

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

YOUR FUTURE

**Competence
and knowledge**

**Sample CV
and cover letter**

**Interview skills
and assessments**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	1
Glossary of competences	4
Competences	7
Motivation	8
Link between competences, motivation and performance	9
Life-long learning	9
The recruitment process	10
Where to apply for a job	10
Networking	11
How to apply for a job	11
Write a professional CV/résumé	13
Sample CV/résumé	16
Sample cover letter	18
Interview skills	19
Psychometric tests and other recruitment tools	21
Appendix: CV writing – useful action words	22

INTRODUCTION

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is presented by Engineers Ireland as a practical set of guidance notes for both graduate and experienced engineers who are seeking to develop their career. While this is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject, we hope that it will be of some use to engineers engaged in job seeking at any point in their career.

These guidelines also feature a special section for graduate engineers seeking their first job, which includes advice on psychometric tests and assessment centres.

This material supplements Engineers Ireland's Career Consultancy Service, which is managed by our Employment Services team.

For more information, and to arrange a one-to-one meeting on managing your career, preparing a CV, and professional development, please go to www.engineersireland.ie, or contact

Paul Sheridan, Chartered Engineer, Assoc. CIPD
Employment Services Manager
T: (01) 655 1344
M: 086 771 4059
E: psheridan@engineersireland.ie

Content provided by Sean Maguire and Paul Sheridan

Sean Maguire BE MIEI MSc (Management Development) is an engineer and management development consultant with many years' experience in power plant engineering, engineer recruitment, engineer training and development, career counselling, and management development.

Paul Sheridan, Chartered Engineer, Assoc. CIPD is Employment Services Manager/Education Advisor and HRM professional with Engineers Ireland. He has strong experience in the engineering, construction and manufacturing sectors where he has worked with companies such as Rohan Holdings, The Construction Industry Federation, Veolia Water, and Aecom (Earth Tech).

OTHER CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Engineers Ireland is strategically aligned to support your career from college to retirement. In addition to this guide Engineers Ireland offers other career support resources for engineers looking to develop their skills. These include:

Employment Services

1. Career Consultancy Services
2. Job Desk
3. Job Desk Newsletter
4. Talent Pool
5. Career Development Training

Networking

1. LinkedIn Group and social networks
2. Regions, Divisions and Societies

Training and Development

1. Certificate and Diploma in professional engineering
2. Soft and technical skills training courses
3. Online training packages
4. Industry seminars and lectures

Third-level and Graduate Services

1. Engineering Your Career Seminars
2. Vouchers for training and development courses
3. Newsletters

Volunteerism and Mentoring

1. STEPS and promotion of engineering as a career
2. Professional interviews and committees

CAREER

What do we mean when we talk about a career? The word can cover a broad range of things related to both your job, training, hobbies and family life.

The best way to explain what a career is, is to refer to quotes by leaders in career development.

“Value what you have to offer... It’s about always knowing what you are worth and being true to what you have to offer, rather than trying to fit what the job market is looking for.”

John Deely, career coach, occupational psychologist and partner at Pinpoint – www.pinpoint.ie

“Keep moving towards what you want... career development is about choosing, not once, not twice, but continually through your life, often in quite small ways.

And if you choose repeatedly on the basis of what you enjoy and what is important to you, it is not probable, but inevitable, that you will find work that you love.”

Anita Houghton, Coaching Consultant at The Working Lives Partnership, London – www.workinglives.co.uk

“For me, a career is all about setting realistic goals, achieving a good quality of life and having the resources to do the things that are most important to you.”

Siobhan Hamilton-Philips, Senior Consultant Psychologist at Career Psychology Ltd., London – www.career-psychology.com

The most important thing to remember is that your career is your responsibility.

GLOSSARY OF COMPETENCES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

For the jobseeker, an understanding of competences is essential to successfully negotiate the various stages of the recruitment process.

A competence is a personal quality or skill that you possess, which could add value to your employer.

Below is a sample list of competences. Take the time to read through them and think about which apply to you. The coding C1-5 relates to the corresponding competence of a Chartered Engineer. (Source: DDI – Development Dimensions International).

Adaptability C1-5

Maintaining effectiveness in varying environments and with different tasks, responsibilities and people.

Analysis/problem assessment C1

Securing relevant information and identifying key issues and relationships from a base of information; relating and comparing data from different sources; identifying cause-effect relationships.

Business development skills C3

Ability to develop business strategies, identify business opportunities, and grow revenue streams.

Coaching C4

Facilitating the development of others' knowledge and skills; providing timely feedback and guidance to help them reach their goals.

Commercial focus C3

Understanding the meaning and implications of key financial indicators and driving a strong value for money ethos across the organisation.

Communication C4

Expressing ideas effectively in individual and group situations (including non-verbal communication); adjusting language or terminology to the characteristics and needs of the audience.

Customer service orientation C3

Proactively developing customer relationships by making efforts to listen to and understand the customer (both internal and external); anticipating and providing solutions to customer needs; giving high priority to customer satisfaction.

Developing organisational talent C3

Developing subordinates' skills and competences by planning

effective development activities related to current and future jobs.

Empowering job design C2

Determining the most effective organisation and job structure to accomplish a goal or strategy; appropriately reconfiguring jobs to maximise opportunities for associate empowerment, continuous improvement and flexibility.

Energy C3-4

Consistently maintaining a high activity or productivity level.

Follow-up C1, 3-4

Establishing procedures to monitor the results of delegations, assignments, or projects; taking into consideration the skills, knowledge and experience of the assigned individual and characteristics of the assignment or project.

Formal presentation C4

Presenting ideas effectively to individuals or groups when given time for preparation (including non-verbal communication and use of visual aids); targeting presentations to the characteristics and needs of the audience.

