



Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Students (DVCS)
Employability and WIL



GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT e-book

2021

www.latrobe.edu.au/students/opportunities

Employability and WIL
La Trobe University

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Welcome and how to use this e-book

Are you thinking about graduate jobs after uni or have you started applying for roles? Not sure where to look or how to put together a competitive job application? No matter where you're at, this guide has been created for you.

This comprehensive e-book has been written by experienced and knowledgeable members of the Careers and Industry Engagement Teams who work with students every day, and understand what employers want. You will find helpful and informative insights whatever your degree.

It's been written so you can dip in and out of it, although if you want to read it from cover to cover - great!

How ever you use this e-book, make sure you read these sections. If you don't know this crucial information, its likely to prolong your job search.

- ❖ The employer's perspective - pages 6-8
- ❖ Researching opportunities - pages 12-17
- ❖ Employer research – pages 29-30
- ❖ Applicant tracking systems - pages 30-31
- ❖ Behavioural questions and STAR - pages 35-36, 50-51, 57, 62
- ❖ Job search realities and careers resources - pages 68-73

You can also get help and assistance - whether it's attending a careers workshop or careers appointment, finding an event with employers or an opportunity to gain experience, or reading one of our many resources, just log into our online platform, [Career Hub](#).

We wish you every success with your graduate job hunt.

The Employability and WIL team.

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1. The Employer's Perspective

The graduate job market has been competitive since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis - and the pandemic has exacerbated this. Graduate employers can receive dozens of applications for a single vacancy, and graduate employment programs with very popular companies might receive up to 8,000 applications. With this many applications, employers do not have the time to check applications thoroughly. For them, the aim of the recruitment process is to find the best applicant(s) in the most efficient way and so to achieve this, employers look for ways to **rule out applications**. Fortunately for many employers, a significant proportion of graduates make it easy and rule themselves out of the process! To help you, in this e-book we've outlined many of these avoidable mistakes.

The graduates who get the good jobs or early offers, are frequently the ones who understand how the recruitment process works. Students who prepare high quality, tailored applications after conducting thorough employer research, and who understand the employer's perspective, significantly boost their chances of success. One of the biggest mistakes that graduates make is to approach the recruitment process solely from their own perspective. When looking for a graduate job, it is vital to understand the employer's mindset. For example, a student might see an opportunity and think it would be a fantastic job, outlining in their application why it would be great for their career. In contrast, a potential employer wants to know what the student has to offer them. Employers want to know what skills, qualities, experience, values, and knowledge an applicant can bring to their organisation. The onus is on the applicant to clearly communicate how they match the employer's requirements rather than hoping an employer can decipher this.

First impressions are very important as employers tend to make up their minds quickly about an applicant's potential for the job. So how do you apply for a job or approach an employer to have the best chance of success? This next section will go into more detail about what employers look for in graduates.

1.1 WHAT DO EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR IN GRADUATES?

Most employers will have a long list of requirements for a particular job, and it can seem like they are looking for a perfect employee. When they advertise a job, they will tell you what they are looking for. This might be a description of qualifications or knowledge, skills, personal attributes, or experiences, in the job advertisement, or through a formal position description document.

Here is an example of what one employer was looking for in a graduate:

Have completed or be in your final year of a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting), Business (Accounting), Commerce/Law with an Accounting major, or a relevant Finance degree depending on your division of preference; Display solid academic achievement; Possess fantastic communication and interpersonal skills; Have motivation for continuous learning; Be a dynamic team player who can complement our diverse and energetic team. Ideally have previous work/vacation experience whilst studying (not essential).

(BDO job advertisement on Grad Connection, September 2020)

In this example you can see that the employer has the following requirements:

Qualifications: They are seeking graduates from a commerce/accounting/finance discipline. Many other employers don't specify a particular discipline, so if you are studying a generalist degree like humanities or science, look for employers such as government departments or large companies that have a variety of graduate roles.

Academic achievement. This might be a minimum WAM (Weighted Average Mark) that they require - some employers who receive thousands of applications use this as a way of cutting down the number of people eligible to apply. There are plenty of employers however, who do not have requirements for academic achievement.

Skills. Most employers will state a list of generic skills (also known as employability skills, graduate capabilities, transferable skills, or soft skills). Generally, you will be asked to answer questions (either in an online application form, key selection criteria, or behavioural interview questions) about how you have developed these skills. Common skills you might see in a job advertisement could include communication and interpersonal skills, innovation, collaboration or teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking.

Personal attributes. These can take many forms, such as being adaptable, creative, empathetic, detail-oriented, or enthusiastic. The employer in this advert is seeking applicants who are dynamic, energetic, team players, open to ongoing learning and with communication and interpersonal skills. It is best to give examples of how you exhibit these types of qualities.

Motivation. Employers want to know not just that you *can* do the job, but that you *will* do the job. Ask yourself these questions before you begin your application:

- What are your reasons for applying for a job with this company?
- What attracted you to your area of study?
- How can you demonstrate a genuine interest in the industry / field?

Employers will expect that you can articulate your reasons for applying and explain how it connects to your longer-term career goals. You need to demonstrate an understanding of the organisation and conduct thorough research so you can ask thoughtful questions if meeting an employer representative. For example, "I noticed your company recently launched product ABC. How does this fit into the company's long-term strategy of ...?", or "Your website describes the company culture as being innovative. In what ways do you support staff to develop innovative ideas"?

How do employers assess these requirements?

Employers use both formal and informal methods to assess candidates against their requirements. The formal ways include online application forms, assessment centres, psychometric testing, and interviews. There is information about each of these methods in this e-book.

Informal ways include an employer appraising your knowledge, or the experiences you list. A recruiter reading through resumes and cover letters might notice an activity that aligns with the company's culture. Perhaps the company highly values collaboration and teamwork. The recruiter reads that you have been playing sport for 10 years and infers that you have good teamwork skills and value being part of a high

performing team. Another example might be a company that is expanding into Europe. They notice that you have been studying German at uni and completed a Study Abroad program in Berlin the previous year. Your language and cultural knowledge are valuable to the organisation, and although not a central requirement for the job, it might mean you are invited to an interview. A more frequent example might be an employer with a strong culture of focusing on their customers, so they take note of customer service jobs on resumes, like working at McDonalds.

To prepare better job applications, it's important to understand the formal and informal methods that employers use to assess applicant suitability. Any experience you gain while at university from part time work, volunteering, internships, placements, overseas exchange programs through to community and sporting involvements helps you to develop the skills that employer's value. Draw upon a mix of these experiences when communicating with employers.

Now that you understand how employers view the recruitment process, the next two chapters focus on the type of roles suitable for graduates and how to find these opportunities.

2. Introduction to Graduate Employment

This section provides you with an introduction to the types of roles that graduates obtain in the labour market. Most graduates will gain either graduate positions or entry level roles after completing their degree.

The final type of graduate employment is graduate programs, which are very competitive but provide a structured pathway into a large private or government organisation.

2.1 TYPES OF GRADUATE ROLES

Graduate and Entry-level Roles

A graduate role is a specific role that requires a relevant university degree but not necessarily any experience. They may have the title 'graduate' such as graduate occupational therapist, graduate teacher, or graduate accountant. In organisations such as hospitals or government departments, the level of a role usually indicates that it is suitable for a graduate such as a Grade 1 speech pathologist or a VPSG 2 or 3 role (Victorian Public Service Grade). Mature age graduates may need to do additional research to determine how their prior experience and transferable skills fit with typical graduate roles, especially if they have changed career direction.

Entry level roles are open to applicants who may have little or no experience. They offer a chance to gain practical experience and a degree may or may not be required. Examples of entry level roles include a marketing assistant, project support officer, support worker, or software developer. You will need to research and know the common job titles for your discipline or field.

Graduate and entry-level positions are offered by organisations to students who have recently completed their university studies, or who are close to completion. These jobs don't necessarily offer a formal program of development as graduate programs do, instead they provide an opportunity for graduates to get a 'foot in the door' in the graduate labour market. Graduates will usually receive training and support from their employer in the form of an induction program, on the job training or professional supervision. Jobs in this category could be full-time, part-time, temporary, or project based.

Roles like these can be offered all year round and by companies of all shapes and sizes – from large corporations to small and medium-sized enterprises. They can be advertised on generalist job websites, through discipline-based or professional associations, and on individual company websites. Some roles will not be advertised so you will need to know how to research opportunities and approach employers. There is information about how to do this in the next two chapters.

Graduate Employment Programs

Graduate programs are generally offered by larger private and government organisations, providing a structured, fast-tracked pathway for leadership and specialist roles within the organisation. Generally, the program will provide a series of short placements on rotation across different areas of the organisation. Most graduate programs run for 12 to 18 months, though some may be up to 3 years.

Successful graduates can expect to have a wide range of learning experiences, coaching, mentoring and support. Some programs might be tailored for one discipline, but larger organisations with roles across many industry sectors, have generalist graduate programs as well.

Eligibility for graduate programs

Graduate programs are usually offered to students in the final year of their course (undergraduate or postgraduate). Generally, organisations will consider applications from students who have completed their course recently. 'Recently' in this context can range from within the last twelve months to within the last 3 years – this can vary, so you need to check with each employer.

Eligibility for many graduate programs may be restricted to Australian/New Zealand citizens or Permanent Residents. Some programs can be available to holders of various working visas who are able to work full-time and without restrictions. Some sectors will be restricted to citizens or Permanent Residents – Government Departments, for example. Other sectors – IT, telecommunications, some areas of accounting – may be more flexible. Always check with each employer as to eligibility.

Graduate program employers are increasingly using vacation employment programs (typically undertaken in the penultimate year or the year before the final year of a degree) or internships as an opportunity to 'trial' potential graduates. In some instances, students who have undertaken one of these programs, have had their application looked upon favourably and have been fast tracked in the recruitment process.

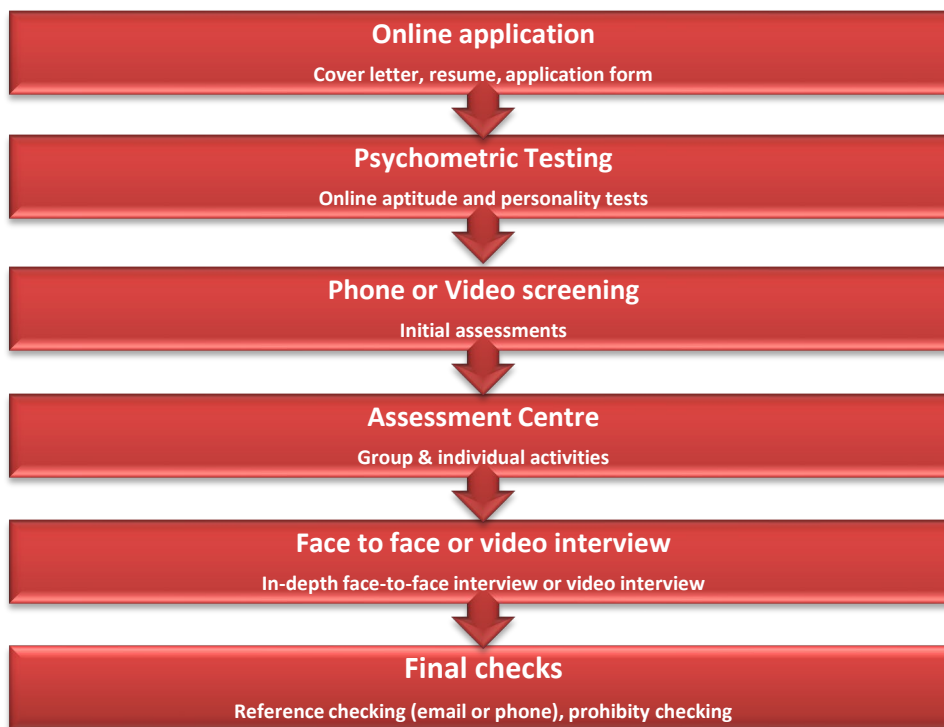
Applying for graduate employment programs

Formal graduate programs are usually listed in the key graduate websites outlined in the next Researching Opportunities section. However, not all graduate programs may be listed on those sites, so you'll need to do further research to identify all the possible opportunities available to you.

Most applications for graduate employment programs open in February, with deadlines occurring from March/May, although 'rolling recruitment' is becoming more common. Application is a rigorous, multi-stage process that in most cases involves submission of a written application, different assessment activities, and then interviews. The recruitment process is highly competitive, because of the quality work experience on offer, and the opportunity for applicants to have a supported transition into the professional labour market.

Typical selection process

Most graduate selection processes are structured similarly to the diagram on the next page. The exact order may change depending upon the organisation; however, many graduate programs will include most of these steps as part of the selection process. There is more information about each of these steps in Chapter 5 of this e-book.



Timeline of graduate recruitment

Feb-March '21: applications open

Mid -March-late April '21: applications close

March-May '21: selection process

May-June '21: job offers

Early '22: graduate programs commence

Quality applications take time to complete

Applying for graduate programs can be a lengthy process and requires more work than applying for part-time jobs you may have had during your studies. The application period coincides with the start of semester, so you do need to think about how you will manage your applications around your study, work, and personal commitments.

Tips

- Prepare your resume early, so you'll only need to make minor changes when preparing your applications.
- Consider creating your own graduate recruitment schedule with deadlines and times allocated for researching and writing each application.
- Submit your application ASAP as some organisations close off applications when they have received a predetermined number.

3. Researching Opportunities

3.1 STRATEGIES TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES

Where can you find these various opportunities mentioned in the previous chapter? You'll find that to access as many opportunities as possible, you'll need to use a few different strategies. Some positions are advertised widely on well-known generalist job websites; others may only be listed on more specific sites - for example, those aimed at graduates or at a specific discipline. But others might only be advertised on a specific organisation's website or LinkedIn page - or made available primarily to those students who have already engaged with the organisation through networking events, competitions, or innovation hackathons. In fact, many opportunities may never be formally advertised at all! (Many employers do not advertise all of their vacancies for reasons such as saving time and money.)

So, your strategies for finding potential job opportunities need to be more than just looking at *Seek* every day. It's important to start from the understanding that reading a job ad you want to apply for should be at the *end* of your graduate job search, not the *beginning*. Finding the job ad for a position you truly feel will be right for you involves gaining a good understanding of the sector you want to work in, the general trends and challenges involved, the specialisations available, the key employers, and the types of roles that might be available.

You may not yet have decided what career direction you'd like to take after your course at La Trobe finishes. Let's imagine you're studying a double degree at La Trobe – say a Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Science – and you can't quite decide whether to ultimately choose between a career in Economics or in Microbiology. That means you'll have to research each discipline, finding out their key organisations, major employers, the technical and transferable skills that are in demand, typical career pathways, whether there are key opportunities you could apply for in the middle of your course, etc. And every discipline is different!

You won't be able to find out all this information just from one source or by just one method – you'll need to use a range of methods – researching, networking, connecting, engaging, etc. As a result of all the activities outlined in this section, you'll end up with a better understanding of your career options, be able to identify the type of role you'd like to pursue, and have an awareness of the organisations you'd like to work for.

Once you identify a range of organisations that you think you'd be a good fit for, you can then make sure you follow them on social media and LinkedIn, tune in to public seminars they run or to employer events run through La Trobe. Then, when you find out about a graduate opportunity with them, you'll be able to draw on what you know about the sector, the key skills you've found out will be needed into the future, and about the organisation, its values and ways of working. If you apply this knowledge, your job applications will be targeted, authentic and effective.

Employment Websites

Accessing employment websites will be one of the strategies you'll use, whether you're researching the type of graduate opportunities that might be available in the future, or whether you're actually in the final stages of your course and looking for current graduate jobs.

On popular jobsites like *Seek* and *CareerOne*, you can search occupations, organisations which are hiring, skills and requirements needed for different jobs, and a variety of other information useful in preparing you for your future career.

But remember not all jobs are advertised on generalist employment websites like these. You can discover many opportunities by searching specialised job boards and employment websites – such as the graduate-specific and government ones highlighted in the next section. Also, many disciplines and industry sectors have their own employment websites.

