



## **St. James's Hospital**

# **Competency Based Selection: Guidelines for Job Applicants**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. St James's Hospital is an equal opportunities employer and applies a fair and transparent selection process for the appointment of staff to all positions within the Hospital. To further assist in this process, and to ensure the Hospital's procedures and decisions in the area of staff selection and promotion meet with leading practice, and comply with Employment Equality Legislation, St. James's Hospital has recently developed a competency based approach to recruitment and selection. The objective of introducing such an approach is to select candidates who are most suited to the role in terms of their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The competencies that are used to guide selection have been identified through undertaking a detailed research process with the assistance of external consultants and organisational psychologists. The result was the development of a Competency Framework specific to the requirements of St. James's Hospital.
  
- 1.2. A competency is defined as the underlying knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics required to be successful in a job role. A competency is described in behavioural terms, and proficiency in a competency can be demonstrated by a candidate through detailed examples of associated past behaviour in various situations. Where a number of candidates are found to be suitable, the candidates that display the closest match to the required competencies for the specified role will be offered the position in order of merit as outlined in this guideline.
  
- 1.3. The competency based approach to staff selection and promotion is designed to ensure that a fair, objective and transparent selection procedure is adopted. The process will be initially conducted in the areas of Nursing, SCOPE, Clerical/Administration (Grades III to VII) and Catering.

- 1.4. This document outlines the procedures associated with the competency-based approach to recruitment and selection in St. James's Hospital. As well as describing the range of competencies and the proficiency level of each competency, it also outlines the exact procedures that will be used for competency-based recruitment and selection, and the exact requirements from job applicants.

## **2. Applying for a Job Vacancy**

- 2.1. Once a decision is made to fill a post within the Hospital, the vacancy will be advertised and potential applicants will be referred to a "Role Profile", in order to obtain a thorough description of what the job role entails, including the competencies required to be successful in the role.
- 2.2. The Role Profile includes a description of the job role, including the purpose, scope, duties and responsibilities of the role, as well as the reporting relationships, salary, and other particulars of the vacancy. The Role Profile also outlines both the essential and desirable educational qualifications, work experience, and technical competencies required to do the job effectively. In addition, the essential and desirable 'behavioural competencies' for the job will be clearly identified in the advertisement.
- 2.3. In making a successful application for the vacancy, the candidate should obtain the Standard Application Form (SAC), which is used for all vacancies throughout the Hospital. The SAC is designed and structured to capture the information relevant to the job and to make screening of applicants objective and reliable. The application form will also act as an aid to the subsequent interview for the short listed candidates.

2.4. Instructions for its completion are outlined on the front page of the Application Form. Applicants are requested to read this carefully, and in particular take note of the following requirements:

- Four (4) copies of the application form are required to be submitted. (One (1) master copy and three (3) photocopies will suffice). These should be posted/delivered by hand to the Recruitment and Selection Division of the Human Resources Directorate, St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8, or emailed to [humanresrouces@stjames.ie](mailto:humanresrouces@stjames.ie).
- Applications must be received no later than 5pm on the date of Closing.
- The application form should be completed in full, either typed in Microsoft Word, or written using **black ink** in **BLOCK CAPITALS**.

2.5. As well as asking the usual biographical information, applicants are asked to provide written examples of having previously demonstrated the behavioural competencies as listed on the Role Profile. In this section of the application form applicants may either attach additional pages (if completing application by hand) or expand the boxes as required (if completing application in Microsoft Word as a typed document).

The Role Profile lists a number of behavioural competencies (usually between 3 and 8) that are required to be successful in the role. Both the competency title, and some or all of the behavioural descriptors, taken from the Competency Framework, are included. The applicant is expected to describe a previous situation, or situations, where they demonstrated the behaviours described. Included in the description should be the background to the situation, the objective you were trying to achieve, the actions you took, what the outcome was, and what you learned. An example of a competency, its behavioural descriptors, and a narrative describing a previous situation of demonstrating the competency, is outlined below:

<p><b>[Competency] Team Player</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is responsive to the needs of others; shows empathy</li><li>• Puts team needs ahead of own; is dependable</li><li>• Helps others; proactively takes on different roles according to team needs</li><li>• Projects a warm and approachable demeanour.</li></ul>
<p>I worked within a team of 3 Admin staff, each supporting a group of 3 Consultants. The unit was particularly pressurised. During one particular period one of the admin staff was out sick. Although very busy myself, I noticed that a backlog of correspondence for one of the Consultants (in the group whose admin was out sick) was building up. I recognised that the Consultants administration support was not meeting the many patient demands and that the Consultant might be hesitant to ask for assistance. So I proactively approached him to ask if there was anything I could do to give him some support. I assured him that there was no problem for me to stay late to help him out and that patient service was my priority. He agreed to my offer on a short-term basis and we prioritised some areas that needed immediate attention. We ended up improving our overall relationship to the extent that he often approaches me now when he needs extra support. The individual who had been out sick was appreciative of my efforts also as there was a reduced backlog of work to get through on her return.</p>

In the above example, the applicant has adequately covered all of the competency descriptors with one example. If necessary, the application form allows up to three examples (**but no more**).