Impact C3-4

Creating a good first impression; commanding attention and respect; showing an air of confidence.

Individual leadership/influencing C3-4

Using appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to inspire and guide individuals (direct reports, peers and superiors) towards goal achievement; modifying behaviour to accommodate tasks, situations and individuals involved.

Information monitoring C2

Setting up ongoing procedures for collection and review of the information necessary for the management of projects or an organisation; taking into consideration the skills, knowledge and experience of the responsible individuals, and characteristics of the assignments or projects.

Initiative C3

Making active attempts to influence events to achieve goals; self-starting rather than accepting passively; taking action to achieve goals beyond what is required; being proactive.

Innovation C1-2

Generating creative solutions to work situations; trying different and novel ways to deal with organisational problems and opportunities.

Integrity C4

Maintaining and promoting social, ethical and organisational norms in conducting internal and external business activities.

Interpersonal skills C4

Tailoring one's interpersonal style to the situation by monitoring and appropriately interpreting others' reactions; showing respect for individuals in all situations; modelling this behaviour for others.

Judgement/problem solving C1

Committing to an action after developing alternative courses of action that are based on logical assumptions and factual information, and that take into consideration resources, constraints and organisational values.

Leadership C3-4

Having a clear vision for the business; inspiring people by example and developing appropriate strategies to position the business for long-term growth and survival; having the capacity to inspire individuals to give their best to achieve a desired result and to maintain effective relationships with individuals and the team as a whole.

Management C3

Translating strategies into specific objectives and action plans; delivering results and aligning various stakeholders to support strategic priorities.

Maximising performance C3

Establishing performance/development goals; coaching performance; providing training and evaluating performance.

Meeting facilitation/meeting leadership C3-4

Using appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to guide participants towards a meeting's objectives; modifying behaviour according to tasks and individuals present.

Meeting participation C3-4

Using appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to help participants reach a meeting's goal; being aware of the needs and potential contribution of others.

Negotiation C3-4

Effectively exploring alternatives and positions to reach outcomes that gain all parties' support and acceptance.

Organisational awareness C2-3

Having and using knowledge of systems, situations, procedures and culture inside the organisation to identify potential organisational problems and opportunities; perceiving the impact and the implications of decisions on other components of the organisation.

Persuasiveness/sales ability C4

Using appropriate interpersonal styles and communication methods to gain acceptance of an idea, plan, activity or product from prospects and clients.

Planning and organising/work management C2

Establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal; planning proper assignments of personnel and appropriate allocation of resources.

Practical learning C1

Assimilating and applying, in a timely manner, new job-related information that may vary in complexity.

Problem solving C1

Efficiently and creatively solving difficult, complex problems that affect the team and organisation; accurately defining the amount and kind of information required to solve problems; identifying underlying or hidden problems across groups.

Professional knowledge C1-2

Having achieved a satisfactory level of technical and professional skills/knowledge in job-related areas; keeping abreast of current developments and trends in the area of expertise.

Quality orientation/attention to detail C1-3

Accomplishing tasks through concern for all areas involved, no matter how small; showing concern for all aspects of the job; accurately checking processes and tasks; maintaining watchfulness over a period of time.

Relationship/people management

Developing common cause and creating a supportive and trustworthy environment with all key stakeholders to help achieve organisational objectives.

GLOSSARY OF COMPETENCES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Resilience C4

Handling disappointment and/or rejection while maintaining effectiveness.

Risk taking C3

Initiating action that involves a deliberate attempt to achieve a recognised benefit or advantage when potential negative consequences are understood.

Strategic leadership C3

Creating and achieving a desired future state (vision) through influence on organisational values, individual and group goals, reinforcements and systems.

Teamwork/collaboration C4

Working effectively with team/work group or those outside formal line of authority (e.g., peers, senior managers) to accomplish organisational goals; taking actions that respect the needs and contributions of others; contributing to and accepting the consensus; subordinating own objectives to the objectives of the organisation or team.

Technical skills C1

Having the ability to solve technical engineering problems using tools and technology.

Tenacity C4

Staying with a position or plan of action until the desired objective is achieved or is no longer reasonably attainable.

Tolerance for stress C4

Maintaining stable performance under pressure and/or opposition (such as time pressure or job ambiguity); relieving stress in a manner that is acceptable to the person, others and the organisation.

Work standards C1-2

Setting high goals or standards of performance for self, subordinates, others, and the organisation; being dissatisfied with average performance; self-imposed standards of excellence rather than having standards imposed by others.

Written communication C4

Expressing ideas clearly in documents that have organisation, structure, grammar, language and terminology adjusted to the characteristics and needs of the audience.

COMPETENCES OF A CHARTERED ENGINEER

Competence 1 (C1)

Use a combination of general and specialist engineering knowledge and understanding to optimise the application of existing and emerging technology.

Competence 2 (C2)

Apply appropriate theoretical and practical methods to the analysis and solution of engineering problems.

Competence 3 (C3)

Provide technical, commercial and managerial leadership

Competence 4 (C4)

Use effective communication and interpersonal skills

Competence 5 (C5)

Make a personal commitment to abide by the appropriate code of professional conduct, recognising obligations to society, the profession and the environment.

To develop your career and find the right employment, you need an understanding of competences to successfully negotiate the various stages of the recruitment process.