Graduate-specific job boards

Here are some key general graduate resources:

GradConnection is a platform where you can find out about upcoming graduate positions and programs. There is research into particular disciplines, industry sectors, as well as individual companies. The site also contains blogs providing recruitment and graduate information, forums, and articles about graduate recruitment.

www.gradconnection.com.au

GradAustralia is a similar site, where you can find out about graduate job opportunities, browse employers by industry, and read articles covering things like a day in the life of individual graduates working at some of Australia's top graduate employers. There are also collections of videos from large corporates covering their selection process, so you can get prepared for what to expect during interviews and working as a new graduate. GradAustralia also produces publications like the 'Top 100 Graduate Employers, a list of Australia's top employers, as voted by students.

www.gradaustralia.com.au

EmployerConnect gives you access to thousands of employers looking to hire graduates and interns in Australia, Asia and around the world. EmployerConnect is linked to Grad Connection.

<https://employer-connect.latrobe.edu.au/>

Government employment sites

- **Australian Government jobs and Graduate Programs**

<https://www.apsjobs.gov.au/s/>

<https://www.apsjobs.gov.au/s/graduate-programs>

- **Victorian Public Service jobs and Graduate Programs**

<https://careers.vic.gov.au/>

<http://graduates.vic.gov.au/>

- **Local Government Jobs**

<https://www.job-directory.com.au/>

You can find a detailed information sheet on *Employment Websites* – including specialised job boards related to specific disciplines and industry sectors such as the arts, health, environment, welfare/community and Not-for-profit sectors and so on in the Resources section on Career Hub or see the link below.

Employment websites

Finding Employers

Individual company research

Once you've identified the organisations you want to apply to, it's essential you explore in detail that organisation's graduate recruitment processes. Most large organisations will have a graduate webpage with detailed eligibility criteria, their own tips on what successful applications should include, stories from previous graduates, and so on. This detail should help you with the practical aspects of applying such as putting together a tailored application as well as determining which role is for you.

When companies recruit, they want to know more than whether you have the relevant qualifications for the job in question. They want to know whether you'll fit in – if you're a match for the values and culture of the team and organisation as a whole. So, it's vital you take steps to understand what makes an organisation 'tick'. The more you find out about the key aspects of their business, and the values and behaviours that the organisation finds valuable, the better you'll be able to show them you understand their business, and be able to show how your skills and experience make you a good fit for their organisation.

You'll probably find that by researching different employers and looking at their values, you'll start to figure out what's really important to you, what motivates you, and so the type of employers you'll most likely fit in with.

While you'll get some initial impressions about an organisation by looking at their website, you'll need to reach out through approaching and connecting with them through appropriate use of social media and through networking activities to truly get a proper understanding of them, their business and how they like to do things including how they recruit. There is more about this in Chapter 4- Networking and Approaching Employers.

Careers expos

Participating in a Careers Expo is an effective strategy to build your professional network, find out about opportunities for graduates, and survey employment prospects in your industry. It is also one of the few times you will have an opportunity to meet with employers and hiring staff in person.

Recruiters and Human Resources professionals attend Careers Expos looking to meet and connect with students who are well prepared, professional, and confident. It is therefore crucial to take some time to research and shortlist organisations you would like to engage with before attending. Go a step further and find out basic details of representatives from the organisations you want to speak to – LinkedIn is a good place to start.

The very nature of traditional (face-to-face) Careers Expos has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, organisations have adopted virtual platforms and channels to engage with students. In the

future, employers will continue to adopt a mixed approach of both face-to-face and virtual platforms, so it is best to prepare for both formats.

You will find updates on expos on [La Trobe's Career Hub](#) and you should also be actively checking industry, professional association memberships, company websites and social media to see what is on offer. Some examples of Careers Expos include [The Big Meet](#), [GradConnection & Seek Virtual Fair](#), [Prosple's SuperFairs](#).

Be aware that you may need to register online to attend these events.

Finding out about relevant events

Keep an eye on the La Trobe University's [Employability and WIL](#) or [Eventbrite](#) web pages for news of events that might help you build your knowledge of career options, sector or industry information and potential employers, internships and jobs. [Career Hub](#) also advertises relevant events and opportunities, and a number of student organisations and schools within ASSC and SHE Colleges run events involving employers or industry connections - see <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/opportunities/leadership-volunteering/organisations> or <https://latrobesu.org.au/clubs/>

People in the industry

Consider any contacts you may have (e.g. previous graduates, friends, parents, community, virtual) who can give you an insight into the industry you are applying to enter. Find out the identity of the key people in the organisation and major players in the industry, how the industry is generally performing, and what the current issues are. Including this information in answers to application and interview questions (such as 'what do you know about us?') will impress employers as it demonstrates your genuine interest in their organisation.

Recruitment agencies

Recruitment agencies are hired by employers to find suitable candidates so they may be another strategy in your graduate job hunt. Agencies advertise positions (and/or look through their existing list of suitable candidates), screen and shortlist candidates, then send the highest-ranking candidates to the employer for them to interview and make the final hiring decision. When a candidate is hired by the employer, the recruitment agency receives a payment. Essentially, a recruitment agency fulfills a 'gatekeeping' function and it is common for candidates to not know who the employer is in the initial rounds of the recruitment process.

Agencies usually work in specific sectors, types of work or geographic locations, so approaching a recruitment agency is only suitable for specific cohorts of graduates such as science, IT, social work, education students etc. Examine job adverts to find which agency is relevant to your field (if any), then contact the recruitment consultant regarding the vacancy. If invited to attend an interview with the recruiter, treat it very seriously, be clear about what you're suited to and what you can offer. Aim to build rapport with the recruitment consultant as they usually have excellent industry knowledge and insider information about employers in the sector. If you miss out on the vacancy but are considered to be a quality candidate, the recruiter is likely to add your name to their list of suitable candidates and advise you of future vacancies. The agency should not ask you for payment to find you work. Always remember their business model is that the recruiter works for the employer, not the candidate.

Building Experience and Connections

Volunteering

Volunteering is unpaid work in a not-for-profit or charitable organisation that you choose to do. Being a volunteer offers a range of benefits for graduates or soon-to-be graduates including gaining hands-on workplace experience, building networks, and developing your employability skills. Many graduate employers place value on the skills you develop through volunteering experiences.

Finding voluntary opportunities

- Think about the type of volunteer work you would like to be involved in, your skills, interests, and values.
- Think about how much time you have free to devote to volunteering and make sure to keep this in mind when searching.
- Depending on the position, you may need a resume and cover letter tailored to the type of volunteer work you are applying for. You might also be interviewed or asked to attend an information session.

Useful Websites

- Career Hub: [Career Hub](#) (use your student number and password to access)
- Volunteer Resources in Victoria: <https://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/>
- Volunteering Victoria: <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/>
- Local government websites - many councils require volunteers to help run different programs.
- There are opportunities to volunteer at La Trobe University too such as through student societies.
- Consider actively contacting organisations that support causes of interest to you.

Professional and industry associations

One important source of information is the professional or industry association website. A professional association is a peak body for professionals working in a particular discipline or industry. It offers a place to engage with the industry and for members to network with each other.

Their websites will typically have information on things like:

- Job opportunities, career advice, and industry information including links to other websites.
- Guidelines on professional standards and professional registration requirements.

Most associations allow people studying relevant courses to join up as student members – they want to encourage students who are interested in a future career in that profession to engage with them and feel as though they're part of the sector. Student membership is usually low cost or free and enables you to access the full website plus events, jobs boards and programs such as mentoring and so on.

Here are links to professional associations for the relevant disciplines within each of ASSC & SHE Colleges:

Professional Associations - College of Arts, Social Science and Commerce (ASSC)

Professional Associations - College of Science, Health and Engineering (SHE)

Informational interviewing

Informational interviewing is the process of researching a career, job, or organisation, by talking to someone with knowledge of working in that role, organisation, or in the broader sector. Informational interviewing is not about directly obtaining a job – your intention should be to find information or answers to questions that will assist you to plan your career or decide which opportunities might be best for you.

Informational interviews can:

- Help you find out more detail about a role, organisation, and industry
- Help to ensure that your career planning, exploration, and subsequent job search go well
- Enable you to speak knowledgeably about the career that you want
- Enable you to create targeted job applications to the requirements of that position and organisation
- Give you valuable personal contacts for your future employment

How do I identify someone to interview?

- Look at your network including family, friends, colleagues, and lecturers
- Use LinkedIn – find someone via the advanced search or LinkedIn app
- Attend networking events including workshops and conferences for your industry

Online Methods

Forums

Whirlpool is a discussion forum where students, graduates and (sometimes) graduate employers can provide (generally unofficial) information and feedback on various graduate programs that are currently on offer. Be aware that the views expressed are usually an individual's own opinion, based on their own experiences of applying for graduate positions, and not necessarily based on 'official' evidence or guidelines. It is useful, however, for providing an insight into how others are feeling about the application process.

<https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/forum/136>

LinkedIn

A LinkedIn profile is a key component in your job search activities – 43% of jobs are advertised via this medium. It's a great vehicle for accessing jobs in your chosen industry and enables you to follow your target organisations, learn from 'thought leaders' in the sector and make connections to support your networking activities. Consider LinkedIn as a global database of talent! LinkedIn is a great research tool too – you can find out where students who have completed similar courses to you have found employment.

For students - <https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students>

General LinkedIn resource - <https://www.youtube.com/user/LinkedIn>

Networking with employers can be a powerful tool in your job search. Read the next chapter to understand what networking is, learn networking strategies and how to approach employers.

4. Networking & Approaching Employers

4.1 NETWORKING

Many people talk about the importance of networking, and it is something people often know they should be doing more. What does it really involve? How can you do it in a way that suits your personality and the way your profession or industry works?

What is Networking?

The purpose and benefits of networking

“Networking: the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business.”

Source: Merriam Webster Dictionary

Networking can involve:

- Developing two-way, mutually beneficial relationships
- Finding out about your industry and learning from other people
- Sharing your knowledge and skills, communicating your strengths
- Working collaboratively towards common aims
- Building awareness of opportunities for career advancement
- Staying in touch with the right people to get “things done”

Who to network with?

People with shared professional interests including:

- Wider family members, friends, or friends-of-friends
- Students and academics at university
- Student clubs and societies
- In professional associations
- In your industry or allied professions
- In organisations you might volunteer with or work for

Where to network?

- Informal occasions in day-to-day life
- Clubs and societies at uni
- Professional events
- Online
- Employer events and expos

Networking Tips

Networking is a two-way activity. It's also a skill that can be improved with these tips.

Think ahead

What's your aim? Who would you like to meet? Do you want to identify a name, improve your knowledge of an industry or sector, gain ideas or an introduction to someone? Think about what would be the right places and events for your industry or career interest? Think about what you could contribute?

Krish Jayatilleke and Rebecca Kriek, both La Trobe alumni, recommend that you do your research, be genuine and make the most of the interaction. Krish suggests making sure your LinkedIn profile is up to date as "business cards are a thing of the past and most people connect via LinkedIn on a professional level". Rebecca adds "be respectful of people's time and perspectives and have an understanding of their background or skillsets."

Get comfortable

Research, learn, and practice networking skills. Put yourself into environments you're comfortable in, as well as getting used to new settings (and people).

Rebecca encourages students not to be shy and to be authentic as "people can tell when you are just trying to extend and benefit yourself". Krish says don't be afraid to talk to anyone. Practice to get to a point where "you're comfortable speaking with a fellow student or a CEO".

Practice your interpersonal skills

Networking is about making sure you utilise your communication skills so actively listen and be observant. Ask thoughtful, relevant open-ended questions to show interest in the other person and encourage conversation. Be interested in people's responses and be mindful of where you are and other people's time. Check in with them about how much time they have available and if it is okay to continue the conversation.

Follow up on the information and contacts you make, and any promises made

Think about what you can give others, so if you make a promise for example, to send an article, follow through on what you have said. Send a thank you note or email.

Extend the same courtesies in virtual networking as you would face-to-face

Virtual networking has become commonplace especially with COVID-19 and the same rules apply. These are some extra tips from our alumni to keep in mind. Krish recommends keeping your interactions professional especially when using email, messenger, or chat functions. Rebecca suggests finding a quiet place for the event and shutting other windows down on your computer so you can give people your full attention.

Things to avoid

Here are some tips from Rebecca and Krish.

- Don't ask for a job. Build strong relationships and opportunities will follow.
- It's best not to rely on networking opportunities brought to you by the University. Take the initiative and look for industry meetups and events hosted by your industry or professional association.
- Avoid going in unprepared. Practise so you become more comfortable engaging with new people.
- Don't be late as you don't want to miss important information at the start of the networking event.

Using Social Media to Network

What social media do you use? How can you use social media to build your profile and participate in your sector?

Employers are online too. Facebook and LinkedIn are two common platforms but increasingly employers are using Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms for marketing and promotion. Look at the websites of organisations you are interested in to find out what platforms they use, research, and follow their activities.

Discussion groups and other online professional groups are also worth investigating. For example, Meetup has a wide range of groups for people with similar professional and career-related interests (as well as social and recreational groups).

Meetup- Australia

Facebook

Ensure you use tight privacy settings to reduce the risk of anything embarrassing being seen by an employer. Krish recommends not posting questionable content on your social media platforms. Recruiters can (and will) look you up before, or after, they have met with you.

LinkedIn

This is the best website for professional networking so regard your LinkedIn profile as your 24/7 online resume. Ensure you apply a high level of professionalism to your profile and keep these tips in mind:

- Keep your profile up to-date.
- For your headline, mention your discipline or future profession such as "Aspiring civil engineer seeking opportunities in..." or "Final year politics student."
- Have a professional summary (in the About section) and a good photo.
- Consider adding people you meet as connections such as guest speakers, or recruiters at careers expos or events. You'll have a higher acceptance rate if you customise your LinkedIn connection request. Explain how you met them, remind them if you had a conversation with them and outline any common interests you share.
- Join a special interest group related to your field and contribute, thoughtfully, to conversations.
- List discipline-specific or professional level skills.

- Add a range of experiences such as voluntary work, community involvement, internships, placements, innovation challenges, involvement in clubs and societies and so on.
- Ask managers and people who you have worked or volunteered with to write recommendations or to endorse your skills.
- Use LinkedIn to find and research opportunities.
- Keep in contact with referees and former colleagues.

For more information about LinkedIn, go to:

<https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students>

Forums

Forums can be a good source of information on what to expect from people who have been through the recruitment process for particular organisations. Employers also use forums to advertise programs and get some background on job applicants. Examples of forums include:

Whirlpool <http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/> (see Jobs and Graduate Program forums)

Gradconnection <http://au.gradconnection.com/forums/>

Wikijob <http://www.wikijob.co.uk/forum>

Final point

The online environment is very public, and records of your interactions are likely to have a very long lifespan. If you want a professional job, ensure you behave professionally, whenever and wherever you network.

4.2 NETWORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

As the last section outlined, networking is about building relationships with people, asking for their advice, and sharing information with them. By attending careers fairs, information sessions, industry nights and other recruitment activities in which employers participate, you will have numerous opportunities to interact with potential employers whilst exploring your options.

Lucy Fitzgerald, graduate program manager at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) says she is looking for graduates who have effective communication and teamwork skills with an eagerness to learn. Networking is perfect to develop and enhance these skills, but you need to prepare.

Strategies for Success

Prepare yourself

When preparing to meet potential employers, anticipate the topics they could raise and the type of questions they might ask; consider beforehand what information and impression you want to convey and practise saying aloud your responses to these questions. For example, they may ask about the subjects you are studying and why you chose them, what your career goals are and what you like to do in your spare time? Consider this to be a trial interview because, if the employer likes you and believes you could be a strong candidate for a job, they will remember you when the formal recruitment process gets under way.

Do your research

Before attending an employer event, check which companies will be attending and do some research on them (a list of companies attending is usually made available before the event). Start by visiting their website and searching for articles in the media. Identify which employers you want to speak to, and a few others that you will approach if you have enough time.

Prepare some questions to ask as this will leave the employer with a better impression of you. Avoid asking “so what does your company do?” if you approach them.

Lucy reinforces this by suggesting that you prepare specific questions and don’t ask questions you can find answers to on the employer’s website. She recommends you make the most of the opportunity to engage with an employer, either face to face or virtually, to learn more about the organisation and plan your next career move. She advises that DELWP are looking for candidates who are motivated to work in the Victorian government and who share their values.

