

SELECTION CRITERIA AND WRITTEN TASKS

Selection Criteria are generally found in job advertisements, mainly in the public sector. The reason is to ensure fairness and objectivity in selecting the best applicants to shortlist for interview. It is a way for you to indicate your level and range of specific skills as well as knowledge and experience deemed necessary by the employer to successfully undertake the duties of a job.

It is critical to read all the available documentation on the role you are applying for. This could include:

- Job advert
- Position description for the role
- “How you will be assessed” section
- Information for applicants – often found on the employer’s website

These documents will provide important information to help you prepare a strong application.

How does it Work?

There are several different titles and formats that employer’s use when describing how they want you to apply. These could include:

- A list of **key and desirable selection criteria** which you need to address individually.
- A **statement of claims** against the role responsibilities/accountabilities as outlined in the position description. This means you need to carefully read this document to analyse what the employer is looking for.
- Inclusion of your response to selection criteria in your **cover letter**.
- Some companies are becoming more flexible with selection criteria and may ask you for a two page pitch or to write a paragraph on a particular topic or skill.

The amount of individual criterion will differ from organisation to organisation, but it will typically be around five and occasionally up to 12. It is important that every single criteria in every category is given the same degree of effort to gain as high a score as possible in order to gain an interview. Whilst individual criteria may be weighted differently, they will all be scored separately and must all be answered to be eligible.

Do your Homework

Just like exams, it is vitally important to give yourself time to prepare a strong application which will show your skills, abilities and knowledge in a way that meets the employer’s requirements.

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To help you to think about how you meet the requested criteria, consider using a table to help you brainstorm where your skills and abilities have been acquired.

It might look something like this...

| Location | Criteria | | | |
|------------|----------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| | Teamwork | Communication | Analytical Skills | Problem Solving |
| University | | | | |
| Work | | | | |
| Interests | | | | |

Putting it in Writing

Some employers specify a word limit or a page limit per criteria and it is **crucial** that you stick to this preference. When unspecified, check with the employer about their expectation of response length. If you are unable to gain this information, then write approximately half a page to $\frac{3}{4}$ page per criteria. Don't forget the usual spelling and grammar checks.

Developing the First Draft

Assuming that you have the headings and the examples mapped out in your grid, the next step is to draft some concrete examples of the evidence you are using to justify your application. It can be helpful to use a combination of **dot points and paragraphs** under each criteria. Solid **detailed examples** of how you meet each criteria are critical to scoring a high mark for that criteria. Recent examples are well regarded, and don't forget to talk to your friends, family or colleagues about your experience if you are having trouble brainstorming ideas.

One helpful model to consider is the **STARL** model. This framework will help you to decide what to include in each criteria.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Situation: | What were you doing at the time? |
| Task: | What was the task/problem that required your interventions? |
| Action: | What specific steps did you take and what skills/knowledge were used? <i>(This part is critical - link it to the skills the employer is seeking)</i> |
| Result: | What outcomes eventuated from this activity? Where is the evidence for this? |
| Learning: | What did you learn from this situation? |

It is common to describe **2 or 3 separate examples** in a **STARL** format in response to one criterion. In outlining your response, start with a general introductory paragraph that summarises your claims against that criteria. Then follow this with your specific **STARL** response as evidence of the claims you have made.

Try not to waffle or get too theoretical. Use strong, practical examples that link your experience directly to the requirements of the position. **"I" statements** will help you achieve this. Be **succinct and specific** and carefully address the level of skill being asked in the application. For example, *'demonstrated ability'* requires evidence that you have successfully performed this task in the past, whereas *'ability to acquire...'* means that you can use comparable tasks as evidence for being able to undertake the current task.

Avoid being too general or vague – it is important to be convincing about your success to create an overall positive impression. Use facts and figures where possible to give credibility and context to your statements.

Don't ignore a criteria that you cannot satisfy - make an effort to write something to the employer about your potential to develop or acquire the skills or knowledge in question.

Evidence-based responses that are tied directly to the job requirements of the position are likely to score well.

More Assistance/Feedback

Assistance on responding to Selection Criteria is available from JCU Careers and Employability:

- Check out the **Master Written Applications** module in the [Employability Edge](#) program.
- See our **Information Sheet** – [Action Verb List](#) to help your writing
- Once you have prepared a draft response, you can meet with a Careers and Employability team member for **feedback** – [contact](#) our office to make an appointment



Tips to Create a Good First Impression

The way you write shows the employer some of your skills. They want to see you are concise in your description.

1. Address all the criteria.
2. Do your research about the job before you submit your application.
3. Give clear examples of work and/or life experience that support (prove) your claims.
4. Try to use the same language that appeared in the advertisement and in the key selection criteria. This will help make your application stand out as recruiters scan it.
5. Focus on outcomes that you have achieved and match these to the selection criteria.
6. Mention how you would gain a skill or experience if you do not currently have all of the skills or experience required.
7. Use action words (verbs) to describe your experiences.
8. Check your resume and cover letter for spelling and grammar errors. Don't rely totally on the spell checker on your computer.
9. Ask someone else to check your application for spelling, punctuation and layout. They should also ensure you have addressed the criteria.
10. Be ready to elaborate on your examples, and prepare other examples that you can talk about in your face-to-face interview

Even if you can't show that you have all the required skills, with a carefully worded application you might still get an interview because you've shown how quickly you learn new things and how you can transfer your skills to new roles.

Adapted from MyFuture, Retrieved June 2022 <https://myfuture.edu.au/career-articles/details/how-to-respond-to-key-selection-criteria>