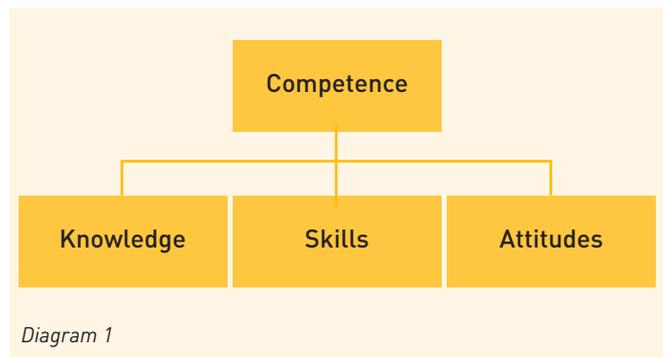
The concept of a competence is essentially about performance (Armstrong, Human Resource Management, 11th Edition, 2009, pg. 202).

Definition

There are different definitions of what a competence is, however some of the best ones are outlined below:

Mansfield: A competence is “an underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance”

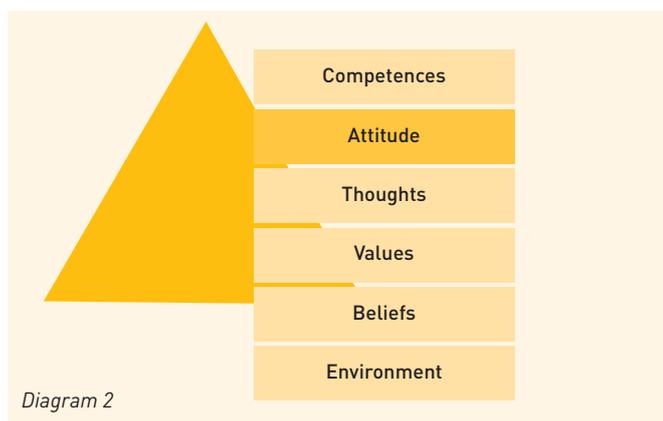
Rankin: Defines competence as “definitions of skills and behaviours that organisations expect their staff to practice in their work”



Competences are the set of:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitudes

that enable an individual to perform a job successfully.



Knowledge and skills

- Education.
- General knowledge.
- Technical and professional knowledge.
- Work experience.
- Specific skills like budgeting, drawing or use of MS Project.

Attitude

Our attitudes are very important because they determine how we perceive the world and situations in our working life. Our attitudes are formed throughout our life and diagram 2 illustrates how this occurs. For example, do you see people as assets to your organisation or as costs?

If your team is not meeting its targets do you assess the reason and provide additional training to up-skill your staff, or do you remove the worst performers and hire new staff?

Now let's come back to our definition of competences again

According to Boyatzis (1982), competence is “a capacity that exists in a person that leads to behaviour that meets the job demands.... and that in turn, brings about desired results”. Refer to diagram 3 for a graphical representation of this statement.



Taking into consideration all of the above we can now summarise a competence in the following statement:

The observable behaviours a person uses to get a task done.

Examples of these behavioural competences are:

- Team work.
- Communication.
- Planning and Organisation.

COMPETENCES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Therefore, the more competent you are at a certain task, the better you will be able to complete it and therefore the better your performance.

Competences – summary for the jobseeker

- Make an honest assessment of your own competences.
- Know your own competences thoroughly.
- At every stage of the recruitment process, aim to show how

your competences match those required in the job you are applying for.

- Remember that employers are looking at past performance, which is dictated by your behaviours. Your behaviours are determined by your competences; therefore, employers will be looking for evidence of your competences and the behaviours that lead to your performances.

MOTIVATION

According to Katz (1964) and Hackman and Oldam (1974) "Your job can be a motivation in itself"

Therefore knowing what motivates you in a job is very important. If you are motivated by what a job requires you to do, then this will come across to an employer at interview stage. One of the more common reasons why people do not get job offers is because they fail to communicate how they are motivated and their enthusiasm for the role they are being interviewed for.

Motivation defined:

A Motive – is a reason for doing something.

Motivation – the strength and direction of behaviour and the factors that influence people to behave in certain ways.

(Armstrong, Human Resource Management, 11th Edition, 2009, pg 317/8)

Motivation/attitudes (motivational fit)

- "The extent to which the activities required by the role overlap with the activities that result in personal satisfaction."

"It determines whether the person will do the job!"

Here are some examples of motivations and aspects of a job that could have an impact on a person's motivation.

- Complexity (technical or people).
- Predictability.
- Details.
- Predictable income.
- Organisational culture.



Diagram 4

- Formal recognition.
- Travel.
- Indoors/outdoors.
- Selling/ cold calling.
- Interaction with others.
- Variety.
- Fast pace.
- Leading others.
- Innovation.
- Routine.
- Work/life balance.
- Regular hours.
- Independence.
- Location.

THE LINK BETWEEN COMPETENCES, MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

There is a strong link between how competent you are, how motivated you are and how well you can perform in a job. This section demonstrates this relationship and shows why employers use competence-based recruitment and development techniques to employ, promote and retain staff.

According to Mansfield, a competence is “an underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance”.

This concept is supported by research carried out by Armstrong, who also found that high performance is achieved by

well-motivated people who are prepared to exercise discretionary effort (Armstrong, Human Resource Management, 11th Edition, 2009, pg 202 and 317).

Therefore we can state that:

High Motivation + High Competence = High Performance

In summary, employers are looking for highly competent people:

- who are competently matched to the role; and,
- are better motivated by the tasks within the role.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

The engineering work place is very dynamic and in constant flux. Technology is constantly changing and employers want their engineers to be at the forefront of knowledge, to be innovative and creative with new technology.

Therefore, as an engineer, the only way to do this is to embrace the concept of Life Long Learning. It is critical to your career and to maintaining your skill and professional competences.

The modern workplace does not offer ‘jobs for life’ – it offers ‘careers for life’.

