



Online job applications

Many employers expect job seekers to apply on-line. In some cases this will simply mean sending your CV and cover letter electronically as attachments, and/or completing an on-line application form. In others, the employer makes use of systems that allow you to create a profile of your education, work history and skills. It's crucial that you determine how the employer wants you to apply. You'll also have to familiarise yourself with the system that they use.

Often, you'll be asked to create a name and password. Where this is the case, you'll usually be able to work on your application in stages, and save this work as you progress through it. Where you are submitting a CV and cover letter, check the format in which the employer wants it e.g. PDF or Word. If this is not specified, we recommend converting files to PDF to avoid any formatting difficulties.

ACCURACY AND STYLE

- Determine their selection criteria. What skills, experience and knowledge do they seek? These are the factors that you'll need to emphasise in your on-line application.
- As with any type of job application accurate spelling and grammar is vital. Make use of your computer's spelling and grammar checking functions and ask someone to proof-read your application. Be aware that some NZ employers prefer UK English to US English so you may want to set your spell-checker accordingly!
- Where you are completing an application form, or answering set questions, ensure that you have comprehensively answered every part of every question. Focus on demonstrating that you have the skills and qualities needed for the role and write formally and professionally.
- In some instances you'll be given a word limit. Where this is the case, stick to it but equally make sure that your answers are not too brief.

You'll need to spend time ensuring that your application is well researched; well-targeted and appealing. It will be judged on its merits but rest assured, a human being will read it too!

BE PREPARED

Preparation is as crucial to on-line applications as it is to any ways of applying for work. Whilst they may be a quicker and simpler way of applying, we recommend that you:

- Begin by finding out all that you can about the organisation. Start by accessing their website.
- In particular, you should explore what they do and the type of people they employ. After all, you'll want to ensure that you're a good fit for them – and them for you!
- Determine their selection criteria. What skills, experience and knowledge do they seek? These are the factors that you'll need to emphasise in your on-line application.
- Ensure that you've undertaken some self-assessment. What are your skills, interests and values? What skills, knowledge and experience can you offer an employer? What examples might you use to demonstrate your skills? Contact the Career and Employment Service staff for help with this and take a look at the related resources that you'll find on our website: <http://careers.massey.ac.nz>
- Prepare a 'master' CV that you can 'cut and paste' from for CVs that you target to the employer concerned and for answering application form questions. See the Career and Employment Service's resources on CVs.

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- Where possible, you should also download the application form and start to complete it as a 'draft' version. If you can't download it, make a note of the questions asked and draft your answers onto a word document that you can 'cut and paste' from. Keep a copy of everything that you submit electronically. You'll need to refer to this again prior to job interviews.
- Look for key words in the job advertisement and job description and use these in your CV, cover letter and application form. These will usually be the skills and strengths sought, and the employer's system may be programmed to select applications that contain these.
- Allow yourself plenty of time. This is particularly important if the system that the employer is using requires you to complete your application 'in one sitting'. Additionally, we recommend that you avoid applying at the last minute. It's possible that many other applicants will be doing that and the employer's system may crash!
- Ensure that you complete all fields required, and text boxes as fully as possible (within reason!). Some systems do not accept incomplete applications. Additionally, employers will not look favourably on applicants who leave out information.
- Call or email the organisation if you encounter technical problems or if you are unsure that your submission went through. In most cases you'll receive an electronic acknowledgement of your application.

BEHAVIOURAL/COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS

Many application forms include competency-based questions. These seek evidence that you have the skills required for the role. Commonly expected skills include communication; teamwork; planning and organising; problem solving and initiative. The STAR framework may be useful:

S Describe a **situation** in which you used the skill concerned

T Tell them about your particular **tasks** or roles

A Outline the **actions** that you took

R Finish with the **result**. What was the outcome? On occasions, you may want to show that you have reflected on the result and the ways in which you would tackle the issue should it arise again.

Refer to the Career and Employment Service's resources on skills and on Behavioural/competency-based interviews for more information.

PROFILING YOUR PERSONALITY

It's possible that you'll be asked questions aimed at assessing your personality, skills, strengths and interests. Employers that use these are usually doing so to ascertain whether your preferred style of working fits with their organisational culture. Such questions are usually multiple-choice and honesty is important. Indeed, they will be looking for inconsistencies in your answers and will usually be able to tell if you are trying to offer answers that you think they want to see.