

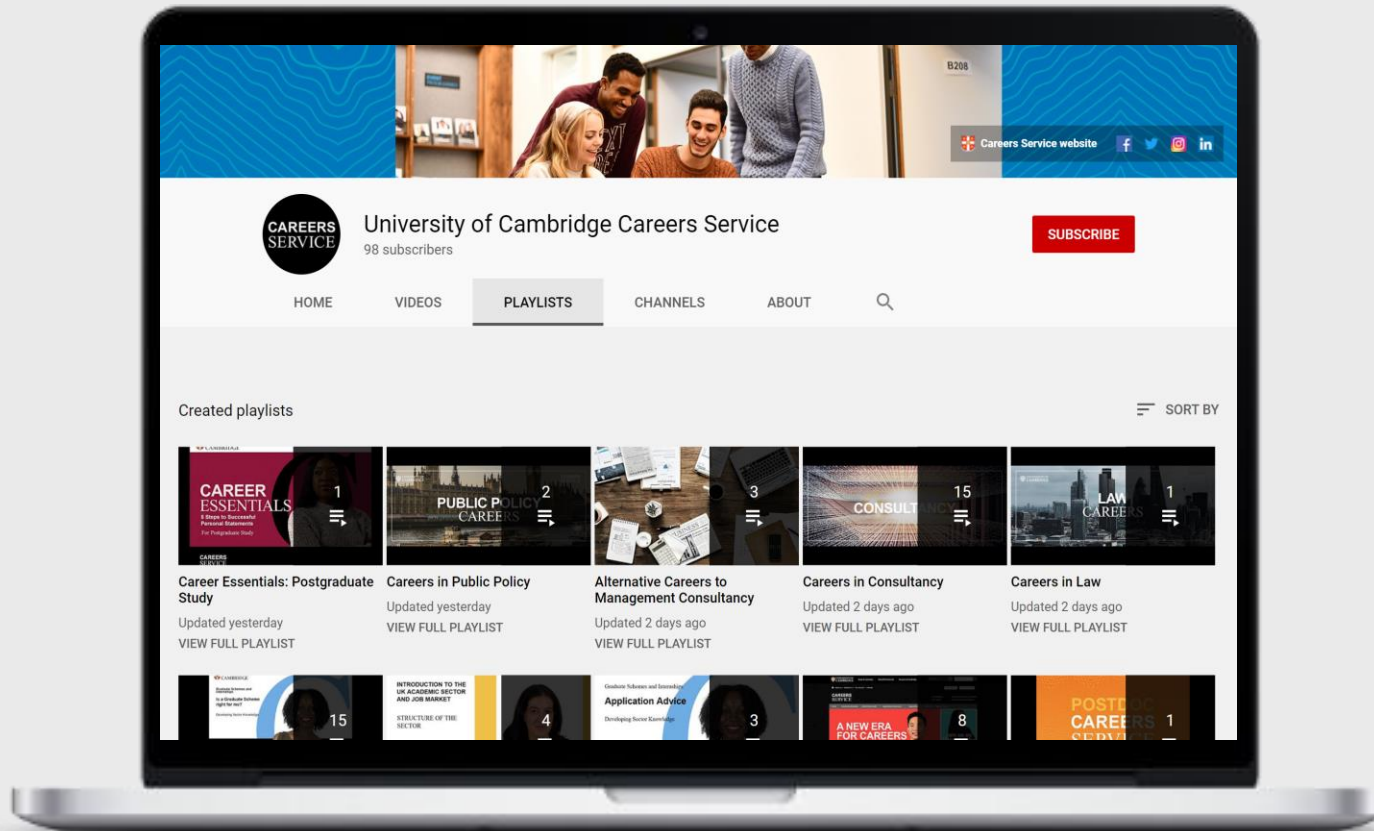
CAREER ESSENTIALS

Successful
Application
Forms

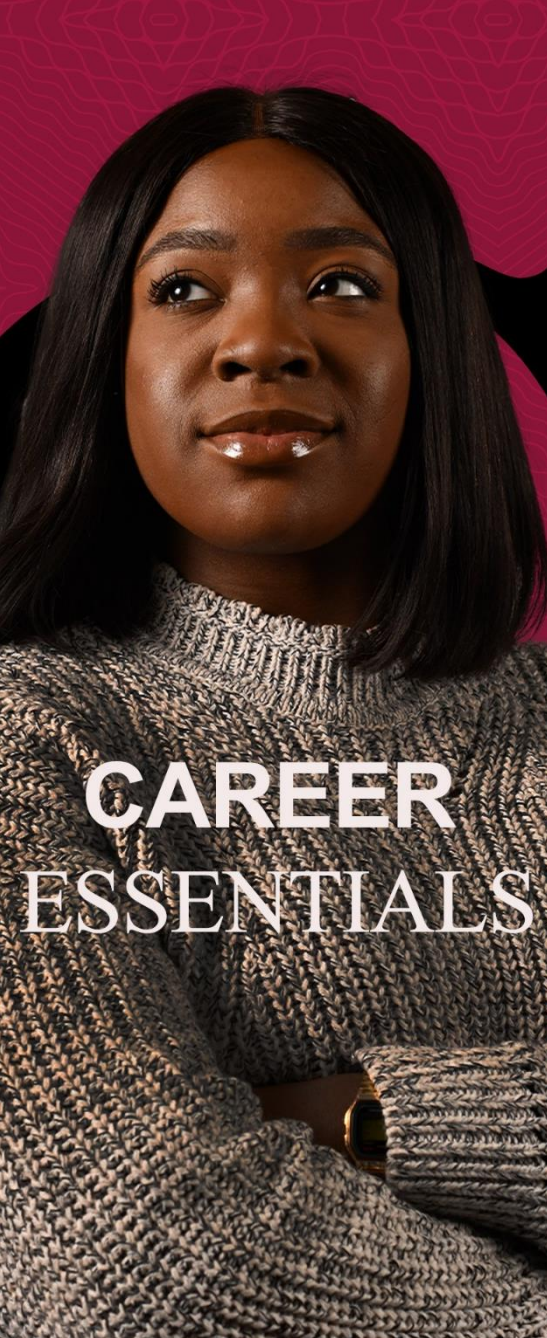


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Careers Service on YouTube



Careers Essentials on our website



Successful application forms:

What we will cover:

- The purpose of an application form
- 4 Types of questions asked
- The importance of research!
- Structuring your evidence and writing with impact
- Tips for things to do and what to avoid
- Discussion with peers to further your understanding

Why do employers use application forms?



volume



focus



fairness



commitment

Types of questions...