If you want a career for life then you need to:

1. Be able to self reflect.
2. Be self aware.
3. Know your values, goals and interests.
4. Be aware of your unique selling point.
5. Be aware of your competences and behaviours.
6. Understand how to develop your competences through learning, training and development.
7. Be adaptable, agile and flexible.

If you continually innovate with your career then you will keep up with the industry around you. Do not become obsolete.



Be a life-long learner!

Engineers Ireland is your career partner. We offer high quality career support through our

- Focused CPD and training.
- Community of engineering professionals.
- Networks.
- Knowledge sharing activities.

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

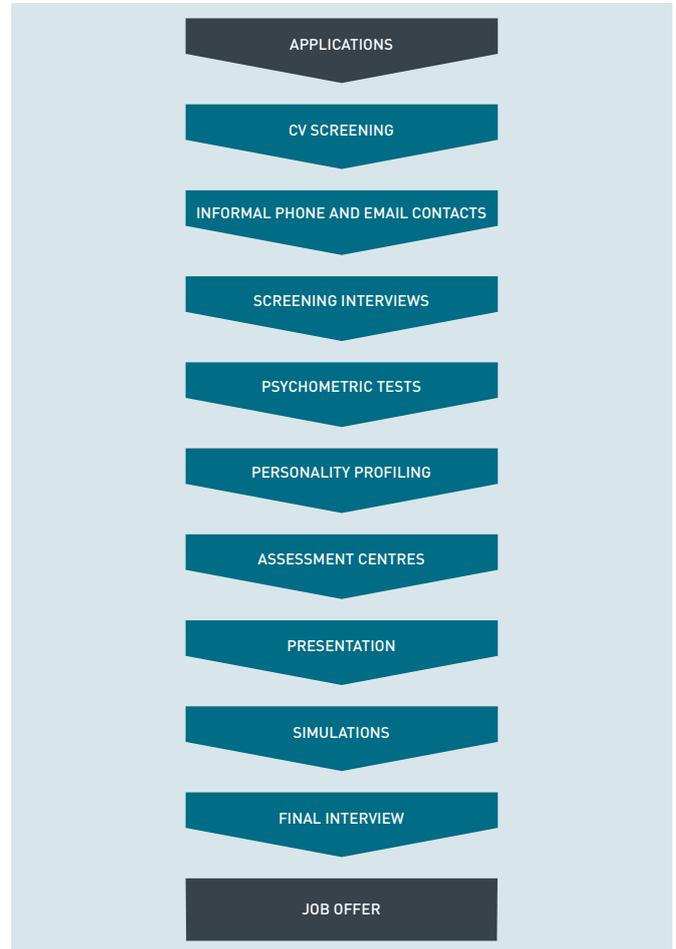
CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE



In this section, we are concentrating on CV writing and interview skills, but any recruitment process may include some or all of the stages listed here (right). At each stage, applications will be 'filtered' out of the process. Your aim is to pass through each filter to get to the job offer.

Therefore:

- Treat each stage of the process seriously. Remember that you are being assessed every time you come into contact with the employer's organisation.
- At each stage, aim to show how your competences match those required in the job you are applying for.



WHERE TO APPLY FOR A JOB



Where do employers advertise?

How employers market job openings

1. Newspapers.
2. Engineers Ireland's Job Desk.
3. Engineers Journal.
4. Other industry journals.
5. Universities and colleges career pages.
6. LinkedIn, Facebook.
7. Agencies and their websites.
8. Online job sites.
9. Networks.
10. Company Career Pages.
11. Career Fairs.

Fifty per cent of all vacancies are not advertised and are filled through referrals and networks. Networking is a key weapon to help you to develop your career and to open up opportunities for your next job. This section offers advice on how to effectively network.

Most jobs are not advertised – they are filled through networks and contacts. The following is a step-by-step guide to effective networking.

Join your professional body and engage with the relevant committees, divisions, regions, etc., to develop contacts and learn what are the main issues and developments within your discipline and field.

The steps to successful networking

1. Research the sector you want to work in.
2. Identify some companies you would like to work for in this sector.
3. Develop a list of questions you would like to ask.
4. Identify the person you wish to network with.
5. Contact them by telephone, email, LinkedIn, etc.
6. Avoid any misconceptions that might put them under pressure to find you a job. Make it clear to them that you just want their advice. When they agree to meet, send them an agenda of the items you would like to discuss with them.
7. Try to meet them in their office or place of work.
8. Go early to the meeting and sit in reception – observe the staff and clients that come in and out, and listen to and observe their behaviours, moods, attitudes and other



relevant issues. Get a feel for the culture and atmosphere of the working environment.

9. At the start of the meeting, thank them for taking time to meet you and repeat the purpose of the meeting. Ensure that they understand that there is no expectation for them to find work for you.
10. When you have completed the session and are about to leave, ask them if they know of anyone else that would be good to speak to, either in their office or elsewhere. This is important as you want to get at least one new network node out of each network node you create.
11. Finally, make sure that you thank them again for their time and send a follow-up email highlighting some key insights that they gave you. This will ensure that you keep this network node alive into the future.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A JOB

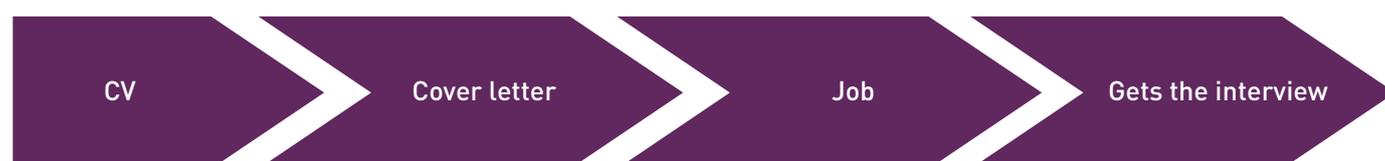


Diagram 5

When applying for a job it is important to remember that there are two people in this relationship – the employer and the applicant, and they must match.

