MDXworks presents:

The applaudable guide to completing application forms

Some recruiters require you to fill in a lengthy application form, which may seem like a lot of bother, but that's all part of the test! Show them how keen you are: submit an outstanding application which beats all of the rest.

Before you start…

Read all the information before you start to fill-in your application. You should at least have a Job Description, but you may also have a separate Person Specification, or Guidance For Applications document which may give specific instructions about how to complete the form. Reading everything carefully will help to ensure that you don't make mistakes, and that you know the requirements of the role, so you can show what a good match you are.
Tip: If there's anything you're not sure about, perhaps contact the recruiter (Make a great first impression by being polite and professional).

Double-check the closing date. If you're not applying straight away, make sure you note the date in your diary.
Tip: You may want to contact the recruiter, to check that the job's still available. Organisations sometimes stop accepting applications early if they've had too many. However they may still consider submissions just after the deadline if they've not had much response.

Ensure you have plenty of time to fill in the form. A good application can take hours. Don't be tempted to rush as this could lead to mistakes. If it's a BIG form, then perhaps don't do it all in one go.
Tip: Carrying-out a regular job search will help you to spot vacancies at the earliest opportunity, so you're less likely to be rushing your application after spotting your dream job the night before the deadline.
Another tip: Plan enough spare time that you can get your application reviewed by MDXworks and make any necessary amendments.

Save a copy of the job description / person specification you may want to refer to it again if you're selected for interview (and these documents probably won't be on their website after the closing date).

Gather your information. You'll need to provide some hard-to-remember details such as your National Insurance Number, contact details for references, start and end dates of employment, school grades, favourite telly-tubby and so on. Do yourself a big favour and keep this information all in one place where you can easily find it. Refer to your CV and LinkedIn profile to help you. Consider keeping a copy of your completed application, to make life easier for yourself next time.
Tip: If you are giving details of someone who will provide a reference, then it's considered polite to let them know in advance. Get in touch with them to ask permission and get any missing contact details, so you don't leave blanks on your form.

When filling in your application form…

Save your application frequently. You may also want to periodically save a backup copy in a separate location, or cut and paste important bits into a separate document.

Fill in every section. Don't leave blanks. If a question doesn't apply (such as 'Unspent Criminal Convictions') then answer with 'None' or 'N/A' for Not Applicable. Why? Because if you leave blanks, employers may assume that you've got something to hide or that you've got poor attention to detail.
Tip: Sections that unsuccessful applicants have frequently left blank, include: full contact details for references (if you're asked for both email and phone number, give both, not one or the other), main duties or start and end dates for employment (not just job title and start date), supporting statement and details of unspent criminal convictions.

Read every question or instruction carefully before you fill in that section. Look out for questions asking you to do more than one thing, such as 'please give your job title and a brief description of duties'.

Write a great Supporting Statement. Application forms generally have a section titled Supporting Statement or 'Additional Information' with an instruction saying something like: 'Please give any additional information in support of your application'. Don't leave it blank! This section needs careful consideration, as it's your best opportunity to sell yourself.
Tip: Before you get to work on your Supporting Statement, check for any instructions, such as word count limit or specific questions you need to answer (such as 'Explain in 200 words how you think you can add value to our brand' or 'Please detail why you have chosen to apply to the financial services industry'). A well-written and thorough statement could take a while, so you may prefer to prepare this in a separate document and remember to save your work regularly.

Check the Job Description / Person Specification, paying particular attention to any 'required' or 'desirable' skills, qualities, knowledge or experience. Describe yourself in a way that shows how you fit those requirements as closely as possible. The more closely your application fits the description, the more likely it is that you'll be selected for interview. You could write a few lines for each requirement, giving a brief example to explain how you meet the criteria.
Tip: Try to make it easy for the reader to spot that you have the necessary skills. Don't bury important information at the bottom of the page or hide it within lengthy descriptions in your application.
Another tip: You could print a copy of the job description, highlight all of the required skills, qualities, knowledge or experience and then 'tick them off' as you add them to your application.

