

Recruitment support pack

January 2012

Application Form

- The first part of the selection process is for you to complete an on line application
- The application screens request personal details about yourself as well as asking you to fill in competency based examples, advice about completing competency examples can be found at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/competency-guidance.pdf>
- Once you have completed all the screens and submitted the application form you will be sent an email for you to access your CS Jobs account and undertake the on line test
- Upon receipt of your application you will be emailed (within 2 working days) a copy of the Working Locations form for the area to which you have applied. As part of the application process you must complete and return the Working Locations Form within 3 working days
- To summarise you will need to complete:
 - Personal Details & Competency Examples and submit the Application
 - On line test to be completed by the closing date of the advert
 - Working Locations form will need to be completed and returned within 3 working days

Civil Service online tests – background

- The selection process will use online tests covering literacy, numeracy and competency and situational exercises
- You will be sent an email which includes an invitation to the test and a link to the sites
- You will have 75 minutes to complete the test
- You will be invited to log into Civil Service jobs site and review your feedback
- You must meet the **minimum score** to be **considered** for progression to the next stage
- If you meet the minimum score you are placed in merit order. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will then make a decision as to how many applicants should proceed to the next stage
- Meeting the minimum standard does not guarantee an interview, it will be dependant on the numbers that have passed
- If you are invited to interview, you will be sent an email which will enable you to schedule yourself an interview in the online booking system
- If applying under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, gaining the minimum score **will** mean you are progressed to the next stage regardless of your position on the merit list
- If within the last 6 months you have gained the minimum pass score for the grade you are applying for you will not be required to re-take the test the score is automatically carried over

Completing the tests

- Once started, the test must be completed in one sitting. It cannot be resumed at a later time so you must ensure that they have the facilities and are prepared to complete it in one sitting
- Once you have applied, you will be given a couple of examples and practice opportunities before starting the test formally. This is to allow you to see the types of questions that you can expect to see. You can then decide whether to sit the test there and then, or at another more suitable point
- You will not know what score you are expected to achieve
- Once you select “start”, you will be in the test and be assessed against the allotted time

- All test scores will both apply and stand, whether the test was fully completed or abandoned part way through.
- **There will not** be the opportunity to re-sit the test a second time, so you should prepare and ensure you answer as many questions as possible
- Any problems with the link to complete the tests can be raised via the contact detailed on the job description
- Competency and Situational Judgement Exercise are based on a set of scenarios with multiple choice answers
- The scenarios are work based and you are asked to identify the most suitable answers to the questions posed. Some will be to identify an answer to a specific question i.e. how much is x or what percentage is y? Others are designed to assess your reasoning by selecting the most appropriate or best outcome.
- It is not a test of right and wrong answers, but rather an assessment of your reasoning and approach to work
- The language used in the test may be unusual to some as it asks you to assume you are a 'manager'
- The DWP recognises however that all applicants, regardless of current position will at various times, have to make decisions and 'manage', whether this be your time, your work load or some other aspect of your day

Practice tests

- You may find it helpful to access the internet using the following search criteria:
 - Verbal and numeric reasoning tests
 - Situational judgement test
- As sites differ in what they offer you will need to decide for yourself which to access – we cannot endorse specific sites
- There are many **free sites** on line offering practice sessions if you have not had to undertake these types of tests before. Be warned however, that **not all sites are free** so you will need to be selective. Some are time based and will give you your score at the end, so will be reflective of the actual tests.
- There are also numerous books available either to purchase or from local libraries that would help with practicing.

Competency interviews

- This is normally run by a panel of two people
- As feedback is provided, notes will be taken during the interview
- You can ask the interviewers to repeat a question and you may also take notes into the interview. However, the panel are also looking at your communication skills, so these need to be used only as a reference tool if you find yourself stumbling.

What is a competency interview?

The interview panel will be looking for:

- A **specific** example which meets the competency criteria and **explicitly** describes an individual's **behaviour** and the outcome
- The example provided will cover the **what, how** and **outcome** of a situation
- It is very important that you make clear precisely what you did, how you did it and what the outcome was of your actions and your behaviour.

It is not about:

- generalisations (“I am always courteous to customers”)
- job descriptions (“my role involves.....”)
- a process (“first I input the details on the computer then I”)
- an assertion (“it is very important to deal with complaints promptly”)
- passive (“a meeting was called”)
- not owned (“it was decided to adopt the last option”)
- paraphrasing the criteria (“I displayed tact and diplomacy”).

