Job Applications

Job Application Documents

Job applications usually consist of a resume, a cover letter and occasionally a statement of claims against the selection criteria. There are handouts on the Careers Centre's website which guide you in preparing each of these documents.

To submit an effective job application you must carefully read the job advertisement and other relevant documentation. This can include a duty statement, a list of selection criteria, an organisational chart and information on the culture, focus and values of the organisation.

Where possible have a discussion with the contact person to clarify the key skills, knowledge, experience and capabilities required to successfully fulfil the role.

It is critical to then tailor your cover letter, resume and/or statement of claims to these requirements. Your application generally represents your first point of contact with a potential employer. It is essential therefore to carefully construct your application so that it:

- clearly demonstrates how your qualifications, skills, abilities and experience are a solid match for the role; and
- showcases your written communication skills.

Employers and recruiters sometimes use application forms instead of, or as well as, resumes and cover letters. Ensure you allow plenty of time to complete an application form. Application forms provide a consistent method of screening candidates in the early stage of a recruitment process.

Often an employer will ask for examples from your work or study history to demonstrate a skill or level of knowledge. Spend time considering the best example to provide.

Online Application forms

Online application forms are often used in large-scale recruitment drives, including graduate recruitment programs. You'll find information on applying for graduate jobs in the handout on Graduate Recruitment.

Here are some handy hints for online forms:

- Before you start, carefully read the instructions.
- Check to see if you can complete and save the application in stages to return to it later (by means of a user name and password), or if the form needs to be completed in one session. If the instructions don't give you this information, print a copy and write your answers on the draft. You'll then be able to complete the online form relatively quickly in case the site "times out" or crashes during your session.
- Expect to supply information similar to that required for a hard copy application form; however, the design of online forms may allow for lengthier answers. In your answer provide one or two detailed recent examples that support how you meet the requirement, for example you may be asked to write about your leadership abilities.
- Use key words that an employer might search for. You'll often find these in the job advertisement and other relevant documentation.
- Draft your answers in a Word document to check your spelling and grammar as the online form will not necessarily provide the facility to do this. Once any errors have been corrected, copy and paste your responses into the appropriate sections on the application form.
- Print a completed hard copy of the form for your records and for rereading before an interview. If you're not sure whether it's possible to print your application after having submitted it, print it before submission.
- Try to submit your application before the due date. If you leave it to the closing date the site may be slower due to increased traffic.
- For some jobs, only online applications are accepted.
- When applying for a job advertised on job boards such as www.seek.com.au or www.mycareer.com. au you may be given the choice of applying online or phoning. This is an opportunity for you to promote your skills and experience so in this case, make the phone call.

Electronic applications

If you intend to e-mail your application, here are some suggestions to make it effective:

- Make the subject line relevant e.g. "Application for the Position of …."
- Your e-mail should be reasonably formal and write a concluding paragraph stating that you have attached your resume and cover letter.
- Include your name and a contact phone number in the body of the e-mail in case the reader has trouble opening the attachments.
- Your cover letter and resume should be two separate attachments. The attachments need to be of the same high quality as hard copy documents.
- Don't scan documentation such as academic transcripts to send with your application unless specifically requested. These can be provided if you are selected for an interview.
- If you don't receive notification within 48 hours that your application has been received, send a follow-up e-mail.
- If you wish to electronically post your resume in a publicly accessible domain, protect your privacy by removing your address and telephone number; set up a special email account just for your job search and using this as your point of contact.

Hard copy application forms

When applying for a job you're sometimes asked to submit a hard copy application form with your resume and cover letter. If so, photocopy the blank form to use as a draft.

You can also photocopy the completed form for your records and to reread as interview preparation.

On occasion you may be required to complete a hard copy application form in an employer's or recruiter's reception area before your interview.

Here are some hints for the completion of hard copy forms:

- Skim read the application form before you start writing to ascertain what's required and how information should be set out.
- Avoid answering questions with 'please see resume' as this may be interpreted negatively by the reader, particularly if used repeatedly.

- You need to systematically search for information in your resume, cover letter, duty statement, statement of claims addressing the selection criteria or skills inventory. It is therefore vitally important that you take copies of all relevant documents to the interview.
- Write neatly in black ink and use block letters where required.
- Write succinctly and neatly rather than squeezing too much information into a small space.
- If you make an error, cross it out neatly and rewrite your answer.
- If you're concerned about possible spelling mistakes refer to your application, which should have been thoroughly checked before you submitted it.
- Expect to be asked to supply your full name and contact details, details of the job you're applying for, residential status, qualifications, employment history, other skills and qualifications (e.g. a driver's licence, another language) and referees.
- You may be asked to supply information about your competency in tasks relating to the particular role e.g. 'advanced Microsoft Excel skills'.
- Your resume can be a useful memory jogger, as can a copy of your skills inventory.
- If required to fill out an application form on the employer's premises ahead of an interview, be sure to arrive at the organisation a few minutes early to allow time to fill in the application form.

Need more help?

For more information on job applications, visit the Careers Centre to view hard copy resources. You'll also find books on job applications in the university and your local library. You can also register for a Resume Rescue workshop and have your job applications reviewed in a group setting.

You may also find it useful to refer to the following handouts on the Careers Centre's website when preparing your job applications:

- Identifying Your Employability Skills
- Cover Letters
- Resume Writing
- How to Address Selection Criteria