- 2.6. The application form must be signed by the applicant when submitting hard copies. Where the application is submitted on-line the applicant needs to make sure they have ticked the appropriate box in the 'Declaration' section of the Application Form.
- 2.7. The applicant can contact the Recruitment and Selection Division, Human Resources Directorate, St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8 (Tel: 01 4162559, Fax: 410, email: [humanresources@stjames.ie](mailto:humanresources@stjames.ie)) with any queries or to request assistance in completing the application form.

### **3. Short-listing for Interview**

- 3.1. The hospital will apply a shortlisting process to all competitions. To be shortlisted for an interview, an applicant must have adequately demonstrated **all** of the minimum requirements as set out in the Role Profile. When an applicant does

not adequately demonstrate all of the minimum requirements, they will not be selected for interview.

- 3.2. The short-listing process will ensure consistency and reliability across a number of specific and essential criteria against which all applications will be compared. The short-listing criteria will apply to essential requirements of the post as outlined in the Role Profile.
- 3.3. It is intended that the Role Profile will specify all minimum requirements for the job. However, if a candidate needs further clarification, they are advised to contact the recruiting manager identified as the contact for enquiries, and/or the Recruitment Team.
- 3.4. A short-listing criteria will apply to all competitions, therefore the applicant must show on the application form that they possess the required short-listing criteria (e.g. educational qualifications, work experience, technical competencies, etc.) and also adequately describe how they can demonstrate that they have experience in the essential behavioural competencies at the required level, as outlined on the Role Profile.
- 3.5. Applicants who fail to submit the application form on time, or do not meet the minimum requirements, will not be short-listed for interview.

#### **4. The Interview**

- 4.1. Short-listed candidates will be called for interview.
- 4.2. Interviews will be conducted normally by an interview panel of two to five persons.

- 4.3. Interviews will be standardised (i.e. they will follow a pre-planned format) to ensure a fair process for all candidates, as well as to aid consistency and objectivity in the board's overall decision-making. The standardised process also helps to eliminate interviewer bias.
- 4.4. During the interview, candidates will be rated on how well they demonstrate that they meet all of the requirements for the job, as set out in the Role Profile.
- 4.5. Firstly, candidates will be asked questions about their qualifications and relevant work experience, and a percentage of the marks will be allocated to this part of the interview.
- 4.6. There will also be questions that ask the candidate to demonstrate their proficiency of the technical/clinical competencies required for the job as outlined in the Role Profile. The candidate will be asked to talk in greater detail about their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the areas already described on the application form. The interview panel may also enquire into the candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities of the competencies listed as 'desired' in the Role Profile.
- 4.7. The largest portion of the interview will be allocated to assessing the candidate's experiences of the behavioural competencies identified in the Role Profile. The examples that have been provided on the application form will be explored and probed in greater detail by the interview board. Questions will be job related and based on the candidate's past behaviour in given situations, for example, "can you tell me a little more about the situation you described on your application form in which you were faced with a difficult problem and what you did to resolve this?. Typical examples of probing or follow-on questions would be:
  - What might you have done differently
  - What kind of feedback did you get

- What benefits ensued from the actions you took.

At this stage of the interview, the panel will be trying to establish that the candidate's level of involvement in the situation described on the application form. For example were they directly involved firsthand, or did they play more of an observer role?

The interview panel may also explore areas that are listed as 'desired' but not 'required' on the Role Profile, and the candidate can gain additional marks from these questions. In most cases, the largest portion of the marks will be allocated to the 'behavioural competencies section of the interview.

In order to be well prepared for the interview, candidates are encouraged to check out books on 'Competency Based Interviews' which are readily available in bookstores or local libraries.

- 4.8. The interview board will likely take notes throughout the course of the interview. This is normal procedure and should not distract the candidate from answering the questions as well as possible. At the end of the interview, the panel will allocate marks for each section of the interview on a pre-determined rating scale. This ensures a reliable and consistent method of rating each individual interview candidate is applied.
- 4.9. Following the interview, the notes, as well as the individual scores assigned against the competencies, experience and relevant additional qualifications held by the candidate, will be combined to award an overall mark and final result.
- 4.10. Successful candidates may be placed on a panel and subsequent vacancies may be filled from the panel within a specified timeframe from the interview date.

## **5. Feedback**

- 5.1. All interview candidates are entitled to request and receive feedback on their interview performance, once the post has been filled and the unsuccessful candidates have been notified. The notes taken and scores allocated during the interview will be made available, if requested, through a nominated member of the interview board, who will be made known after the process is complete.
  
- 5.2. The purpose of this feedback is to provide constructive advice and to guide unsuccessful candidates in the areas most in need of improvement and development.

## **6. The Competency Framework**

- 6.1. The full competency framework, comprising the different competencies and the behavioural descriptors for each competency level, can be accessed by staff on the St. James's Hospital website.