Krish Jayatilleke, a La Trobe alumni notes that employers love candidates who take the initiative. He says doing your homework is crucial and he encourages students to have a plan to successfully engage with employers.

Create your ‘Elevator Pitch’

This is a short 30-60 second personal branding/marketing statement about yourself, and the basis for building a professional networking relationship. You can use it to introduce yourself when attending

networking events, in emails, over the phone, and on any occasion where you want someone to quickly understand your background and your interests.

It can include details about your:

- Qualification/s and experience
- Skills and personal qualities
- Career goals / interest in the position, the organisation and industry
- Current situation and availability to commence work

Here's an example of an elevator pitch:

"Hi, my name is ... I have recently graduated from La Trobe University with a health science degree majoring in public health. I'm really interested in Indigenous healthcare, especially in children living in urban environments. I am interested in the research work your department has undertaken in this area especially relating to ..."

Rebecca Kriek, a manager at a children's health service, recommends to keep to the point and not to ramble. She encourages students to preface sentences with statements such as "I'm looking for" and "I think I would provide" and not to take themselves too seriously - "a smile and a laugh will make you memorable."

At employer events and careers fairs, Lucy from DELWP recommends you introduce yourself, and giving the graduate employer information about what you are studying, and your career goals, may help guide the conversation.

She advises that you be respectful of time and if there is a long line of other students, limit your questions so other students can engage as well. Most of all relax and be your (best) self.

Remember it is a two-way street. Lucy understands that networking can be overwhelming but encourages you to keep in mind "graduate employers are people too and are usually in the role because they enjoy engaging with students and graduates".

Rebecca advises you to not just focus on what you are getting from the relationship and while it's important to know what development opportunities and benefits there are for you, "it can be off putting if it feels like the only reason you are interested in a role is the benefits and gains for yourself." Krish encourages you to build strong relationships and opportunities will follow.

Finally, Lucy suggests a great elevator pitch is succinct and clearly articulates your experience, credentials, and career goals/interests. Be positive and practice makes perfect.

How to approach someone at a networking event

- Introduce yourself
- Firm handshake (if COVID-safe to do so), maintain an appropriate level of eye contact
- Use your 'elevator pitch' (see example above)
- Enjoy the conversation – genuinely listen and show enthusiasm
- Have a prepared exit phrase to end the conversation gracefully and leave a good impression

For example.

“Thank you for your time / for speaking with me. I’ll let you talk to the other students waiting and will submit my application soon.”

“It’s been great speaking with you. I’ll send you a copy of my resume tomorrow as agreed.”

“I can see that there are a number of students waiting to speak to you, so I’ll let you go. Would you mind if I sent you a LinkedIn request?”

Follow up

If you don’t follow up what was the point in going to the networking event?

Send an email after the event:

- Thank the person for meeting
- Attach a document or web link you discussed or promised to send
- Ask further questions about their industry
- Attach your resume if appropriate
- Send a customised invite to join their LinkedIn network

4.3 APPROACHING EMPLOYERS OF INTEREST

If you have identified an employer that you are interested in, you do not need to wait for a job to be advertised before approaching them. Directly contacting the employer via phone, email, or in some cases face to face, can be a useful way to uncover hidden opportunities. This strategy is called cold calling.

Advertising vacant jobs takes employers time, money, and staffing resources so some employers prefer to promote from within, identify suitable candidates through their own contacts, or meet with someone who has been proactive and approached them. Directly contacting employers is an approach that is often more suitable for small to medium sized organisations rather than very large organisations with formal recruitment campaigns and processes.

How to prepare

Prior to approaching an employer ensure you:

- Thoroughly research the organisation including roles within the organisation, make sure you understand its services, products, projects, or programs and check information about the organisation's recruitment processes. This demonstrates motivation and effort. Refer to pages 29-30 for more information about researching an employer.
- Research the industry so that you are aware of trends and understand appropriate job levels/titles and responsibilities.
- Check if there is anyone in your own network who may be able to provide you with an introduction. This is called warm-calling and it significantly increases your chance of an employer responding to your inquiry.
- Identify the best person for you to contact. Ideally, it would be the line manager who has the actual power to hire staff. If this is not possible, locate a suitable person in the Human Resources team. Use LinkedIn, your own contacts, find a staff directory on the organisation's website or search for the contact person listed on recent job adverts. In certain circumstances, you may be able to phone the organisation and politely ask the receptionist for the best person to contact.
- Adapt your documents such as your resume so they are tailored to the type of role you are interested in and the organisation's needs. Sending a generic email, cover letter or resume to dozens of organisations is highly unlikely to result in any employer responding to you.
- Be prepared to introduce yourself and explain what you can offer the organisation in terms of your skills, qualities, knowledge, values, and experience. This is an opportunity to practice your elevator pitch – in a suitably modified version.

The Art of Cold Calling

Cold calling is when an employer does not know you and is not expecting your call. A cold call involves contacting an organisation directly to ask if they have any roles available and/or possible future opportunities. Managers are likely to be very busy and faced with considerable workplace change during the pandemic. It is important to be mindful of their time and to communicate clearly and succinctly. How you make contact will be up to you, what you feel most comfortable with, and what method is most appropriate. (If face to face, ensure you follow COVID-safe protocols and the latest public health guidelines).

Contact via phone

It is vital to be prepared and have a clear idea of what you are going to say such as- who you are, why you are calling and what you want out of the conversation. In many instances, the main aim of the phone call will be to seek permission to forward your resume and cover letter. It can be useful to write a script of the key points but ensure you do not read directly from the script as you will risk sounding 'wooden'. Cold calling is not an easy task to undertake so it can be helpful to practice with family, friends, or a member of the careers team.

To improve your cold calling skills:

- Choose when to make the phone call. Usually, calling first thing in the morning or at the end of the day are the best times.
- Introduce yourself and explain why you are calling. Check if you have called at a convenient time.
- If it is not a convenient time, arrange an alternate time that suits the manager and ensure you phone back at that time.
- Explain why you are interested in an opportunity with the organisation and be ready to discuss your skills, experience, and interests. Seek permission to forward a copy of your resume and cover letter. Advise you will phone again and agree on a timeframe after the manager has had the chance to look over your documents.
- When you follow-up and phone the manager again, re-introduce yourself. Ask politely if they have read your documents, if not, repeat the process of agreeing to another time to phone. If they have read your documents, discuss the possibility of an opportunity. If there is no opportunity, always be gracious and politely ask if there is anyone who they could recommend you speak to. This might be someone in the same organisation or a different company, who could be interested or hiring.

Other points to be aware of:

- You can use part, or all, of your elevator pitch, depending on the appropriateness of the situation. See pages 22-23 for more information about an elevator pitch.
- Be prepared for a voicemail or someone else in the team answering the phone.
- Keep the initial phone call short – unless the manager chooses to keep the conversation going.
- Take brief notes during the phone call to aid your memory and gather information about the organisation or industry.

Contact via email

If you prefer to make contact via email, follow the points outlined above in making contact via phone. To increase the chance your email will be read and/or responded to:

- Pay attention to your writing. Ensure it is clear, concise and with no spelling errors. An email which consists of a lengthy elevator pitch, poor spelling and grammar, or a list of vague questions is unlikely to be responded to.
- The tone of your email is important. It needs to convey interest and motivation without sounding desperate or over-confident.
- Include a subject line and ensure the content of the email is customised to the organisation. Generic mass emails that do not have a clear indication of which role(s) is of interest or an explanation of

why the person is interested in that specific organisation, have no chance of success. If an employer even reads the email, they will be unimpressed and see it as a sign that the sender is not genuine as they have not taken the time and effort to customise their email. (See the poor example below)

- An email approach is rarely enough (there is always the chance it is sitting in a Spam folder!) so be prepared to follow-up with a phone call.

This is an actual generic email and is an example of what NOT to send. Would you bother to respond?

Subject: Employment enquiry

Are you seeking an experienced MBA professional with a strong business/IT background to be a full-time salaried, long-term value-added asset to your organisation?

Someone who can contribute to your growth and profitability with strong analytical skills and creative ideas?

Here is my LinkedIn profile for your consideration <link here>.

Please let me know if you have any openings available.

Thank you.

A Candidate

Warm Calling

Warm calling is when you are contacting employers that you have already met (for example at a careers expo or when a representative attended a lecture or workshop) or when someone you know has mentioned your name to the employer. The previous contact or the connection with the employer, may mean there has been a level of trust built or a sense of familiarity, and it may feel easier to make further contact with the organisation.

When you make contact, you can make it more personal. For example, you can remind the person how you met (at the careers event) and who you are (a key point from your conversation with them). Alternately, you can explain how you came by their name if a third party has provided you with their details. This can provide a more natural opening to your communication and encourage easier conversation.

Example of a warm calling phone introduction

"Hello. My name is.....and I have been given your details by..... I am a recent graduate from La Trobe University with a degree in..... I'm looking to find out more information about the Industry/field. I'm really interested in.....Is now a convenient time to talk to you?"

It is important to let the conversation flow in a natural manner rather than sounding like you are reading from a pre-prepared script, or without giving the other person chance to respond.

Final points

- Employers can be impressed by someone who shows interest and initiative by contacting them. If a manager suggests you keep in contact, as there might be future vacancies, ensure you phone or email every few months as agreed, so they remember you.
- Follow-up is important because if you don't follow-up as agreed, you are unlikely to get a result.
- Keep records of your contacts, conversation, follow-up actions and timeframes.
- Have realistic expectations and be persistent. It is very likely that you will have to contact a number of organisations. Sometimes organisations simply do not have any roles available or there may be no response to your contact, despite how professionally you contacted them.
- Contacting organisations can take courage. Once you have done it and had a positive conversation or have found someone who was happy to take your call, it can build your confidence, so you become better at approaching potential employers.

5. Applying for a Graduate Job or Program

Once you have identified suitable opportunities, whether it is an advertised role or an employer you would like to approach, the next step is to contact the employer. Before taking that step however, you need to ensure you have:

- An understanding of how technology such as Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are integral to the recruitment process.
- Conducted thorough research into the organisation to help you write your application.
- A tailored and professional resume that is up to date.
- A well-written cover letter, and thoughtfully crafted responses to key selection criteria (if relevant).
- An up to date LinkedIn profile which is consistent with your resume.
- Reviewed all your public social media accounts. Always assume hiring managers and recruiters will check for any risky attitudes or behaviours.

Employer Research

Although it might be tempting to wait until (or if!) you are invited to an interview before having more than a brief glance at an employer's website, conducting thorough research at the application stage will help you to stand out. Employers are impressed by candidates who understand their organisation and who can articulate why they would be a good fit. Think of researching an employer as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) assessment.

This is a comprehensive list of points to research.

- **What do they do?** What are their core services, products, or programs and what, if any, specialisations do they have? Who are their customers, clients, consumers, or patients?
- **Growth and demand** - What skills and knowledge do they want or value in their employees? What are the areas of growth and what skills might staff need to have?
- **Workplace culture** - How does the organisation's values, ethos or mission align with your own? What is the culture of the organisation? (For example, is it a government department with a focus on public service, an innovative start-up that is disrupting a sector or a large multinational company expanding across Australia?) Each of these types of organisations will have a different workplace culture consisting of formal and informal rules, values, attitudes, and expectations of their staff.
- **Roles** – What types of jobs and career pathways are available? What does the role involve? Which team does the role belong to and what work are they responsible for?
- **Opportunities** – How do they recruit? What is their recruitment process?
- **Hiring manager** – Who is it? What is their role, experience, and expertise?
- **Strategy** - What is the organisation's strategic direction?

- **Business model** - If it is a private organisation, what is their point of difference? What are their key markets? Which organisations are their main competitors and how are they performing against them? Do they have a local, regional, national, or international focus?
- **Leaders** – Who are the key people in the organisation? Who is in their leadership team?
- **Trends** - What are the current issues or trends in the industry sector? What challenges is the organisation facing? How has the pandemic impacted them? What about future challenges?
- **History** - Who founded the organisation and why?
- **Structure** - How is the organisation structured?

There are a variety of sources for your research including: an in-depth look at the organisation's website, search engines, social media especially LinkedIn, YouTube, the job description, news stories, people you know who work or volunteer with them, any experience you have had from placements, internships or volunteering etc and lastly, employees you have met at guest lectures, panels, expos, careers fairs or events.

Not only can thorough research help you to decide whether the organisation is right for you, but it can assist you to tailor your application or approach towards a hiring manager. To boost your chances of success, make sure you read through the sections below and follow the tips.

5.1 APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are embedded in the recruitment process of many organisations and the rise of AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools mean ATS will be an integral part of the hiring landscape for the near future. An Applicant Tracking System uses software to assist employers and recruiters to manage every aspect of recruiting and hiring staff. Information from applicants is uploaded and organised in a database. The ATS saves time and money as employers and recruiters can easily access, sort, and search the database. Be aware that job sites like Indeed and LinkedIn have their own in-built ATS.

Large graduate employers commonly receive between 4,000 to 8,000 applications for their graduate programs every year (source: Australian Association of Graduate Employers). Given this volume, ATS make the recruitment process easier for employers as the software can quickly and automatically screen out unsuitable applications. These unsuitable applications will not be viewed by human eyes.

Reasons for applications to be screened out are determined by each employer and might include not meeting eligibility criteria such as degree type, date of degree completion, residency /citizenship requirements or geographic location and so on. Unfortunately, some candidates may have their applications rejected inadvertently if they have not made their application suitable for an Applicant Tracking System. Remaining candidates are ranked in order of potential interest to the employer.

How to Optimise your Application

Although Applicant Tracking Systems highlight top candidates, sometimes quality candidates do not make it through the filtering process if they have not submitted an ATS-friendly application. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the information you submit on the online application form as well as documents you attach (for

example your resume, cover letter and responses to key selection criteria) are in a searchable format. Sometimes when an ATS uploads information into the database, key details are distorted or not imported from an application. To reduce the chance of this happening, you need to:

- **Use Keywords**

ATS identify the best candidates by scanning applications for specific keywords, pre-determined by each employer, and commonly found in the job advert or position description. These keywords relate to the job requirements and might be skills, qualities, software, experiences, values of the organisation, geographic location and so on. This means you need to match the exact language used by each employer. For example, if an employer consistently mentions they are seeking someone who is “adaptable” you would use this term not interchangeable words such as “flexible” or “versatile” etc. It also means you need to tailor your resume, cover letter and any key selection criteria document for every single job you apply for. The other benefit of using key words in your application is that when a member of the Human Resources team or the Hiring Manager reads the document, the words will resonate with them and help to demonstrate you are a good fit for the role.

- **Use a standard format and ATS- friendly fonts**

Infographic resumes might look great, but they can confuse an ATS - if it is able to read the document at all. Instead, choose a standard resume format and well-known fonts. A list of ATS-approved fonts include Arial, Calibri, Cambria, Garamond, Georgia, Helvetica, Palatino, Tahoma, Times New Roman and Verdana (source: Job Scan).

Use consistent formatting throughout the document for outlining dates, education, and jobs. Ensure section headings are straightforward such as “Education,” “Employment” etc rather than anything unusual or too smart. Avoid tables, columns, images, pictures, shading, non-standard bullet points (such as stars and checkboxes) or putting key information only in Headers or Footers – again these may become lost or cause errors when the document is uploaded into the database.

- **Spell out acronyms**

Use both the full and abbreviated versions of key words and skills, for example - “Master of Business Administration (MBA)” to increase searchability.

- **Follow instructions**

Ensure you submit the right documents in the exact format requested by the employer (for example don’t submit a PDF document if the employer specifies a Word format). Some ATS cannot read formats such as a PDF document and your application will be automatically rejected.

Resource

For further information about Applicant Tracking Systems, visit Job Scan. <https://www.jobscan.co/>

Use a Job Scan test to see how well your resume or cover letter matches a specific job description. La Trobe University students and recent graduates can access an extra 5 free scans a month by clicking on the promo la-trobe link on this Career Hub page. <https://latrobe.careerhub.com.au/students/links/detail/763>

5.2 ONLINE APPLICATIONS

Many employers of Australian graduates use online application forms as part of the recruitment process. With their use being widespread and a simple process for candidates, it is easy for large numbers of candidates to apply. Figures indicate that large graduate employers screen out over 70% of applicants during this first point in the job application process (source: Australian Association of Graduate Employers). Completing an online application is therefore an important part of the recruitment process and should not be regarded as a formality. Employers want to see quickly and easily how well candidates meet the requirements. They search for quality applications which consist of:

- Evidence of the applicant's skills, experience, and qualities
- Clear, concise, and well-structured writing
- Strong attention to detail and their instructions followed

Above all, a quality application is a tailored document that matches each employer's specific requirements. Generic applications which consist of the same document submitted to multiple employers, are quickly detected, and filtered out.

