



Application Forms

The key aim of completing applications is to make it to the next stage of the recruitment process – the interview.

How to achieve the aim

- Demonstrate how you meet the requirements of the role
- Demonstrate how you stand out from other candidates
- Produce a high quality application

Types of application

- Application forms
- Letter of application
- CV

Employer application forms are almost all online, which require the completion of an electronic or web-based form. Paper-based application forms are rarely used now.

Some employers may ask for additional documentation to be sent with your application, such as a letter of application or CV, which will need to be attached/uploaded on to the website.

How to approach an application

- Prepare intensively as you would for a job interview
- Poor quality applications are surprisingly common

Some employer comments:

- Mayer Brown – “last year I received more than 1,500 applications, more than 20% had the firm's name misspelt. Another 30% contained typos.”
- Asda – “despite receiving 4,000 applications online, many were of poor quality.”

What do employers look for?

- Applications targeted to the organisation and role
- Correct grammar and spelling
- Complete and concise information

Preparation

- Get hold of a **Job Description** which describes the job and principle duties and a **Person Specification** which describes the essential and desirable skills and experience necessary to fulfil the requirements of the position.
- Research the organisation by looking through their website and any other information that you may have about them.

Different formats of application forms

All application forms ask for standardised content such as personal details, education and employment history. It is important to give full details starting with your most recent education, work and experience. They also ask for references which would usually be an employer and a university lecturer.

There may also be an equal opportunities monitoring form which is removed from the application before short-listing. This helps employers monitor and improve standards of recruitment and employment practice.

In addition to the standardised information, employers may also require a supporting statement. This is probably the most important part of the application form as it provides you with the opportunity to show how you meet the job requirements. This section can vary depending upon the employer, but some of the more typical examples include the following:

Supporting statement (Skills, Knowledge and Experience)

The majority of applications ask you to complete a supporting statement. This is where you need to demonstrate your skills, knowledge and experience for the role. It is important that you address the points in the **Person Specification** in the order in which they appear, as this will be used as a checklist for short-listing by the employer. Each one should be tailored to the job you are applying for. Address each point on the person specification in a clearly themed paragraph.

Competency based application forms

Some employers ask competency-based questions which match the Person Specification, in order to see if you possess the skills that will make you succeed in the role.

STAR Technique: When preparing answers to competency-based questions it may be helpful to use the STAR technique. This is a simple approach based on providing the following information:

- **Situation** or context of the particular example you are providing
- **Task** – what you had to do to achieve the desired result
- **Action** – what you actually did. The important word here is **YOU**. They want to know about your contribution
- **Result** – what was the outcome?

Remember to use recent examples, and if you're asked several competency-based questions within an application use different examples for each one.

Strength based application forms

These questions usually take a great deal of thought and are designed to find your natural aptitude and motivations. Some examples include:

- Describe something you are particularly proud of?
- Tell us about a task that comes easily to you?
- Highlight the reasons why should we meet with you over other candidates?

Application forms which ask for a personal statement e.g. UCAS forms

Most teaching/academic applications will ask for a Personal Statement which should explain why you are applying. It is important to include a structure which is clear, concise and easy for the person who is shortlisting to understand.

One possible structure is:

Why? Personal experiences which have led to making this decision

What do you bring to the course/job? Academic and extra-curricular experience

Where are you heading? Ambition and career plans

Application checklist

Before you press 'send' carry out these final checks:

- **DO** tailor your application to the organisation and role
- **DO** make sure you are using the right form - some employers have different forms for different job functions
- **DO** read the form through and follow all instructions
- **DO** keep a copy of your answers. When it comes to the interview stage, it is useful to remember what you have told the employer
- **DO** put your most recent experience first
- **DO** pay attention to spelling and grammar and make sure as many people as possible proof read this section
- **DO** take time to complete each section
- **DO** be honest. Even minor changes such as inflating grades or making up extra-curricular activities can be classed as 'fraud by false representation' and can be punishable under the Fraud Act 2006. In addition, Graduate Prospects has launched a degree verification service which allows employers to check degree grades
- **Do** give correct contact details. Include a term time and a home address
- **Do** make sure your email address is appropriate
- **Do** be aware of 'cut and paste' and be sure that you are entering information that relates to the right organisation
- **Do be positive** you should never be negative or 'under-sell' yourself

Finally!

Get your application or CV checked before submitting. Make an appointment with the careers team. Email careers@bolton.ac.uk or phone 01204 903080.

Access LEAP Online at: <http://www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline>