# Completing the application

Scottish Courts and Tribunals (SCTS) use an evidence based approach when evaluating candidates within the application stages of our recruitment process. In practice this means that we expect candidates to be able to demonstrate that they meet all of the essential criteria listed within the person specification before we can invite them to the next step of the process- the interview. An evidence based approach is also used for interviewing.

The purpose of this document is to help you prepare your answers so that we can guide you through our process and gain suitable employment with us.

We look for applicants to demonstrate our core values and behaviours throughout the selection process.

Our Values are:

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| Respect | Be courteous – cooperate, treat everyone with dignity and value diversity |
| Be open and fair – encourage good performance, give and receive constructive feedback, challenge and change inappropriate behaviour |
| Work as one team – lead and manage well; trust; empower and inspire each other |
| Service | Deliver a professional service – get the basics right, recognise individual needs and manage information responsibly |
| Learn in all we do – build our skills and knowledge; respond to feedback and reflect on learning and experience to improve our service |
| Set an example – always do our best, share and explain what we do and show how it relates to our priorities, policies and values |
| Excellence | Innovate – think creatively to find solutions, evaluate ideas and deliver continuous improvement |
| Collaborate – work with our customers and partners to share experience and lead change to improve the justice system |

# STAR method

Using the STAR method, allows you to set the scene, show what and how you did and the overall outcome. The STAR technique is a step-by-step tried and tested method used when applicants have been asked to provide examples of how they meet a job description or specification. Using this method allows employers to evaluate your examples in a structured and methodical way.

**Situation** - Describe the situation and explain what happened.

* Be sure to give enough detail for the panel member to understand.
* Where are you?
* Who was there with you?
* What had happened?

**Task** - Outline the task you had to complete and describe your responsibilities.

* What was the task that you had to complete and why?
* What did you have to achieve?

**Action** - Explain the steps that you took or the decisions you made.

* Keep the focus on you.
* What specific steps did you take and what was your contribution?
* Remember to include how you did it, and the behaviours you used. Try to use “I” rather than “we” to explain your actions that lead to the result. Be careful not to take credit of something that you did not do.

**Result** - Explain the outcomes of your actions

* What results did the actions produce?
* What did you achieve through your actions and did you meet your goals?
* Was it a successful outcome? If not what did you learn from the experience

Keep the situation and task parts brief. Concentrate on the action and the result. If the result was not entirely successful describe what you learned from this and what you would do differently next time. Make sure you focus on your strengths.

# The CAR approach

Not everyone can relate to the STAR method, so an alternative approach is:

**Context** - Explain the situation; what, where and when. Simply describe the challenge that you faced. Give the reader some background, just enough to set the scene.

**Actions** - Make sure that you explain how you did something not just what you did. What action or steps did you take? How did you do it? For some jobs, it might be quite detailed, but don’t talk about every single thing. Summarise as best as you can.

**Results** - What was the outcome? What results did you achieve? Talk about the results. Use numbers and percentages whenever possible. Remember if your result is not positive, describe what you have learnt.

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| Don’t claim to have excellent communication skills - **prove you do**. |

Regardless of the tool you use to show the panel how well you meet the selection criteria, it is up to you to find strong examples that display your abilities. Set it out clearly and succinctly and show how it contributed to achieving the unit’s objectives. A good example in your job application, that is also well written, will go a long way towards getting you an interview, and ultimately the job.

# Examples

The following provide examples of criteria outlined in the skills, knowledge and experience section of our person specifications, and what a good and poor response might look like, as well as how this could link to our values and behaviours.

1. **Essential Experience:**

• Experience of managing time and a varied workload

*Poor response:*

I manage to juggle a varied workload very well in my current role and ensure that everything is completed on time. I understand how important it is to meet deadlines and customer expectations and I have never missed a deadline.

*Good response*:

In my present role, I am an accounts manager and have an existing case load of clients, but have new clients coming in all of the time. Some of it is routine work, following up to correspondence, and some of my work is matters arising from situations. I cannot really delegate my work as I am the assigned account manager. Several weeks ago, I had five pieces of on-going case load work and two pieces of consultancy work. On one particular day, some urgent status reports were required before the end of the day. The on-going case work has a management required turn-around of 10 days, however I set my own for 5 days to make sure that no routine work stays on my desk for long. This way I never have a backlog. The consultancy work is high priority, with strict deadlines. These are always to be completed 2 weeks before the deadline, and so I complete these ahead of this date by allocating time in my diary to work on these priority projects. When I get urgent work in, such as the status report, it needs to be immediately attended to. I don’t really set priorities for this, and always have other work to do at the same time. Sometimes, I might have several of these at the same time, and need to ask management which is most important. On this particular day, the status report was given my immediate attention from the moment I got the email to complete it. I needed to reschedule all of my contract and regular work. Due to the fact that I give myself tighter deadlines for my routine work, I am always able to keep to deadline, even when I get urgent tasks such as the status report. On that particular day, the report was sent before the deadline, and I was still able to complete all of my routine work on time.

This is a good response as it has a specific example structured around the STAR technique. It links to our value on service and excellence respectively:

• Delivered a professional service by providing what was promised and understood stakeholder needs.

• Demonstrate being accountable and taking responsibility

1. **Essential Skill:**

* Deals efficiently with customer enquiries, providing consistently accurate advice to customers

*Poor response*:

I am a great communicator and get on well with anyone that I work with. My interpersonal skills are well developed and I use these both within and out with work.

*Good response*:

I used to work part time as a member of waiting staff. On a particularly busy weekend, we were short staffed and an angry customer complained about the extended wait for their food. I utilised effective communication to help resolve the issue. I first listened attentively to the customer and clarified the reason for his complaint to ensure I fully understood. I apologised and explained the reasons for the delay, and that it was not usual to have to wait this long but that I would see what I could do. I then spoke to the kitchen staff to find out how long it would be before his order was going to be ready and asked for the order to be moved to a priority: By explaining the situation to them, they were willing to prioritise it (something which they would not usually do). I also asked for an estimate as to when it would be ready. I then apologised again to the customer and gave him the estimated waiting time for his order.

This is a good response as it has a specific example structured around the CAR technique. It links to our value on respect and value of service respectively as it:

• Demonstrates courtesy

• Shows an example of appreciating others and their needs

• Demonstrates working as one team

• Demonstrates delivering a professional service.

# Summ**ar**y

When writing your competency example make sure you cover both ‘what’ you did and ‘how’ you did it. In most examples you should focus more words on the ‘how’ than the ‘what’.

Follow this by a brief summary of the ‘outcome’.

Use either STAR or CAR approach for writing your competency.

Competencies allow job holders to see what you are capable of doing, it shows them what you can also do for them as well.