

## Application Forms

Application forms are carefully designed selection tools suited to the needs of the employer / organisation.

They require a bit of preparation, so you will need to allow plenty of time.

- Research the employer and sector to up your awareness on what they do, where they operate and what might be current news for them right now.
- Read the job advert and identify the skills they are looking for.
- Show the employer your motivation for applying by focusing on what you have to offer, and why you are interested in this particular role and company.
- List key recent experiences that demonstrate the skills required
- Always follow the instructions on the form.

Most application forms begin by asking for personal details including education and previous employment. This is known as biographical information. They then often move towards a series of more challenging questions to assess your motivation for applying and the skills and competencies you have to offer.

**Motivational questions** assess your enthusiasm and test your knowledge and understanding of the role and the company / organisation. They are also designed to establish the alignment of the role and business to your own interests and future career goals. This is where your research during preparation comes in to play. Examples include:

- Why do you want to work for us?
- What do you expect to be doing in the first year?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

**Competency questions** around key skills and attributes required for the role will also feature. These are designed to check you have the potential to be effective within the organisation. They aim to find out how you work with others, cope under pressure, apply practical solutions to problems and react flexibly when things do not always go to plan. Examples include:

- Describe a time you had to work effectively as part of a team?
- Describe a time when you had to adapt to changing circumstance?

Consider using the STAR method to structure your responses:

**Situation** - Describe a **situation**

**Task** - Explain the **task** you had to do

**Action** - Set out clearly, specifically, and with detail the **actions** you took

**Result** - And finally, describe the **result** and what you learned

**Strengths based questions** around motivation, values and who you are as a person. These focus on what you like doing rather than what you can do, to understand what you are good at and if you are a good match for the role. Examples include:

- What energises you?
- Do you like starting tasks or finishing them?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?

**Action verbs** can add impact to your skills and experiences. Consider these examples:

Accomplished • Achieved • Administered • Advised • Advocated • Analysed • Assembled • Authorised • Awarded • Budgeted • Captained • Chaired • Coached • Completed • Conducted • Co-ordinated • Counselling • Created • Decided • Delivered • Demonstrated • Designed • Determined • Developed • Devised • Directed • Discovered • Earned • Edited • Employed • Enabled • Encouraged • Engineered • Enjoyed • Ensured • Established • Evaluated • Examined • Expanded • Explained • Facilitated • Founded • Gained • Generated • Handled • Identified • Implemented • Improved • Increased • Initiated • Instituted • Instructed • Interviewed • Invented • Launched • Led • Managed • Marketed • Maximised • Mediated • Negotiated • Obtained • Operated • Organised • Oversaw • Performed • Planned • Prepared • Presented • Prioritised • Produced • Promoted • Raised • Ran • Recognised • Recommended • Reconciled • Recruited • Represented • Responsible • Saved • Set up • Simplified • Solved • Supervised • Targeted • Transformed

**If you lack experience**, you can always reference the knowledge and skills developed during your course. Draw on your modules, dissertation, field work and projects. Highlight abilities such as seeing both sides of the argument, thinking on your feet, explaining your views, presenting information and coping with pressure. Don't forget all the other skills that also come in to play such as time management, research skills, analytical and critical thinking, identifying key points, summarising and synthesising information and structuring arguments.

The **AberGrad checklist** will help you recognise skills developed throughout your time at University.

**Disclosing** a disability or long term health condition is not a legal requirement on an application form. However, as employers are keen to ensure that all applicants are given equal and fair opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, disclosure could offer access to reasonable adjustments for the application and interview process.

**Before submitting**, check you followed the instructions and answered the questions directly using varied personal experiences. Proof-read the document yourself and ask another to do so as well (remember the Careers Service can review any application if you attend our daily drop-in or email it to [careers@aber.ac.uk](mailto:careers@aber.ac.uk)). And don't forget to retain a copy in optimistic readiness for an interview.