



Tips on applying for a job at the University of Oxford

We are always recruiting people for jobs at the University of Oxford.

Over 10,000 people work for the university, including administrators, clerical staff, maintenance staff, technicians, library and museum staff, as well as academics and researchers.

Here are some tips to help people who are unfamiliar with the university apply for Support and Technical or Professional and Management roles. They are less relevant for people applying for academic or research roles.

Making a good application is likely to improve your chances of success!



Deciding whether to apply for a job

- Read the job description and selection criteria very carefully to decide whether you have the skills, knowledge and experience that we need in relation to the key areas.
- We often receive many applications for a post so you will usually need to show that you meet most of the essential criteria and perhaps a few of the desirable criteria in order to be shortlisted. Your skills and experience do not need to have been acquired in paid work, but they must be relevant to the criteria.
- Research shows that women are often deterred from applying for a job unless they meet every criterion. We encourage you to apply even if you have less experience of some of the essential criteria. We recognise that you may need further experience and development in some areas.

“In my experience, applying for a job at Oxford was no different to applying for a job anywhere else”

Adrienne

Using the e-recruitment system

- When you use the system for the first time you will be prompted to create a username and password. Keep a note of these in a safe place.
- Check carefully which documents you need to submit e.g. curriculum vitae (CV) **and** supporting statement.
- Take time to write and check all the parts of your application before you submit them. Some people find it helpful to do this over several days.
- Don't leave submitting your application to the last minute in case of computer problems. We can only accept applications after the deadline in exceptional circumstances.
- If you are a disabled applicant who cannot use the e-recruitment system, e.g. because of incompatibility with assistive software, please contact us for help: recruitment.support@admin.ox.ac.uk.
- Computers are available in public libraries if needed.

Curriculum vitae (CV) (if requested)

- Check that your CV is up-to-date.
- For support, administrative and managerial posts keep your CV short (1-3 pages). Researchers and academics will normally have longer CVs.
- Highlight the skills and experience that are relevant to the post for which you are applying. Avoid sending a generic CV.
- Give details of your education, employment history and voluntary experience.
- Keep details brief for jobs with less relevance and focus on transferable skills gained e.g. customer service skills from temporary retail jobs.
- You may find the advice on [writing a CV](#) on our Careers website useful, but be aware that this material is intended for our students applying for graduate-entry jobs and it may therefore not be relevant for all roles.

Supporting statement

- Structure your supporting statement clearly. For example you may want to list each of the criteria in turn, and explain briefly how your skills and experience match these requirements.
- As far as possible, give us evidence that you have the skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications that match what we want for the role. Don't just say that you can do the tasks, but give us examples of things that you have done that demonstrate. If you don't have the exact experience asked for, be honest about this and explain how you think your other skills are relevant or how you could address this gap.
- It is fine to use examples from voluntary work or social activities, if relevant e.g. "I keep the accounts for my local church."
- Don't exaggerate your achievements, but keep your application honest and supported by evidence. At the same time, don't be afraid of selling yourself, even if this feels unnatural. Use positive language and write in the first person e.g. "I demonstrated my excellent attention to detail when I handled all bookings for a national conference of 200 people ..."
- Explain any gaps in your employment history. For example tell us if you took a career break because of caring responsibilities e.g. "I took a nine month career break to look after my elderly father who had dementia." We recognise that people may have varied career patterns e.g. "I took a 3 month break to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and visit family."
- Check your spelling and grammar.

Communication

- Confirm promptly that you can attend.
- Let us know if you need any reasonable adjustments e.g. a wheelchair user may need an accessible room; someone with dyslexia may request additional time for a practical task; someone with RSI may want to use an ergonomic computer mouse.
- Find out who you will be meeting: the person to ask for on arrival, the number of people on your interview panel, etc.

“Overall, I found the process fairly uncomplicated. The website is easy to access and provides more than enough information about all the different departments.”

Bea

Finding information

- Strengthen your application by finding out about the department and university, e.g. by looking at the website.
- You may want to find out more about the role. It is sometimes possible to speak to someone informally to find out more.
- If you would only be able to do the role on a part-time basis, you might like to phone the department to ask if there are any reasons why the role couldn't be done part-time. For many roles this would be possible, but a few roles can only be done full-time, so it may be best to clarify this early.