Tips for Online Application Success

- **Understand how an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) filters job applications**

When you apply for a job online, your application is likely to be processed first by an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) before it *may* be seen by the employer. Make sure you have read the section about ATS on pages 30-31 to learn how you can optimise your application to get through one.

- **Do your research into the organisation**

A key aspect of submitting a quality application is to research the company and the role, or graduate program. Ensure you read through the organisation's website, look at their social media, attend any (virtual) expos or presentations where the employer is present and speak to anyone you know who works for that organisation or in that industry. Often employers will provide a lot of information about what they are looking for in candidates so keep their requirements in mind and think about what's behind each question when writing your responses.

- **Ask yourself is this what you want and are you qualified for the role?**

Think about what you can offer, consider is this what you want, and do you meet the criteria? Often graduates apply for jobs that don't really match their skills, interests, or experience. Instead focus on what you want and use your time and energy to concentrate on roles that are suitable for you.

- **Familiarise yourself with the application process ahead of the deadline**

If possible, read through or print the application before you start answering questions. This gives you an opportunity to think carefully and provide relevant answers to the questions. Check for word limits, document formats, deadlines, other instructions, and what resources you need such documents to upload, contact details of referees and so on.

- **Diarise the application closing date and submit your application well before then**

Many employers will close applications as soon as they have enough suitable applicants, so don't wait until the closing date to submit your application. In addition, your computer or the employer's website might encounter technical difficulties as the deadline approaches, so you might miss out.

- **Allow more time than you think you need**

Approximately half of all people who start an application don't finish it and it's usually because they haven't allowed sufficient time to write it. Allow 1.5-2 hours per application (assuming your job application documents are already prepared) as well as time to create an account on the employer or third party's website.

- **Read and follow instructions carefully**

Make sure you read all instructions, so you don't miss any steps or crucial information. Does the application have to be completed in one sitting or can it be done over time? Most will allow you to work on the application over time and save it as you go before you submit it, but you do need to check this. Usually, it is better to draft your responses in a separate Word document to easily check word or character limits, refine and proof-read what you have written. If you need to complete the application in one go, make sure that you have drafted answers in advance and that you have allowed sufficient time to answer all questions comprehensively. Ensure you do stick to character or word limits as applications that exceed these limits can get excluded.

- **Use the correct writing style and avoid errors**

An online application needs to be written in a professional, slightly more formal tone - not the informal style of an email. Proof-read to ensure that your grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct - triple check the spelling of the employer's name. Many applications are rejected because of incorrect or poor use of English.

- **Ensure you provide a response to all questions**

Complete all the required fields in the application. If a section does not apply to you, write "Not Applicable" rather than leaving the question blank as the application could be marked incomplete and rejected. Similarly, avoid referring the reader to your resume, instead use the opportunity to answer the question properly.

- **Attach all documents as requested**

If you don't attach the documents the employer asks for, it may delay or jeopardise your application. Pay attention to the format that attached documents must be in (for example, Word, or PDF etc). If you need to provide a transcript of academic results, check if an official transcript is required at this stage. If you aren't sure whether an official transcript is required, ensure you read the website thoroughly before you contact the organisation, and ask.

- **Keep a copy of your submitted application**

You may not be able to access a copy of the completed application form once you submit it, so save or print a copy. This will allow you to prepare more thoroughly for later stages in the recruitment process such as an interview.

Responding to Questions on the Application

Employers gather targeted information to compare candidates and determine eligibility for the role(s).

Requirements will vary depending on the employer and industry.

You might be asked for information on a range of topics including:

- Personal information such as your name and contact details
- Role and /or department you are applying for
- Academic information including achievements, reasons for your choice of major or degree
- Employment experience
- Volunteering, placement, or internship experience
- Residency, citizenship, or visa status
- Extra-curricular activities such as sports, community involvement
- Professional association membership or professional registration details
- Referees
- Your motivation for applying
- Behavioural questions about your skills, abilities, or qualities

Questions which ask about your motivation, or behavioural questions about your skills, abilities and qualities require time, thought, and research to answer well.

i). Questions about your motivation for applying

Example questions include:

- Why have you applied for this role?
- What interests you about working for our organisation?
- What do you think you could contribute to the work done by this organisation?
- Why are you interested in a career in... [discipline or occupation]?
- What research have you done into our organisation?

Responding to questions about motivation

Employers want to see you are interested in both the role and the organisation. They are keen to know how your values align with the organisation, how well you would fit into the team and the organisation's culture.

Employers report that they are tired of hearing cliched responses, so this is an ideal opportunity for you to stand out. Illustrate the research you have conducted into the company to show you understand their purpose, have a realistic understanding of what the position entails and have a genuine interest in working for them. Consider:

- What is your motivation to build a career in this industry?
- Why are you enthusiastic about this specific position and organisation?
- Does the position link to a longer-term career goal? How?
- What genuinely interests you about the organisation's services/ products/ programs?
- Did you do well in subjects relevant to the position?
- Have you had work experience that gave you an insight into the work?
- Will this position allow you to use skills you enjoy developing?
- Have you spoken to or read about current or former employees who enjoy the work?

Sample response

Why are you interested in a career in audit? (250-word limit)

A career in audit has attracted me since I completed a first-year *Auditing in practice* subject, achieving a distinction. This subject included working on real case studies involving independent audits of financial information for multinational companies. I gained an insight into the intellectually challenging work of an auditor and enjoyed using my analytical skills to assess how clients in these case studies could be supported to comply with regulations.

To learn about a career in auditing, I attended a Pitcher Partners student day where I had the opportunity to work-shadow a Tax Auditor to observe their daily work. During the day I was able to speak to two other auditors about their careers and the realities of auditing. I also gained an appreciation of the need for clear communication when liaising with clients, and it made me keen to utilise the communication and teamwork skills I have developed from employment as a sales assistant and coaching sporting teams in a career as an auditor.

In my current part-time role as an administrative assistant for a law firm, I am required to undertake varied research and complete client documentation within tight deadlines. My responsibilities also include taking accurate notes of client meetings on behalf of the legal team. I enjoy this work as it allows me to develop skills such as attention to detail, commercial awareness, and critical thinking which I understand to be vital to the effectiveness of an auditor.

ii).Behavioural questions about your skills, abilities, or qualities

Some online applications include behavioural questions which ask about your skills, abilities, or personal qualities in relation to the role. Behavioural questions assume that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. Employers identify key skills, abilities or qualities that are necessary to perform in a specific role such as analytical skills, communication skills or the ability to work in a team. These skills or competencies then form the basis of questions. By asking questions about an applicant's thought processes and actions in challenging past situations, the employer can look for evidence of these skills. Behavioural questions are broad to allow applicants to draw upon a range of situations. They usually start with "Tell us about a time when..." "Give an example of...." or "Describe a situation when..."

Example questions include:

- Tell us about a time when you saw an opportunity and drove it forward? How did you spot the opportunity?
- Describe a time when you led a team to a positive result.
- Give an example of when you demonstrated a high level of customer service in a pressured situation. Why was it pressured? How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a time when you had to interact with a difficult person. How did you manage the situation?

Use STAR to respond to behavioural questions

To respond to behavioural questions, analyse each question to identify the skill(s) sought by the employer. Think of specific examples from a wide range of past experiences from work, university, volunteering, placements, internships, sports, and other activities. When writing your answer, focus on what you did, not what others did, or what you could have done.

The STAR technique (**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult) provides a framework to structure your answers to behavioural questions. Employers will expect you to use the STAR format. (See examples on pages 36 and 51)

Situation - Describe the situation you were in. Include the context, details, and how long ago it was. (briefly)

Task - What was the challenge or problem you were facing? Build a concise picture for the reader. (briefly)

Action - What did you do? How did you manage the situation? Set out the steps you took and be specific.

Result - What was the outcome? How effective was your action? What did you learn?

Provide the greatest amount of detail in the Action section (especially) and the Result section as employers focus on these aspects of your answer. Behavioural questions require self-reflection, so it is important to allow time to think and to select good examples that demonstrate your strengths and skills. Sometimes the questions are very broad so you can never have enough examples of how you approached or managed something – as long as it is genuine and not made up.

You might also encounter questions about unfavourable outcomes such as team conflict or an inability to finish a project on time and so on. Use the same STAR technique and focus on what you tried to do to ensure a successful outcome and what you learnt from the situation.

If the employer has not specified a word limit, write at least one to two paragraphs explaining how you demonstrated the skill or quality. It is likely you will also encounter these types of questions at an interview.

Sample response to a behavioural question

Question: Tell us about a time when you had to manage a stressful situation

Example answer:

A year ago, I was working part-time for Target in the store's loading bay at Northlands Shopping Centre. We had just had a large shipment come in and we were under pressure to get the goods out on to the shelves prior to a massive sale. **[Situation]**

I was on shift with a colleague when he accidentally cut his hand quite badly with a sharp knife. Blood started pouring from the wound. I was the only person in the loading bay at the time. **[Task or challenge]**

My colleague kept looking at his bleeding hand and feeling faint, so I calmly, but firmly told him not to look at his injury. I quickly applied pressure to the wound, then got a bandage from the first aid box and a chair for him to sit on. I reassured my colleague that he would be ok as I knew I needed to keep him calm. While I was doing that I was thinking and prioritising the most important things I should do to manage the situation.

Next, I phoned for an ambulance and gave clear instructions of our location. I phoned local security staff so they could direct the ambulance and phoned my supervisor to inform her of the situation. I sat with my colleague, continuing to apply pressure to the wound and keeping him calm by distracting him with funny stories while we waited. **[Action]**

My colleague was taken to hospital for micro-surgery and did not lose his finger as the ambulance officers had been concerned about this. My supervisor was pleased that I had managed the situation in a calm and level-headed manner and nominated me for the next advanced first aid course. She also gave me first choice of shifts when the next roster was drawn up. **[Result]**

5.3 RESUMES

A resume is a marketing document to showcase your unique skills and attributes to potential employers. It details your qualifications, work experience and accomplishments. It is *not* your biography, so you need to be selective about the information you present to an employer. Graduate recruiters will spend between 20 seconds and 2 minutes on average, scanning your resume before deciding whether to shortlist you. In many instances, an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is embedded in the recruitment process which as mentioned earlier, is artificial intelligence that automatically scans the content of each resume to determine its relevance for the role. Make sure you have read the section on Applicant Tracking Systems on pages 30-31 for key information on how to optimise your resume for an ATS.

Your resume needs to be clear, concise, and relevant. For many graduates, the education section will be the most important section followed by any relevant experience such as placements, internships, or voluntary work. The order may vary for mature age students who will need to highlight their transferable skills and the additional benefits they bring from their employment and life experience.

Tailor your resume for each job application so that you clearly demonstrate to potential employers how you meet their specific requirements. Generic resumes that have been written for any company are easy to detect and are disliked by all employers. They are usually rejected in the initial round of the selection process as they do not include key words or focus on information relevant to that specific role and employer.

Before creating a resume consider:

- Your unique combination of skills and experience and how these relate to what the employer is looking for, and
- How to market this persuasively whilst being clear, concise, and relevant.

Your resume needs to give employers clear evidence of the qualifications, skills, experience, and qualities you have that match their specific job and workplace or organisational requirements.

Resume Sections

There is no one right way to organise and present the sections on your resume. It will depend on what skills, experience, and qualifications you have to offer and the industry sector.

The order of the sections is flexible, but a general principle is to place the information most relevant to the job you are applying for on the first page, with less relevant information towards the end of the document. Hiring managers and recruiters spend the most amount of time on Page 1 so this is the most important part of your resume. It is common to present information such as your education or employment experience in reverse chronological order (that is, to list the current or most recent activity first working back to older activities).

Personal details

This is always the first section and includes your preferred name, email, and phone number. Ensure your email address sounds professional and have a voicemail function on your phone in case an employer needs to contact you. Employers like to be reassured they have phoned the correct person and that a message will reach you as opposed to sending a SMS of their number. A home address is not mandatory while including your LinkedIn profile URL (assuming it is up to date) is a good idea.

Career profile/summary or objective

Your career objective should be concise and adapted to the job you are applying for. A career objective is a short pitch about yourself.

Example career objective

I am a final year Arts student with a major in politics and a minor in crime, justice, and legal studies. I am seeking a graduate role in government where I can contribute my research and analytical skills to the development of policies in youth justice and community engagement.

For many graduates, or soon-to-be graduates it is more effective to write a career profile or summary. This is a short introductory description of you that interests and engages the reader and encourages them to read further. It is a statement of what you can offer an employer, as opposed to a career objective which is a statement of what you are seeking from an employer.

When writing your career profile or summary, avoid broad, generic statements such as “I am wanting to fully develop my skills and knowledge”. Instead, think about the specific experiences, skills, personal qualities, interests, and career goals that are unique to you. Modify it to each employer so that you draw out the most relevant skills, experiences, and interests for that position and organisation.

A career profile or summary typically might contain:

- The areas of the discipline or field you are most interested in.
- The relevant skills, strengths, experiences, values, and knowledge that you want to highlight which show compatibility with the role and employer.
- What your career goals are or what you would like to learn more about.

Example Career Profile

Career Profile

- *Focused final year social work student with a drive to support youth and people with disabilities to participate in the community and lead fulfilling lives.*
- *Strong communication skills developed from third year social work placement at Melbourne City Mission, voluntary work with the Big Brother Big Sister Foundation and 3 years in customer service roles.*
- *Demonstrated capacity to build a respectful working alliance with clients and their carers, convey empathy, and advocate for clients' rights.*

Education

In this section include:

- Full course title
- Institution (La Trobe University, not 'Latrobe')
- Dates studied (you can include your expected completion date if you are currently studying)
- Majors (if applicable or relevant)
- Highlight major projects, research papers, thesis, etc (if relevant)

In certain circumstances, it may be helpful to include a selection of subjects you have studied. For example, if they're particularly relevant to the job you're applying for. Only include your results in your resume if they are well above average. It is optional to include your secondary education, however as you near the end of your course this is something you can remove unless there is a specific achievement you wish to highlight, or it shows compatibility with the organisation. For example, if you are applying for a role with an organisation that has similar values as your school or is in a similar regional geographic location.

If you have completed other qualifications, such as a TAFE certificate or a short course (e.g. Responsible Service of Alcohol or First Aid Certificate), consider the best place for this on your resume. If it is directly relevant to the job, include it in this section below your degree; if not, it could be placed in a section towards the end of your resume called 'Training', 'Certificates' or 'Other Qualifications'.

Relevant experience

If you have had practical experience, either paid or unpaid, in the industry in which you want to work such as an internship, placement, voluntary role, or industry-based learning, it's useful to have a section titled "Relevant Experience" or "Industry-related experience". This draws the reader's attention to this section. Ensure you add specific information about the nature of the experience such as the role, dates, the organisation's name, and the key skills and experience you developed. See the resume example on pages 43-44.

Employment

In this section list your current or most recent employment followed by the next most recent through to the least recent role. Include details such as:

- Job title
- Company name (you might include a short company description if it is not well known)
- Dates you worked there (in months and years)
- Key tasks or responsibilities using action verbs to convey the skills involved
- Any achievements

If you have had several jobs with similar responsibilities, you may group them under one sub-heading. For example, if you have had multiple jobs as a waiter, list your job title as 'Waiter' and below that list the dates and places where you worked as a waiter in order of most recent to oldest. Underneath, list the responsibilities of those waiting jobs as though it was one position.

All employment (full-time, casual, part-time and voluntary) is important when you are starting your career as it illustrates you have an understanding of workplace expectations and have developed transferable skills such as time management, communication skills and the ability to work in a team.

Achievements

Achievements can be a way to stand out from other applicants. They signal to employers important qualities such as excellence, initiative, innovation, teamwork, leadership skills and drive. Achievements are what you have done that is above and beyond your day to day responsibilities and are about results and recognition.

