Supporting Information

Most application forms will contain a section asking you to write in detail about your suitability for the role. This can be called "Supporting or Additional Information" or a "Personal Statement". In this section, you will be expected to outline your reasons for applying, provide details of any relevant experience that you have and highlight the skills and attributes you possess. These sections are where you really sell yourself and demonstrate why you are suitable for the job or course to which you are applying, so it is important to spend some time getting it right.

It is vital to check the guidance notes or person specification in the application pack before you start on this section. It is important to address all the points listed and ensure you demonstrate that you meet all of the set criteria. If you are following a person specification, you should ensure that you follow the same structure and you may also find it useful to use the same sub headings (as the recruiter is likely to be checking your answers against the person specification). Most person specifications will also specify whether a particular quality is "essential" or "desirable" – it is **vital** that you address every "essential" criterion, and you should also meet as many of the "desirable" values as possible.

You should note that many person specifications will also tell you how each criterion will be assessed: for example, by the application form, at interview or as part of a test or assessment. If a skill is to be assessed by application form, and you don't address it as part of your supporting information, it is likely that your application will be rejected or marked down.

Graduate Prospects recommends that you address each point on the person specification in clearly themed paragraphs:

- In your first sentence you might make a short **statement** summarising how you meet or relate to the requirement.
- The next few sentences should provide a concrete **example** of the assertion(s) you have just made.
- A final sentence that shows **reflection** will add depth to the point you're making.
  (Source: www.prospects.ac.uk: "Applications, CVs and Interviews")

You could use the STAR technique to help you complete this section, as explained in the "competency-based questions" section on the previous page.

Most importantly, remember to read and follow the instructions given in the application pack; most employers will give you some guidance notes to help you fill out your application form. An example of guidance notes can be found on the Birmingham City Council website; see "Further Resources" for more details.

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T: 0121 331 5588
www.bcu.ac.uk/studentservices

Applying for jobs: Application Forms

Need more help? Just ASK!

Call in for initial advice at a Help Zone "Drop In" in Student Services, who will refer you to a career specialist if required:-

- City North Campus, First Floor Baker Building
- City Centre Campus, Gosta Green, Room G27
- City South Campus, Second Floor Seacole Building
- Millennium Point: Ask at reception

Telephone 0121 3315588 or visit our web pages for dates and times of Drop Ins and services at other sites.

Careers and Job Prospects websites:

- https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers
- www.bcu.ac.uk/alumni/careers

Online e-guidance service:

- www.bcu.ac.uk/askus

Social Media:

- Facebook: BCUemploymentzone
- Twitter: @employmentzone

View our full range of leaflets online:
https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers >> Quick Link >> Handouts

Careers and Job Prospects, August 2011

Why do I have to fill in an application form?

Although some employers may still request a CV and covering letter, it is increasingly common for candidates to have to fill in an application form when applying for jobs. Employers like application forms because it makes it easier for them to compare the strengths and weaknesses of all the candidates on a like-for-like basis.

Many people are daunted by this prospect, but you don't have to be: filling out an application form is usually fairly straightforward and just requires a little time and effort to ensure you match yourself to the set criteria.

Most application forms will include guidance notes and a job specification. It is important you fill in all the sections required and aim to meet as many of the set criteria as possible.

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Tips for completing Application Forms

- Before you start writing, ensure you **read through** any instructions and accompanying documents, including the Job Description and Person Specification. It may help to print these out and make notes as you go through them.

- Give yourself **plenty of time**. Good application forms require a lot of concentration and may take several hours to complete. Ensure you find somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed.

- **Research** the company thoroughly. Employers will want to see evidence that you have a good understanding of the role and why you want to work for their company. For further guidance, see our handout "Researching Employers".

- **Check your spelling and grammar**. A great application can be ruined by spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. Don't rely on a spellcheck—ask your family or friends to read through as it can be easy to miss errors. The Centre for Academic Success can also provide help in this area

- **Review your application**. Have you filled out all the sections? Are your contact details correct? Better still, get your application checked by a Careers specialist, either by booking a face-to-face appointment through the Help Zone or using our online e-guidance service. For details see the "Need More Help" section in this handout.

- **Print a copy** of your application for future reference. If you are selected for interview, you may be asked questions about statements you have made on your application, so ensure you keep a copy to hand.

Further Resources

Graduate Prospects' guide to filling out application forms: **www.prospects.ac.uk** —> click on "Careers Advice" tab —> "Job Application Advice"

Target Jobs guide to the STAR technique: **www.targetjobs.co.uk** —> "Careers advice" —> "Interview Techniques" —> "Competence-based interviews"

Birmingham City Council guidance notes for completing an application form: **www.birmingham.gov.uk** —> "Jobs" —> "'How to apply" —> "Guidance notes for completing an application form". This provides an example of the kind of guidance notes employers may offer as part of the application process.

Application Form Content

Education and qualifications:

The golden rule with application forms is to follow the instructions; usually you will be asked to list your qualifications in reverse chronological order (most recent first), but do check that this is what they want!

Employment experience:

As with your education and qualifications, you should list jobs, placements and voluntary work in reverse chronological order. If you have a lot of jobs, then you may not have to list all of them, but do make sure that you explain any gaps in your personal statement. You may be asked to list your job title: if you didn't have an official one then use a title which best describes your job. If they ask you to describe your main duties, don't just give a job description but use the opportunity to sell your skills, particularly those which the employer is looking for. The language you use is also important so make sure it's strong and decisive. The Graduate Prospects website has a useful section on "power words" (see "Further Resources" section below).

References:

Most application forms will ask you to list two or three referees. It is important that you ask permission first, and then also ensure that you list the full name, job title and full contact address of your referees, and also provide a valid telephone number and email address if you can.

Competency-based questions and scenarios

You may have seen application forms which feature questions such as "**Think of a time when you had to work as part of a team. Describe the situation and explain your role**", or "**Think of a time when you have had to influence others to do something they were reluctant to do. What was the situation? How did you do it? What was the outcome?**"

One good approach to dealing with these types of questions is to use the **STAR** technique,. This is where you consider the **Situation** (the context or environment), the **Task** at hand (which should link to the skill outlined in the question), the **Action** you took, and explain the **Result** (which should preferably be a positive outcome).

The aim of these questions is to help you prove that you have the skills and experience to deal with such scenarios. Don't worry if you do not have direct experience of these situations in the workplace; remember that skills are transferable so it is acceptable to use an example from your studies or social life. Our leaflet "**Making Yourself Employable**" can help you identify your strengths and choose examples that you can use on your application form or in an interview. For more information on the STAR technique see the "Further Resources" section on the opposite page.

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