What are Selection Criteria?

The selection criteria for a position is a list of the essential and desirable skills, attributes, experience, and education which an organisation decides is necessary for a position.

Why are selection criteria used?

Selection criteria are used to help select the most capable, effective, suited, experienced, qualified, person for the job. Applicants must demonstrate and prove the ways in which they will be of value for the job and the organisation.

An application may not be shortlisted if it fails to demonstrate how the applicant meets any one of the criteria. Those applicants who are able to successfully and competitively demonstrate that they meet each of the selection criteria will usually be offered an interview.

From the organisation's point of view, selection criteria can help to standardise the recruitment process. They provide a guide to employees and recruiters as to essential and desirable requirements to look for in applicants, which can help reduce personal and social bias in selection decisions and to ensure that the most suitable candidate is selected.

Who uses selection criteria?

All Australian public sector positions have, or should have, formally stated selection criteria that are made available to all potential job applicants. Community sector positions will usually have formally stated selection criteria as well. Private sector employers may or may not have formally stated selection criteria for different positions. However, they will usually have at least a short list of requirements for advertised positions.

Where can I find the selection criteria for a particular position?

Public Sector

Formal, clear selection criteria are available from Human Resources for all positions in the Australian Public Service and they are often summarised in Public Service job advertisements. If that department has a web site, the selection criteria may also be available on that site, often under headings such as "employment", "positions", "human resources" etc. If you telephone the Human Resources department on the telephone number listed in the advertisement they will usually send you a package with:

- selection criteria
- job description
- employment forms
- other employment related and policy information (such as EEO and OH&S guidelines)

Private Sector

Selection criteria usually exist for jobs in private industry. However, they may not be as clear or followed as rigidly as in selection in the Public Service. Selection criteria for jobs in the private sector may be outlined in the job advertisement, may be available from the manager of the work unit or from the recruitment consultant who is working to fill the position.

Suggestions for addressing selection criteria
Clarify the selection criteria by either requesting a recruitment package, by analysing the job advertisement, or by speaking to the contact officer or recruitment consultant. Research the position and the organisation further.

In her book, How To Write to Selection Criteria, Dr Ann Villiers suggests the following do's and don'ts when addressing selection criteria.