
How to address job selection criteria

Job selection criteria are also known as key selection criteria or KSC. They are designed to help make the most accurate match between the requirements of a position and the skills of an applicant. Some areas of government require applicants to respond to specific KSC. No matter how well qualified or suited you are to a position, if you do not address them when required, your application will not make it through to the interview stage. So make sure you check what information you need to provide, before submitting your application, as requirements vary across departments and agencies.

Some pointers to get you started

- Understand the job and key selection criteria
- Find out about the employer
- Decide if you are qualified to do the job

Understand the job and key selection criteria

Study the position description, including the key selection criteria, along with any other relevant information you have collected. If you are unsure about any aspects of the job, call the contact officer during normal business hours. Their name and telephone number will be in the job details and they will be happy to answer your questions.

There are four main parts to a position description

1. Values

These tell you about the way the organisation works and what it expects of its employees. Check you are comfortable that these values fit with the way you want to work.

2. Accountabilities

This is a list of the day-to-day responsibilities and tasks of the role. Each role has a key focus - for example, some roles supervise staff, some manage resources or provide policy advice, and others deliver support services. Your career background and interests should match the requirements and accountabilities of the job.

3. Key selection criteria

By law, we must assess all job applicants fairly and consistently, so we can select on merit. We do this by providing key selection criteria (KSC) that all candidates are assessed against.

When you apply for a job, the KSC are clearly described in the position description - so you know what's required. Check out some of the jobs advertised on this career website to see the sort of things we look for.

The key selection criteria outline the qualities, knowledge and skills needed to do the job. For some roles, you will need to write short statements that sell your specific capabilities for each of the criteria. It is important to include specific examples or situations where you have demonstrated the behaviour, knowledge, skills and personal qualities asked for in the job selection criteria. Perhaps you have worked in a related field or industry or have private interests that are relevant. Take all of these things into account when responding to job selection criteria.

Writing a good KSC response statement is also invaluable in preparing you for the interview stage of the selection process. You now have specific examples that will help you answer questions about your ability to do the job.

Describing how you meet the criteria ensures we capture all information about your suitability for a job. You can type in the spaces on your online application, or cut and paste text from a document you've prepared. Make sure you thoroughly check your KSC statement for spelling and grammar.

KSC vary among employers and jobs. Traditionally, they are statements that combine skills, knowledge, experience and personal qualities. For example, 'Ability to develop and maintain systems and processes for mail distribution and storage of publications and brochures' or 'Ability to work under pressure, prioritise tasks, meet deadlines and remain tolerant.'

Increasingly, job selection criteria are based on key capabilities (rather than matching exact past positions or roles). These often include:

- Resilience- for example, perseveres to achieve goals, even in the face of obstacles; copes with setbacks; stays calm under pressure; and accepts constructive criticism without becoming defensive
- Problem solving - seeks all relevant facts; liaises with stakeholders; analyses issues from different perspectives and draws sound inferences from available data; and identifies and proposes workable solutions.

3.1 Six steps to addressing job selection criteria

No matter how the job selection criteria appear, follow these six steps to ensure your application covers all the required information:

1. read and reread the advertisement, KSC and position description
2. print or save the job details and position description, so you can easily refer to them later
3. highlight key words in the first KSC and think about what the employer is looking for
4. list examples of how you meet the KSC - describe relevant skills, experience, incidents, training, personal qualities and expertise
5. review your list and summarise, in 60-120 words, how you have demonstrated you meet the KSC
6. repeat these steps for the remaining KSC.

3.2 The specifics of writing KSC statements

When writing your KSC statements we suggest, for each criteria, that you follow the '**SAO**' approach:

- **Situation** - where and when you did something
- **Action** - what you did and how you did it
- **Outcome** - what the result of your actions was.

Try to address each part of the SAO in just a few sentences. Be factual and positive, without exaggerating or minimising your capabilities and experience (see below for three examples of KSC responses).