You must focus on what you can bring to the company and what the company wants. It's not about you, what you like best about you or what you think are your strong characteristics. It's about

the company's needs and whether these match your goals, skills, competences, behaviours and values.

The company – research

1. Do the tasks of the job motivate you?
2. Review the company website.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A JOB

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

The company – research continued

3. Analyse their corporate policies.
4. Find out the company's vision, mission and goals.
5. How do they value their staff and their development?
6. Do they have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy?
7. Look at their career section.
8. Find out about their products, services, and projects.
9. Identify with some of their work and see what you could contribute.
10. Identify what their needs are and what type of employees they want.
11. Ensure that you identify what you have and what they want.
12. Do not think only in terms of what you think you are good at. You must think in terms of what you are good at and what the employer wants.

Job advertisement

When the company completes its job design, it will then prepare a job advert to attract talent to apply for the role. Most companies will be conscious that if they want to attract the best talent they must market themselves well, create a brand and highlight how good they are to work for along with the benefits they offer. They will develop adverts that will be designed for the audience they wish to attract. This is the first stage in your own analysis of whether this company is one you would like to work for.

The job specification/description

Contained in the job advert is the job specification/description. Once the design of the job is complete the company will list the objectives, tasks, duties and responsibilities in a job specification or description. This only outlines what will be required of the person carrying out the job and not the type of person they want to do it. That will be outlined in the person specification.

Gunnigle outlines that a job specification should typically contain the following elements (Gunnigle, Heraty, Morely, 4th edition, 2011, p113), although these will vary depending on the role:

1. Job title
2. Department
3. Location
4. Reports to

5. Purpose
6. Main tasks
7. Liaison and main contacts
8. Responsibilities
9. Rewards and conditions

Analysing a job specification

To analyse the job specification, review the following:

1. Look at the purpose of the job, the deliverables and goals.
2. Consider the industry the job is in. Does it match your values?
3. Look at the functions and duties of the role – do you have the relevant experience (not necessarily a perfect match)?
4. More importantly, does the role match your values and goals?
5. Outline examples of these.

The person specification

After the job specification comes the person specification:

1. Skills and competences.
2. Motivators.

Analysing the person specification

1. Very similar to the analysis of the job spec.
2. Have you the level of experience required?
3. Do have the qualification and skills?
4. Do you have the competences to do the job?
5. List them and include examples.

Package

Is this attractive to you?

1. Monetary
2. Benefits
3. Career progression
4. Training and development

CV/job spec comparison

1. Once you have completed the above you are now in a position to compare your CV to the job spec.
2. You have also begun to prepare yourself for the interview, if you are invited.

Try to network – find out what it's like to work there. Sit in their reception or find someone who works there.

Apply early for the role in case of large numbers of applicants.



A CV is about highlighting past performance, which remains the best indicator of future performance. Refer to the sample CV on pages 16 and 17.

Qualities of a professional CV

- Your CV should be a well-presented, attractive, professional document.
- Every section of your CV should demonstrate how your competences match those needed in the job.
- On average employers spend 8 seconds initially screening CVs, so yours needs to stand out immediately.
- It should include essential and relevant information such as contact details, qualifications and career history.
- Every CV you submit should be tailored to fit the particular job which you are applying for.
- All information in your CV should be true and accurate.
- Your CV should lead the employer to conclude promptly that you are a suitable candidate worth further consideration.

Before you start: assemble your information

Be prepared to spend plenty of time preparing your CV. First assemble the following information:

- Your contact details.
- Your education – secondary (recent graduates only) and third-level qualifications.
- Your postgraduate qualifications.

- Training courses you have completed – only include those which are significant and relevant.
- Your career history – make a list of the jobs and roles of your career to date. Ensure that all your dates match up. For recent graduates, list all summer and holiday jobs.
- Reflect upon and identify your achievements.
- Your behavioural competences – reflect on and list your behavioural competences (see sample CV). Consider how and where you have developed and displayed these competences throughout your career. Make them relevant to the company you are applying to – some companies state them explicitly on their websites.
- Motivation – reflect on and list your own preferences. Be honest with yourself. What sort of work really motivates you? What kind of organisation would you prefer to work in? Are you prepared to work irregular hours? Are you willing to travel?
- Research the job you are applying for. Interpret the job ad – deduce the nature of the job and the competences needed for it.
- Familiarise yourself with the employing organisation. Use the internet. Annual reports are a good source of information.
- If you are changing career, focus on your relevant competences and achievements.

You do not have to put everything about yourself into your CV. You are generally not obliged to include personal information such as age, gender, marital status, race, religion or political affiliations.

WRITE A PROFESSIONAL CV/RÉSUMÉ

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

CV – general format

Normally, a CV should be two pages long – certainly no more than three pages.

1. The first page should begin with personal contact information and if you are a recent graduate, a brief summary of your education and qualifications. If you are an experienced professional, this information should be placed after your career details.
2. Still on the first page, follow on with a brief paragraph (maximum three sentences) summarising your career in terms of your level and overall work experience. This paragraph should be immediately followed by a description of some of your relevant competences, supported by examples. These should be related to the job you are applying for. Let the recruiter immediately see how you might be a good fit for the job. Ensure that you are prepared to discuss anything that you include on the CV in detail, with examples, at an interview.

Example: Communication skills

Chairing team meetings, one-to-one meetings with my colleagues and team, reporting, presentation skills, ensuring that the team is fully informed of objectives and targets.

