't leave any questions unanswered.** If the question doesn't relate to you, write 'Not Applicable'.
7. **Use effective language.** Choose your words carefully so they're specific, clear, positive, jargon-free, not too formal but still business-like.
8. **Follow the instructions exactly.** Make sure you have read and understood what the employer wants.
9. **Don't highlight any weaknesses.** Instead, point out how well you coped when things didn't go well (demonstrating your problem solving skills, determination and motivation).
10. **Always have someone proofread your form** before you sent it.
11. **Keep a copy.** You'll need it for your interview.

Electronically speaking - the online application form

Exercise caution when applying for jobs online. Graduate recruiters report that email's speedy, informal nature is not always conducive to accurate applications.

To be competitive when applying online, your application needs to include **key words** to attract the employer. Look at the organisation's mission statement, key objectives or graduate recruitment literature for relevant terminology.

Following are some tips to avoid the pitfalls!

Before you start ...

Ensure your email address and internet service provider (ISP) will work for you

Your email address is the primary contact point for online applications so it can be more important than your name! Ensure your address is correct, current, reliable, accessible and sounds professional. Ensure your ISP will provide uninterrupted online access for the application process.

Your browser must be compatible with the application. Later browser versions can be downloaded free.

Research the company

Most organisations using online applications will include everything you need to know about the company on their website. Check it thoroughly before applying.

Find out the closing time and date

DO NOT begin on the day applications close because the website could be burdened by increased traffic and technical difficulties could cause you to miss the deadline. Apply at least three or four days before the closing date.

The application process may be lengthier and more detailed than you expect, so allow sufficient time.

Read all instructions thoroughly

Ascertain all the application requirements. Does it have to be completed in one sitting or can it be done over time? A well-designed application will allow you to complete it in a number of sittings.

Find out if the application requires extended answers involving research and planning.

During the application ...

Read all the text and instructions

Text and instructions are used sparingly in the online application process. They are there to help you complete the application successfully, so read them carefully!

Stick to maximum word counts where indicated. Prepare your response in WORD so you can use the spell check and word count tools. When complete, copy and paste into the online form.

Answer the questions

Think about your responses and jot down ideas without time pressure. You may not have to complete the form online. It's faster and easier to draft your answers offline before completing the application online.

Treat it like a formal document

Just because the application is online doesn't mean it can be written like a personal email. *Your grammar and punctuation must be correct.*

Many online forms don't have a spell check. Prepare answers on your computer, edit and use the spell-check tool, then copy and paste them into the application form. Always proofread.

Save your resume in a few different formats

Many organisations will request your resume in text format. Text files don't look the same as word-processed files, so check your formatting and edit to make it easy to read. If you are emailing a word-processed document, ensure the recipient's word processing package is compatible.

Save Save Save

Save as you go! If you have the option, register your name, save your work and take a break. It'll be easier to spot errors when you return.

Complete all sections

Look for pull-down lists. If none of the choices matches you, fill in the 'Other' section. An incomplete form won't create a good impression.

Concentrate on your content

The time you save in formatting an individually-styled application and resume can be used to improve the quality of its content.

Don't give up

If you have computer problems, the website isn't functioning correctly, or you don't understand the process, contact the organisation by email or phone.

When you're finished

Print a completed copy of your form for your records before you send it. Most employers will not let you review the form once it's been submitted, but they'll refer to your answers in the interview, so you'll need to re-read it before the interview.

Make the most of application form questions

Personal details

If you list a home and a semester address, be clear about when each should be used. Include mobile phone, email, fax and message details if you have them.

Education

Order your application so your best grades or most relevant courses are highlighted. Selectors will notice any gaps, so if you changed courses, say so.

Be creative about grouping related courses, or courses where you received the same grade.

Employment and work experience

Make sure your job title is meaningful. If you didn't have a job title, summarise the position, e.g. Clerical Officer.

Quantify your achievements and use positive language. Include all paid and unpaid work, voluntary work, practicum placements, and work in a family business.

Include employer details and dates, and outline the activities/responsibilities involved and any courses attended.

Computer skills

Include word processing, databases, spreadsheets and specialist packages, and be specific. Qualify your experience, e.g. *Professional experience of...*, *Sound working knowledge of...* More information is required of IT students.