A word of encouragement, this method of responding to job selection criteria may seem unfamiliar and a bit awkward to begin with, however, around 60% of government jobs are filled by people not currently working in government organisations.

So writing your statements this way will ensure you're considered fairly along with all other candidates.

3.3 Sample KSC response statements

KSC1: Problem solving - Seeks all relevant facts. Liaises with stakeholders. Analyses issues from different perspectives and draws sound inferences from available data. Identifies and proposes workable solutions.

Problem solving has been a critical part of my roles over the past five years. While working as Customer Complaints Officer at Acme Department Stores, I dealt with a variety of problems. While many could be resolved easily, two to three per week were more complex and required a detailed process to resolve. I had to investigate what had happened from the staff and customer's points of view, clarify the facts, and work out what had gone wrong and why. I then had to propose suitable solutions and negotiate a mutually satisfactory outcome. I was often commended by my manager for my sensitive handling and speedy resolution of these problems. Less than one per cent of complaints had to be escalated.

KSC2: Advanced computer skills - Uses a wide range of software features for word processing, spread sheets, etc. Helps others solve problems with software.

As Personal Assistant to the Marketing Manager at SYZ Enterprises, about half my time was spent preparing letters and reports for clients using Word. I also used detailed information in Excel spread sheets to prepare graphs and tables, to demonstrate the results of our market research and to analyse client company performance. I often prepared major PowerPoint presentations for my manager and maintained a database of her contacts. I also managed many daily emails and searched for information on the Internet to answer questions.

KSC3: Sound communication, interpersonal and negotiating skills, including well-developed written and oral skills, and the ability to develop and deliver interpretation and education services.

In my five years as a teacher, strong communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills have been essential. I have dealt with a wide range of people, including parents, colleagues and students. I was involved in a community project where I co-wrote a booklet on helping children learn and have fun. As part of this project, I led successful negotiations with the local council and three schools in the area who agreed to run a series of weekend family science programs for kids in the area.

4. Qualifications

In many cases qualifications are either not required or are an added advantage. However, some roles will include formal or mandatory qualifications, such as a degree or a technical qualification, as part of the job selection criteria.

You may be asked to produce documentary evidence of these qualifications before being appointed to the job.

Find out about the employer and the organisation

The Victorian Government is a large employer. We have thousands of jobs in many organisations operating across Victoria. Each department and agency has different objectives, functions and programs, and may deliver services in a variety of ways to the Victorian community.

So it's important that you find out what the employing agency does, including its objectives and functions, and how the job you are applying for fits in. A good starting point to understanding job selection criteria is to look at the agency's corporate website or visit a public library to find out about:

- The department/agency - look at annual reports, business and corporate plans. There may well be a question asked at the job interview to explore your understanding of the agency's role. If

you've done your homework, you will be able to impress your potential employer by describing what you understand the organisation does.

- The organisation structure - an organisation chart sets out the reporting arrangements and may tell you where the advertised job fits in. Usually the organisational context will be stated in the position description.
- Department or agency values - these vary, however, the following are the core public sector values: responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights.

In some cases it may also be appropriate to speak directly with a person in a similar or supervisory role to the one you are applying for. It doesn't hurt to call and ask, if you have specific questions.

Decide if you are qualified to do the job

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I think I meet all or most of the key selection criteria for the job?
- Could I do the job with some training – either formal or on-the-job training?
- Do I have skills gained in other fields of work that may be transferable?

If so, then you are ready to apply. But before you start your online application, start making notes on the following:

- summarise your background and the skills you can offer
- highlight your strengths and relevant experiences, achievements and capabilities
- highlight relevant achievements from past jobs
- address any obvious weaknesses and what training you are willing to do to address these
- address each key selection criterion for the job, if required
- prepare or update your resume or CV
- talk to your referees about the job you are applying for, the general job selection criteria, and what they will say about you to a prospective employer.