Examples of achievements

- Holding positions of responsibility, which may include training new staff members
- Increasing or exceeding targets e.g. in customer service or sales roles
- Running a project or initiative in your university, community, or workplace
- Winning an award or prize
- Achieving high results in exams, assessments, or workplace initiatives
- Receiving customer service or quality awards
- Achievements outside of your studies or workplace, such as raising money for charity, being elected to a committee
- Achieving as an individual or group in areas such as sport, music, and any other extra-curricular activities
- Being awarded a promotion
- Working as part of a team to achieve a superior result
- Saving time or money for an organisation
- Identifying or solving workplace problems

Remember to quantify and qualify achievements. For example, how much money did you raise for charity, why were you nominated for an award or on what basis did you receive an academic scholarship? If you introduced a new complaints procedure what was the percentage reduction in customer complaints or what was the specific positive feedback you received from a mystery shopper? Emphasise your achievements when summarising your academic, employment, volunteering, and extracurricular experiences. You can list your achievements beneath the specific activity such as your degree or as a separate list beneath an 'Achievements' heading.

Skills

It is usually a good idea to have a skills section on your resume, with sub-headings for the skills that you want to highlight (for example Communication Skills, Teamwork, Leadership Skills). For each of these headings, use dot points followed by action verbs and statements that demonstrate how you acquired or developed the skill. Try to ensure that the skills listed match those required by each employer. Use the exact wording the employer does (read further about this in the section on Applicant Tracking Systems on pages 30-31).

Example skills statement

Organisational Skills

- Planned and coordinated training sessions for the Eltham Junior Basketball Team for 3 years.
- Planned, managed and filled fortnightly rosters for up to 12 staff at the Toys 'R' Us Brunswick store for 18 months including during two peak Christmas periods.

The most important thing about a skills section is to provide evidence of how you gained the skill rather than just listing skills. Simply having a list of skills does not give the reader any context and it is a wasted opportunity for you to expand on your suitability. If you're not sure of what skills you have, try this resource:

Identifying transferable skills

Discipline-specific experience and skills

Ensure you use language relevant to the occupation or industry you're applying for and include discipline-specific information but minimise jargon. For example, if you are a nursing or allied health student include details of your placements. If you are an IT or engineering student list your technical skills such as software skills.

If you have completed a research degree, add sections documenting your publications, conferences, and presentations.

Volunteering

Volunteering experience is highly regarded by employers as it shows commitment, drive and it can be a demonstration of how your values fit with a potential employer. Present this information in the same way you format your employment history.

Professional membership

Include membership of industry/professional bodies, as it indicates a genuine commitment to your profession. If you haven't joined a professional association as a student, consider doing so; it is very helpful in developing industry knowledge, building your networks and finding out about volunteer, internships and other opportunities while you study and when you graduate. See page 16 for more information.

If you have attended any professional development activities such as webinars, short courses, seminars, workshops, conferences or have completed a relevant MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), these can be listed under a 'Professional development' sub-heading.

Extracurricular activities

If you have been involved in sports clubs, student clubs or societies, include details of your involvement. Your focus should be on highlighting how these activities have contributed to developing skills valued by employers. Include the length of time you have actively participated in the activity, as this helps to demonstrate your commitment and determination to achieve a goal.

Referees

A referee is anyone who can comment on your work or education history, skills, personal qualities, or experience. Aim to have two or three referees. Choose professional referees (not a family member) such as someone who has supervised you during employment or volunteering jobs. Academics can be used, but only ask those who know you well. Always ask your referee for permission before including them in the referee section at the end of the resume.

Generally, employers will only conduct reference checks on candidates they have interviewed. It is not compulsory to list your referees, however, if an employer requests details of referees as part of the

application process, then you need to include these. Include their full name, job title, organisation, contact details and their relationship to you if it is not clear (for example Former supervisor).

If you provide a referee's contact details to a potential employer, contact your referee with information about the job and let them know they might receive a phone call or email. When you have attended a job interview, it can be useful to update your referees with any new information you have learned about the role. This means your referees can prepare and be ready to highlight your relevant experiences, skills, or key qualities. Your referees are very important people, keep them informed and let them know you appreciate their help.

Layout and Presentation Tips

- Australian employers generally expect resumes to be 2-3 pages in length for a new graduate (depending on the profession), and 3-4 pages for someone with more experience.
- Keep the layout and formatting simple and consistent. Headings and sub-headings should be uniform and stand out from the text in the document. Use bold, underlining or italics selectively to focus the reader on your resume's highlights – but don't use all three at once!
- Use a standard font used in most versions of Microsoft Word. If you use a font that is unusual it might mean your resume is not read properly by an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) or it creates formatting problems. ATS- approved fonts include Arial, Calibri, Cambria, Garamond, Georgia, Helvetica, Palatino, Tahoma, Times New Roman and Verdana. Infographic resumes cause errors for an Applicant Tracking System and are best avoided.
- Size 11 or 12 is usually best for the content, and 14-16 font for the headings. It will depend on the font you use. What can look okay on a screen can look different when printed, therefore print your document, check it and if necessary, make changes.
- Use the correct tense. If you are describing a past job, use the past tense. If you are describing your current job, use the present tense.
- Try to not have large 'chunks' of text, instead use dot points. Have a maximum of 5-6 dot points for each section, and where possible ensure the most relevant dot points are first.
- It's best to use simple black and white for your resume or alternatively professional colours such as dark blue or dark green (headings only). However, if you are in a creative profession such as a Graphic Designer, the resume is often where you can show more creativity. It may be wise to have one version modified for an ATS and a more creative version to hand to a hiring manager in person.
- Unless specified, avoid a photo on your resume as this can distract employers from the content. Similarly, as employers are not allowed to discriminate against candidates on the basis of personal features, avoid information such as your age/ date of birth, marital status, gender, religion, ethnicity and so on.
- Lastly, proof-read your resume, checking for spelling and grammar errors. Attention to detail impresses potential employers whilst spelling and grammar errors will mean your application does not progress to the next stage. Make sure your spell check is set for English (Aus) not English (US), for example you want to use words such as "centre" not "center" and "organisation" not "organization" in your document.

Sample Resume (Note 10 font is used for space purposes in this e-book)

Jessica Tan

0411 987 654

jessicatan@students.latrobe.edu.au

[linkedin.com/in/jessicatan/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jessicatan/)

Profile

Final year marketing student seeking an entry-level marketing role. Strong creative and research skills demonstrated through the design of marketing campaigns and strategies to increase brand recognition and customer retention. Experienced in event planning, brochure ware development and the use of social media to enhance online brand presence.

Education

- 2019 – Current **Bachelor of Business (Marketing)**
 La Trobe University
(Anticipated completion date: Nov 2021)
- Invited to join the Golden Key International Honour Society (membership offered to top 15% of academic achievers)
 - La Trobe University Student Career Mentoring Program (2020)

Professional Memberships

- 2019 – Current **Australian Marketing Institute**
 Student Member

Relevant Experience

- Jan 2021 – Current **Volunteer Fundraiser**, Bendigo Community Health
- Assist in planning and project-managing fundraising events, coordinating advertising campaigns and managing information databases
- Achievements
- Designed a series of brochures marketing family and children's services
 - Significantly increased participant numbers at the annual Bendigo Health Run via a vigorous social media marketing campaign
- Nov-Dec 2020 **Marketing Intern** - Ideas Marketing
- Attended meetings with clients including Krazy Confectionary, VIC Dairy Products and NutriWhip
 - Assisted in product sampling campaigns through the development of promotional materials and coordination of in-store demonstrations
 - Prepared work-in-progress documents and project reports
- Achievements
- Organised and delivered a highly successful in-store promotion campaign of NutriLight Tea across several supermarket chains
 - Performed market analysis and research on competition for several key clients
- 2019 – 2020 **Duty Manager and Promotions Officer** - Village Cinemas
- Supervised staff in Candy Bar, floor and ticket box, including open/close procedures
 - Produced marketing programs to support film releases
 - Developed, as part of a team, ongoing marketing activities to increase sales in Candy Bar

Achievements

- Successfully organised and promoted three red carpet movie premiere events, which included catering, invitations, post film entertainment and local newspaper coverage
- Created a procedural manual for events hosting which was implemented and used across several Village Cinema sites

Other Work Experience

2018 – Current

Bar Attendant - Black Swan Hotel

- Train new bar staff and waiters in customer service skills, financial transactions and conflict resolution
- Prepare fortnightly rosters for 25 staff members
- Serve up to 200 patrons during peak business hours
- Conduct identification checks to ensure legal entry

Extra-Curricular Activities

2019 – Current

Activities Co-ordinator - La Trobe University Business Students Club

- Plan and coordinate valuable experiences and activities for club members
- Publicise upcoming marketing and networking events
- Source, edit and update content for the business club website

Relevant Skills (ensure these skills relate to the specific job criteria)

Communication Skills

- Hosted the marketing launch of a movie premiere at Village Cinemas
- Wrote monthly newsletter articles for Bendigo Community Health as a volunteer

Analytical Skills

- Conducted research for second year project into the way in which pharmaceuticals are marketed. This required the sophisticated use of internet resources, the development of questionnaires and detailed analysis of results. Achieved High Distinction for project.

Teamwork Skills

- Worked with marketing officers at Bendigo Community Health to develop social media strategy for fundraising events
- Demonstrated the capacity to work as a collaborative team member during several group assignments throughout tertiary studies

Planning and Organising Skills

- Organised promotional events, including catering, invitations, venues and publicity
- Have successfully managed part-time work commitments and study while maintaining HD average through effective time management

Referees

Dr. Amanda Lewis
Marketing Lecturer
La Trobe University
Ph: 5444 7222
Email: alewis@latrobe.edu.au

Emma Hansen
Supervisor
Ideas Marketing
Ph: 9479 1000
Email: ehansen@ideasmarketing.com.au

5.4 COVER LETTERS

The cover letter is your chance to introduce yourself and explain why you are the best candidate for the position. Write a custom-made letter for each position – generic or template cover letters are obvious to employers and show a lack of effort and genuine interest. They are very unlikely to get you to an interview. Employers want to see a tailored cover letter as this reflects interest and knowledge of their organisation, effort, and attention to detail.

Your cover letter should be one A4 page in length unless the employer or advertisement specifies otherwise. Longer cover letters are usually not well regarded by employers because of the large number of applications received.

Make sure your writing is concise and use a standard business letter format and style, with fairly formal English. If possible, personally address the letter to the person responsible for hiring including their full name and position title. If you can't find out this information from the job advertisement, organisation's website, or through LinkedIn, try contacting the organisation to find out. Otherwise, consider addressing your cover letter to the Graduate Recruitment Coordinator. See the sample cover letter on page 47.

Some employers no longer require a cover letter, especially for graduate programs. However, they may ask you questions in an online application about why you are applying for the opportunity. Some elements of a cover letter will be useful in responding to these questions.

How to write an effective cover letter

Paragraph One

State the job you are applying for (include the job reference number if applicable), and how or where you found out about the job.

Paragraph Two

Explain why you are interested in applying for this particular job with this specific organisation.

This is your chance to demonstrate your understanding of the organisation and to show your enthusiasm for the job or company. These comments need to be backed up with evidence of *how* you know this information. This is where your previous research is important. Mention if you spoke to a member of the graduate recruitment team or to past graduates, and where – for example at an expo, employer, or industry event. Briefly explain how this experience helped you decide to apply. Other reasons may relate to case studies you have read of previous graduates – what inspired you about the work they were doing? Or perhaps you are interested in their services, products, or a specific program? Whatever your reasons, make them specific to that organisation and explain why and how you can contribute to what they do. Re-read your draft paragraph – if you can change the company name and the reasons for your interest still make sense, then it's clear your cover letter is too generic.

Paragraph Three and Four

Explain how you meet the requirements of the job (these should be listed in the advertisement or position description). Make sure you provide evidence of how you developed your skills and outline your experience. As much as possible, try to match your unique set of skills and experience to the employer's requirements.

Paragraph Five

Explain that you look forward to the opportunity to attend an interview for the position.

Unsolicited cover letters

This type of cover letter is used to approach an organisation for potential opportunities that have not been advertised. Prior to approaching the organisation, conduct research to identify the skills, attributes and experience that might be considered valuable to the organisation. Talk to people in the industry or occupation, look for recent job adverts, use LinkedIn to research the organisation and the skills of its employees and utilise avenues for meeting employers such as expos and careers events.

Use the same one-page business letter structure and layout with four to five paragraphs as a standard cover letter (see example on the next page) - but adapt it. Outline in the first paragraph the type of opportunity you are interested in such as an entry level or graduate role, provide examples of job titles where appropriate. In the second paragraph explain how and why you identified the organisation as a place where you would like to work. State your areas of interest, key skills, and career goals and how these align with the organisation's needs or focus. It's an opportunity to impress by demonstrating the research you have done. Use paragraphs 3-4 to provide evidence for the skills and qualities of value to the organisation. Lastly, in the final paragraph thank the employer and indicate you would welcome the opportunity to discuss the potential for a graduate/entry level role. Sign off the letter with "Yours sincerely" if it is addressed to someone by name or "Yours Faithfully" if addressed to Dear Sir/Madam. There is more information about how to approach employers of interest in Section 4.3 (pages 25-28).

Sample Cover Letter

Jessica Tan

0411 987 654

jessicatan@latrobe.edu.au

[linkedin.com/in/jessicatan/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jessicatan/)

Ms Joanna Smith
ABC Products
123 New Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

6th April 2021

Re: Graduate Employment Program 2022

Dear Ms Smith,

I am writing to you to apply for the 2022 Graduate Employment Program with ABC Products as advertised on Employer Connect.

I am currently in my final year of a Bachelor of Business (Marketing) degree at La Trobe University and am very interested in the prospect of working for ABC Products. I am very familiar with your product range and am particularly passionate about your innovative social media campaign style. Your recent public health campaign #mentalhealthmondays was highly successful in building awareness of such an important issue across all social media platforms. I was fortunate to participate in Bendigo Health's own social media health campaigns which I thoroughly enjoyed. The opportunity therefore to contribute to the social media marketing effort at ABC, holds considerable appeal.

During my time at Bendigo Health, I designed numerous brochures to market family and children's services and coordinated advertising campaigns. At Ideas Marketing I organised and delivered an in-store promotional campaign for Nutrilight Tea, which was highly successful. Both tertiary and marketing experiences have developed my written communication with the completion of written reports and marketing briefs. As a Duty Officer at Village Cinemas, I communicated marketing activities requirements to floor and promotional staff in addition to the development of supporting promotional materials, such as invitations and organising press coverage during premiere events.

I also have well developed analytical skills. In my role as an Intern at Ideas Marketing I undertook market analysis and research on behalf of several key clients. Balancing my tertiary experiences with part time work has honed my ability to plan and organise and I have consistently reviewed priorities, to ensure study deadlines are met. Additionally, during my university course and as part of the Duty team at Village Cinemas, I regularly collaborated with others as part of team effort to deliver projects and promotional initiatives. I am a competent user of Word, Excel and PowerPoint, having used extensively as both a student and in a professional capacity.

In support of my application, I have attached my resume and would welcome the opportunity to attend an interview to discuss my suitability for the 2022 Graduate Employment Program.

Yours sincerely,

Jessica Tan

5.5 RESPONDING TO KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

What are Key Selection Criteria?

Key Selection Criteria (KSC) describe the personal qualities, skills, abilities, knowledge, values, and qualifications needed to perform in a job. Key Selection Criteria usually include skills such as communication, interpersonal, teamwork, analytical or time management skills and so on depending on the role or occupation. KSC are usually required for positions in government, health, education, research and some larger not-for-profit or community organisations.

Key Selection Criteria are central in the recruitment process and are **more important** than a resume in determining which candidates will be invited to an interview. Employers use KSC as a benchmark and assess the suitability of each applicant against each criterion to ensure fairness and consistency. In other words, every applicant is rated on how closely they meet each of the criteria and this determines the overall ranking of applicants. Be aware many organisations will **reject your application** if you fail to address the Key Selection Criteria adequately.

KSC provide more information than a job advert and enable applicants to see what an employer is seeking in their ideal candidate. They can usually be found in the Position Description document.

