

# APPLY YOURSELF

## YOUR BEST APPLICATION

Hints and tips on how to write an application for a position within VU

### INTRODUCTION

Universities and most government organisations have a significant focus on **equity and merit-based selection processes** and, as such, **require applicants to submit a cover letter, resume and a response to selection criteria.**

VU selection panels assess applications on the basis of the cover letter, resume and response to selection criteria. By omitting the response to selection criteria you may be deemed not to have submitted a complete application. This may mean that you are screened out immediately or, at the very least, you will be disadvantaged against other candidates who have, in competition with you, submitted a full application. By submitting a complete, well structured and composed application, you substantially increase your chances of winning the position.

When applying through the VU intranet site be sure to follow the instructions on how to apply, particularly when applying for multiple positions.

**Below you will find some guidelines and tips to assist you in composing your best application.**

### WRITE YOUR RESUME

Your resume (or Curriculum Vitae/ CV) outlines your experience, knowledge and skills, and is one of the key sources of information from which a VU selection panel/ recruiter will judge your suitability for employment.

Your resume should be **tailored** to each particular position you apply for and should not contain detail about everything you have ever done. Everyone has their own style and approach to resume writing but, as a guide, the following sections are generally included.

1. **Personal Details** (don't actually add a heading, it's obvious these are your personal details!)
  - Name (and preferred name)
  - Address
  - Phone number
  - E-mail address
  - Residency status (as required)
  - Details of any mandatory checks or requirements specified in the position description such as; drivers licence or working with children check card.  
**Do not include: nationality, marital status, gender, children, etc.**

## 2. Career Objective

An optional section, but is often a great way to focus your resume and direct attention to your relevant skills and attributes for the position you are applying for. A career objective can be in sentence or point form.

Give the reader an idea of your career direction in a way that makes you a match for the position on offer; highlight the key skills and experience you have that are relevant to the main accountabilities within the position description.

Provide information that shows that obtaining this position is a strategic component of your long-term career plan.

A good example:

"With a background in professional writing, editing and corporate communications, I have recently commenced studying a Masters in Education. I wish to secure a position in a large, progressive University where I can develop my teaching skills and inspire a new generation to be passionate about literature and language."

Why this is a good example:

- The position description for this role required a postgraduate qualification and professional experience in the communications field.
- The applicant demonstrated their passion was for teaching and demonstrated that they are moving their career in this direction.
- The applicant aligned their career direction with the aspirations of the University in being progressive and passionate.

## 3. Employment History

This section is a key component of your Resume, the key is to select relevant history and effective organisation of the content is critical. You do not have to list ALL your positions but you may need to explain any gaps in service if these are not evident in the Resume.

Your employment history can include paid work and also unpaid work such as volunteer roles and work experience which is relevant to your career direction.

Tips:

- Be concise and factual and, where relevant, highlight key accomplishments and skills acquired.
- Differentiate yourself from other candidates by showing your achievements in terms of the value added to the organisation through the outcomes you achieved (eg. cost or time savings, revenue earned, risk reduction, etc.)
- For recent or more relevant history to the position you are applying for you might like to briefly describe, in point form, the major accountabilities or duties of the position.
- Do not use undefined acronyms.
- Use plain English and 'user-friendly' language, remember that a resume can be used to assess your communication skills; it needs to be understood to be effective.

## 4. Education

To highlight their educational achievements, students or new graduates may do better to place this section before employment history, depending on their professional experience.

Include:

- Relevant formal qualifications from tertiary institutions (Higher Education, TAFE). List the years studied and completion (or expected completion) date.
- Where specified in the position description or you are a student/new graduate, include secondary education results. Only include subjects or grades where requested.

- Highlights or significant awards.

It is recommended that you do not scan your qualifications or transcripts but that you bring these for review by the selection panel (eg. at interview stage).

#### **5. Other Training or Professional Development**

You may choose to include other training or development such as conference attendances, licences, first aid, short courses or professional development which is highly relevant to the position you are applying for. List the training or development, the date completed and no more than a one-line description.

#### **6. Professional Associations (Professional Memberships)**

List any professional associations/memberships. Include the association or group, the level or type of membership, and state the year joined.

#### **7. Extra Curricular Activities, Hobbies and Interests** (choose a heading that suits your content)

For more senior roles this section often is not included. Students and new graduates can use this section to highlight their involvement in clubs and community endeavours which demonstrate attributes such as leadership and community involvement.

