

HOW TO ADDRESS KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Many job opportunities, particularly those in the public sector, require applicants to include a statement addressing the position's selection criteria. To get through the recruitment process, you need to do this correctly; this Quick Tip tells you how.

Introduction

The selection criteria are the personal qualities, skills, abilities, knowledge and qualifications an employer has identified as necessary to perform a role effectively. Selection criteria might be listed in the job advertisement as “essential”, “desirable” or “preferred”. While some selection criteria will focus on the specific technical skills required, many are likely to be based on general skills—those skills (also called “employability skills”) that have been identified by employers, industries and governments as essential for successful careers across all occupations. Examples of these include: communication, problem solving, teamwork, initiative, and planning and organising.

Typical examples of selection criteria that you could expect to see in a graduate job advertisement would be:

- good research and analytical skills
- good oral and written communication
- excellent interpersonal and liaison skills
- good organisational skills and proven ability to apply those skills to achieve results
- ability to work effectively in a team.

Applicants for the position would be rated according to the information they present that demonstrates their skills for each of the selection criteria. Job applications that fail to properly address the position's selection criteria are unlikely to be successful in gaining the person an interview.

Selection Criteria and the Selection Process

The assessment of candidates against selection criteria is based on the premise that past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour and performance; your application must therefore provide evidence of how you've used your skills in the past. A statement that you believe you possess the required skills without providing specific evidence is not going to help you gain that interview.

When you respond to selection criteria in a job application, your goal is to provide concise written evidence on how you meet the job's requirements. You must explain how you have demonstrated the skill or quality, using evidence from your previous activities. It's likely that you'll be able to identify examples from your study, employment, or other areas such as industry placements, voluntary work and community activities.

Strategies for Addressing Selection Criteria

- Brainstorm ideas
- generate possible examples from all your activities, especially those involving study, employment or industry work placements.
- Use positive action words and be specific in your language.
- Provide evidence to support your claims, with not only specific examples of what you've achieved, but also how well you did it.

A simple framework for structuring your answer for selection criteria is the "STAR model", consisting of:

- Situation: describe the setting
- Task: outline what you needed to do
- Action: explain how you went about it
- Result: describe the outcome.

Examples of Responding to Selection Criteria

To demonstrate your skills in teamwork, a simple example might be:

Situation: “I was involved in a study group for a research project in my third year.”

Task: “Each team member had a separate role; my role was to put together the final project write-up.”

Action: “The team developed a process which involved individual members doing their own section of the research and then forwarding it to me. We agreed upon a timeline that took account of commitments and research tasks. All research was forwarded to me in line with the schedule devised, and I assembled and collated the information into the final project paper.”

Result: what happened? “The paper was completed on time and was awarded a High Distinction.”

To demonstrate your skills in planning, your example might be:

Situation: “I am the marketing officer for a student social organisation at my university.”

Task: “My task was to organise marketing and promotional activities directed at students at the beginning of first semester 2010 to increase our membership.”

Action: “I started planning late in 2009, when I put together a list of marketing proposals. The committee considered my proposals and we decided on our marketing campaign. I then got in touch with a range of stakeholders including Campus Operations and Student Services in order to book space on campus for our promotional activities, as well as print shops to produce our materials.”

Result: “As a result of the marketing drive, our membership increased above the target set by the committee.”

Last Word

The use of selection criteria is a common method used by employers to establish an applicant's suitability for a position. Selection criteria provide you with a very clear guide as to the skills that employers think is important, so make sure you highlight those skills in your resume and application letters. They also provide a guide to the likely questions asked at an interview for the position. The more you understand selection criteria and develop expertise in writing to them, the greater insight you will gain into the nature of work and the labour market generally. You will then increase your chances of successful job seeking.