Your UCL job application

How to interpret the Job Description and Person Specification

Seen a role you like and want to apply? Read the following tips to see how you can get your application off to a good start.

- When applying for a job we will often request you include a 'supporting statement' along with a CV or application form. This is very similar to a cover letter and gives you the opportunity to expand on your experience, knowledge, skills and abilities, and really 'sell yourself' as the best person for the role. A supporting statement should be tailored to the requirements of a specific job.

- To submit a good application for one of our roles, it is essential to read and thoroughly understand the job description and person specification for the role. We often find that candidates who aren't as successful in the shortlisting stage are those who have not demonstrated how they meet the person specification criteria and are therefore not using relevant examples.

- Before you begin, make sure you have read the instructions (if any) for the supporting statement, so you know exactly what to include. If you have not been given any specific guidelines for the supporting statement, you may find the following framework useful.

Introducing yourself

The first paragraph should give a brief introduction of who you are and why you are best for the role, e.g. 'I am an award-winning project manager with excellent organisation skills'. It is important to give a succinct and positive impression of yourself right from the start.

About working for us

You need to explain why you want this specific role and to work for us, which will involve doing some background research on the department and team. If you're unsure, read the job description and advert again. Explain how you match the roles objectives, our core values and what motivates and attracts you to work at UCL. Explore our website using the search functionality.

Demonstrate your suitability through evidence of your qualities

You then need to familiarise yourself with all the essential requirements and desirable criteria (if applicable) mentioned in the person specification and explain how you meet each one, giving examples from your experience. Provide concrete examples and solid numbers wherever you can, e.g., 'increased efficiency by 25% while saving over £10k from the original budget'.

Use positive statements about yourself, e.g., by saying 'I ran multiple working groups…' rather than 'my last employer has…'. Bullet points and active verbs can help to make your application stand out. Your closing sentence should recap your enthusiasm for the role and why you could be best suited.

Keep it concise

It is important to keep your supporting statement as relevant and concise as possible, whilst including all the requested information. Once you have finished, go back and remove anything which is not as relevant, or does not clearly demonstrate how well you meet the essential criteria. We also strongly recommend you get a friend or colleague to proofread the statement before submitting your application.

Your UCL job interview

Well done! Now it's time to revisit your application form submitted. You've got our hiring manager's attention, so now it's time for them to learn more about you and for you to get to know us.

Read your interview invite closely, check the date, time, location and any instructions you may need to prepare for. Most importantly, let us know if you have any reasonable adjustment requirements.

A typical job interview at UCL will assess all candidates against each essential criteria, and you will be asked about:

- Past behaviours and performance
- Learning from past behaviours
- Knowledge and understanding of issues in relation to the post

What will a UCL job interview focus on?

Most interviews will focus on key areas. These will mostly be competencies but may also include other knowledge-based essential criteria, such as leadership (if applicable), teamwork, conflict, motivation, creativity, and technical skills related to the job specification. Questions asked will be focused on criteria considered most critical for the particular role. You may also be required to meet other essential criteria, for example an in-depth knowledge of a particular area or previous experience of working in a similar role.

What should I expect at interview?

All UCL interview panel members are trained on Fair and Inclusive recruitment and any selection decisions are made on this basis.

Competency-based interview questions will focus on past situations and your behaviour in those situations. They're always based on the requirements outlined in the person specification for that role. The interviewer may use phrases such as 'give me an example' or 'tell me about a time', but they may also ask 'when' and 'how' questions.

Depending on the needs of the role, questions may cover the following areas: Teamwork, Personal motivation, Decision making, Conflict & pressure among many others. If in doubt, always refer to the person specification for guidance. You can find out more about the UCL Core Behaviours and Ways of Working (professional services roles only).

What will the interview panel members be looking for?

Interview panel members will be looking for specific examples describing exactly what you did in certain scenarios.

You can use relevant examples from your current job, a previous role or a situation outside of work altogether. You will be asked to discuss the example in some detail. It is likely that the interviewers will then follow with some probing questions, possibly to clarify a particular point.

Our interview panel want to know the outcome of the situation too, what you achieved or learnt. For example, if you generated income, state how much. If you launched a marketing programme, what were the engagement results?

Interview response methods

Competency-based interviewing, also known as behavioural interviewing, requires you to draw on past experience and describe specific examples of incidents that demonstrate your competence in a particular area. The most effective way of answering these questions is to use the "STAR" technique:

- Situation - briefly describe the background to the situation
- Task - specifically describe your responsibility
- Action - describe what you did
- Result - describe the outcome of your actions.

You may find it useful to prepare some answers using the 'PEE' method, which stands for 'Point, Evidence, Explain.' State your point, give evidence, so an example of something you have done and explain the outcome (benefits/ problems.)

An interview at UCL provides an opportunity to learn more about the department and team you are applying to work for, as a result you are strongly advised to prepare questions of your own for the panel.

If anything is unclear about the interview itself or how it will run, please contact the relevant department or person who sent the invite for clarification as soon as you can.