Biographical

- grades you got at school, modules

Competency

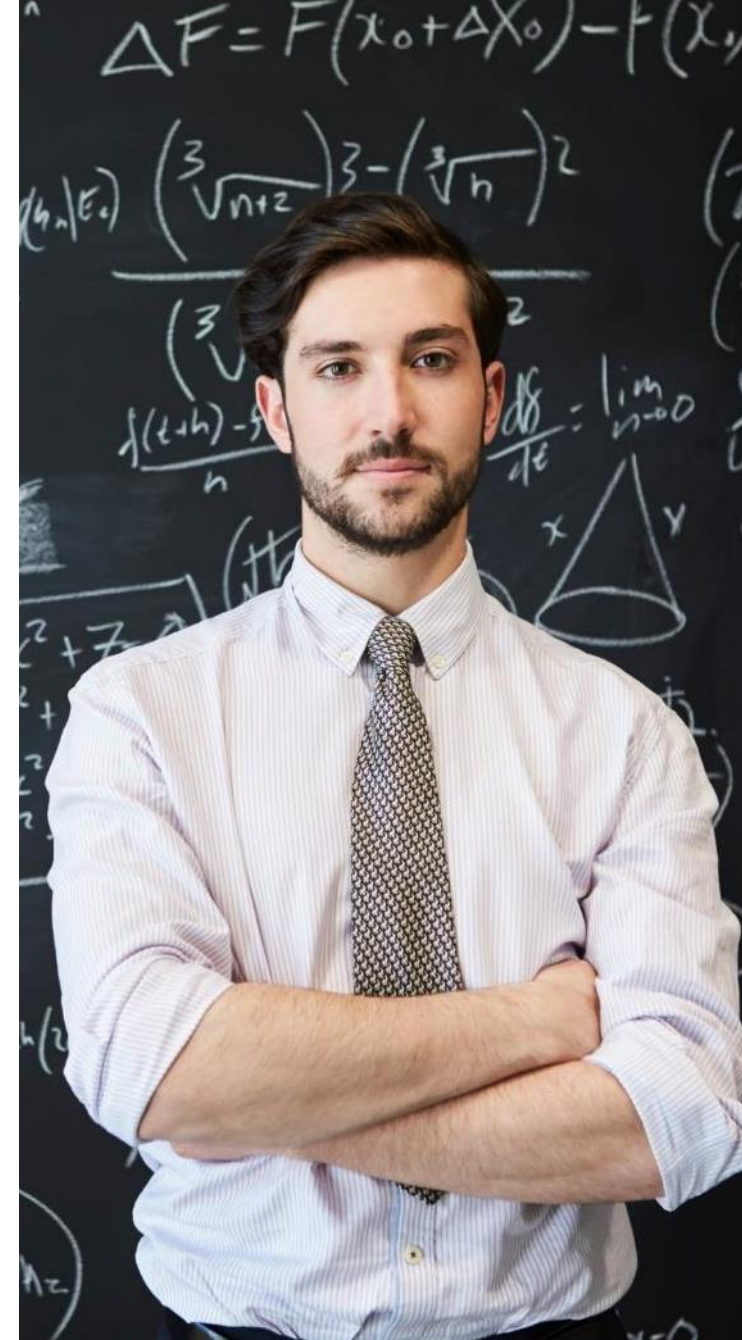
- give an example of when you worked in a team

Career motivation

- why do you want to work for LEK Consulting?

Anything else to add?

- an opportunity not to be missed



Before you start: Logistics



Read through the full application form



Pay attention to any instructions, e.g. word count



Can you spell check your answers on the form draft/edit in work and cut/paste into the form



Collect all the factual information you will need



Don't leave it until deadline day



Ask referees well in advance

Before you start: Research

The Organisation

- organisation values
- recent news stories, direction

The Sector

- recent developments
- current pressures facing the sector

The Job

- What you will be doing
- Competencies required

You

- Experiences and skills
- Motivations and values
- Self awareness and reflection (strengths and weaknesses)

“past, demonstrated behaviour is the best indicator of future performance”

“it is a competition so you need to ensure that you give your best and strongest competency-based examples to reflect what the post requires”

“failure to give good evidence will not get you through the sift stage”

Employers are looking for...

EVIDENCE that you match...

- the **needs** of the job
- **want** the job
- will **fit** the culture of the organisation

So use...

- ✓ **Relevant examples** of the competencies they are seeking
- ✓ **Facts** e.g. numbers, things published, grades achieved
- ✓ **Tangible indications** that you are interested in their work

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COMPETENCY QUESTIONS



Competency Questions

Q. Tell us about a time when you have used outstanding **problem solving skills** to deal with a problem and what happened?

Q. Describe an occasion where you have used strong **time management** ability, in particular where you have had deadlines to meet.

Q. Please detail information about how you believe you have demonstrated exceptional **leadership skills** in your work, academic or social life.

Q. Give an example of a time when you have demonstrated excellent verbal **communication skills**, including the situation you were in and the outcome

Regularly sought skills and aptitudes

Willingness and ability to learn	Negotiation
Adaptability and flexibility	Self direction
Teamwork	Organising/project management
Results driven	Customer service/relations skills
Problem solving	Presentation skills
Analytical ability	Research skills
Initiative	IT skills
Commercial awareness	Quantitative skills
Innovation	Languages
Verbal and written communication	Influencing

Competency Questions

A story of a real experience, demonstrating the competency used.

