

Writing Application Forms

Why are application forms used?

Application forms are used in the initial job application process, usually as an alternative to a CV. An application form will be specific to the employer. They are designed as a filter for employers, so they only receive the information they need from a candidate. As all candidates will be filling in the same form it is easier for the employer to compare applications.

What is included in Application forms?

- Contact details
- Education & Qualifications
- Work/Employment history
- Job/Experience/skill specific questions
- Supporting/Personal Statement
- Monitoring Questions
- References

How to prepare & completing the application form:

- Read through the instructions and any supporting documents before you begin. Ensuring you have collated any information you need beforehand.
- Have a copy of your current CV to hand so you can refer to this throughout.
- Is the application online? You may need to register online before you begin. Remember to keep your login details and password safe, you will need this if you proceed with the application.
- Collect as much information as possible about the company and role and think about the type of questions they will be asking so you can prepare informed answers using your relevant experience.
- Start by reading through the whole form so that you get a feel for the angle the employer has taken. This will allow you to get an idea of what questions are being asked, and allows you to organise and draft your potential answers.
- Sometimes you may have examples which can be used to provide good responses to several questions. It's a question of balance and knowing your information.
- Once you've gathered together all your information, use your CV as a reference for factual details. It's important to draft your answers first, either in Word, where you can use a spell-check, or by hand so you can ensure that your answer fits the space provided.

- Try making your answers stand out from other candidates' responses by tailoring your answers to fit the person specification. Are you promoting the skills the employer is looking for?
- If you're applying for a non-specialist post, you must emphasise, with evidence, the relevance of general skills, such as planning, research and analysis you have gained from your studies.
- Make sure you answer the whole question, especially if it has multiple parts. Employers often have a scoring system for these types of answers and you may score zero if you miss a part out.
- Remember: Submit your application in good time before the deadline. If something goes wrong you have time to take action to sort it out. Applications may not be accepted after closing dates, if in doubt ring to check.
- Not all systems will allow you to save and come back to your form, so you may have to do it in one sitting. You may not be able to cut & paste or print it out. Try to check these things out before starting the form for real.
- Check the word or character limit for each answer. If you write too much it may not count or even be displayed, don't pad your answers with unnecessary words, keep to the point. Be careful of writing too little, if you are well under the word count you are putting yourself at a disadvantage.
- Students often assume that their part time work as a waiter/shop assistant etc is not relevant to graduate jobs/placements. However, this is not the case, employers can learn a great deal about your motivation and transferable skills from jobs such as these so do include them.

Do's & Don'ts

- Do research the company, the career area and the actual job for which you are applying. Make sure you can offer the qualifications, experience and personal skills that the employer is seeking.
- Do make sure you are using the right form - some employers have different forms for different job functions. DO read the form through and follow all instructions.
- Don't use a CV where the employer specifies that you should use their own application form.
- Do keep a copy of your completed application, the job description, and person specification. When it comes to the interview stage, it is useful to remember what you have told the employer.
- Don't include "Interests" for the sake of it as it will not tell the employer anything useful about you. Instead try and include any extra curricular activities that have allowed you to develop or demonstrate employability skills.

If you need support completing an application form you can book an appointment with one of our Employability Advisers on campus in our Employability & Careers Hubs.



Search for us – CareersAtUlster