

### Application Forms

Many companies ask you to complete an application form instead of, or in addition to, sending a CV and cover letter. There are usually sections asking for educational and working history followed by targeted short essay questions. These cover motivation for the job role and choosing their company, competency questions (questions asking about particular skills), or sometimes instead of this there will be a personal statement section asking for evidence of suitability for the job role. They usually have a word limit. Make sure you stay inside it but also try and use most of the word count, to show your enthusiasm and knowledge. Application forms can take a while to complete so make sure you allow enough time to complete them well. They are often online, and contain the function to save and review before sending it off. It is worth doing this as many students have 3 or 4 goes at drafting an answer before reaching their final version.

### Answering motivation questions

The key to a good answer for these types of questions is thorough research into the job role and the company. Show that you understand what the job entails and why those elements appeal to you. Get information on the job role from going along to Career events where you will hear about it, talking to personal contacts or friends' contacts working in the role and reading about it online. General careers information websites are [targetjobs.co.uk](http://targetjobs.co.uk), [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) and [www.careerplayer.com](http://www.careerplayer.com) and [www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org) has Geography specific information in the 'Schools and Education' section under 'our work'.

### Example motivation question

#### Why have you chosen to apply for the Assistant Community Environmental Officer at Tower Hamlets Council? (250 words)

I have wanted to pursue a career relating to the environment since volunteering weekly with a local environmental charity in sixth form. This motivated me to study Physical Geography at University, where my module choices, such as 'Environmental Pollution Management' have enabled me to learn about environmental issues. I attended a Careers event and heard an alum working as a Community Environment Officer talking about what their job entails and the type of person who suits the role and decided that it was the career I wanted to follow. The job allows me to apply the theory I have studied and my technical skills into a real world situation and the combination of technical work and educational work strongly appeals to me. As a resident of Tower Hamlets for the last two years, I have taken an active interest in the activities of the council, following you on Facebook and Twitter, and have attended a number of council run summer entertainment events. The extremely positive impact that the council has had in facilitating active community life, regenerating parts of the area and promoting sustainable living with the 'Go for Green' and 'The Recycle Reward' campaigns make me keen to be a part of your organisation. In conclusion, it is the opportunity to participate in improving my local community through working in the council, along with my strong interest in environmental issues that draws me to the role.

### Answering competency questions

To answer a competency question well you need to give detailed, succinct answers, focused around the actions that you took to demonstrate the skill being asked about. A useful structure to help with this is CAR: context, action, result. You start by briefly outlining the context (the situation) in which you used

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**Comment [1]:** This part of the answer addresses 'why this position'? Notice how the answer outlines actions taken to demonstrate motivation to work in accountancy and also shows awareness of what the role involves.

the skill in question. Often students give lots of detail about this, but remember the employer only needs to know enough so that they can have a general understanding of the situation you were in. The next part is the action that you took to demonstrate the skill in that particular situation. This should make up 70% of the answer and is the most important bit. Try to outline your actions step by step and use action verbs, such as articulated, analysed, evaluated, organised. Finally, outline the result of the situation to show your effectiveness in using that skill: if teamwork, did the team work together effectively and achieve their aim? if organisation, did you manage to get everything done on time? if leadership, did people willingly follow your lead? and so on.

### Example competency question

#### Give an example of a time when you made a positive contribution to a team? (150 words)

In my second year I was treasurer for the Geography Society. At the start of the year we ran a promotional campaign. In the first team meeting I contributed various campaign ideas, one of which was incorporated into the final plan. I wasn't responsible for rolling out the campaign, however, as it was a large amount of work I offered to help out. I spent 2 days putting posters around campus, fliering students and writing Tweets. On the last afternoon of fliering the team was tired and motivation was low, so I decided to raise morale by buying everyone an ice-cream and encouraged them about how many sign-ups we had achieved so far. I received feedback that my assistance was invaluable and we managed to gain 80 new members through the campaign.

This answer is made up of the 3 parts – Context, Action, Result – and is just inside the word limit.

#### Context

In my second year I was treasurer for the Geography Society. At the start of the year we ran a promotional campaign.

#### Action

I wasn't responsible for rolling out the campaign, however, as it was a large amount of work I offered to help out. I spent 2 days putting posters around campus, fliering students and writing Tweets. On the last afternoon of fliering the team was tired and motivation was low, so I decided to raise morale by buying everyone an ice-cream and encouraged them about how many sign-ups we had achieved so far.

#### Result

I received feedback that my assistance was invaluable and we managed to gain 80 new members through the campaign.

#### Personal Statement

In a personal statement you are asked to outline the reasons why you would be a suitable candidate for the role or, more generally, why you have applied for the role. In both, you need to address your interest in the role and company and the skills and experience you have which meet the requirements in the person specification. Refer to the earlier part of this handout for how to write about your motivation for the job and company. For the skills and experience part, write a few lines to address each skill or experience required, using a specific example for each requirement. Make sure that you address every requirement listed on the person specification part of the job description.

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**Comment [2]:** This is a brief introduction

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**Comment [3]:** Notice how specific this section is – the answer focuses on the tasks the writer did to contribute to the team effort.

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**Comment [4]:** This section is about the result of the writer's contribution to the team – feedback and numbers can help to qualify and quantify success.