- ✓ **Aim to use a range of contexts, e.g. work, extra-curricular, education etc**
- ✓ **Take time to recall, in detail, the situations where you used the competencies the employer is looking for**
- ✓ **Make a rough plan as to which experience/s you will use to provide evidence of which competency**
- ✓ **Ideally one example per question (unless asked for more)**

A note of caution:

A statement that you achieved something or held a particular position, even if that is at a very high level, does not make for a good competency example and will not generally score very highly.

Use the STAR Technique

What is the question asking?

Describe a challenging project, activity or event which you have planned and taken through to a conclusion. Include your objective, what you did, any changes you made to your plan and how you measured your success.

Add your ideas to the chat box



Leadership ~ Planning ~ Organisation ~ Delivering results ~ Resilience

Situation:	In 2020 I was head of the sponsorship committee for the Cambridge International Student Film Festival.
Task:	The aim was to double the scale of the festival, in terms of applicants for awards, and audience. As head of the sponsorship committee I was responsible for securing £15,000 to enable this.
Action:	<p>1 I mapped out a project timeline with funding milestones to be met. This helped me identify when progress was slower than hoped. 2 I looked at the data about our engaged sponsors. Initially, the committee had targeted local industries but I identified film related companies were most likely to provide sponsorship. 3 Armed with this information, I created a list of ‘priority targets’ and 4 assigned team members to each organisation. 5 I continued to check in regularly with my team so I knew we were on track for our target and to keep everyone feeling involved and motivated.</p>
Result:	Under my leadership, my team used persistence and persuasion to raise £16,700, and I personally engaged six sponsors, including the BFI. The event increased its audience from 1400 to over 2100 attendees.

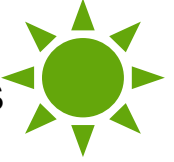
Need inspiration for the ‘verbs’

Use the CV guide to expand and increase the impact of the language you use

Competency requirements	Experience you could draw on	Active verbs
Persuasiveness/negotiation An ability to convince others of the value of your point of view; achieve your own objectives; get others to change their view and agree with you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding your argument in a supervision • committee work • liaison with senior members (arranging work, negotiating extensions, as rep of student body), college porters, sponsors, outside suppliers • debating, campaigning, publicity, fundraising • enlisting anyone else’s help • student politics/hustings, being elected and holding elected posts • devising fieldwork and persuading others to meet you 	advocated, assured, convinced, enlisted, persuaded, negotiated, reasoned, re-evaluated, encouraged, consulted, liaised
Planning/organisation Show you can decide on priorities; work out a timetable; carry out tasks according to plan; meet deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dissertation/project report, essay and other supervision preparation • balancing the demands of your Cambridge life • management or production of an event or campaign • planning how to use the vacation, organising travel, planning your job-hunt • working under pressure, e.g. a 1-year Masters 	designed, ensured, implemented, mapped, completed, organised, scheduled, prioritised, specified, targeted

Activity 1: Interpreting the question

3 mins



Question: Tell me about a time when you had to work as part of a group to achieve a task. How did you work effectively together?

What are the features of effective working in a group?

How you set aims and shared objectives
How you shared ideas, listened to and supported each other
How you negotiated with each other
How did your specific role contribute to the outcome
How you got your point of view across to the group. How did you get feedback?
How any issues within the group were dealt with before they escalated further

What actions (verbs) show evidence of this competency?

- Agreed
- Contributed
- Discussed
- Engaged
- Included
- Involved
- Joined
- Participated
- Fed back
- Prioritised
- Negotiated
- Persevered
- Initiated
- Encouraged
- Established
- Resolved



Activity 2: Your example

Think back through your past experiences. What example might you use to answer the group work question? Jot down some notes in the STAR framework. Think about the verbs you will use to describe what you did

10 mins

Activity 3: Your example

Share your example with the other members of your group (3 min each).

- ✓ Succinct summary of **S**ituation and **T**ask?
- ✓ Actions: Substantial detail on what you did? Used impactful verbs?
Tangible example with facts/numbers?
- ✓ Included **R**esult/**R**eflection?

Any suggestions for improvements ?

