RESPONDING TO SELECTION CRITERIA

As part of a job application, you might be asked to formally respond to selection criteria. This requires a document in which each selection criterion is addressed in turn. A selection criteria document is separate from the other application documents such as resumés and cover letters.

Organisations which typically require selection criteria to be addressed in a separate document include public service, universities, research institutes, large NGOs.

Key points about selection criteria documents

- Sometimes it is not clear whether you are required to address selection criteria formally in a separate document. A job advertisement may list selection criteria yet not indicate whether they are to be addressed formally. If unclear, contact the recruiter/employer – there is nearly always a contact given for enquiries.
- Some organisations eg Australian Public Service (APS), and Victorian Public Service (VPS) have their own guidelines for responding to selection criteria – it is always worth checking/asking if there are specific guidelines.

APS guide to addressing selection criteria:

VPS guide to addressing selection criteria:

Preparing responses

- Start a new document and use the exact wording of the selection criteria as headings. Don’t be tempted to combine criteria which sound similar. Keep in mind that selection criteria are not always well written but you need to work with what is given.
- Respond to both ‘Essential’ and ‘Desirable’ criteria. It is important to respond to all criteria even if you don’t feel you have much to say. Don’t be discouraged if you can’t give a strong response to every criterion.
- Selection Criteria may relate to various aspects including skills, abilities, experience, qualifications, though the most common tend to be about skills and abilities.
Some examples include:
  o A tertiary **qualification** in media or related field
  o **Demonstrated skills** in presenting to groups
  o Ability to liaise effectively with people from a range of cultural backgrounds
  o **Experience** in administration
  o A broad **understanding** of the role of local government in Victoria

Take care to note what are being asked about - experience, skills, ability, understanding are the main ones. In relation to skills, note whether you are being asked about ‘demonstrated’ or ‘proven’ skills, or just ‘the ability to’ perform a certain task.

**Responding to different types of criteria**

Different types of selection criteria lend themselves to different approaches.

**Skills or ability criteria**

The most common type of selection criteria relate to skills or abilities, often referred to be recruiters as ‘competencies’.

- Key to the approach is to give examples of when you have demonstrated the skill or ability.
- A typical response might consist of 2 or 3 examples, though a single substantial example might be used when it covers all aspects of the criterion.
- Use examples from a range of experiences and contexts throughout your responses – these examples can be taken from your work, study or extra-curricular activities
- A useful framework for responses for skills criteria is the STAR model:
  o S – **situation**: set up the context – where, when, who?
  o T – **task**: what specifically was the task/challenge?
  o A – **action**: what did you do to get the task done?
  o R – **result**: what was the outcome?
- It is effective to provide an introductory statement which flags elements of the skill area which you will be discussing.
- A combination of dot points and prose can be used. For example, if giving a number of examples, you might use dot points to list the examples (see below). If giving one extended example, you might use dot points at some stage to break up the prose.
- While there is no strict guide to length, perhaps consider a 1/3 to 1/2 a page.
**Example: Excellent interpersonal and communication skills**

I have developed excellent interpersonal and communication skills, including interacting one-on-one, speaking to groups and producing written documents of various kinds.

- In my role as Oaktree Schools4Schools Coordinator, I worked with student leaders to develop and educate a seed group of younger students. My role involved mentoring the leaders as well as facilitating weekly discussion groups, all of which required positive and thoughtful interpersonal communication. Organising the group’s art auction fundraiser required liaising and negotiating with a range of people including school staff, caterers, artists who donated works and the auctioneer. As part of the fundraiser, I produced a brochure and subsequently a report to Oaktree management. The seed group sustained and strengthened throughout the year, and our fundraiser was a success raising $7,000 for our sister school in Cambodia.

- In my tutoring work with refugee children, I assist individual children and small groups with their homework. This requires a sensitive and positive approach as well as flexibility in communication as each child has different needs and learning style. As part of my role, I prepare worksheets and instructions for students and complete a reflective journal. I have received very positive feedback from the program coordinator.

**Experience criteria**

- With experience criteria, the more experience the stronger the response, so give the full picture of your experience rather than just examples.
- List the particular experiences and then give some detail of what you did.
- Include any information which indicates that you performed well

**Example: Experience in administration**

My experience in administration includes the following:

- In my voluntary work as Administrative Assistant with The Smith Family, I am responsible for a range of administrative tasks including scheduling client appointments, keeping records in a database, and updating web content; I have been doing this work for over a year now and am very comfortable with administrative work
- Many of the tasks undertaken as part of my internship with Careers & Employment were administrative in nature; these included entering events and job listings in a database, preparing promotional flyers and posters, and managing small events
- I also completed the Certificate IV in Business Administration concurrently with my degree studies, in which I gained a Distinction average; the course has reinforced and extended the skills gained through work experience, and it also included business financials in which I am now confident
Understanding or awareness criteria

- Provide a summary of the issue or topic and some specifics to demonstrate or illustrate your understanding.
- Indicate how/where you acquired your knowledge
- If no experience in using this particular ‘understanding’, you might be able provide an example of where you have worked with something similar or related (see last paragraph in example below)

Example: *An understanding of ‘inclusive practices’*

I understand that the aim of inclusive practices is to provide increased and equitable access to education for students with a disability. I have read the relevant policy documents on your website. There are a wide range of practices undertaken by the University of Melbourne to achieve inclusion, with the tasks of the Academic Support Worker being part of that set of practices.

I am also aware that in assisting students, certain principles such as academic integrity and student independence are important. This means, for example, that a support worker must take care not to transfer their own ideas onto the notes taken in lectures for client students and must always seek to maximise the students’ control over the note taking and other support activities.

In my tutoring work with refugee children, we work with a philosophy and set of principles which guide how we should approach our work, so I am used to working within such guidelines.

Qualifications and other factual criteria

A brief factual response is all that is required, stating your qualifications or whatever factual information is required. Perhaps elaborate a little eg mentioning relevant subject streams within a course.

For further examples of selection criteria responses: check out Anne Villiers’ book ‘How to write and talk to selection criteria’ p.177. This book is available in the Baillieu Library, or ask a Careers Consultant for an extract of p 177.