Example Key Selection Criteria (for a Case Support worker with a community organisation)

Essential

- *Tertiary qualification in Social Work, Youth Work, Community Services, Psychology, Welfare Studies, or related field or working towards a tertiary qualification.*
- *Ability to engage and provide support for children and young people with complex needs*
- *Skilled in written/verbal communication and administrative skills*
- *Ability to promote effective working relationships with other organisations within the region*
- *Demonstrated ability to respond to crisis situations*
- *Understanding of the purpose and expectations of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and demonstrated commitment to contributing to a child safe organisation in both practice and culture.*

Desirable

- *Knowledge and understanding of the home-based care and/or in child protection systems.*
- *Ability to partner with and support carers/family in regard to caring for children and young people*

You will note in this example that there are two types of criteria:

- Essential criteria (sometimes called Important criteria)
- and Desirable criteria (may be called Less important criteria)

Essential criteria are not negotiable criteria as the employer regards these as being critical to performance in the role. Applicants need to meet all, or most, of these criteria to have a chance of progressing to an interview. Desirable criteria are not necessary, but applicants who have experience or knowledge in these areas have an advantage and increase their chances of being interviewed. Ensure you do your best to address both types of criteria when writing an application.

It is also important to address all aspects of each criterion and make sure a part is not overlooked– like you would address all aspects of an exam question. Using the KSC example on the previous page, for criterion 3 applicants would need to provide examples of their written and verbal communication skills as well as their administrative skills. Applicants who omit one aspect such as not outlining an example of verbal communication skills, would be rated lower than candidates who covered all three aspects of the criterion.

How to Write a Good Response to Key Selection Criteria

Employers usually provide instructions on how they want applicants to address the Key Selection Criteria. Occasionally, they may want KSC addressed within a cover letter, but the most common (and default) approach is to create a separate word document with:

- Your name
- The job title
- Position number
- A heading such as ‘Responses addressing Key Selection Criteria’ or ‘Statement of Claims.’

Type all the selection criteria in the same order and exactly as they are written. Use each criterion as a heading and write a response underneath. For each criterion write a short statement which outlines how you satisfy the criterion, providing evidence of the particular skill, quality, or knowledge.

Check for any word limits and if none are specified, aim to keep your response to each criterion to 1/3 to 1/2 of a page. (In most instances, two or three sentences is an insufficient amount of information for an employer to determine if you have that skill, quality, or experience). See the example on page 51.

Steps

- Step 1 – Analyse the criteria. Read it carefully so you understand what each criterion means. Underline key words and phrases such as “Experience in..” “Demonstrated ability to..” “Knowledge of...” to identify what the employer is looking for. For example, demonstrated ability or experience means you have practical experience of it, or have actually done it. If you know in theory how to do something, that is knowledge.
- Step 2- Brainstorm examples. Think of specific examples and situations where you have demonstrated the skills, experience, qualities or gained the knowledge for each criterion. Select the strongest example. Try and use examples from a range of experiences – draw upon current or previous employment, university studies, volunteering, placements, internships, community activities, sports, clubs, and associations.
- Step 3- Support your claims with evidence. This means you need to support your claim to having a particular skill, ability, quality, or knowledge by providing evidence. It is not sufficient to give your opinion and say that you have the quality, ability, or skill.

Give concise, concrete examples of actual situations to demonstrate how you acquired or developed the skill. For example, if you are providing evidence of your ability to work in a team, think about a specific situation when you worked in a team. Explain your role, when it was, what the context was (part time job, sporting team etc), outline what the team's goal was and specifically how you contributed to the achievement of the goal. Include any other behaviours that demonstrate teamwork such as sharing resources, respecting the views or experiences of others, offering support and help to team members and so on.

- Step 4. Structure your response. Start your response with a broad introductory statement which outlines the depth and breadth of your skillset or experience before writing about a specific example. Use the STAR approach when giving an example.

Situation: What was the context or situation you were in?

Task: Describe the task or challenge you encountered.

Action: Outline the specific steps you took to manage the situation.

Result: What was the outcome or results of your action?

For more information about the STAR format, see pages 35-36 as well as the example on the next page.

If you do not have a strong example or relevant experience for a specific criterion:

- Outline how you can learn new skills or knowledge quickly. Provide an example of how you have done this in the past.
- Think laterally. Do you have a related skill that you can describe?
- Indicate you are willing to learn and provide a past example to illustrate this.

The worst thing you can do is to leave a response blank. The employer will notice and is likely to conclude either that you have nothing of relevance or have little interest in learning the skill or knowledge.

Final points

- Many applicants are overlooked or ruled out, because they do not clearly address the Key Selection Criteria. It's important to be specific and provide actual examples. Do not assume the employer will be able to guess what you mean or will be able to read between the lines if you are general or vague with your responses. The onus is on the applicant to clearly demonstrate how they meet the KSC.
- Quality responses to KSC take a lot of effort so allow sufficient time to prepare them.
- Vary your examples rather than using similar examples or examples from the same context.
- Proof-read the document, checking for spelling and grammar errors.

Sample Response to Key Selection Criteria

Responses addressing Key Selection Criteria by Holly March

For the role of Grade 1 Health Professional, Position No. 11111, ABC Hospital.

Criteria 1 - Excellent communication skills (written and verbal) including the ability to adapt communication to suit varying audiences.

I have developed high level written and verbal communication skills from my employment at a local pharmacy, clinical placements, university studies and from volunteering as a Connect Volunteer at La Trobe University. These experiences have involved communicating with different audiences of varying ages, the general public, hospital patients and university students.

I have consistently demonstrated the capacity to adapt my communication to suit the needs of individuals. My role as a part-time sales assistant with ABA Pharmacy involves answering customers' questions and providing product and basic health information in a clear and tactful manner. Two months ago, an elderly customer entered the shop and I could see she was upset and embarrassed by a personal product her doctor had just told her she needed. To minimise her discomfort, I led her to a private part of the pharmacy where our conversation could not be overheard. I listened to the customer and noticed that she was hard of hearing so to improve communication I faced her directly and spoke clearly and distinctly. After I had asked questions to clarify her needs, I selected the two most appropriate products, and outlined the advantages and disadvantages of each to enable the customer to decide. A week later the customer returned and advised the pharmacist that she had really appreciated how patient and sensitive I had been, and she had also advised three of her neighbours to change to ABA Pharmacy for better care and customer service.

In addition, I have developed skills from:

- Communicating with patients ranging in age from teenagers through to elderly adults during my clinical placements. I have developed skills in asking questions, listening, clarifying, and explaining information to patients during client assessments and treatment sessions. I have also ensured timely and accurate documentation of all client appointments using electronic medical records.
- Researching, preparing, and writing university assignments and reports. I have achieved an average of 77% indicating a high calibre of written communication skills.
- Volunteering as a Connect Volunteer where I assisted two cohorts of first year university students to adjust to university life during the first six weeks of semester. My role consisted of maintaining contact with new students via face to face or email to answer their questions, helping them get to know other students and referring them to university support services.

Criteria 2 – Demonstrated ability to....

Note - This is a detailed response and some employers may prefer a shorter response of 250-300 words per criteria. Always follow what each employer wants.

5.6 PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING

Psychometric tests aim to objectively measure attributes like intelligence, aptitude, motivation, and personality. They are often used by employers as part of the selection process for graduate programs and for some graduate roles. They are utilised to assess whether your abilities and personality meet the requirements of the position, and to determine if you will be a good 'fit' for the organisation.

The tests comprise a series of multiple-choice questions usually administered online. You may be asked to complete them at home or at a central location. Psychometric tests may be used in the initial stages of a recruitment process or as one of the activities at an assessment centre during the final stages of recruitment. They are usually one of a variety of assessment methods.

Types of Psychometric Tests

Different types of psychometric tests may be used in the selection process. Each test has its own purpose, and you may be asked to complete more than one test.

Ability or aptitude tests

These tests measure intellectual abilities as well as your potential to learn and understand new information in a limited timeframe. They may measure your numerical, verbal, spatial or problem-solving abilities.

Aptitude and ability tests have right and wrong answers. The tests are usually timed so you need to work quickly and accurately. If you are having trouble with one question, move on to the next and return to it later if you have time. These are the most common type of test used by organisations.

Personality inventories or Emotional intelligence tests

Personality inventories may be used to evaluate your personality and preferred ways of behaving in a work setting. They can provide a useful insight into your behavioural style and preferences, and how you perceive yourself. Tests of emotional intelligence focus on how you understand and manage your emotions.

Both types of inventories have no right or wrong answers, but some answers might be more suitable than others. They are usually untimed and often have sophisticated in-built detectors that can determine if you are trying to build an overly positive or unrealistic impression of yourself. It is best to answer honestly (but not naïvely) and to not be overly deliberate, or pedantic, when completing them. It is also not helpful to try and second guess what you think an employer wants.

Situational judgement tests

Situational judgement tests assess how you approach challenging real-life workplace scenarios. They usually involve a range of hypothetical scenarios and you will be asked to select which option is the most effective course of action for the workplace. When completing this type of test, focus on the competencies/skills and values that are sought by the organisation.

Motivation, values, or occupational interest inventories

These tests are used less frequently and focus on the factors that motivate you in a workplace and your workplace-related beliefs. There are no right or wrong answers, and they aim to determine your degree of compatibility with the organisation.

Computerised Adaptive Testing (CAT)

This is a style of assessment (not a type of psychometric test) that uses technology to tailor psychometric testing to each individual test taker. The computer aims to gauge the test taker's ability level quickly and accurately. As an individual works through the test, the computer adapts the questions based on how well the test taker has performed on the preceding questions. This means the better an individual performs, the harder the questions will become. Questions are usually timed, test takers are unable to skip ahead to questions, or return to previous ones.

Tips for Boosting your Performance

How to prepare for psychometric tests

Research indicates one of the best strategies to prepare and improve your performance is to take practice tests. This helps to familiarise yourself with the types of questions you may be asked.

Also try and find out relevant information from the employer such as:

- The type of tests
- What the tests measure
- How long the tests go for

Make sure you notify the test centre if you have any special requirements such as hearing difficulties and take any required aids such as glasses. Get a good night's sleep before you take the tests.

On the day of testing

Use these strategies to boost your performance.

- Complete the tests when you are alert and rested - which for most people is in the morning.
- Ensure the room you are in is quiet, free of distractions and that you have a stable internet connection.
- Listen to and / or read all instructions carefully.
- Read each question carefully and fully before answering.
- If you are asked to base your answer on the passage of text that you are given, you must do just that – do not base it on your own knowledge of the topic or your opinion.
- Work quickly and accurately. Try not to spend too much time on any one question, move on and return to the question later if you have time.
- Unless it is a computerised adaptive test, the level of difficulty will increase as the test progresses.
- If completing multiple tests, take a break between them to ensure you remain alert.

Final points

- There is a limit on the number of times you can sit the exact same psychometric test – usually only once in every 12 months. This means the results from your first testing session can be used by multiple organisations if they use the exact same test.
- Practice tests provide you with an idea of the types of questions you will be asked. Be aware that the examples used in practice tests are easier than the items in the tests that you will be asked to complete.
- It is common for most candidates to not finish the timed tests.
- If you are required to complete psychometric tests, you should be given feedback and an opportunity to discuss how you performed in relation to others. Make sure that you take advantage of this opportunity.

Resources

Take a few free online practice tests from the following websites to familiarise yourself with what to expect.

- SHL (part of CEB Global) is a major psychometric test publisher.
<https://www.shl.com/shldirect/en/practice-tests>
- Revelian – Australian psychometric testing company. Link to information on tests including game-based assessments for applicants and job seekers.
<https://www.revelian.com/jobseeker/>
<https://www.revelian.com/jobseeker/example-assessments/>
- Assessment Day – have a wide range of free practice tests.
https://www.assessmentday.co.uk/aptitudetests_numerical.htm
- Sova Assessments - a provider of psychometric tests. Link to candidate preparation page including a candidate guide.
<https://www.sovaassessment.com/candidate-preparation-hub/>
- University of Kent – How to pass graduate aptitude tests.
<https://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/tests/psychotests.html>
- The Psychometric Institute
https://www.psychometricinstitute.com.au/Psychometric_Test_Practice_Online_Guide.html
- Computerised adaptive testing – Great YouTube videos about the principles behind Computerised Adaptive Testing (CAT) but they are in the context of the American GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9-D3nMtIhg>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg8krCcB6GI>

5.7 INTERVIEWS

Employers use job interviews to gather more detailed information about applicants' skills, knowledge, experiences, and values. The interview provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate your awareness of your key attributes, and your ability to communicate that information effectively. Although the specific wording of questions may differ from interview to interview, there are three key questions that all interviewers are seeking the answer to:

- **Can you do the job?** Do you have the skills, knowledge, and experience to be able to perform in the role?
- **Will you do the job?** Do you have the right attitude and work ethic? What's your motivation for applying? Are you enthusiastic about the position and the organisation?
- **Will you fit in?** Do you fit within the organisation's culture and workplace environment? Are your work habits and personality a good match for the position? Do your career goals, values and expectations align with the role? How will you fit in with the existing team and the manager?

Types of Interview Formats

Phone interviews

Many large employers will use a phone screening interview to narrow the pool of candidates selected for in-person interviews. The phone interview may be focused on obtaining more details about your motivation, experiences, and skills, or it could involve several behavioural-based questions. (Refer to pages 57, 62, 50-51, 35-36).

Tips for phone interviews

- Treat a phone interview as seriously as a face-to-face interview.
- Ensure your phone is fully charged and that you have good reception.
- Answer your phone in a professional manner. Ensure that your voicemail message is professional.
- Take the call in a quiet place, free from interruptions.
- Speak clearly and smile (you will sound more friendly as smiling changes the tone of your voice).
- Have your resume and application handy but don't be distracted by them.
- Have a notepad and pen to record any important information.
- It's ok to ask to re-schedule the interview if it is a poor time to speak.

Video interviews

Video interviews have become an increasingly popular recruitment tool that allow companies to screen hundreds, if not thousands, of job applicants during the early stages of the hiring process. For these types of interviews, many companies use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assess the performance of candidates based on certain key elements such as body language, facial expressions, word choices and tone of voice.

To maximise your chances of getting past the AI screening, do some trial video calls with friends or family, ask for feedback on your performance and keep practicing until you start to feel more comfortable. You can

also use The Big Interview to learn and practice video interview skills including their new AI Feedback feature. Find out about video interviews with this great article: <https://biginterview.com/video-interview/>

Pre-recorded video interviews

As the name suggests, a pre-recorded (or asynchronous) video interview is one that involves answering questions that have been pre-recorded or appear in writing on the screen and then watched by a recruiter afterwards. As a candidate, you'll be asked to connect to an online platform and your answers will be recorded remotely. There's often a time limit for your answers, and you may or may not be given more than one chance to record each answer.

Live video interviews

Other video interviews will be live, meaning that you will join a video conference in real time via a link that the employer shares with you. Once connected, you will be speaking with an interviewer on the other end.

Tips for video interviews

- Dress professionally – like you would for an in-person interview.
- Make sure your room is well lit and remove any inappropriate items or clutter that may be visible once you're on screen. Avoid any backlighting from windows that may make it difficult for the interviewer/s to see you clearly.
- Ensure that your interview space is free from noise and interruptions.
- Test your video and audio equipment beforehand to make sure everything is working properly.
- Make sure your internet connection is stable and close other apps or windows on your computer that could interrupt the conversation.
- Avoid speaking over the other person as this can mute their microphone momentarily and disrupt the flow of conversation. Let the other person finish speaking then wait a few seconds before giving your response.
- Use non-verbal cues such as nodding and smiling to show you are listening and engaged.
- Importantly, look at your webcam/camera, rather than the computer screen, so that you are 'making eye contact' with the interviewer. Ensure you have the camera or webcam at the right angle so that it captures a straight on image of your head and shoulders.

One on one interviews

This is a common form of interview where one person such as a manager, a recruitment consultant, or human resource manager interviews you. The interview might be highly structured, where they have set questions they will ask, or it may be more informal where the employer tries to get to know you. If you are told that it is only going to be "a chat", you still need to prepare and behave as you would for a formal interview.