Tell us about a time when you worked in a team

Situation:	As an intern at Norman economic consultancy for six weeks in summer 2019 I worked in a team of four, headed up by a senior partner.
Task:	In one project for a French Bank we were asked to analyse trends in the pharmaceutical sector. Given my back ground in economics, my role was to research two FTSE companies.
Action:	I attended meetings with my colleagues where we divided tasks according to our experience and skills. I researched the firms and set up meetings with and interviewed investors and senior executives. I communicated this information back to my team in weekly presentations and revised my analysis according to their feedback. During the final week my role was to compile the final report, checking back with other team members to ensure all statistics were accurate. At the end of the project I chose to work longer hours to correct errors I had found in the contact database, to write a “quick guide” for interns and to help cover for one of the team who was ill.
Result:	The project was completed two days ahead of schedule. My research was incorporated into the final report for our client who have since commissioned Norman for further projects.

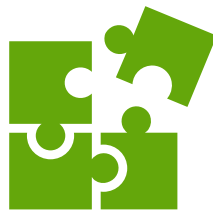
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MOTIVATION QUESTIONS



Career motivation questions

- Why do you want to work in the this sector?
- Why do you think you would be suited to a career in this sector?
- Why have you applied for this job?
- What do you think you will be doing in this role?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What impact do you think Covid-19 will have on our business in 2021?
- Tell me a recent news story you have been following and what are the important factors when advising one of the clients?



What it really means...
How well do we match up?



Approaching motivational questions

- ✓ **Be specific about THIS role at THIS firm. Use the research you have done**
- ✓ **Generate 2-3 reasons why this organisation genuinely excites and interests you**
- ✓ **But avoid paraphrasing their website or giving a generic answer – make a connection to your values, interests and skills**
- ✓ **Be selective – a few examples unpacked are better than a world tour**

Don't be vague or emotional

I have always wanted to work in the AA Sector.

Your company is the world leader in BB with a global share of CC

As a child I was passionate about DD.

I am thrilled about the prospect of working in a creative environment

I achieved a first class degree last year.

I was president of Society EEE

I have commercial awareness because I read the FT

Your ideal job....your motivational answer

- ✓ **Evidence** - you have done your research about the job/sector
- ✓ **Evidence** - your values and interests match the organisation
- ✓ **Evidence** - you have a key skill

Attending
Careers
events

Talked to
Alumni

Keeping up
to date with
the news

Researched
the
organisation

Student
societies

Summer
work

Personal
projects

Hobbies

Make the connections between you and them



Your company's work on antibiotic resistance is of particular interest to me because the research project I did last summer with YYY focused on this issue



Your company requires someone you can explore new multimedia resources for maths teachers. As a STIMULUS volunteer, I helped design an online game for weaker maths groups, which the school is still using.



I first came into contact with your organisation when I did a voluntary placement with FFF. I have researched your current projects, and your anti-homophobic bullying initiative closely matches my experience working in schools and with LGBT groups in Cambridge. I am keen to learn more about how you evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes and report on your outcomes to stakeholders and funders.



I want to work for company X because of your two recent acquisition in mainland China, where I will be able to utilise my knowledge of both the culture and the language, as explained by YYY at the Cambridge presentation.

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OPEN TEXT BOXES



Finally: Anything else you would like to tell us?

- **Answer these type of questions last**
- **Don't simply repeat what you have already said**
- **Opportunity to include additional relevant information, e.g. "although not a requirement you have asked for, I speak Russian which might be useful as I know a number of the events you have run this year have focused on Russian themes"**
- **Opportunity to address any issues, e.g. grades, lack of relevant experience or a skill, a date gap**

In Conclusion



Plan, draft (write long and then edit), redraft and polish



Do not exceed the word count for the question



Answer the specific question



Use active language including high impact verbs (be careful with jargon)



Do fewer application forms and do them well



Don't underestimate how much time it takes



Don't wait until the deadline to submit it



Save it! Remember to read again before interview.

Your next steps



**What actions
are you going
to take as a
result of this
workshop?**

In the next week

In the next
month

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ANY QUESTIONS?