

Key Selection Criteria

Key selection criteria (KSC) are the skills, experience and qualifications that an organisation needs for a particular job.

Key selection criteria are used by the employer to shortlist applicants for the interview process.

Writing a good KSC response statement is also invaluable in preparing you for the interview stage of the selection process. You will then have specific examples that will help you answer questions about your ability to do the job. You should use the KSC when tailoring your resume and cover letter to each job for which you apply.

Looking at the key selection criteria closely is also a chance for you to assess whether you really want the job and how suited you are for the position.

Using the KSC

KSC vary among employers and jobs. For non-government jobs the key selection criteria are key words listed in the ad. They are statements that combine skills, knowledge, experience and personal qualities. For example, 'Ability to develop and maintain systems and processes for mail distribution and storage of publications and brochures' or 'Ability to work under pressure, prioritise tasks, meet deadlines and remain tolerant.'

Increasingly, job selection criteria are based on key capabilities (rather than matching exact past positions or roles). These often include:

- Resilience - for example, perseveres to achieve goals, even in the face of obstacles; copes with setbacks; stays calm under pressure; and 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; and identifies and proposes workable solutions.

Six steps to addressing job selection criteria

No matter how the job selection criteria appear, follow these six steps to ensure your application covers all the required information:

1. Read and reread the advertisement, KSC and position description
2. Print or save the job details and position description, so you can easily refer to them later
3. Highlight key words in the first KSC and think about what the employer is looking for
4. List examples of how you meet the KSC - describe relevant skills, experience, incidents, training, personal qualities and expertise
5. Review your list and, for government advertisements, summarise how you have demonstrated you meet the KSC in a separate document, for non-government address the key words in the cover letter
6. Repeat these steps for the remaining KSC

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The specifics of writing KSC statements

When writing your KSC statements we suggest, for each criteria, that you follow the 'STAR' approach:

- **S**ituation - where and when you did something
- **T**ask - what was the task goal or project you had to achieve
- **A**ction - what you did and how you did it
- **R**esult - what the result of your actions was, put it in measurable terms if possible

Try to address each part of the STAR in just a few sentences for non- government jobs be more brief. Be factual and positive, presenting your capabilities and experience in the best light without using misleading information (see below for three examples of KSC responses).

A word of encouragement, this method of responding to job selection criteria may seem unfamiliar and a bit awkward to begin with, however, around 60% of government jobs are filled by people not currently working in government organisations. So writing your statements this way for government jobs will ensure you're considered fairly along with all other candidates.

Sample KSC response statements

KSC1: 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. Some problems were 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 one per cent of complaints had to be escalated.

KSC2: 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 also 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.

KSC3: Sound communication, interpersonal and negotiating skills, including well-developed written and oral skills, and the ability to develop and deliver education services.

In my five 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 children 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.

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Qualifications

In many cases qualifications are either not required or are an added advantage. However, some roles will include formal or mandatory qualifications, such as a degree or a technical qualification, as part of the job selection criteria.

You may be asked to produce documentary evidence of these qualifications before being appointed to the job.

Find out about the employer or organisation

It's important that you find out what the employer does, including its objectives and functions, and how the job you are applying for fits in. A good starting point to understanding job selection criteria is to look at the company website or visit a public library to find out about:

- The department/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 organisation'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.
- Company or organisational values - these vary, the following are the core public sector values: responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights. Many organisations list their values on their website.

In some cases it may also be appropriate to speak directly with a person in a similar or supervisory role to the one you are applying for. It doesn't hurt to call and ask, if you have specific questions.

Decide if you are qualified to do the job

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I think I meet all or most of the key selection criteria for the job?
- Could I do the job with some training - either formal or on-the-job training?
- 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 application, start making notes on the following:

- Summarise your background and the 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, if required
- Make sure you thoroughly check your KSC statement for spelling and grammar
- Prepare or update your resume or CV tailoring or targetting it to the role

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

Key Selection Criteria

This information has been adapted from information provided in the public domain on the Victorian Government website <http://careers.vic.gov.au> which is a good resource for job seekers.

For further information on job seeking skills, you may like to attend one of our Tools and Techniques for Job Seeking workshops.

The workshops include information and tips on:

- Job search strategies (including using career websites, recruitment agencies, LinkedIn and networking)*
- How to identify and respond to key selection criteria*
- How to write a cover letter and resume and target them to each position*
- Interview skills*
- Employability Skills*

Previous participants of this workshop have found it to be very useful and enjoyable. For bookings or more information, please call the Employment & Education Centre on 8517 5912 or email eec@jewishcare.org.au