3. Most of the remainder of the CV will be devoted to briefly describing the jobs and roles in your career to date and what you accomplished in these roles.

Example: I designed a product enhancement, which generated an additional €1 million in revenue for the company.

Hint: Do not be over-descriptive here. The readers will be looking for key action words and not a lengthy story about one of your projects. If necessary, you can create an appendix or career portfolio, within which you can include details of the projects that you have worked on in more detail.

4. Normally, jobs are listed in chronological order, starting with the most recent. Most employers prefer chronological CVs, as they are easier to follow.
5. Make sure that all dates are consistent – be prepared to explain gaps or overlaps.
6. For each job (or role), include dates, organisation, title, level of responsibility and a brief summary of the work. Show how you have developed and displayed competences in each job. Show how you made a contribution and how you demonstrated commitment.
7. Towards the end of your CV, briefly list your personal interests and hobbies. This is an opportunity to get your personality across. Be honest – experienced recruiters will spot untruthful or exaggerated claims.
8. References – normally you don't need to give details of

referees. However, you might finish off the CV with a simple statement such as 'References available on request' (see sample CV on page 12).

Make sure your CV looks good

Your CV should be a professional, well-presented and easy-to-read document. It should immediately impress and attract the attention of the recruiter.

A few practical tips:

- Keep the format simple.
- Font – use the same font throughout. Fonts such as Arial or Times New Roman (10-12 point) are best.
- Use 'bold' only to highlight headings and key words.
- Do not underline – it makes words harder to read.
- Be consistent when using headings, upper case lettering, bullet points and punctuation, i.e., if you finish bullet points with a full stop, make sure that you do it for all bullet points.
- Footers – include your name and page number in the footer of each page. This adds a nice professional touch.
- Colour – it is generally best to stick with black and white. Occasionally, however, you may be sending your CV as a hard copy, or you may know that the recruiter uses colour printing facilities. In such cases, a discreet use of colour can give an extra look of professionalism.
- Photos – in general, it is best not to include a photo of yourself.

Use of language in your CV

Correct use of language is essential to make your CV look professional and to enable the recruiter to read it easily. You should work hard to write your CV – the recruiter should not have to work hard to read it.

A few practical tips

- Be brief and succinct – avoid flowery language. Use short sentences and short words.
- Be positive and confident in your language, but do not exaggerate or boast.
- Avoid clichés – express your own ideas in your own way, with examples and supporting statements.
- Your grammar and spelling should be perfect – get someone you have confidence in to check it.
- Use technical terms sparingly – adjust your language to the person likely to be reading your CV.
- Do not use abbreviations unless you are confident that the reader will understand them.

- Use action words such as Controlled, Budgeted, Designed and Managed (refer to appendix on page 22).

Recent graduates – extra tips for an excellent CV

If you are a recent graduate engineer looking for your first job, you should follow the general guidelines outlined on the previous pages. Here are a few extra suggestions relating specifically to recent graduates:

- It is particularly important to tailor your CV to the job you are applying for. Recruiters will immediately spot and reject a generic CV, in which the applicant has made no effort to find out anything about the job or the employing organisation.
- As a recent graduate, you may not have much employment history, so details of your education and training will play a bigger part in your CV.
- Use your final year project or thesis as a means of demonstrating competences such as planning, problem solving and teamwork.
- Do not go into excessive detail on the technology – just mention enough to demonstrate your achievements and abilities.
- Describe the holiday and part-time jobs you have had – emphasise your achievements, and the skills and competences you learned and displayed.
- Mention your membership of Engineers Ireland and other organisations and societies. Highlight your role and achievements in them.
- Mind your language. Take particular care with spelling, grammar and syntax. Do not use mobile phone or email abbreviations. Do not use colloquial expressions.
- In describing your hobbies and interests, mention your participation in sports and social life, but do not overdo it. Let the recruiter know that you have an interest in the wider world.
- Describe honestly what kind of work gives you most satisfaction. Be yourself. Get across your own personality.

Writing a cover letter

A cover letter is about future performance and what you can bring to your new employer. Refer to the sample cover letter on page 18.

Most organisations will expect you to provide a cover letter with your CV. We recommend that you use your cover letter as the first page of your CV so that they are one document – this makes it easier for the reader and CV screener. When applying for a job by email, you can include the text of the cover letter in the email (without the addresses). The email will serve as the cover letter, and your CV will be an attachment to it.

The cover letter gives you the opportunity to introduce yourself to the employer, and show how your background and abilities match those needed in the job. Aim to write an excellent cover letter, which will encourage the recruiter to seriously consider your application.

A few practical tips

- Your cover letter should be brief and to the point. A few paragraphs are enough – do not exceed a single page.
- Begin by introducing yourself, explain why you are writing the letter and refer to the job advertisement.
- Show that you are informed about the organisation and the job.
- Link your competences to those needed in the job.
- Show how you can contribute to the organisation.
- Use simple and direct language. Make it easy for the recruiter to read.
- Conclude with a positive action statement encouraging the recruiter to actively consider your CV and make further contact with you.
- If you know the name of the person receiving the letter, use it, and end the letter with 'Yours sincerely' – otherwise end with 'Yours faithfully'.
- We recommend that you use a word processor to type your cover letter.
- Do not forget to sign the letter.

Application forms

Some employers may request candidates to fill in an application form rather than submit a CV. While this restricts the quantity and nature of the information a candidate can present, it gives employers the specific information they want. It also makes it easier for employers to make valid comparisons between candidates. A handwritten, hard copy application form can also project the applicant's personality quite strongly.

