



Postdoctoral Applications for Academic & Research Positions

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To Apply for Academic & Research Positions:

- Know your career goals – What are your values and motivators? Your areas of interest? Your strengths?
- Research potential employers.
- Complete a skills audit – transferable and subject related. Think about how you can demonstrate them using examples and evidence.
- Assess your suitability for the job – study the job and person specifications and compare the job requirements and selection criteria against your experience/skills.



Assess Your Suitability for a Job

Job Requirements	Examples of Relevant Experience/Skills
Strong interpersonal skills	Tutoring, conference presentations, customer service
Research and analysis	Thesis, papers, internship
Teamwork and leadership	Group projects at university, professional collaborations, postgraduate student society representative
High level writing skills	Contribution to publications, thesis, newsletter for community/research group
Information Technology	Word, excel, SPSS, databases. Excellent web skills. Some desktop publishing
Project Management	Thesis, volunteer work, supervision of research trials. Supervision of UG student



To Apply for Academic & Research Positions:

- Research the faculty/department/organisation:
 - Study the website, noting staff biographies, publications, research areas
 - Find out the research interests and papers published within the faculty/division
 - Research the wider institution – eg: current strategic direction, areas for collaboration, strengths and resources
 - Use your personal contacts to find out all you can
- Telephone the contact person to find out more about the position – ask probing, well-considered questions – helps you create a positive impression and gain useful information for your application.
- Prepare an evidence-based Selection Criteria Document and Resume



Position Description

The Research Officer in Human Research Ethics will be responsible for:

- Recruitment of research participants
- Organise and undertake qualitative research interviews
- Transcription of research interviews
- Data analysis using thematic analysis
- Assisting in the feedback and the dissemination of research findings
- Organising and participating in research participant workshops as required
- Assisting the research team in producing project outcomes including the write up of research findings
- Ensuring that all research tasks are carried out in a timely and professional manner
- Managing the day to day running of the research project
- Other duties as relevant to the successful completion of the research project



Example Selection Criteria

For Research Officer in Human Research Ethics:

Essential

- PhD in social sciences/humanities/bioethics or other relevant health related area, or equivalent relevant qualifications
- Record of publications including research publications and research reports or other demonstrated scholarly activities.
- Demonstrated experience in successfully undertaking qualitative research
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to human research ethics
- Excellent organisational skills and time management skills
- Excellent written and oral communication and interpersonal skills
- Demonstrated ability to work as part of a team
- Knowledge of EEO/AA principles

Desirable

- Demonstrated experience in the field of human research ethics



Application Documents

Cover Letter

- Formal introduction referring to the job you are applying for and the documentation you are providing
- Indicate why you are interested and summarise how you are suitable

Statement of Claims
addressing Selection
Criteria

- Write paragraphs for each criteria
- Use criteria as subheadings
- Provide specific evidence and stress accomplishments

Resume

- Documents all your qualifications and experience
- Tailor to the specific job



Sample Scoring Sheet

Essential Criteria	Sally	John	Sue	Chris	Margaret
PHD/Relevant Qualifications	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Research publications and scholarly activities	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red
Qualitative research experience	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green
Understanding - human research ethics	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red
Organisational and time management skills	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red
Communications skills - oral and written, interpersonal	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red
Interview	Yes	No	No	Yes	No



Responding to Selection Criteria

- Organise according to **essential** and **desirable** criteria
- **Use the actual criteria** phrases for subheadings (don't change the criteria wording) – use the same order
- Your writing style should be **evidence-based**
- Draw your **evidence from all parts of your resume**
 - eg. your studies, employment history, work experience, extra-curricular activities, volunteer work, professional involvement



Responding to Selection Criteria

- Address all parts of the selection criteria
- Break down the criteria into smaller parts:
eg. Break **oral and written communication skills** into 2 separate paragraphs
- Look at the job duties to guide you in interpreting the selection criteria and selecting relevant examples
- Pitch to the level of the job



