

Preparing a Job Application

Human Resources

University of Ballarat
Learn to succeed



Many staff members may not have applied for a new position for quite some time.

The purpose of this document is to provide some guidance on preparing a job application and preparing yourself for an interview.

I. Job Application

A job application consists of a resume and a statement addressing the key selection criteria. You may also want to consider writing a cover letter.

1. Resume

Resumes are now focused on achievements and the value you can add to the position you are applying for.

Personal Details

Name and contact details.

Career Objective and Statement (Optional)

A career objective is a short, realistic statement that defines what you are looking for in a position and that highlights your strengths.

Example

A skilled administrator with a Diploma in Business Administration together with ten years' experience in managing diverse administrative tasks. I am now seeking a position as a Senior Administrator in which I can to utilise my qualifications, knowledge and proficiency within a dynamic environment that will provide me with new challenges.

Career Achievements

In this section of your resume you will list your achievements in previous positions. These are not lists of duties, but rather the tasks that you implemented and how these added value to your position and the organisation.

Example

Implemented use of database for conference documentation and records leading to greater efficiency.

Here are some guidelines to assist you in defining your achievements:

- achieve more with the same resources;
- achieve the same with less resources;
- improve operations; and
- improve quality.

Preparing a Job Application

Human Resources



When writing your achievements, remember:

- present relevant information only for maximum impact; and
- use action words.

Here is a sample of action words the may assist you in writing your achievements:

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Achieved | Conducted | Drafted | Negotiated | Sold |
| Acquired | Constructed | Founded | Obtained | Solved |
| Addressed | Coordinated | Generated | Organised | Staffed |
| Administered | Created | Guided | Planned | Streamlined |

There are two main ways to present Career Achievements:

- chronological, ie. organised around the dates you held various positions (starting with most recent position first); or
- functional, ie. organised around knowledge, skills and/or industries worked in rather than positions held. This format emphasises your competencies, abilities and achievements.

This format is useful where you:

- have worked for a large number of organisations; or
- have worked in a number of different industries or professions.

There is no right or wrong format, however the chronological order appears to be preferred.

Education and/or Training

Qualifications gained and dates attended.

Continuing professional development.

Some tips:

- Don't include irrelevant qualifications.
- As a general rule, do not include subjects or modules studied (except if relevant to the position and/or if you haven't yet completed your studies).

Membership, Accreditations and/or Professional Affiliations

Name of organisation, dates and level of membership/accreditation.

Additional Information

This is optional.

Here you can include information such as:

- second/third language; and/or
- computer/software knowledge and skills.

Preparing a Job Application

Human Resources



Referees

The University requires you to provide contact details for at least three professional referees.

It is important that you manage your referees!

- Ask whether they are willing to serve as a referee.
- Tell them why you applied for the job, what excites you about the job.
- Provide them with a copy of your resume and application.
- Provide them with a copy of the position description.

In summary remember the following three C's when writing your resume

- Clear – easy to read, but consistent format, visually attractive.
- Concise – contains only relevant information.
- Correct – facts are correct, no typos or spelling errors.

Tips for writing your resume

- Only include relevant and essential information – aim for three to five pages.
- Adapt/customise your resume for each job you apply for.
- Choose an appropriate font and font size, eg. Arial, 11pt.
- Only bold and/or underline headings. Do not bold/underline text to emphasise a particular achievement for example.
- Have a critical friend or colleague read your resume.

2. Addressing the Key Selection Criteria

Your statement addressing the key selection criteria will be used to make a judgment on whether you should be shortlisted or not. It is thus important that you:

- put your best achievements forward; and
- include situations that are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Addressing the key selection criteria means you need to provide evidence that you possess the knowledge, skills or attributes by elaborating on your past experience and providing evidence.

When addressing a key selection criterion a useful tool is the STAR principle.

| | |
|----------|---|
| S | What was the situation ? |
| T | What task/s had to be implemented? What was the challenge? |
| A | What actions did I take? How did I address the challenge? |
| R | What was the result ? |

Let's look at how you would use the STAR principle for the following a key selection criterion:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Key Selection Criterion | Demonstrated negotiation skills, including the ability to achieve win-win results. |
|--------------------------------|---|

Preparing a Job Application

Human Resources

University of Ballarat
Learn to succeed



Using the STAR principle, a possible analysis could be:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Situation | Sales Consultant and Account Manager positions required negotiation skills. |
| Task | Increasing sales. Retaining clients. Selling value-added services. Promptly resolving issues. |
| Actions | Obtained a clear understanding of company products and client needs. Researched competitors. Drafted a negotiation strategy. Met with client to present products and services as per strategy. Liaised with clients on a regular basis. Followed up with clients. |
| Result | Successful in building a client base in excess of 20 clients while in each position. |

When addressing a key selection criterion a useful tool is the STAR principle. Remember, it is not the number of examples that you use, but rather the quality and relevance.