Completing an application form

- Follow the same basic principles that apply to every stage of the recruitment process – aim to show that you have the competences that are needed in the job.
- For hard copy application forms, make a few photocopies first so you can make rough drafts of your application.
- Your final form to be submitted should be in clear 'printed' or block capital style writing, using black ink with a fine nib pen.
- Online application forms are simpler to complete, as it is very much like writing a pre-formatted CV.

SAMPLE CV/RÉSUMÉ

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

Note: This is a suggested template, and we recommend that you adapt it to your individual requirements.

Curriculum Vitae: Xxxxxx Xxxxxx		
PERSONAL DETAILS		
Name: (Post Nominals)	Email:	
Home address:	Mobile:	
	Office Tel.:	
CAREER PROFILE		
Introduction Since graduating as a _____ from _____ in YYYY...		
CAREER HISTORY		
Job title (employer)	From	To
Roles and responsibilities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managed...• Developed...• Delivered...		
Major achievements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Led...• Published...		
Job title (employer)	From	To
Roles and responsibilities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designed...• Created...• Supervised...		
Major achievements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authored...• Organised...		
ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level of qualification (date completed), course title, learning institution. Add brief summary if necessary and only if relevant.		
PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional title, name of professional institution (post nominals, date awarded).• Member of the...		

ACHIEVEMENTS, AWARDS AND ACTIVITIES

- Appointed...
- Co-founded...
- Completed...
- Chaired...
- Awarded...

COMPETENCES (optional)

My experience to-date has enabled me to develop the following competences:

Technical

- Proposing...
- Examining...
- Analysing...

Innovation

- Co-inventor...
- Ability to...

Initiative

- Driving
- Taking on
- Preparing

Leadership

- Working...
- Transferring...
- Supervising...

Problem solving

- Troubleshooting...
- Identifying...

Planning and organising

- Project management...
- Creating...
- Delivering...

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL SKILLS

- (Insert IT skills)
- (Insert other engineering related skills)

INTERESTS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Name interest – (insert brief description)
- Travelling – circumnavigated the globe in 2005, enjoy travelling to, and discovering foreign countries.

REFERENCES – available upon request

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

(Insert your name)

(Your address 1)

(Your address 2)

(Your address 3)

(Insert name of employer)

(Employer address 1)

(Employer address 2)

(Employer address 3)

Date: (Insert date: DD/MM/YY)

Re: (Insert reference number and/or ref. name and/or job title)

Dear (If known, insert name of contact, alternatively, insert Dear Sir/Madam)

Paragraph 1

I am writing to you to apply for the position of (insert job title, etc.) with (insert name of employer), as advertised in (insert where you saw the job advert).

Paragraph 2

In paragraph 2, insert why you are applying for the job. For example:

I believe I have the core skills, experience and enthusiasm to excel in this role.

Paragraph 3

In paragraph 3 you need to highlight the attributes you will bring to the employer and to link your competences to the role. For example:

I believe I can bring (insert attribute 1, attribute 2 and attribute 3) to the role, which will contribute to the overall success of your organisation. I have attached my curriculum vitae for your review and in summary I will bring the following competences to the role:

- Insert competency – (insert brief bullet point supporting statement)
- Insert competency – (insert brief bullet point supporting statement)
- Insert competency – (insert brief bullet point supporting statement)

(Note: Include no more than three to five competences here, and remember that they must relate to the job and your CV.)

In your final paragraph you should request or suggest an action. For example:

I would be delighted to meet with you to discuss my suitability for this role in more detail. I look forward to hearing from you with regard to an interview.

(Note: You may include details of availability – particularly if you are currently abroad – specifying when you are next back in Ireland; or if there are good times to contact or call you. If an employer knows they do not have to fund the cost of a flight home, and that you will be local in the near future, they may be more inclined to arrange a meeting.)

Yours sincerely (if contact known)/Yours faithfully (if contact unknown),

(Insert your name)

Ph: (Insert contact number)

Email: (Insert email address)

Overall – the letter should be fairly concise. Avoid listing projects you have worked on, etc., as this is more useful as an appendix rather than embedded detail in the cover letter and your CV. Refer to sample CV for format of index.



Structured interviews

Most progressive organisations use a structured, competence-based approach to recruitment interviewing. Competence-based interviewing operates on the general principle that: 'Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour'.

Employers will be looking for evidence of your competences and behaviours, which led to your past performances.

Therefore, you will be asked to give specific examples where you have displayed the competences needed for the job. These are called 'behavioural examples' and form the core of the interview.

If you are changing career, focus on transferable competences.

A one-hour structured interview will typically contain:

1. Introduction.
2. CV review.
3. Behavioural examples.
4. Questions on motivation.
5. Questions from interviewee.
6. Close.

This is a useful model to consider when you are preparing for the interview.

Interview preparation

Thorough preparation is essential – allow plenty of time. The main steps in preparing for an interview are:

- Learn as much as you can about the recruiting organisation.
- Learn as much as possible about the job you have applied for.
- Review your CV thoroughly.
- Reflect on the four or five behavioural competences that are likely to be assessed in the interview (see competence glossary on page 6).
- Have some relevant, substantive and recent examples ready, which will demonstrate these competences. Use the STAR - (situation, task, action, result), as a reminder. Each behavioural example you give should include motivation and 'motivational fit' – be prepared to discuss your likes and dislikes. There should be maximum overlap between what motivates you and what the job has to offer.
- The table below gives an indicator as to which competences the recruiter may be assessing during the interview.

