

Understanding the Selection Criteria

The selection criteria can often be confusing and overwhelming to the jobseeker. From an employer's point of view it provides a means to measure each job applicant's suitability to perform the advertised role, so your ability to understand and effectively respond to the criteria is very important.

An employer can receive literally hundreds of applicants per job. SEEK has received feedback from recruiters across Government and Education in particular, who state if your application doesn't meet all the criteria, or makes it difficult to assess your suitability, there's a good chance you won't be considered at all! So before preparing your application, take the time to review the position's selection criteria carefully and ensure that you tailor your cover letter and CV accordingly.

Within each selection criteria you'll come across a number of familiar key phrases or expressions that indicate the type of skill or ability required for the role. Some of the more commonly used key expressions are listed below. Understanding the subtleties and differences between each is important and can improve your ability to provide a succinct and relevant job application.

Awareness of involves the least amount of familiarity with a subject and can mean little more than having a perception or realization of.

Knowledge of refers to familiarity gained from actual experience or from learning, suggesting you need more than a passing familiarity with these subjects.

Understanding is more than knowledge. It requires having comprehension and perception of the significance of it. For example, to say you understand the 'New Zealand Advertising regulations' means you grasp why the regulations were established, why it is important, and how it relates to the role.

Ability means having the skills, knowledge or competency to do the task required. For example, if a job requires a person to create presentations, then the ability to use Microsoft PowerPoint may be needed.

Aptitude suggests suitability to carry out a task or role. That is, you have a leaning towards a particular skill or quality, such as, aptitude for policy formulation in government.

Capacity can mean able to or qualified to perform a task. There

is some suggestion that you have the necessary skill or quality but may not have demonstrated it to any major extent. Examples of how capacity to is used include, 'capacity to meet deadlines', and 'capacity to lead a department'.

Background in is often used in reference to educational qualifications or areas of specialisation, such as marketing or journalism.

Experience in means you must have literally done the work as distinct from observed it or had a sideline role. For example: experience in bookkeeping, means you must show that you have performed in jobs requiring bookkeeping.

A proven record means that you must be able to substantiate any claims to the experience or skill. Preferably with outcomes that have been documented. For example: 'a proven record in achieving sales targets', means that you must document what you have done and achieved in these areas.

The following expressions indicate to you that claims must be supported with concrete examples that show some depth of experience and/or capability -

- **Well developed** - as in 'well developed understanding of immigration policy', 'well developed interpersonal skills'.
- **Demonstrated** - as in 'demonstrated ability to use a word processor', 'demonstrated qualifications and experience in marketing'.
- **Extensive** - as in 'extensive experience in journalism and leadership programs'.
- **High level of** - as in 'high level of appreciation of OH&S practices', 'high level experience in the preparation of speeches'.

If you have any doubt as to the meaning of these expressions, check with the point of contact. Don't assume, however, that this person has an understanding of these nuances or has made deliberate choices - selection criteria can often be sloppy in their wording and meaning.

You've reviewed the selection criteria and understand what's required, so how do you present your application? You can improve the quality of your statements against the selection criteria by following a number of key principles -

Support claims with relevant, concrete examples.

Don't make claims based on personal opinion with no supporting evidence. Provide evidence that shows achievement and examples of experience. Instead of using lines such as "*I possess superior liaison skills.*", expand this with "*My superior liaison skills are demonstrated by ...*" and follow with examples to illustrate the demands and complexity of the tasks.

Watch your verbs.

Use direct, active verbs, rather than passive verbs and use verbs that indicate exactly what your contribution was. For example, to say - '*I assisted with the project*' - could mean you drafted a document, negotiated a deal, operated a photocopier or swept the floor! While such expressions can imply more than what your contribution was, they can also undersell your worth! Be specific and select a verb that clearly describes your role.

Use plain English.

You should ensure that all parts of the application are written clearly, concisely and are grammatically correct and that spelling is accurate. It may sound obvious, but you'd be surprised how many job applications include spelling mistakes! Review your application carefully and don't forget to use a spell checker.

Address all parts of the selection criteria.

Avoid attempting to address the selection criteria in a broad sweep, hoping to encompass each criterion. Address each clearly and precisely.

Be results oriented.

Focus on what impact you have, what difference you make and what results you achieve. This is particularly important as you reach more senior level positions. Examples of this include sales increases, cost reductions and productivity increases.

Have good layout and presentation.

As mentioned earlier, employers can receive over one hundred applications per job, so anything that makes reading your application easier and reaching an assessment as to whether you merit short listing quicker, will help your cause. You should address all the selection criteria within the cover letter and one of the best ways to do this is using bullet points. Writing in this abbreviated manner not only helps the selection panel but also forces you to express yourself more clearly and succinctly.

Remember, the onus is on you to convince the selection panel of your suitability for the role. Ensure your application is clear, concise and to the point, addresses all the selection criteria and you'll give yourself the best opportunity to progress to the next stage! Best of luck.

by Glenn Rogers

For more tips on Selection Criteria visit [Making Selection Criteria Easy](#) by [Tom Hannemann](#)