After analysing your knowledge, skills and attributes you will need to draft a clear and concise response.

Example

I have held several positions as Sales Consultants and Account Managers which required excellent negotiation skills. In these positions I was responsible for achieving sales targets, selling value-added services and retaining clients by ensuring the prompt resolution of issues.

These responsibilities I achieved by:

- *obtaining a clear understanding of the company's products and matching these to the clients' needs;*
- *researching competitors;*
- *drafting and obtaining approval of a negotiation strategy which addressed client needs and highlighted the company's competitive advantage; and*
- *"pitching" each proposal of the strategy to the client.*

When the client accepted the proposal, I ensured a successful hand-over to the Service Department. I also regularly followed-up with the client to ensure client satisfaction and resolved issues promptly.

During my employment as a Sales Consultant, I was successful in achieving sales targets in excess of \$250,000 pa and as an Account Manager, I retained a client base in excess of 20 clients.

Preparing a Job Application

Human Resources

University of Ballarat
Learn to succeed



Some tips on addressing the Selection Criteria

- Make sure that you understand each key selection criterion.
- Use STAR to unpack your knowledge, skills and attributes by looking at specific positions you have held and/or examples.
- Ensure your examples are specific to the position you are applying for.
- Use action responses.
- Avoid using unclear and ambiguous statements, eg. assisted, involved in, some, somewhat, limited.
- Summarise information where possible.
- Check spelling, typos and grammar.

3. Cover Letter

The purpose of a cover letter is to reflect your interest and suitability to the position advertised. A well written cover letter may assist you in making your application stand out.

Structure of a Cover Letter

- State the position you are applying for.
- Provide a reason why you are interested in the position – this means you need to understand the position and the responsibilities.
- Provide a reason/s why you would be suited for the position – highlight specific areas on your resume.

Tips

- Address it to the recruiting supervisor – not Dear Sir/Madam.
- Clearly link your qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills to the position.
- Keep it fairly formal.
- Be concise and to the point.

Example

Dear Mr Soap

Application for Human Resources Manager Position

I read the advertisement for the above position with great interest.

I am an accomplished Human Resources Manager with more than ten years experience.

I believe that I am able to contribute to your company's Human Resources strategy and in particular your key objective to develop and retain key talent.

The last five years I have been employed by ABC Financial Services where I have:

- *implemented an on-line career centre which has increased the quality of applicants and retention of new employees by 3 %; and*

Preparing a Job Application

Human Resources

University of Ballarat
Learn to succeed



- *maintained salary costs by implementing a remuneration strategy based on industry benchmarks.*

My qualifications and further achievements are in my accompanying resume.

I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss the contributions I can make to your company.

Yours sincerely

II. Job Interview

Preparing for an Interview

Understand the job you are applying for

Read the position description. Ensure you understand the various responsibilities, reporting relationships and key selection criteria.

Know yourself

Read your resume you have customised for the job application and your statement addressing the key selection criteria. Ensure that you can explain the linkages between your knowledge, skills, attributes, qualifications and the position.

Prepare possible questions and practice answering these

Based on the position description, prepare some practise questions. Practise answering them.

Below are some examples of more traditional interview questions that may be of use in preparing yourself.

- What are you looking for in your next position?
- Do you prefer to work independently or as part of a team?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your areas for development?
- How would you describe your management style?
- What do you consider to be your outstanding achievements?
- What attracted you to the role?

Prepare some questions for the Interviewer

Example

What are the immediate challenges that I would need to address in this position?

Prepare copies of your Qualifications

It is University policy for the selection panel to sight your original qualifications. Remember to take your original qualifications (and a copy) to the interview.

Preparing a Job Application

Human Resources

University of Ballarat
Learn to succeed



During the Interview

Try to stay calm. Don't hold anything in your hands – you may be tempted to fidget with it, eg. the clicking pen.

Remember, there will always be questions that you are unprepared for. Stay calm, collect your thoughts and respond when ready and as clearly as possible. It is okay to admit the question is tough, eg: "That is a tough question, I will need some time to think about it."

Answering Questions

The STAR principle can again be used to assist you in answering questions, particularly where you are asked to provide specific examples. If the questions do not require you to use specific examples, the actions and results areas of STAR can assist you in demonstrating your knowledge and skills.

III. Further information

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The University's EAP provider can assist staff seeking new positions. The "Career Assist" program is offered as part of the University's EAP arrangements. For a free confidential conversation about your career and applying for new positions, please call 03 8681 2444.

Careers@UB

The following resources are also available on the University's [Careers@UB](#) web page.

- Applicant Information.
- How to Apply.
- Addressing Key Selection Criteria.
- FAQs.