Languages

Include all languages you can speak, read or write. State your current standard in a way that is applicable to work, e.g. *bilingual, fluent, able to translate reports*.

Other skills and achievements

List achievements like coaching certificates, first aid, mandatory reporting, etc.

Extra curricular activities

List your involvement in clubs/societies etc. stating the length of your involvement and responsibilities.

Behavioural questions

While behavioural questions are commonly used during interviews, some employers also use them in application forms.

Behavioural questions usually start with, "Describe a situation ...", and look for evidence that you can meet the job's requirements based on previous performance. For example: "Describe a difficult or challenging project you have undertaken. What did you do and what was the result?" Behavioural questions are becoming the most common question on application forms and at interviews. Here's a simple, industry-standard formula for responding.

Be a STAR!

This formula may help you to structure your response. By answering each question, you'll have the type of answer the employer's looking for: that is, specific, evidence-based, and action-oriented.



Supporting statements

Application forms often include sections asking you for supporting statements, e.g. “Write a statement supporting your application”, or “Why do you wish to work for us?”. The length of response may or may not be specified.

Here’s your chance to stand out from the other applicants. This statement may be crucial to your being interviewed so it’s worth devoting time to do it well. Effective supporting statements combine knowledge of and interest in the organisation, with pertinent information about your skills and attributes, supported by examples.

Guidelines for supporting statements:

1. Indicate your strong interest.
2. Research the organisation and position, state the key points of what you discovered and how you know this (e.g. “I noticed in your annual report that your key mission is to provide the highest standard of customer service ...”).
3. Identify how you meet each key requirement by highlighting your demonstrated skills, experience and attributes.
4. Conclude strongly by re-stating your interest and summarising your potential contributions.

(Electronically Speaking: the Online Application Form - reprinted with the permission of Flinders University Careers and Employer Liaison Centre.)

Example of a supporting statement

Write a statement of no more than 250 words in support of your application

Disability Placement Office - Workplace Australia

I am excited about the prospect of a position with Workplace. I first became aware of your leading role in this field in 0000, after reading a report in The Weekend Australian about Workplace’s success in placing people with disabilities in full-time work (QLD 10/06/0000). I subsequently sought work experience (letter August 0000) but was told you were unable to accommodate volunteers.

I included Disability studies (four subjects) in my Bachelor of Arts degree as a result of a long-term interest in this field (since Year 11). My academic studies have contributed knowledge and skills related to the psychology of exceptional development, the types of exceptionality, and the assessment of physical dysfunction. I achieved High Distinctions for two of my disability-related subjects.

I believe I possess good communication skills as a result of three years of customer service work (including two ‘outstanding service’ awards), am committed and hard-working (refer references supplied with application) and possess a strong dedication to this professional field. I am confident that such a background provides an excellent preparation for liaising with employers about suitable vacancies, and assisting the adjustment of people with a disability to work.

I relish the challenge of working as a disability placement officer, and believe I can offer high levels of professionalism and commitment coupled with the empathy and sensitivity you require. My youth should help me make a special contribution to your expanding group of younger clients. As stated in my resume, my longer-term goal is to obtain a managerial position within the disability field.

Checklist

- I have correctly spelt the employer's name and address.
- I have written the employer's correct job title as advised in the ad or application package.
- I have indicated evidence of research into the employer.
- I have used short, clear sentences.
- I have given specific examples to illustrate key points.
- I have checked and re-checked my spelling and grammar.
- The purpose of the letter is clear.
- Each paragraph's key message is clear.
- I have written only correct information about myself.
- The tone of my letter indicates self-confidence without boasting.
- I have avoided jargon and technical terms.
- I have avoided any negative remarks about myself.
- I haven't mentioned my salary expectations.
- I have recorded when I'm available for interview and how I can be contacted.
- I have indicated that my resume is enclosed.
- I have asked for action in the last paragraph.
- I have shown my letter to others and sought their opinion.
- My letter has been word-processed.
- I have signed it.
- I have typed my name below my signature.
- My letter is no longer than one page.
- The envelope is correctly addressed and has my address on the back.
- I have kept a copy for my job search record file and noted the date of mailing.