Looking at a printout and wondering why the links won't work? Email MDXworks@mdx.ac.uk to request a fully-working electronic copy of this guide.

Tip: When giving examples or answering questions in your application form, you may find it helpful to use STAR technique as you would in an interview. STAR stands for…

- **Situation:** Give your answer some context by outlining the company you worked for and your role.
- **Task:** Give a bit more context by explaining the specific project or activity you were involved in.
- **Action:** Explain what actions you took. This should take up most of your answer.
- **Result:** Finish with a positive outcome resulting from the actions you took.

If you're not sure what to write in your Supporting Statement (and if there are no specific instruction about what you should write), then perhaps you could get some inspiration from your Personal Profile, Key Skills, and Interests sections on your CV. If you've already prepared a covering letter, then perhaps you could use this as a starting-point for your Supporting Statement.

Tip: Compare your CV and cover letter with your application form. If something was worth saying in your CV or cover letter, then it may be worth adding to your application form (don't just attach your CV, unless they've specifically said this is ok, as it may seem a bit lazy).

You could include explanation about what relevant skills, qualities and experience you will bring to the role, your main achievements, any relevant extra-curricular activities you're involved in (such as reading relevant publications, volunteering or society membership). Perhaps include links showing your relevant extra-curricular projects, such as videos or blogs.

Mention why you want to work for them in particular. Try to make a connection and show how well you will fit in with their work culture and values. Tailor your Supporting Statement to the company you are applying to (don't use the same statement for every application). Do some research about the company to help give you some inspiration. Look at their websites and news-feeds, read about them on Wikipedia, follow them on social media.

Tip: Don't be a mercenary. Focus on what you have to offer, rather than what's in it for you.

You may like to finish your Supporting Statement with something like 'Many thanks for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.'

Once you think you've finished (Before you submit your application)

Proof-read your application to check that you haven't left any blank sections and that you've fully answered the questions. Check your spelling and grammar. Check that you've consistently used the same font throughout your document particularly if you've been cutting and pasting from elsewhere. Avoid alternating between Arial, Calibri and Times New Roman font in different sizes or colours. We also highly recommend that you get your application form reviewed by MDXworks. Email: MDXworks@mdx.ac.uk

Tip: If you take a break between 'finishing' your application and proof-reading it, this may improve your ability to spot mistakes.

Another tip: To help you check spelling and grammar, you may find it helpful to draft your answers in a separate Word document. Ensure your spell-checker is working, and set to the correct language.

If you're sending your application form by email don't forget to attach your application form! To avoid this common mistake, we recommend attaching your form -along with any other attachments- *before* you draft your email. To help you draft an attention-grabbing email, we recommend familiarising yourself with the 'MDXworks outstanding cover letter template'

After you've submitted your application

Follow-up with a quick call to introduce yourself and check that your application has been received. This personal touch could help to put you in their mind when they're shortlisting candidates. To make a great first impression, remember to be polite and professional. Be prepared to deliver your best elevator pitch.

Keep a copy of your finished form so you can refer to it next time you're completing an application.

Need more help?

Take a look at application form tips and guidance on MDXworks.com (Use your MyUniHub ID and password to log in), or get in touch if you'd like us to review your application documents: MDXworks@mdx.ac.uk. Before you contact us, please ensure that you include an explanation of who you are, in your email, tell us your MDX student ID number and explain your job goal. Send us a job description, if you have one (a link in your email will do), as this will help us to provide you with more specific feedback.

Your feedback matters: If you've got any comments or suggestions, please give us your feedback. Your feedback will help us to improve our service for students and graduates just like you!

We hope you found this guide helpful. Good luck, and please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require any further support (Don't forget to Connect with MDXworks so we can keep you updated with the latest employability news and opportunities).

📍 bit.ly/MDXworks_appointments
Drop-in Mon-Fri 10am-5pm

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✉️ MDXworks@mdx.ac.uk

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