Include the membership of clubs and committees, community involvement and competitive sports. Do not add into this section a shopping list of things you like such as “reading, music, sport”. You need to include enough detail to say something about you and provide a picture of you as an individual, your activities and interests should help your application rather than just be a listing of everything you do.

#### **8. Referees**

At least two employment related referees should be provided where possible. Referees are not contacted until the appropriate time in the selection process with your consent.

For students or new graduates where employment-related referees are not possible, an academic referee or a referee from a club or association would be acceptable (friends or associates are not acceptable referees for employment purposes).

For academic positions written references on a VU-specific template are required (this template will be provided at the appropriate stage of the selection process). Generally, details for three referees are required.

It is recommended that you discuss your career objective with your referee and brief them on the position you are applying for so they are able to consider your fit for the role and think of examples of how they have evidenced your work performance and behaviours against the selection criteria.

#### **Other General Tips:**

**Length** – For students or new graduates without significant work experience, or for entry-level roles, two to four pages would be sufficient. For more senior roles, a resume may be six to eight pages.

**Grammar and Spelling** – CHECK, CHECK, CHECK grammar and spelling are important in presenting a professional image.

**Formatting** – Equally important in presenting a professional image Don't use fancy fonts or anything smaller than 10 point and have lots of white space. Arial size 10 or 11 is easy to read.

**“I”** – Avoid the use of “I” except in the Career Objective section.

## WRITE YOUR COVER LETTER

### Tips:

- Tailor your cover letter to each position you apply for (employers/recruiters can tell when you don't. Ask yourself do you really want this position, if so take the time!).
- Use a business letter format.
- Include your address, phone number and email at the top of the page.
- Include the name and address of VU and address the letter to the contact person.
- In your content touch on the essential selection criteria to reinforce the messages in your response to selection criteria and resume.
- Show your enthusiasm, confidence and personality but avoid exaggerations or baseless assertions (ie. statements without evidence) about how "good" you are.
- One A4 page is sufficient.
- Check spelling and grammar thoroughly.

## RESPOND TO SELECTION CRITERIA

Your response to selection criteria is your first opportunity to show that you are a good fit for the VU team you are applying to join and for the specific position you are applying for. This section of your application should not be omitted or underestimated and is a key tool that selection panels use to short-list for selection.

### Tips:

- Tailor your responses to the selection criteria for each role you apply for.
- Ensure you respond **to all essential selection criteria** as a minimum.
- Use a professional, report-style format.
- Sentences and some dot points are okay.
- Show your confidence but again, avoid exaggerations or baseless assertions which are unsupported.
- Use evidence/examples to demonstrate how you meet each selection criteria. A short paragraph including a one-line explanation of the situation, a few points on the actions/steps/thought process you followed and the outcome achieved can be an effective format to use.
- Watch the length, do not write an essay. Write no more than a couple of paragraphs for each selection criteria.
- Avoid undefined acronyms or jargon.
- Just because you are applying internally don't assume knowledge on behalf of the selection panel which may include external members to the area or University.
- Check spelling and grammar.

An example of essential selection criteria:

- Demonstrated experience in a demanding fast paced administrative environment meeting short deadlines.

An example of a response to essential selection criteria:

During my time at XYZ Limited I worked as part of a team of 10 administrators for a 300 seat call centre servicing XYZ's Australian client base. I undertook a range of administrative duties for my principal consultant including composing and distributing sales correspondence, writing inter-departmental

memorandum, filing and diary management. I was also responsible for contacting leads for my consultant within five minutes of acquisition to enable us to deliver industry–best service as evidenced by our XYZ Centre of the Year Award in 2007.

Another effective approach would be the inclusion of a table outlining the selection criteria in the left-hand column and describing relevant experience, education, knowledge or skills in the right-hand column. An example follows:

<b>Selection Criteria</b>	<b>Relevant experience/education/knowledge/skills</b>
Bachelor's Degree	B. Science Victoria University Completed 2006 (3 years)
Working with Children Check Card	W89838348 Valid to: 4/1/2013

**GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR APPLICATION!**

**WE WISH YOU EVERY SUCCESS IN WINNING THAT POSITION AND CONTINUING YOUR CAREER WITH VICTORIA UNIVERSITY**