You should make time to familiarise yourself with the DWP competency descriptors, as detailed in the job description

Interview preparation

Before the interview

- Check the date, time and location of the interview
- Ensure you have directions to the location
- Consider parking arrangements and entrance security
- Inform them in advance if you require any special arrangements.

Preparation

- Make the time to prepare
- Familiarise yourself with the job description
- Familiarise yourself with examples you would use to cover the competency evidence
- Prepare/think about at least a couple of examples per competency, panels often ask for another example to the first one given
- Make brief notes, these can be taken into the interview but avoid taking in reams of paper
- Consider other questions linking to the competencies that may be asked
- Be critical of your examples, try and identify questions the interviewer may ask
- Think about examples where something did not go as well as planned, interviewers may look for contrary evidence and how you dealt with it
- If possible, ask for someone to give you a mock interview.
- If applicable, think about your current job and what you do; panels may ask this as a warm up question, practise talking about it
- Positive thinking techniques: think in the role you are applying for, walk tall, be positive/confident.

Day of the interview

- Make sure you have a copy of your invitation to interview, it will have the contact number on and any other notes that you want to take into the interview
- Talk – get used to talking and hearing your voice, think in terms of answers
- Try and get nerves out of the way early so the real you comes through at the interview
- Take a few deep breaths, exhaling slowly; this will get oxygen to the brain and help relax you
- Arrive in good time so you are not rushing; however if you are caught in bad traffic/delayed train and it is possible, call to advise them of your impending delay.

The interview

- Introduction – either a receptionist will escort you to the interview room, or the chair person will come and greet you. Walk slowly and breath regularly, too many candidates rush to the comfort of the chair and sit down – this can be a mistake
- Once in the interview room the chair person will introduce the panel, most comprise of two or three members. The chair will explain the process/structure of the interview. This usually involves telling you which competency area each panel member is responsible for, they will also advise how long the interview should last
- Once the process has been explained the interview will start with the competencies – however, sometimes the chair person may ask an initial question about what you are currently doing to help relax you and get you into the interview mode
- There may be water available, this can help if your mouth starts to go dry and gives you time to think about your answer
- Listen carefully to the full question, don't rush in with an answer before they have finished otherwise you may miss the point
- If you are not sure what they are asking, you should playback your understanding of the question e.g. "Do you mean you would like an example of...."
- Maintain eye contact particularly with the person who asked the question, try to make occasional eye contact with the other panellists too, although you will notice that they will normally be taking notes
- Remember they want to know what **you** did and how **you** did it (what was your specific involvement) use the word **I**. Avoid using the word **we** - the panel will pick up on it
- Think about:
 - **S**ituation
 - **A**ction
 - **R**esult
 - **B**enefit
- Tell it a bit like a story with a start, middle and end
- Interviewers are not out to trip you up or ask trick questions so they will try and steer you in the right direction by either
- Restating their question; or clarifying it
- They are willing you to succeed
- There should not be hypothetical questions but if you do get one turn it into an experiential answer (e.g. well I once had a situation like that where I...)
- If you do not understand or have lost your thread – ask them to repeat their question or explain it differently
- You should not be afraid of silences – don't feel the need to fill them, you should take time to formulate your reply – you don't have to say the first thing that comes into your head

- Think before considering making a joke – humour can backfire
- At the end of the interview the chair person will tell you when you may expect to hear the result
- They will ask you if there are any questions you wish to ask but don't blurt something out, you should only ask if you want to and if you have prepared in advance (perhaps something relevant to the vacancy or the area of work)
- They may ask you if there is anything you want to add to any of your earlier answers, again don't blurt out unless there is something that you want to correct or something important that you forgot to say. But keep it brief and pertinent; it is not an invitation to re-run the interview.
- The length of the interview is not an indicator as to how well or badly someone has performed. It will take as long as it needs to. The panel will end the interview when they have everything they need.

After the interview

- Relax – it's over, try not to reflect and carry out a post mortem on your performance
- Each competency will be individually marked and an overall mark awarded
- The marks will be collated and results agreed
- Remember the test marks are **not** added to the interview marks; everyone starts from zero at the interview
- You will be notified by phone, letter or email, once **all** the interviews have taken place
- If unsuccessful you will receive written feedback on your interview performance (if successful you can still request feedback if they want).

And Finally – Good Luck!