APPLICATION FORMS

Careers and Employability Service

What will I be asked in my application?

Competency and *Situational* questions

A competency question will ask for an example of a time you have demonstrated a skill or worked in a particular way. A situational question is similar, except, rather than asking how you have worked in the past, it asks how you would act in a future situation.

Examples are:

Tell me about a time you have worked in a team.

Describe a time you have used strong interpersonal skills.

Talk me through a project you have led from start to finish.

What would you do if you found out a colleague had breached confidentiality?

How would you respond if a customer told you that they were not happy with your service?

When planning an event, what would be the first steps you would take?

For competency questions, the STAR method is the appropriate way to answer a question. This is when you give an example, ensuring that you cover the

Situation – Explain where you were working studying volunteering

Task Clearly outline what you were trying to achieve

Action This should be 50 70% of your answer. You need to clearly explain how and why you did something in a particular way

Result This should be positive! And can be learning, a good grade, increased efficiency, positive feedback and so on.

For situational questions, you can write about how you think you would approach the situation, and then back this up with an example of how you have acted similarly in the past, using the STAR method.
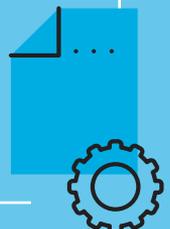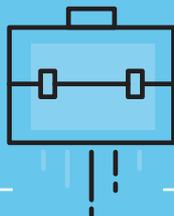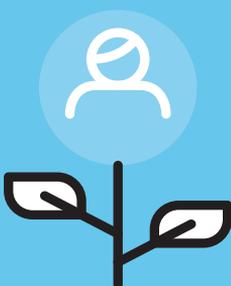
Motivational and Sector questions

These kind of questions will be on why you want the role and why you want to work in the sector. It is very rare not to be asked why you are applying for a role in an application. To answer this well you need to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the company, role and sector and your enthusiasm for it. You can achieve this through properly researching the company using their website, any contacts you have there, and by reading the news and sector websites. This means you cannot get away with copying and pasting an answer from a previous application. Other example questions are
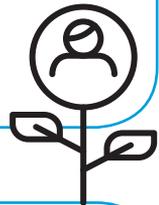
Tell me about yourself

What do you know about us and our sector?

What are the key challenges facing our sector?

What motivates you?

What have you read in the news recently regarding our sector? (This kind of question is particularly common with law firms)

Strengths and Weaknesses questions

Often, for this type of question, you will need to identify your own strengths and weaknesses. The important thing is to clearly explain why you believe something is a strength or weakness of yours by giving examples, this can be done by the STAR method or by summarising experience and achievements. If you are writing about a weakness, it is important to state how you are trying to overcome it, or have made progress with it.
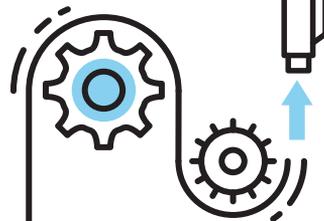
Example questions are:

What are you good at?

What are your weaknesses?

What do you enjoy doing the least?

Do you most like starting tasks or finishing them?

Things to remember when tackling application forms

Time: Often, an application form can take a lot of time to complete, it is therefore important that you give yourself enough time to complete the form well. If you think you will be applying for a lot of graduate or placement opportunities then it is wise to create a list at the start of the academic year of who you are interested in applying to and their deadlines so that you can plan your time effectively. Remember, you will also need to balance the time taken for these against your academic commitments. Often, we recommend that you choose to complete fewer forms well than try to rush in a lot of applications that you don t have the time for.

Write new answers: Don t make the mistake of copying and pasting answers from previous applications that are not relevant or refer to a different employer.

Word count: It is important that you stick to the word count provided on the application form. As well as making sure that you don t write too much, you also need to ensure that you write enough. If an employer has allowed 500 words for an answer and you only write 300 when most applicants would have written to the maximum, it will look like you have less to offer.

Spelling and grammar: It is essential that your application form is written perfectly, it represents the standard of your work. Partly, giving yourself enough time will help with this, as you can save your application and then check over it later to make sure that it reads well. You can also type up answers in Word so that they are spell checked and then paste them into the online application form, although this wouldn t catch everything, such as writing costumer rather than customer .

Tests: Before you send off an application it is wise to check whether the employer is likely to send you some online tests to complete. Most large employers do explain their recruitment process on their website and you can find out more information at thestudentroom.co.uk and glassdoor.co.uk. If you will be sent tests you need to make sure you are prepared before you submit your application. Have a look at our Psychometric Tests leaflet for more information.

Disability: If you have a disability and you think that it will impact your ability to complete the application form or online tests, then you can contact the employer to discuss your adjustment needs. You can also often declare your disability on the application form itself which can be a good idea if you think that you will require reasonable adjustments at an interview or assessment centre.

Our support to you: We can check your applications in person or online. To find out more please visit students.hud.ac.uk/careers

Careers and Employability Service

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