

# DEVELOPING YOUR APPLICATION

Getting your application right gives you the best chance of making it through to the next stage of the recruitment process.

Applications can include:

- CV
- Cover Letter
- Personal Statement
- Application Questions

Whatever form they take, employers want to know that you are:

- **Motivated** – show them why you are interested in the role/ them
- **Qualified** – ensure that you address the person specification with relevant examples
- **Compatible** – demonstrate an understanding of the organisation's culture and values and show how these are aligned with you own

## APPLICATION 101:

Tailor your application every time, for every role.

## RESEARCH

To tailor an application effectively you need to understand the role and organisation you're applying to and the skillset and experience you bring. Spending time on this stage of the process will make the writing of your cover letter, personal statement or application answers a whole lot easier.

### Dissect the Job Description

Ensure you fully understand the requirements of the role. Look for clues within the person specification. Pull out the key criteria written into the job description so that you can start matching your own experience. Take note of the language used and mirror this in your application. If there is little information, research likely criteria from similar roles on LinkedIn or using Prospects Job Profiles <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles>

### Consider your motivation and fit for the company

Why are you applying for this role in particular? Why do you want to work for this organisation? These are questions you will need to address within your application, so it is important that you take some time to consider your motivation.

CareerHub+ Resources:

- Career Assessment - 'Motivation at work'  
<https://essex.careercentre.me/u/jpai9vii>

### Identify the relevant skills and experience you would bring to the role

Having identified the skills required for the role and the values the company looks for in its' employees, you now need to match these with your own skillset and experience. Gather evidence of your relevant skills and experience with examples drawn from:

- Work Experience – Paid and Voluntary
- Academic studies
- Extra Curriculum activities and interests
- Positions of Responsibility

CareerHub+ Resources:

- Career Assessment – 'Strengths'  
<https://essex.careercentre.me/u/snx25uo2>

### Build commercial awareness

Employers will also expect you to demonstrate an understanding of the company and the industry in which it operates. Don't just limit your research to the company website:

- Follow the company's social media pages such as LinkedIn and Twitter.
- Increase your understanding of the wider sector by looking at industry publications. Explore professional body's websites and social media.
- Keep up to date with what's happening in the news on a local, national and global level by setting up alerts with apps such as BBC News.

CareerHub+ Resources:

- Industry Reports  
<https://essex.careercentre.me/u/sdtd63o0>

## WRITE

Organise and present your information so that employers (and digital Applicant Tracking Systems) can easily see that you are motivated, qualified and compatible with this **specific role and company**.

- Keep presentation clear and uncluttered
- Use active / dynamic language to bring your application to life
- Mirror the wording used in the job description – 'clients' vs 'customers'
- Use a succinct, professional rather than academic style of writing and edit your points carefully. Often up to 50% of words are 'fillers' or repetition.
- Avoid clichés and generalisations – your application should be as unique as you!

- Build your personal statements and cover letters around a clear structure that leads the reader through in a logical manner. 'Signpost' sentences at the beginning of paragraphs and 'linking' sentences at the end can help with this
- Use the **STAR** technique to structure your evidence:
  1. **Situation** – Explain the context
  2. **Task** – What was required of you?
  3. **Action** – What you actually did
  4. **Result** – What impact your action had

CareerHub+ Resources:

- power verbs and personal descriptor generators  
<https://essex.careercentre.me/u/i6v0ipwf>
- application planning  
<https://essex.careercentre.me/u/0jo08jiv>
- completing an application  
<https://essex.careercentre.me/u/cyo34rkc>

## REVIEW

Finally, book yourself an Application Support Appointment for advice on planning your application and to have your application checked before you submit it.

Self-book via CareerHub appointments:  
[www.essex.ac.uk/see/careerhub](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/careerhub)

## EXAMPLES

### WRITE CLEARLY AND CONCISELY

I am currently in my second year at the University of Essex, where I am studying a Psychology degree (19 words)

Becomes:

I am a second-year psychology student at the University of Essex (12 words)

*Same information, less words*

### EVIDENCE AGAINST CRITERIA

*Criteria: Proven ability to take responsibility for own work.*

I have to take orders, clear tables and speak to customers in my section of the restaurant.

Becomes:

I am responsible for a designated area of the restaurant, responding to customer needs, taking orders efficiently and ensuring tables are cleared in a timely manner and to the required standard.

## STAR TECHNIQUE

### Use STAR to answer competency questions

**Situation (10%):**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> year
- Student Ambassador
- Working with secondary school pupils to promote University

**Task (15%):**

- Lead class
- organising activities
- Engage pupils

**Action (50%):**

- Set out expectations
- Showed interest in more withdrawn pupils
- Interactive delivery

**Result (25%):**

- Enthusiasm of class
- Completed tasks
- 90% to go on to HE

During my second year, I developed my leadership skills by working as a Student Ambassador. Working with secondary school pupils to promote higher education I had, on one occasion, to lead from the front for a 40-minute session: organising activities, setting targets, delegating tasks and making decisions. It was a challenging class, but by setting out expectations early on, I was able to respond promptly and firmly to disruptive behaviour. I also showed an interest in the more withdrawn pupils by encouraging them to contribute and praising their efforts, building their trust and co-operation. Then, by delivering interactive and challenging activities such as quizzes and debates, I motivated the class to take part and the students achieved the tasks within the given timescale. A survey at the end of the session showed that 90% of the class planned to go on to Higher Education as a result.