



# HOW TO ADDRESS SELECTION CRITERIA

Almost all government positions require you to respond to selection criteria as well as submitting your CV. There are certain facts that need to be provided in your response to each criterion, and the following information should assist you in preparing a high-calibre document.

## HISTORY

The process of selection criteria was developed to enable a single method for evaluating candidates to ensure an efficient and equitable system. A panel of 2-3 people will usually review applications and score each response. Those responses scoring the highest will be requested for interview.

The onus is on the applicant to **provide evidence** of their suitability for the position. Any application may be disregarded if deemed that one or more of the criterion have not been proved satisfactorily.

## DOS AND DON'TS

- ⇒ **Do** follow the format of the selection criteria
- ⇒ **Do** be succinct and organised in your responses – stick to the point!
- ⇒ **Do** check your spelling and grammar
- ⇒ **Do** answer the question with relevant information and *demonstration* of skill
- ⇒ **Do** provide an up to date resume
- ⇒ **Do** provide actual, specific, and relevant

examples

- ⇒ **Do** stick to word limits (if applicable)
- ⇒ **Do** be certain you understand the criterion before responding to it
- ⇒ **Do** use the STAR model in your responses

## WHAT IS THE 'STAR' MODEL?

The STAR model provides a sound, behavioural-based response to each criterion, and clearly outlines the situation, the role you played, and the outcome. Use this format to structure your response:

**Situation** – provide a brief outline of the situation or setting, and at which company the situation took place

**Task** – outline what your role was, and what you had to do

**Approach or action** – outline how you did it

**Result** – describe the outcomes: what did you achieve and what was the end result?

- ⇒ **Don't** be vague or long-winded
- ⇒ **Don't** make false allegations – it will be noticeable
- ⇒ **Don't** be self praising: use evidence to support your claims
- ⇒ **Don't** rely on just your CV

## GETTING STARTED

A common criterion is written communication skills. The selection criterion may read:

*'Well developed written communication skills. This includes the ability to:*

- *structure written communications such as reports to meet the needs and understanding of the intended audience;*
- *express opinions, information and key points of an argument clearly and concisely; and*
- *write convincingly in an engaging and expressive manner'.*

You should commence your response to each criterion with an affirmative statement, for example:

*'My strong written communication skills have been developed over the course of my career'.*

Then continue with the supporting evidence for your statement using the STAR method as mentioned above

For instance when asked "must have good communication and written skills", you would need to respond with evidence such as: writing reports; writing training manuals that have since been implemented; preparing letters; preparing proposals that have won business; and having presented at regular meetings and so on. You would also indicate for which companies you had been required to perform these duties.

Do not be self praising, which means provide evidence of how you can perform a skill, not using language that gratifies yourself. For example, "I am an excellent programmer who has had many years' experience on successful projects", is not suitable. If on the other hand you said " I received a commendation from my XYZ employer for providing outstanding programming skills to a 3.5 million dollar project that was implemented on time and within budget and had 3,000 users" would indicate the size of the project and that you were a good programmer.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

**Situation** – role as Project Coordinator at Department of XYZ

**Task** – needed to ensure that managers were kept informed of project progress against agreed milestones

**Action or approach** – initiated weekly update template, which was emailed to each manager and key project stakeholders. Took responsibility for the communication. This involved obtaining financial data and input from other stakeholders to ensure that the email reflected managers' needs (in terms of content and language)

**Result** – led to improved lines of communication between Departmental stakeholders and the project team. Feedback was consistently excellent. Received divisional achievement award.

Once this has been achieved, you can then write the draft paragraph in full. For example:

*'As Project Coordinator at the Department of XYZ, I needed to ensure that managers were kept informed of the project progress against agreed milestones. To do this, I initiated a weekly update template, which was emailed to each manager and key project stakeholders. I took responsibility for writing the updates. This involved obtaining financial data and input from other stakeholders to ensure that the updates reflected the needs of the Department, both in terms of content and language. I received consistently excellent feedback from these internal clients and my own manager. I received a divisional achievement. Importantly, this initiative resulted in improved lines of communication between Departmental stakeholders and the project team'.*

Take the time to examine your career to ensure that you provide the most relevant example/s. Examples should ideally be as recent as possible.

### Format

Our clients will not accept responses that are not within the format of their selection criteria. For instance, the selection criteria will be provided as a list of questions requesting how you can demonstrate each particular skill. It is necessary that you answer each of these questions individually. Grouping questions and providing a single answer will not be acceptable; referring the reader to a previous answer; to your resume, or a profile is also unacceptable.

## THINGS TO CHECK BEFORE SUBMISSION

- Have you used correct spelling and grammar? This will impact the reader's perception of the professionalism of your response. Don't rely on using spelling and grammar checkers, as these are far from trustworthy. Check for 'organise' vs 'organize', and typos such as 'to' vs 'too' etc, as these often go undetected
- Is your language dynamic and outcome-focused? Does it describe what you did? For example, administered, analysed, completed, delivered, established, implemented, produced
- Is it clear what role you played? Were you the owner of an outcome or a contributor to it? If you were a contributor, exactly what were your personal contributions to achieving the outcome?
- Please note that the criterion is not a comprehension exercise and answers such as "yes I have done", or "I am able to adhere to your policy on...", do **not** provide demonstrated experience
- Do your responses portray an accurate and honest account of your abilities?
- Have you removed any superfluous or 'fluffy' words and statements?
- Have you avoided using the passive voice? Stronger, more active language is always preferable
- Have you answered every point in each of the criteria?

If you have taken all of the above points into consideration, we feel confident that you will submit a well-constructed and competitive response. Staff at M&T Resources are always happy to review and provide feedback on any responses you submit to them.