# CRITERIA BASED SELECTION – A GUIDANCE NOTE FOR APPLICANTS

## Background

Criteria based selection is used as a means of ensuring that the best candidate is selected on the basis of their ability to do the job required. This method of selection requires individuals to demonstrate their knowledge, skills or competence through completion of an application form and, if invited, by attendance at a structured interview. Competence is the ability to perform a particular role or task. It is most easily demonstrated by reference to your personal experience.

## What is Criteria Based Selection?

Criteria based selection tests applicants against a set of criteria, which have been drawn up and agreed as being necessary for a specific post. The criteria detail the knowledge, skills and competences that an individual will need to possess to be effective.

The 'Person Specification' details the criteria for the post. *Essential Criteria* reflects the essential competences and knowledge an applicant must possess in order to apply. *Essential Criteria* may thus be regarded as 'eligibility' criteria. Individuals must demonstrate that they satisfy these criteria fully in order to be shortlisted.

*Desirable Criteria* reflects the competence or knowledge which have been agreed as being desirable or advantageous for the successful applicant to possess. If the eligible field of applicants remains too large after the initial 'eligibility' shortlist, the *Desirable Criteria* may be applied to further shortlist for interview.

The application form is an essential part of the process and allows you to use **specific examples** of past behaviour to demonstrate how you meet the eligibility criteria.
Please note that CVs will not be accepted.

## Writing your application

The aim of the application form is for you to demonstrate your ability to meet each of the essential criteria. Think about your knowledge, skills and attributes and choose examples which best demonstrate these criteria. Give examples about your personal experience where evidence of competence or ability is sought. Many people are not used to writing about themselves or thinking about what they have done as opposed to what a team has done.

Before starting to complete the form, it is important you think about **your** role and what **you** have done, either on your own or your contribution as a team member. It is your unique role the panel are interested in. Below are some points to bear in mind: -

- take time to read the 'Person Specification' and understand the relationship between the examples you will use and the relevant selection criteria. At this stage, don't consider any one of the criteria to be less significant than another – they are

all requirements of the job. (If certain criteria are considered to be more important than others, they will be 'weighted' at interview. Where this is the case you will be advised of the weighting applied when notified of your interview date);

- don't write a long narrative – focus your mind and note important points before completing your form;
- use actual examples, rather than 'how you would do something';
- you may use examples from your working life or personal life, (part-time activities or leisure etc), including any voluntary or community work in which you are or have been involved;
- avoid statements that describe your personal beliefs or philosophies – focus on specific challenges and results;
- if possible, quantify/qualify your accomplishments;
- use simple and easy to understand language in your examples to describe what you have done;
- avoid jargon – if it is necessary to use jargon or technical terms, explain them;
- applications should be completed in blank ink in either typescript (Arial, font size 12) or handwritten. If your application is handwritten, please ensure it is legible (in BLOCK CAPITALS and in black ink);
- all sections must be completed;
- once you have completed your application, read and re-read it for any spelling errors and grammatical mistakes;
- remember to keep a copy for yourself;
- submit your application through the channels requested, by the closing date and time. As late applications may not be accepted, it is essential to allow plenty of time for this process to take place.

**Previous Employment and/or Voluntary/Community Experience**

The Department recognises experiences not directly associated with the education service including those found within business and commercial life and less traditional career patterns and experiences such as community involvement or voluntary work. In your application form, you may use examples from your working or personal life, including part-time or leisure activities, and any voluntary or community work you are or have been involved in.

For example, the following experience could be developed as evidence to meet elements of the essential criteria:

- You may be a leader in a youth group with responsibility for financial or other resources or for developing an annual plan to set and monitor the achievement of key objectives and targets.

- You may be a committee member of a local community group or voluntary organisation with input to decision making and for developing strategy, business plans or action plans to address specific problems.

- You may be a member of a Parent Teachers Association and may have developed ideas and made recommendations for school fund raising.

- You may have developed a code of practice for members of a voluntary or youth group or guidelines for undertaking a particular activity or event e.g. taking a group on an outdoor pursuit or field trip.

- You may have experience as a coach or manager of a local sports team. You may have played an important role in organising and/or publicising a key event e.g. a charity or fund-raising event; sports day; conference; annual awards dinner; or garden fete.

**Structuring Your Responses**

The key to a well-written application form is to give the selection panel specific information about your achievements. Therefore, it is recommended that you use the following model to describe your accomplishments:

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| **Challenge:** | Describe a specific problem or goal. |
| **Context:** | Write about the individuals and groups you worked with and / or the environment in which you worked, to tackle a particular challenge (e.g. colleagues, clients, shrinking budget, low morale). |
| **Action:** | Discuss the specific actions **you** took to address the challenge. |
| **Result:** | Give specific examples of the results of **your** actions. These accomplishments demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of what **you** did in relation to the selection criteria. |

Please note that in following the model, most of your effort should be focused on recording Actions and Results.

Using this model to structure your examples will also benefit you greatly if you are selected for interview, as it will allow you to analyse and express your examples in a logical form.

When you have finished, ask someone (preferably an impartial and knowledgeable individual) to review your application form and give you feedback.

Completion of the form can be a time-consuming process, but it is a useful opportunity for you to review your ability to meet the selection criteria, which will be assessed, if you are selected, at interview. The criteria based interviewing approach means that all questions asked by the panel will be linked to the criteria.