Panel interviews

These are very common in larger organisations. The panel may consist of between three and five people, usually the line manager, a HR representative, a team member, or even a person from another department. Each panellist will ask interview questions. Employers use panel interviews to help them make the best decision by getting a range of people to assess the candidates, rather than relying on one person.

Group interviews

In group interviews, you will be in a room with other candidates. These interviews test your communication, leadership, and teamwork skills, amongst others. You are not only judged based on your response to the questions, but also based on the ways that you interact with your peers. Be confident and participate, without dominating. You should listen to other candidates, allow them time to speak, and be respectful even if you don't agree with what they have said.

Behavioural-based interviews (or sometimes called competency-based interviews)

The idea behind behavioural-based interviews is that past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour. Generally, the employer is assessing candidates against a range of competencies, such as teamwork, problem solving, communication, customer service, etc. You'll know when you are being asked a behavioural question, as it will start with "Tell me about a time when..." "Give an example of..." or "Describe a situation when...."

Use examples from your past experiences that demonstrate each skill. Try to think of a different example for each skill so that you have a variety of responses prepared for the interview. Some of your examples will come from university or work, but also draw on volunteer work, placements, internships, participation in sporting teams or community activities if they provide a good demonstration of your skills. Most importantly, focus on what **you** did, not what you could have done, or what others did.

You'll need to structure your responses to tell a story about a real situation that you were involved in. The **STAR** method is the best way to structure your response:

- Describe the **S**ituation or context
- The **T**ask/challenge that needed to be performed/solved
- Explain the **A**ction you took and what skills you used
- Specify the **R**esults

For more information about behavioural questions and examples of STAR, see pages 35-36, 50-51.

Preparing for the Interview

It goes without saying that the best way to perform well at interviews is to be thoroughly prepared. Start by gaining a detailed understanding of the role and the organisation. Review the position description to make sure you are clear about the skills and knowledge required, then think of relevant examples to demonstrate the 'fit' between your capabilities and these requirements.

Research as much as you can about the company using all sources of information at your disposal including: the company website; press releases and annual reports; social media; LinkedIn; your contacts. See more ideas for what to research on pages 29-30. LinkedIn can also be used to view the profiles of the people who will be on the interview panel – this may help you understand their backgrounds and identify anything you have in common with them. Write down any questions that you have about what you have read and ask these at the interview.

Once you've gathered information about the company and the role, it's time to reflect on you – your relevant experience, skills, achievements, and career goals. Think about how you are going to articulate your 'career story' and be prepared to discuss what interests you about the role, why you want to work for this company and how you can help the company achieve its goals.

A very useful resource to assist you with your interview preparation is The Big Interview. This is free for La Trobe students and has videos and tutorials full of useful suggestions, including hints on how to answer all types of questions. Find out more at: <https://latrobe.biginterview.com/>

Anticipate the interview questions

Make a list of questions you may be asked – these are usually based on the selection criteria, brainstorm your responses, and practice your answers out loud. As much as possible, use the terminology in the position description/job advertisement to describe your key competencies and relevant experience. In the section starting on page 59, we outline some common interview questions - these are a good place to start, but you can also try to think of other questions, particularly technical ones related to your occupational area.

The Interview

The following tips may seem quite basic, but for many people who don't have much experience with interviews, the tips are a source of reassurance that they are presenting themselves well.

Arrival

If attending an interview in person, plan to arrive at the interview location ten minutes before your interview – then find a quiet spot to collect your thoughts for five minutes before you 'check in'. This is a good time to turn off your mobile phone.

When you arrive at the office, approach the reception desk, and introduce yourself and the reason you are there. For example "Good morning, my name is ... and I am here for the 10.30am interview with..." Reception staff are often asked their opinion of how candidates behaved in the waiting area, so make sure you are always polite and courteous to everyone you encounter when on the premises.

Meeting the interviewers

When you are introduced to the interviewers, smile, greet them by name, look them in the eye and firmly shake hands (if COVID-safe to do so). This is not only good manners, but it conveys confidence. Prior to the pandemic, it was customary in Australia for candidates to shake hands with men and women in a business situation. During the pandemic, however, ensure you follow the latest public health directions.

During the interview

Part of the reason the employer wants to meet you is to find out whether you will fit into the work group. Your aim is to build rapport with the interview panel so present in a professional and friendly way. Be aware of your body language and show you are genuine and interested. For example, sit upright in your chair and maintain an appropriate level of eye contact. Be aware of any distracting mannerisms such as fiddling with your hair or excessive hand gestures and try to contain these. If you are being interviewed by more than one

person, direct most of your answer to the person who asked the question but occasionally include the rest of the panel by glancing in their direction.

If you don't understand a question, seek clarification. You can do this by simply asking the interviewer to repeat the question or paraphrase it back to them to ensure you have understood it correctly.

Ask the questions you have prepared beforehand – and any others that have come to mind during the interview. End the interview on a positive note by smiling, thanking the interviewer(s) for their time and if appropriate, shaking their hand.

After the interview

Take time to reflect on your performance. What did you do well? What questions did you find hard? Write down the questions you recall as you will most likely forget them later; sometimes similar questions are asked in interviews so you can learn from each interview and practice getting better at answering certain questions. If you were unsuccessful, ask if you can have some feedback. Some organisations will be unwilling to do this, but they will respect your right to ask and the initiative that you have shown in doing so. Those who are willing to give you feedback will usually do it in a constructive way so that you learn and improve.

Examples of Interview Questions

Questions about your preparation and knowledge of the employer/industry

Why do you want to work for this organisation? What do you know about our organisation?

These questions are often in the first few minutes of the interview so it is important that you are prepared and can answer in a knowledgeable and interested way. These two questions give you a chance to show that you've done your homework and have researched the organisation thoroughly. Identify the company's key compatibilities between the organisation and yourself such as common interests, goals, or values.

Why does this job appeal to you?

Show that you understand the requirements of the job and are genuinely interested in it. Explain how you are excited by the position, its challenges, the opportunity to use and build on your skills and knowledge, etc.

What do you think it takes to be successful in this field?

Use this opportunity to demonstrate your background knowledge and to explain how the skills you would bring are relevant to success in the field.

What do you think are the greatest challenges facing our industry/profession?

This is about your knowledge of the field you're hoping to enter and another chance to show you've done your research.

Questions about you

Tell me about yourself

This is a chance to introduce yourself – it is not an invitation to tell your life story. If asked, it will be at the beginning of the interview. Focus only on aspects that have relevance to the role - the interviewer does not need to know your pet's name! Keep your answer to within 1.5 to 2 minutes and give your answer structure to avoid waffling. One common approach is to start with your past (experience, qualifications) before moving

to the present (your interests and skills) and then the future (your career goals). Alternately, use the structure – EES; Education, Experience, Skills to focus on the aspects of compatibility between your background and the role. It's best to prepare for this question and practice so you answer it well.

What are the most important factors for you in considering a job?

This is about your values so think about what is important to you (for example opportunities for development, compatibility with the values/ mission of the organisation, work/life balance, opportunities to work with a particular population, the reputation of the organisation, capacity to work on cutting edge products or technology etc). Be prepared to explain why you value these things.

What motivates you?

This is about what drives you and about your values. Give an example if you can.

What types of people do you prefer to work with?

Identify positive qualities; give examples from people you know if you can.

What types of people / situations do you find difficult?

Give an example. Show how you cope with these people or situations so that the outcome is positive.

How would your previous managers describe you?

Talk about your strengths, work ethic, personal qualities, etc. Remember that your claims may be checked with a previous manager if he/she is one of your referees.

Do you prefer to work alone or with others?

Demonstrate your ability to work both independently and in a team. If you prefer one or the other, explain why but be aware of the requirements of the position you're applying for.

What does teamwork mean to you?

This is about being able to see the value of a team working together to achieve a common goal. An example of a successful team (either a well-known one or one that you have been in) would be useful to illustrate the qualities that are important in successful teams.

Who is the customer?

Don't forget the other people within the organisation – the internal customers.

How would your friends describe you?

This is the time to talk about your personal qualities and your work-related qualities.

Who do you admire most? Why?

The person you choose doesn't have to be famous, but they do have to have positive qualities.

What hobbies / interests do you have? Why did you choose them?

Show enthusiasm and a balanced lifestyle.

Questions about your career goals and plans

What have been the most important events (or who have been the most important people) in your career?

Explain why they were important to you. And what you might have learned or discovered?

What do you hope to be doing in five years' time?

Show that you have thought about it and have some plan in mind. The employer does want to know that you have looked ahead and have a general direction in mind. You don't need to name a specific job but do think

about the skills and knowledge you would like to have acquired by then. Consider the opportunities for growth in your field or future challenges facing the sector. Do these affect your plans?

What other jobs have you applied for?

It's unlikely that you will apply for only one job. Show a commitment to your profession and some consistency in the jobs you have applied for but reinforce your interest in the organisation that is interviewing you.

Questions about your strengths and weaknesses

What are your strengths?

Although many people feel self-conscious talking about their strengths, you must be prepared for this question. The employer needs to know the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities that you will bring to the job. However, you do need to provide evidence for your claims. Give an example of when you have demonstrated a particular strength. This question is also an indication of how self-aware you are.

Why should we employ you rather than someone else?

This is really asking the same thing as the previous question. Expand on what you have said in your resumé. Relate your strengths to the requirements of the position.

Under what conditions do you produce your best results?

A chance to focus on your strengths and illustrate that you know what motivates you.

What are your weaknesses? Or what could you do better or improve on?

This question is also about self-awareness. Everyone has weaknesses – either pick a genuine weakness that is not central to the position you are being interviewed for, or a weakness that you are working on and outline the improvements you've made. Avoid clichés such as being a perfectionist. For example, you might say, "I have tended to be disorganised and get distracted as a result, when under pressure. I understand that in this position I will have to work to tight deadlines. So, what I've done over the past year is have daily To Do lists and start on tasks earlier than what I previously did. This has helped me to prioritise and work on the most important tasks. This strategy has also meant that if something has taken longer than expected, I didn't have to rush to meet the deadline. I have also broken tasks down into smaller chunks allowing me to see my progress, keep the momentum going and focus my efforts. I've found this has really helped. I have been more organised and have been able to meet deadlines without getting stressed or distracted from the goal."

If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be? What has been the most useful criticism you have ever received?

These two questions are also about your weaknesses. See the hints above. Avoid anything too personal or that you might be self-conscious about. Think in terms of work-related transferable skills or qualities.

What's your greatest achievement so far? What's the thing that you are proudest of?

Use questions such as these as an opportunity to reinforce your strengths or personal qualities and to let the employer know what is important to you. You can use an achievement from any aspect of your life – university, work, sports, community involvement, school and so on.

Questions about your academic history

Why did you choose to study.....?

Your answer will tell the interviewer something about you, your interests, and your motivation. Convince the employer that you have a realistic idea of the industry or profession that you wish to enter.

What subjects have you enjoyed most/least?

Be honest and enthusiastic. Always end your answer on a positive note, even when talking about your least favourite subject.

How satisfied are you with your results?

This question gives you a chance to explain any poor results or to highlight any excellent ones.

Questions about your employment

How is your previous work experience relevant to this position? How has your experience prepared you for this job?

Draw upon the transferable skills that you have developed in other positions. Illustrate how they could be used in this position. Focus on both paid and unpaid experience.

What job have you enjoyed most/least? Why?

The interviewer is trying to find out what motivates (or demotivates you) and if you are compatible with the organisation. Never criticise a previous employer. Focus on what you liked and play down what you didn't like. Highlight what you learned and the skills you acquired.

What type of manager would you most like to work for?

This question allows you to describe the qualities that you respond to best. Let the interviewer know that you appreciate being given responsibility and receiving constructive feedback. You may want to emphasise approachability so that you will feel comfortable seeking help. This indicates a willingness to learn.

Behavioural questions

For behavioural questions, your responses need to demonstrate how you have developed or used a competency in the past. Remember to use the STAR method (see pages 35-36, 50-51) for information.

Example of behavioural questions include:

- Tell me about a time when you had to help someone change or improve something they were doing.
- Describe a time when you were given feedback about your work? What was the feedback? How did you respond?
- Outline a situation when your analytical skills were put to the test. In what way were your skills tested?
- Tell us about a time when you exceeded the expectations of a customer you were assisting? How did you go about this? What was their response?
- Give an example of when you demonstrated leadership skills and were able to motivate a team that was struggling to work together. How did you do this?
- Tell us about a time when you needed to adjust quickly to a significant change in an organisation, or a team that you were a part of. What did you find challenging? How did you respond?
- Give an example of a time when you were faced with competing work demands and had to prioritise your actions.
- Describe a time when you worked in a team and there was a disagreement or conflict. What was the reason for this? How did you handle it?

Technical or discipline-specific questions

Be prepared for questions that relate to your future profession or discipline. These may take the form of a case study, a clinical scenario (for health/nursing students), current trends or issues related to the practice setting or industry.

Think about the role you are applying for and the client or patient population, or the tests, tools, procedures, processes, or protocols you could be expected to know. The position description might provide you with clues of questions or what you might need to revise. Outline your rationale and use your problem-solving skills. The Big Interview also has examples of discipline-specific questions. After the interview, write down the questions you were asked so that you can build a bank of questions and improve your preparation.

Concluding questions

Do you have any questions for us?

Prepare some questions before the interview. Employers regard thoughtful questions highly. Think about what you would like to know about the role, team or the organisation but don't ask questions that you could gain from looking at the website. If you don't have any questions to ask, or the interviewer has already answered them through information provided during the interview, the following questions might be useful.

- Can you please describe the next steps in the recruitment process?
- What are the three tasks or projects that would be the priority in the first six months in this role?
- Do you have a formal induction program for new employees? What does this involve?
- What are the opportunities for further training or professional development?
- What are the performance expectations for the role and/or team?
- How would you describe the culture of the team/ unit?
- I'm aware that some of the main issues facing this industry include.... [*outline these based on your research*]. I'd be interested in hearing your views on the key challenges facing this industry.

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

This is your chance to reinforce your suitability for the job. Think about the key points you want to leave the interviewer with. It is also an opportunity to return to any questions that you missed earlier in the interview.

What are your salary expectations?

It is best to avoid discussing salary until after you have been offered the job – when you are in a position to negotiate. For some roles the salary will be within a range and this is clearly displayed in the advert. If it is not clear, conduct your own research through an online search of graduate salaries on websites such as [Grad Australia](#) or the [QILT \(Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching\) Graduate Employment reports](#). If the interviewer asks you directly, you can sidestep this by saying:

- I realise that you need to ensure that my salary expectations are in-line with what you can offer. So that we are on the same page, could you advise your range for this role?
- Or possibly - I'm very interested in this position as it [*outline some positive aspects to the job*], so I'll be happy to discuss salary once you and I have agreed that I am the right person for the position.

For more information about salary negotiation see this LinkedIn article:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-negotiate-starting-salary-when-youre-new-graduate-warren-frehse>

5.8 ASSESSMENT CENTRES

The term 'assessment centre' refers to a process, but confusingly it can also mean a place. For example, an employer may request you attend their assessment centre and provide you with an address. Assessment centres are widely used in recruitment for graduate programs run by large employers as they are a strong predictor of job performance.

An assessment centre is a highly structured and standardised process, meaning all candidates undergo the same activities to enable comparison between candidates. It usually consists of a few individual and group activities that are designed to find out how you relate to others or how you would perform in the tasks and demands of the job you're being considered for. While you are undertaking these activities, you will be observed by multiple, trained assessors (observers) who will evaluate your performance against predetermined behavioural competencies or skills. Assessment centres generally run from half a day to two full days.

The number of candidates invited to attend each assessment centre will vary. There will usually be around 8 to 20 people. All candidates are assessed against the same criteria. You are not directly competing with other candidates present on the same day. Large organisations usually hold multiple assessment centres across the same city and/or the country so your own experience may not be a good indicator of whether you will progress to the next stage of the process. None, some, or all, of the candidates who attended the same assessment centre as you may be offered employment.

Activities used in an Assessment Centre

The type and number of activities undertaken will vary depending on the employer and the skills they are trying to assess. It is usual for an assessment centre to begin with a welcome from a senior leader and an overview of the company and roles. The assessment centre typically consists of 3-5 activities which could include:

Ice-breaker exercise: This may be used at the start of the day to introduce everyone and assess communication skills. Be prepared to introduce yourself and say something appropriate about yourself.

