

HOT TIPS V - Application Forms

- **Two major things to do before you start to fill in the form**

You need to know what the employer wants

What they want will usually be clear from the Job Description/Person/ Specification/Employer website/Graduate Brochure/that presentation they did earlier in the term/that Careers Fair they attended.

You also need to know what you can offer

Start to make note of things you have done. Lists/Mind maps/scribbles on the back of cornflake packets - whatever works for you. Main areas should cover education, work experience, voluntary work, travel, leisure pursuits, Societies and so on. Alongside all the things you come up with - you need to think about what you did and what you learnt from the experience.

- **Another major thing to do before you start to fill it in**

Read the form carefully from start to finish and follow any specific instructions. Take a copy of the form, or download it from the internet, so that you have something to practise on before you attempt the real document.

- **All those little boxes**

Now that you know what the employer is looking for and what you can offer, the next step is to match experiences to the skills asked for in each box. For example, if you talk about your work as a Student Guider in one box - excellent example of communication skills - you might tell the employer about planning your dissertation in another box - organisational skills. Either of these examples could demonstrate communication and organisational skills, but it is important to make the form as interesting as possible for the reader and demonstrate your breadth of experience.

- **This section does not apply to me**

Try not to leave whole sections empty. It is a bit like any official form - rather than leave a box empty, state 'Not Applicable' in it to show that you have read it. If you are not sure about the contents of any section, check this with a Careers Counsellor.

- **Word limits are for wimps**

It is very common to see word limits on sections of application forms or to have lines drawn on a form to dictate just how much you can say. THIS IS A DELIBERATE PLOY BY THE EMPLOYER TO SEE HOW SUCCINCT YOU CAN BE. Draft a section and check the word length. If too long, you might try reducing background information and avoid the first person: "I did...."

- **Attention to detail...**

This is going to be expected by ALL employers, so check the final form for 'typos', misspellings and poor grammar. Careers Counsellors do not have time to do this for you, so ask a friend whose knowledge of English you trust.

- **Not enough space on the form?**

It there is something you want to tell the employer but cannot find space on the form, use your Covering Letter or email to make any additional points. See 'Hot Tips II - Covering Letters' for more information.

- **Online applications - EXTRA**

A few tips from employers:

Use formal, not email language and avoid abbreviations.

Check the employer can print it out (are the systems compatible?)

If you do not have UCAS points telephone their graduate recruitment officer.

Non UK qualifications? Ask University Admissions office staff to see if they can give you the UK equivalents for your academic qualifications. If not, contact UK NARIC - telephone number: 01242 260010