Appendix 1

Strategic writing - Style and editing for impact

Writing for your reader involves:

- Organising your writing around the reader's needs/objectives, rather than a narrative around the topic.
- Understanding your reader. Research their needs and consider their perspective.
- Distinguishing between major and minor ideas and making the relationship between them explicit to the reader (See Appendix 2, *Common cues or signposts for the reader*).
- Drawing conclusions from your writing to guide the reader.
- Using cues/signposts to organise your writing so it's clear to the reader (See Appendix 2).
- Conveying interest and dimension by using action verbs (see Appendix 3) and writing in the active voice.

Let the actors act – write in the active voice

Sentences in the active voice have the doer (you) as the subject. This is a more direct and concise way to communicate. For example:

I received an award for my high standards of customer service. (Active voice)

is more effective than

A reward was received for high standards of customer service. (Passive voice)

Edit for economy and impact

- It's easy to misinterpret or ignore highly abstract statements. Use direct, specific statements to direct the reader and hold their interest.
- Avoid weak linking words like 'is', 'are', 'am', 'was', 'been', 'were', etc.
- Eliminate inflated words or concepts and jargon. Opt for a business-like style.
- Increase action words (verbs) and reduce nouns. See Appendix 3.
- Delete empty words and phrases. Make every word work for you!

Appendix 2

Common cues or signposts for the reader

Reference adapted from *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing* (4th Edn), Linda Flower (1997), p 256, published by Thomson Publishing International.

Cues/signposts that lead the reader forward

To show addition:

Again
And
Besides
Equally important
Finally
Further
Furthermore
Moreover
Nor
Too
Next
First, second etc

To show time:

At length
Immediately thereafter
Soon
After a few hours
Afterwards
Finally
Then
Later
Previously
Formerly
First, second etc.
Next

Cues/signposts that make the reader stop and compare

But	Notwithstanding	Although
Yet	On the other hand	Although this is true
And yet	On the contrary	While this is true
However	After all	Conversely
Still	For all that	Simultaneously
Nevertheless	In contrast	Meanwhile
Nonetheless	At the same time	In the meantime

Cues/signposts that develop and summarise

To give examples:

For instance
For example
To demonstrate
To illustrate
As an illustration

To emphasise:

In fact
As a matter of fact
Indeed
In any case
In any event

To repeat:

In brief
In short
As I have said
As I have noted
In other words

To conclude:

Hence
Therefore
Accordingly
Consequently
Thus

To summarise:

In brief
On the whole
Summing up
To conclude
In conclusion

Appendix 3

Action verbs that create a positive image

accomplished	acted	adapted	administered
advanced	advised	allocated	analysed
applied	approved	arbitrated	arranged
assisted	attained	blended	brought
built	carried out	catalogued	changed
classified	collaborated	compared	completed
computed	conceived	conducted	constructed
consulted	contracted	controlled	coordinated
corrected	counselled	created	dealt
decided	decreased	defined	delegated
derived	designated	detected	developed
devised	directed	disapproved	discovered
distributed	documented	doubled	edited
encouraged	engineered	enlarged	escalated
established	estimated	evaluated	examined
expanded	experienced	explored	facilitated
finalised	formulated	founded	functioned
governed	grouped	guided	handled
harmonised	harnessed	headed	identified
implemented	improved	increased	indexed
initiated	inspected	installed	instituted
interpreted	introduced	invented	investigated
justified	localised	located	made
maintained	managed	mastered	mechanised
merged	moderated	monitored	motivated
negotiated	opened	operated	organised
originated	overcame	performed	pioneered
planned	prepared	presented	presided
processed	produced	programmed	promoted
provided	purchased	quadrupled	raised
recommended	recorded	recruited	rectified
reduced	re-evaluated	reorganised	repaired
replaced	reshaped	restored	reversed
reviewed	revised	saved	scheduled
screened	selected	serviced	set up
solved	sorted	sparked	specified
standardised	started	stimulated	straightened
succeeded	summarised	supervised	supported
surpassed	tested	trained	transacted
tripled	underwrote	unified	upgraded
validated	varied	verified	vitalised
won	worked	wrote	yielded