Group task: As a member of a small group, you may be asked to solve a problem, discuss a topical issue, or make a decision – usually within a strict time limit. The group will usually be asked to present their solution or summarise their debate to others. This activity is likely to be the only activity of the day with other candidates, so it is important to contribute and demonstrate your interpersonal and team skills. You will be assessed on both what you say and how you relate to other members of the group. Be aware of the time limit and stay focussed on the objective of the task.

Individual presentation: You are asked to prepare and verbally present a proposal or answer a question. You may have to prepare your presentation in advance (on a given topic), or you may be asked to interpret and analyse information that you are given on the day. If you are presenting an argument you will be expected to be able to argue in favour of your recommendations. Structure your presentation with a clear introduction, main body, and summary.

In-tray/e-tray exercise: In this activity you are asked to assume the role of someone who is new to the job. You will be given documents in hard copy or via email including memos, phone messages or emails that relate to typical issues for the job. You will be asked to read the information and deal with the contents. Within the time- limit, you will need to make decisions about what to prioritise and indicate what action you would take.

Role Play: You are asked to assume a specific role with an assessor usually assuming the role of a customer or client. Role plays often focus on an unhappy or difficult customer, so they are an opportunity to demonstrate your interpersonal and communication skills. Ensure you read the briefing materials carefully and demonstrate you understand the needs of the organisation.

Case study: You are asked to make a recommendation based on information that is presented to you. This may include a written exercise or a verbal explanation. You will usually need to analyse, prioritise, and identify key issues to decide on a proposal or recommendation. The case study may be a real- life scenario facing the organisation and its clients or customers. This may be an individual or sometimes, a group activity.

Psychometric tests: One or more tests may be given to candidates during the assessment centre. See section 5.6 on Psychometric testing (pages 52-54) for information, tips and links to free practise tests.

Interview: This is an opportunity for the potential employer to comment on your performance in the assessment centre activities and to ask you about your reaction to the tasks presented. You may also be questioned as you would be in a first interview, but in greater depth. Be prepared for behavioural interview questions with a range of examples ready.

Some activities in an assessment centre may test your written communication skills. For example, you may be asked to write a business proposal, ministerial brief, or draft recommendations to solve a problem as part of a case study. If leadership skills are sought by the employer, you may be asked to act as the leader of a group in a problem-solving activity where you will be assessed on your leadership style.

How to Prepare for an Assessment Centre

Be aware of the key skills or competencies an employer is looking for such as analytical thinking, communication, teamwork, commercial awareness, innovation and so on.

- **Treat it as you would an interview.** You will be assessed on your appearance and presentation as well as your performance in the various activities.
- **Ask what sorts of activities** will be used so that you can do some preparation. Thoroughly read all the pre-assessment centre materials and check social media for videos of tips made by the organisation. Sometimes forums such as Whirlpool (see page 17) may provide insights from other applicants' experiences.
- **Identify your strengths and weaknesses.** Think of examples to use to demonstrate your skills.
- **Ensure you have researched the position** for which you are applying and know the selection criteria very well.

- **Conduct in-depth research into the employer and industry** so that you have information about key issues and trends as this may assist you in some of the activities. For example, for a government department know how to write a ministerial brief. (See pages 29-30 on employer research).
- **Try to get a good night's sleep** beforehand as the activities are designed to be challenging.

At the Assessment Centre

- **First impressions count.** Try to relax and make small talk with the assessors as well as the other participants.
- **Get involved.** You can only be assessed on what you contribute so make an effort to remain engaged in the activities and communicate confidently.
- **Be a professional.** Employers will be observing you to see how you interact with other candidates and assessors during activities as well as in the breaks, lunch and so on. This includes how you interact with *all* staff so be respectful, friendly yet professional to everyone you meet throughout the day.
- **Explain your logic.** Clearly explain your thought processes in reaching your decision or conclusion so that assessors can understand the factors or options you weighed up.
- **Use self-awareness and emotional intelligence.** Reflect on your behaviour towards other candidates. Ensure you acknowledge and listen to others. Include other participants and don't make assumptions about the way in which you think you should behave. For example, thinking you need to be the leader or comment all the time.
- **Stay positive.** If you feel you didn't do well on one activity don't give up or let it affect your performance on subsequent activities. It is common for candidates to perform well on some tasks but be weaker in other activities. It is helpful to remember you are being assessed on a range of skills across several activities so there will be other opportunities to demonstrate your capabilities.
- **Being nervous is normal.** If you're nervous chances are so are others, nerves often disappear when you get involved in activities on the day so try to focus more on participating and being yourself and if possible try not to think of it as a test (although you might feel like it is). It is possible that you might even discover some aspects are interesting. The more research you do about assessment centres the less onerous they might be – see the Resources section on the next page.

Final points

- There is no single most important activity. However, in many assessment centres the group activity is the only activity in which candidates can demonstrate teamwork skills. The ability to work effectively and collaboratively with others is essential in every organisation.
- In a group activity, the interpersonal dynamics and the process the group goes through to reach a decision, is just as important as the decision that is reached.
- The assessors need to see evidence of your skills such as your problem-solving ability, influencing and communication skills. In a group activity, if you do not contribute much, or at all, the assessor will not have any evidence to rate you as having that specific skill i.e. you will score poorly.
- In some activities such as a case study, there may not be a right or wrong answer. It is more important that you outline your reasoning as to how you reached your conclusion.

Resources

Specific employers talking about their assessment centres

- Telstra - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGtLVytj3O0>
- Deloitte Australia – How to prepare for an assessment centre - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYn1ZjCaSnU>

General information about assessment centres

- Grad Australia – Interviews and Assessments - <https://gradaustralia.com.au/interviews>
- University of Warwick- 13 videos with practical advice about preparing for and performing at an assessment centre. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8e4BPj5tqj0>
- WikiJob - Assessment Centres - <https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/application-advice/assessment-centres/assessment-centre-tips-and-preparation-advice>
- Assessment Day (UK) - Assessment Centre Guide plus free example exercises. <https://www.assessmentday.co.uk/assessmentcentre/>
- Target Jobs (UK) - Information on assessment centres - <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/assessment-centres/275435-the-graduates-guide-to-assessment-centres>
- University of Kent – Tips for students. <https://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/assessmentaptitude.html>

6. Job Search Realities and Resources

6.1 WHEN THE JOB SEARCH IS TAKING LONGER

For many graduates the process of looking for work can be a stressful experience filled with unpredictability and frustration. The pandemic has added an extra layer of uncertainty for both job hunters and employers as well as heightened volatility (and competition) in the labour market.

Frequently, the search for graduate employment takes longer than many students anticipate. Despite their best efforts, things might not go to plan. Employers don't respond, the recruitment process is laborious and time-consuming, or the job is withdrawn. A job hunter might miss out to better prepared candidates, graduates who articulate their skills more clearly or those who better express a genuine interest in working for that organisation. Sometimes the solution is to persist but if you have not been offered an interview after submitting multiple applications, or you have not been offered a role after attending several job interviews, then it is time to stop and reflect on what is, and what isn't, working?

Ask yourself-

- **Am I using a range of strategies to look for work?**

If you are heavily, or only, relying on vacancies on Seek, you are not only facing maximum competition from every job seeker who saw the same advert, but you are missing out on using a range of effective strategies to find other opportunities that are not advertised. Read pages 12-28.

- **Do I know the right type and level of job for me?**

Have you done sufficient research to know the types of jobs that are typical for graduates with your degree? If you are aiming for roles that require more skills and experience, or conversely jobs that require significantly fewer skills than you have, this might be a reason why you are missing out. Do you need to learn more about your industry/profession so that you are clearer about which jobs are suitable for you to target? Use LinkedIn to research in real time, the type of roles and companies for students from your degree. Attend one of our Career Ready workshops on LinkedIn, How to Research your Career Options or look through the Career Summaries link in the Resources section.

At the same time, a job title is only a brief piece of information so look beyond it and read the advert to gain a better understanding of what the role involves. This is particularly important if you have studied a generalist degree such as a Bachelor of Arts. If you rely on job titles alone to decide which positions are worth applying for, you may inadvertently miss out on suitable opportunities.

- **Am I being flexible enough?**

For many graduates, their first role in the professional workplace is a starting point in their career. It is rarely helpful or practical to aim for your dream career or perfect job straight out of university. This narrow focus might mean you miss other opportunities to build your skills, knowledge, experience, and networks. Often, once you get 'a foot in the door' in a workplace or industry, other

opportunities arise after you have proven yourself and gained experience. Try and balance being focused in your search for work, with being open to opportunities, but resist the temptation to broaden your job search too much so that you become overwhelmed.

- **Do I need to boost my competitiveness?**

If you have identified gaps in your skills or experience, try strategies such as volunteering, internships (if applicable), joining your professional association or undertaking a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course). If you're a current student, why not enroll in a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) subject, join the mentoring program, get involved in a student club or society or take part in an industry innovation challenge? These and other ideas are outlined in the web link below.

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/opportunities/practical-experience>

Ask yourself are my job application documents competitive enough? If you are having limited success, then it is time to review what you submit to employers. Read the hints in Chapter 5 - Applying for a graduate job or program about preparing quality, tailored job applications. Attend a Career Ready workshop then book a careers appointment to receive individual feedback.

Do you do enough interview preparation, especially research into the employer, prior to the interview? Review the Interview chapter and book in for a Career Ready workshop.

- **Where can I get feedback and assistance?**

The La Trobe University careers service operates throughout the year (excluding the Christmas stand-down). Workshops and appointments are listed on [Career Hub](#) and are available to current student and graduates within 3 years of completing their studies. For more information go to -

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/opportunities>

Dealing with Job Rejection

Looking for work is a very stressful experience for most job hunters, and it can feel like an emotional rollercoaster with peaks of optimism followed by troughs of despondency - often triggered by a job rejection. Unfortunately, setbacks and being rejected for a job are an inevitable part of a job hunt. Employers have more power than candidates in the hiring process, and it is their decision about who they think will perform best, and fit in with the existing team, managers, and organisational culture.

Tips for managing job rejection

At some point in the job search process, you will be turned down for a role so keep these tips in mind.

- **Acknowledge how you are feeling and undertake activities that you know maintain your physical and mental health.**

Find healthy strategies to release and channel your stress, frustration, and disappointment so pent-up emotions don't sabotage your job search. For example, you don't want angry or pessimistic comments or behaviour 'leaking' out during an interview and sabotaging that opportunity.

- **Don't take it personally.**

It can be difficult not to take a job rejection personally as it can *feel* like a personal rejection, especially if you attended an interview. The reality is that there can be many reasons why one candidate is offered the job, and another isn't. These factors can be out of your control and unrelated to you, such as there being a favoured internal candidate, nepotism, budgetary constraints, and even workplace politics.

Missing out on a job does not mean there is anything inherently wrong or inadequate with you as a person. It usually means it is not the best fit for you or it might mean you need to reflect on the questions on the previous two pages.

- **Focus on what is within your control.**

You can't control the labour market, which organisations are, or are not hiring, the number or calibre of your competitors but there are plenty of things you can control. Often in the job search process, candidates rule themselves out of contention by making many of the mistakes that have been outlined in this e-book. It is within your control not to make these same errors. You can control the methods you use to look for work, the quality of your applications, the extent of your interview preparation and how you present yourself when communicating with employers. You can also gain more experience and skills to boost your competitiveness.

- **Comparisons with other job hunters will usually make you feel worse.**

It's natural, but not helpful, to compare yourself to friends from the same or different disciplines who are looking for work at the same time as you. Everyone's job search will be different as people use different methods, have varied target roles, respond differently to opportunities and sometimes people are just plain lucky – they are in the right place at the right time. The job search is often unfair. You might see students who try very hard not being offered a role while others, who you believe are less deserving, get the second job they apply for. Sometimes job hunting just sucks!

- **Ask for constructive feedback and keep improving.**

If you were unsuccessful at the application stage, in many instances, hiring managers will not have the time to provide you with feedback. However, if you attended an interview, ask for feedback – listen to it and learn. Look for any patterns or consistent themes to help you identify what the obstacles are and then take steps to remedy it. For example, if two employers have told you that you present as being quite nervous in interviews, review your interview preparation. Attend a Career Ready interview workshop, read the Interview section in this e-book, use the Big Interview, or book a careers appointment for interview coaching.

- **Reach out to supportive people.**

It can be tempting to withdraw from family and friends when you are feeling discouraged, low, or stressed. Some of your family and friends will understand what you're going through so reach out to the people who care about you and who are supportive. Often, they can encourage you and remind you of your strengths and qualities.

- **Keep the momentum going but its ok to take a short break.**

It is understandable to feel discouraged and to lose focus when faced with setbacks. Sometimes taking a short break to regroup can help. In general, try and keep a regular routine to maintain motivation. Treat your job search like a job, get up at the same time each day and dedicate a certain number of hours to the process every weekday.

At the same time, don't let the end goal of finding a job define your day and your existence. Give yourself credit for making some progress including achieving mini goals, such as finding something out, having a useful career conversation or being a little clearer about your preferences. Have regular breaks to rest your mind and refresh, know that breakthroughs do happen – and when they do and it's your turn, you will appreciate all the effort you have put in.

- **Remain professional.**

It is important not to burn bridges with an organisation when they reject your application. In some instances, when an employer is hiring again, they may approach the runner-up from an earlier interview to inquire if they are still interested or look highly favourably upon a subsequent application from the runner-up candidate. This just might be the door to open for you!

6.2 CAREERS RESOURCES

1. La Trobe University careers resources

These resources are available to students and recent graduates.

Help finding work - <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/opportunities/help-finding-work>

Career Hub – Information sheets and recorded workshops on a range of topics.

[Career Hub - Resources](#)

Career summaries with examples of jobs for each discipline.

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/opportunities/careers/plan-your-career/career-options>

If you are a current student and want to stand out to future employers, get involved in the **Career Ready Advantage Award**. Log onto the LMS and find Career Ready – Career Ready Advantage in your subject list.

2. Help finding work

Read the Researching Opportunities section and graduate-specific jobs boards listed on page 13.

Job Scan – is a tool that gives job seekers an instant analysis of how well their resume is tailored for a particular job and how it can be better optimised for an Applicant Tracking System. See more on page 31.

<https://www.jobscan.co/>

Big Interview – for learning and practising interview skills (current students only).

<https://latrobe.biginterview.com/>

LinkedIn – student job hunting handbooks and resources for Higher Education students.

<https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students>

An online guide for international students – **Employable you**. Written by the **IEAA (International Education Association of Australia)**.

<https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/1631>

Grad Australia – Graduate Careers Advice on applying for grad jobs.

<https://gradaustralia.com.au/applying>

Jobjumpstart – Australian government website for young people aged 15-25 years. Provides information to assist with job search and building employability skills.

<https://www.jobjumpstart.gov.au/>

COVID-19 series: Where are the job opportunities? (Link to Jobs Hub with a list of employers hiring during the pandemic).

<https://www.jobjumpstart.gov.au/article/COVID-19-series-where-are-job-opportunities>

Youth Central – Victorian government website for young people 12-25. Has useful resources for finding experience, applying for jobs, career profiles and understanding your rights at work.

<https://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-and-careers>

3. Career planning resources

My future – Australia's national career information service with career planning, occupational, industry information and more. Note – free registration is required to access the myfuture website.

<https://myfuture.edu.au/>

Job Outlook – Australian source of careers information.

<https://joboutlook.gov.au/>

Grad Australia – Graduate Careers Advice.

<https://gradaustralia.com.au/advice>

Your Career – Australian government careers information website for Australians of all ages.

<https://yourcareer.gov.au/>

My Big Tomorrow - Careers resource for young Australians.

<https://mybigtomorrow.com.au/>

4. Other useful careers resources

Australian Jobs – Overview of trends in the Australian labour market. Published in late 2020.

<https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/australian-jobs>

Labour Market Information Portal (LMIP) by the Australian Department of Education, Skills & Employment. This website has detailed and the most up to date information on the Australian labour market. (For serious data enthusiasts!)

<https://lmip.gov.au/>

Fair Work Ombudsman – for employment rights and responsibilities information.

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

Job Watch – Victorian employment rights legal centre.

<http://jobwatch.org.au/>