“Thinking of examples in advance helps to avoid blank moments during the interview!”
Caroline

Preparation

- We will usually ask a series of questions linked directly to the selection criteria listed in the job description. To prepare for this, look again at your application form, CV or covering letter and think about the key points you want to make. It is usually fine to take some brief notes to the interview.
- For each of the criteria, think of one or two specific examples you can use to demonstrate the required skills e.g. working in a team, dealing with a difficult situation, attention to detail.
- You may like to practise answering possible questions.
- Think about any questions about the job you may like to ask us. This is not compulsory but is often a good opportunity to show your interest in the role, the team and the university.

Check practical arrangements

- Check the date, time and exact address.
- Check how long the interview process is likely to take.
- Check your travel arrangements, including [maps](#) for routes and times. You are unlikely to be able to park easily in central Oxford or Headington, so you may need to use a Park and Ride bus. Traffic congestion is common, so allow plenty of time.
- Check what you will be asked to do: interview, tests, presentation and whether you need to prepare anything in advance.

The evening before

- Find any documentation you have been asked to bring with you, for example showing your right to work in the UK.
- Decide what to wear. We would normally expect men and women to look reasonably smart e.g. wearing a jacket, but not necessarily a suit.
- Although the material on our Careers Service website is primarily intended for our students, you may find some helpful advice on [preparing for interview](#).

At the interview

- You are likely to be interviewed by a panel of around three people, more for a senior role. The invitation to interview will normally tell you the arrangements in advance, including any written or other tests.
- Typically at interview you can expect to be asked questions to show how your knowledge, skills, potential, interests and aspirations match the criteria required for the job. e.g.
 - 'What knowledge do you have of ...?'
 - 'Tell me about a time when you ...'
- You may be expected to think creatively, particularly for more senior roles, but the questions you are asked shouldn't come as a surprise.
- Take your time to answer carefully. We know you may be nervous. If your mind goes blank, ask the interviewer to repeat the question. Don't be afraid to ask for further explanation.
- All candidates will have roughly the same time for their interview, so use your time well. Answer each question as clearly as you can, but stick to the question and don't wander off the point.
- Answer questions in relation to what *you* did personally, not what your organisation did.
- It would be inappropriate for us to ask you questions about:
 - your marital or civil partnership status;
 - whether you have children or other caring responsibilities;
 - whether you are pregnant, or intending to become so;
 - your health;
 - whether you have a disability or long-term medical condition. There is no obligation to tell the panel about any disability, but you may choose to do so if you wish. If you tell the panel that you are disabled they would be looking for evidence of your skills with any necessary reasonable adjustments in place.

Continued.....

- We may ask all applicants questions about their ability to meet particular selection criteria, such as flexibility to work irregular hours. You need to tell us that you can meet the requirement, but do not need to give details of your personal circumstances.
- We will ask all applicants similar questions, to measure how well they match the essential criteria.
- Ask the panel your own questions. This is your opportunity to check out whether this is a place where you would feel happy working. Ask questions that show your interest in the post e.g.
 - what are the future plans for the team/department?
 - why is the role empty/available?
 - how have the careers of previous post-holders developed?
 - what training opportunities are there?
- It is best to wait until you are offered the post to negotiate practicalities.

“I found the setting, the panel and the questions fair and balanced. It was a pleasant experience. The interview also involved a practical session...I was informed what was required in advance so this felt straightforward.”

Gavin

“I was pleasantly surprised how relaxing the interview was and how panel enabled me to relax. I felt I performed much better seeing BME members of staff on the interview panel.”

Shakina

Offer of employment

We hope you are successful at interview.

However, we have many applications for jobs at the university, so your application for a particular post may not be successful. This may simply be because there was another candidate whose skills were a better match for that post. We encourage you to reflect on how you could improve future applications. You may want to ask for feedback, which would help you do this.

Thank you for your interest in applying for a job at the university and good luck in future applications!

*"I have been pleasantly surprised
by how friendly everyone is"*

Emily

Equality and Diversity Unit

equality@admin.ox.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 01865 (2)89825

Fax: (2)89830

Personnel Services

personnel.services@admin.ox.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 (0)1865 (2)89900

Fax: +44 (0)1865 (2)89927