Key Words in Selection Criteria

- **Experience in** – have performed the task
- **Proven record in** – can substantiate any claims with documented outcomes
- **Demonstrated ability to** – support claims with concrete examples which show breadth & depth of experience & capability
- **Knowledge of** – familiarity gained from actual experience or learning
- **Awareness of** – the least amount of familiarity required



Responding to Selection Criteria

- Make a claim and then support with relevant, concrete examples
- Avoid credibility-reducing words such as always, all, every, never, completely, etc – quantify instead
- Use specific, active verbs
- Be results-oriented
- Use bullet points or short paragraphs



Responding to Selection Criteria

- Check application for grammatical / spelling errors
- Use variety in how you start your responses
- Take care with layout
- Qualify acronyms
- If you don't have direct experience, demonstrate how your transferable skills relate to the criteria



Sample Essential Criteria

Excellent written & oral communication skills

"I am an excellent communicator. I enjoy talking to people and have done numerous written reports as part of my university degree. My strong ability to communicate means I can talk to members of the public comfortably and present to large audiences."

Compared with:

My well-developed written and oral communication skills have been demonstrated by:

- Wrote and presented a 5000 word paper to a large audience of 100 people for a recent university assessment on human research ethics, and received a distinction grade.
- Introducing speakers at the monthly departmental Women's Forum.
- Representing staff on a management-staff working group to review the occupational health and safety issues for the section.



Common Selection Criteria

- Includes criteria addressing:
 - EEO – Equal Employment Opportunity
 - AA – Affirmative Action
 - OHS – Occupational Health & Safety
- Download document: Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) in NSW Public Sector – describes EEO, OH&S and Ethnic Affairs & cultural Diversity
- Address the criterion with a couple of sentences indicating you know **what the criterion means**
- Follow on with providing some **evidence of how that criterion affected your previous experience** or applies to the position you are applying for



Structuring Your Resume

- Career Objective/Summary (optional)
- Education:
 - titles of dissertations
 - synopsis of PhD
 - Achievements and awards, prizes, scholarships
- Employment:
 - Key responsibilities and key achievements
 - Highlight any research or teaching experience, grant/funding applications
- Professional memberships:
 - University committees
 - Scholarly or professional associations
 - External boards or committees
 - Outline your involvement
- Publications & Conference papers presented
 - Consider appendix
- Professional Skills:
 - Give evidence/examples of your professional skills
 - Eg. research, teaching, project management and report writing skills
- Extra curricular activities and volunteer work:
 - Level of involvement
 - Achievements and key skills demonstrated
- Interests
- Referees



Formatting

- Resume 2-3 pages – longer if a lot of publications, conferences, research abstract.
- To ensure valuable information is noticed use:
 - Labelling - **Bold**
 - Avoid *Italics* & Underline
- Clear and consistent formatting – CHECK GRAMMAR AND SPELLING
 - Use only 1 **plain font** (e.g.. Arial, Times New Roman)
 - Font size: 11 / 12
 - Use bullets & short paragraphs
 - Keep **plenty of white space** on page
 - Put dates, titles and bullet points in similar places
- Adopt a positive tone throughout by using **action verbs** and **quantifying achievements** for greater impact



Resources

- www.careers.unsw.edu.au

See Careers Education →→ Writing Your Application →→
Selection Criteria

- Have a variety of samples online

Careers + Employment Library – Books

- Villiers, A. *How to Address Selection Criteria.*
- Sadler D.R., *Managing your Academic Career: Strategies for Success.*
- White L., *Write a Winning Job Application: A guide to responding to the selection Criteria.*



Postgraduate Events!!!

Networking for Postgraduate Students

29th May, 1-12.30pm, QUAD 2008

Interviewing for Academic & Research Positions

4th June, 12-2pm, QUAD 2008

PhD What Next? Career Options after your PhD!

5th June, CLB 4

Speakers from Academic/Public/Private/Research/Not-for-Profit sectors share their experience & knowledge.



**Level 2, East Wing,
Quadrangle Building.
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www.careers.unsw.edu.au