

How to Address Key Selection Criteria

You've seen an job opportunity that you're interested in, on a jobs board or in the press and want to apply, but where do you start?

A key requirement for jobs in Government is to respond to the Key Selection Criteria (KSC). You need to know how to address the criteria.

Our experience also shows that people who do some basic research about the job before submitting their applications achieve the best results. Before you apply, we suggest that you think about the job requirements and gather some information, so that you can focus your job application better.

Here are some basic pointers:

Understand the job and Key Selection Criteria

Find out about the employer

Decide whether you are qualified to do the job

Understand the job and Key Selection Criteria

If you don't fully understand the job requirements you may have difficulty demonstrating that you are the best person for the job. Study the Position Description, including 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 (the name and telephone number will be in the job details) during normal business hours. They'll be happy to answer your questions.

There are four main parts to look at and review in a Position Description:

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

Accountabilities :

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

You will need to be able to demonstrate that you have the capabilities - personal qualities, knowledge and skills to do the job. Perhaps you have worked in a related field or industry or have private interests that are relevant.

Key Selection Criteria :

The Key Selection Criteria outline the qualities, knowledge and skills needed to do the job. You will need to write short statements that sell your specific capabilities for each of the criterion. It is important to include specific examples or situations

where you have demonstrated the behaviour, knowledge, skills and personal qualities asked for in the KSC.

Writing a good KSC response statement is invaluable in preparing you for the interview stage of the selection process. Now that you have specific examples you will be better prepared to answer questions about your ability to do the job. Make sure you check your KSC statement for spelling and grammar.

By law, we must assess all candidates for our jobs fairly and consistently- to select on merit.

We do this by using the Key Selection Criteria given to all candidates to assess their ability to do a job. When you go for a job, KSC are clearly described in the Position Description - so you know what's required. See jobs advertised on this career web site for the sort of things we look for.

Describing how you meet KSC 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.

KSC vary among employers and jobs. Traditionally, they are statements combining skills, knowledge, experience and personal qualities, e.g.

"Ability to develop and maintain systems and processes for mail distribution and storage of publications and brochures"

"Ability to work under pressure, prioritise tasks, meet deadlines and remain tolerant"

Increasingly, KSC are based on key capabilities e.g.

Resilience - Perseveres to achieve goals, even in the face of obstacles. Copes with setbacks. Stays calm under pressure. 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. Identifies and proposes workable solutions.'

No matter how KSC appear, you respond to them the same way:

1. Read and reread the advertisement, KSC and Position Description.
2. Print or save the Job Details, Position Description, so you can easily refer to it later.
3. Highlight key words in the first KSC and think about what the employer is asking for.
4. List examples of how you meet the KSC. Describe relevant skills, experience, incidents, training, personal qualities, expertise and things you couldn't have done without all these.
5. Review your list and summarise, in 60-120 words, how you demonstrated the KSC.
6. Repeat Steps 3 to 5 for the remaining KSC.

The SAO approach can help:

Situation - Where and when did you do it?

Action - What did you do and how did you do it?

Outcome - What was the result of your actions?

A word of encouragement, this may seem unfamiliar and a bit awkward to begin with, but around 60% of government jobs are filled by people not currently working in government organisations. And doing it this way ensures you're considered fairly along with all other candidates. See below for three examples of KSC responses.

How I Demonstrated I Met the KSC

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, 2-3 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 1% of complaints had to be escalated"

Advanced Computer Skills - Uses a wide range of software features for word processing, spreadsheets, 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 used detailed information in Excel spreadsheets 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"

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 5 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 child 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"

Qualifications:

In many cases qualifications are either not required or are an added advantage-desirable. However, some roles need formal or mandatory qualifications, such as a University Degree.

You must be able to produce documentary evidence of these qualifications to be appointed to the job.



Find out about the employer

The Government is the largest employer in each State. Each department and agency has different objectives, functions and programs and may deliver services in a variety of ways to the community.

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

- The 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.
- Agency values - these vary for each agency. Public sector values are responsiveness; integrity; impartiality; accountability; respect and leadership.



Decide if you are qualified to do the job

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I meet all or most of the Key Selection Criteria of the job?
- Could I do the job with some training - formal or on-the-job?
- 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, make a few notes on all the information you have gathered:

- Summarise the background and 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.

- Prepare or update your resume or CV.

Talk to your referees about the job you are applying for and what they will say about you to a prospective employer.