

## Completing the Supporting Statement

Sheffield Hallam Students' Union is committed to ensuring that its workforce represents the diversity of the community it serves. The application process has been designed to ensure that everyone applying for a job with us has an equal and fair chance.

We know that it takes time and effort to put in an application, so we wanted to give you some guidance to enable you to present your information in the best way possible.

### Before you start

- Have a *look at our website* to find out more about what sort of an organisation we are and the work that we do. This will help you to frame your responses in the supporting statement and at interview stage.
- *Read the Job Description* – it outlines the purpose of the role and the key tasks and responsibilities the post holder will be required to carry out. When you are giving examples in your supporting statement you should think how they might relate to what you would be expected to do in the role. You should also check that any relevant experience is highlighted in your CV – this could be as simple as reordering some of the information.
- *Look at the Person Specification* – this lays out what we are looking for from our ideal candidate. It will also tell you which criteria we will use for shortlisting and which for interview and task (if applicable). In the example below
  - Criteria 1.1 and 1.2 will only be assessed at application stage. You should be able to evidence these on your CV
  - 2.1 will be assessed at application, task and interview stages. You might have something on your CV but you will probably also want to refer to this criteria in your supporting statement.
  - Criteria 2.2 will only be assessed at interview, so you don't have to demonstrate how you meet that criterion when you are completing your application form.

Requirements		Essential (E) Desirable (D)	Assessed by Application (A), Task (T), Interview (I)
<b>1</b>	<b>Qualifications/Training</b>		
1.1	Good general education, typically to degree level or equivalent or relevant experience	E	A
1.2	Training qualification	D	A
<b>2</b>	<b>Experience</b>		
2.1	Experience of preparing and delivering presentations and/or training to small groups and facilitating group discussions, disseminating key points of interest.	E	A/T/I
2.2	Experience of working with and engaging diverse groups of people with the ability to present information in a concise and engaging way, for a variety of audiences.	E	I

- If you are still not sure about something in relation to the role you can *speak to someone* – details on how to contact the relevant person are provided on the advert.

## How the application is assessed.

- When all the application forms have been received the shortlisting panel will score them. There is a scoring matrix which is used to help the panel score fairly and consistently – this is shown below.
- They can only score evidence which has been asked for at that particular stage. For example, if you provide evidence for 2.2 in the Person Specification example above, the panel won't be able to give you any points for it at application stage.
- The essential criteria can get a higher score than the desirable criteria. You can see which criteria is essential and which is desirable by looking at the person specification. In the example above 1.2 is desirable and the other criteria are all essential
- If you can't evidence how you meet an essential criteria your application won't be taken any further. If you can't fully meet an essential criteria there are some tips in the section below on how you can handle that.
- If you can't evidence how you meet a desirable criteria you may still score high enough on the other criteria to be able to proceed to the next stage. You should still consider the tips in the section below how you can manage any gaps.

### Scoring matrix guide

#### Essential Criteria

Score	Justification
0	No evidence is provided that the applicant has the relevant skills/knowledge/ability
1	Minimal evidence is provided – indicates that the applicant cannot meet the minimum requirement in this area
2	Some evidence is provided, but reservations remain as to whether the applicant can meet the minimum requirement in this area
3	'Good enough' evidence is provided – indicates that the applicant can adequately meet the minimum requirement for the role
4	Strong evidence is provided – indicates that the applicant more than meets the minimum requirement
5	Outstanding evidence is provided – indicates that this area is a particular strength

*Note – where a candidate scores 0 or 1 on an essential criterion they should not be put forward for interview/appointment without agreement from HR*

#### Desirable Criteria

Score	Justification
0	No Evidence is provided that the applicant has the relevant skills/knowledge/ability
1	The applicant can adequately meet the minimum requirement for the programme
2	The applicant more than meets the minimum requirement

*If a question at interview stage covers both an essential and a desirable criterion it should be scored based on the essential criteria scoring table.*

### Completing the supporting statement section

- Keep your examples clear and concise. Remember you have a maximum of 1000 words (approximately 2 sides of A4) but you don't need to use them all. You want to make it as easy as possible for the shortlisting panel to find the relevant evidence.

- Try to make your examples demonstrate your strengths and experience. For example, rather than telling us that you have good team-working skills, tell us about a team you've been part of where there might have been issues, and what **you** did to help address these.
- At the beginning of a paragraph you can add the number of the criteria that you think the example covers – this can help the shortlisting panel when they come to score but it is optional and may not be appropriate depending on how you structure your statement. If you do, remember, an example may cover more than one criteria so list any that you think are relevant.
- If you meet the majority of the criteria but not all it may still be worth sending an application in if you can demonstrate how you might be able to compensate for the gaps. The following are some ideas you might consider:
  - Identify ways in which you could easily bridge any gaps: "Although I do not currently have Sage experience, I have extensive payroll database experience and have enrolled on a Sage course for next month."
  - Highlight transferable skills: "Although I have not worked in account management before, I have always worked in customer-facing environments where relationship management was essential."
  - Use extracurricular experience and show your keen interest: "Although I do not have direct experience of working for a charity, I am actively involved in volunteering for a charity working with young adults."
- Use the 'STAR' technique. This is often suggested for use when preparing for and responding to questions at interview but it can also be adapted for completing your supporting statement. STAR stands for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult. It helps you to structure your response. There are lots of examples of how to use this approach on the internet but below is a brief summary to get you started:

**Situation:** this gives the context within which you carried out the job or task or a challenge you faced. For example, you could have been working on a particular project or had to manage a situation with a fellow student, volunteer or colleague. Be specific but keep it short and concise.

**Task:** this is where you describe your responsibility in that situation. Did you help meet a tight deadline, work with a fellow student to submit a piece of work, or maybe did something to raise money for charity.

**Action:** describe how you completed the task or overcame the challenge. Remember to focus on what you did rather than others. For example use 'I' rather than 'we' so the panel can see what skills, experience or knowledge you contributed and can bring with you to the new role.

**Result:** what changed as a result of your action – was it successful or did you learn something? Think about why you chose that example in the first place – how did your contribution impact the outcome?

- Before you submit your documents:

- check for spelling mistakes and that they read clearly.
- Check your word count on your supporting statement
- Cross reference with the person specification to ensure you have covered all the relevant criteria and not cluttered up your supporting statement with information not required at that stage of the process.
- Double check your CV is up to date, concise and highlights your relevant skills, knowledge and experience.

Good luck with your application