Introduction and throughout	Impact and communication
CV review	Technical/professional knowledge
Middle/main part	Behavioural competences
Towards the end	Motivation
Questions from interviewee	Judgement, communication
Finish	Motivation, communication

INTERVIEW SKILLS

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

The day of the interview

- Check directions and location in advance, and turn up on time.
- Dress appropriately – if in any doubt, err on the conservative side.
- In general there is no need to bring any documentation with you. However, design or project engineers might find it useful to bring along a portfolio or sample tools that you have used. Graduates should consider bringing details of their final year project to talk through. It is recommended to use photos/diagrams to explain your work.
- Leave coats, briefcases, umbrellas, etc., outside the interview room.

During the interview

Relax as much as you can, but do not be too chatty. The interview is an important event and should be treated as such.

- Concentrate – stay alert.
- Listen to each question, pause to consider how you will reply, then reply clearly and succinctly.
- Answer the question that you are asked – do not go off on a tangent.
- Answer each question fully, but do not go on and on. Pause now and then. Give the interviewer time to consider your replies and to ask you further questions.
- Remember that verbal communication is an important competence in any job. Throughout the interview, the interviewer will be assessing your ability to express yourself verbally.
- Try to highlight your own achievements and abilities.
- When asked to give examples that provide evidence of your competences, concentrate on the recent past – the last year or so. The interviewer will be more interested in what you did last month than in what you did 20 years ago.

Remember the STAR!

- For each example, describe the **Situation**, **Task**, **Action** and **Result**.
- Keep out of the 'woulds'! As far as possible, avoid discussing what you would do, but concentrate on what you actually did.
- Avoid using the word 'we'. Concentrate on what you did.
- Project an air of self-confidence, but do not seem boastful.
- Be honest.
- Do not use slang or swear words.
- Do not volunteer opinions, but give them when asked.

Ending the interview

- Have one or two questions ready to ask at the end of the interview, but do not go on too long.
- It is reasonable to ask when news of the job will be out.
- Do not embarrass the interviewer by asking how well you did.
- It is best to stay in formal mode – do not get chatty.
- Recognise when the interviewer would like you to leave.
- Shake hands – but let the interviewer initiate.
- Thank the interviewer and leave the room.

After the interview

- Normally the recruiting organisation will contact you within a few days, letting you know the result of the interview.
- If there seems to be undue delay, it is reasonable for you to contact them.
- For unsuccessful applicants, some organisations may be willing to offer feedback on the interview.

Hint: For video interviewing/Skype, the same rules apply.

Warning! Be aware that your online social media profiles could affect your prospects for employment.



Diagram 6

Psychometric testing

Psychometric testing is a recruitment tool commonly used by recruiting organisations. Graduates, in particular, are likely to encounter these tests when taking part in the recruitment process. The objective of psychometric testing is to measure certain psychological aspects of a person, such as knowledge, skills, abilities and potential. Applied to the world of work, these tests are sometimes called aptitude tests or occupational ability tests.

Typical occupational ability tests include:

- Verbal reasoning.
- Numerical reasoning.
- Diagrammatic reasoning.
- Mechanical reasoning.
- Spatial reasoning.

Occupational ability tests are normally timed and are taken in a supervised exam-type environment.

A few practical tips

Preparation:

- Find out in advance as much as you can about the tests.
- For verbal reasoning tests, do verbal puzzles and crosswords. Play word games.
- For numerical reasoning tests brush up your skills in basic maths and calculations. Practice the interpretation of graphs, tables and pie charts.
- Access sample questions online. Saville & Holdsworth, for example, provide advice and give sample questions on their website – www.shldirect.com.

At the test session

- Read or listen carefully to instructions.
- Do exactly as requested.
- Ask the supervisor if you are unsure on any point.
- Read each question carefully before answering.
- Work quickly and accurately – normally you will have to answer a lot of questions in a short time.
- If you get stuck on a question leave it and go on to the next one.
- Concentrate and try hard – remember that the more questions you answer effectively the higher your score will be.

Personality questionnaires

The personality questionnaire is another type of assessment you may encounter in the recruitment process. This assessment provides a personality profile of the individual, relating to the work environment. The personality questionnaire is designed to assess:

- The candidate's typical behaviour in the work environment.
- How the candidate will work with other people.
- How the candidate will fit into certain work environments.
- How the candidate will cope with the demands of different types of work.

It is important to remember that the personality questionnaire is a questionnaire and not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. When completing a personality questionnaire, it's best to:

- Answer each question as honestly as you can.
- Do not try to second-guess the questions.
- Consider each question carefully – there is no strict time limit so there is no need to rush.

An example of a personality questionnaire is the OPQ32, published by Saville & Holdsworth. Their website www.shldirect.com gives excellent information on the OPQ32.

Assessment centres

Graduate engineers applying for positions in large organisations may be asked to attend an assessment centre. In an assessment centre, multiple assessments are carried out over a one- or two-day period.

The assessments may include:

- One or more conventional interviews.
- Psychometric tests and personality questionnaire as described above.
- A formal presentation on a work-related topic.
- Job-related role-playing and simulation exercises.
- Analysis of a problem followed by group discussion.
- 'In tray' exercise.

The assessment centre is an intense experience for candidates, and requires stamina and concentration. Some candidates might find some of the exercises to be somewhat contrived, and may question their validity. However, the assessment centre gives candidates a good opportunity to display a wider range of competences than would be possible in just one conventional interview.

APPENDIX

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

CV WRITING – USEFUL ACTION WORDS

(Source: You're Hired! How to write a brilliant CV by Corinne Mills)

Achieved	Created	Introduced	Scheduled
Advised	Designed	Liaised	Set up
Analysed	Developed	Managed	Solved
Arranged	Directed	Modified	Sorted
Assessed	Documented	Monitored	Supervised
Built	Encouraged	Organised	Tested
Calculated	Engineered	Pinpointed	Trained
Coached	Established	Planned	Updated
Collaborated	Headed	Prepared	Validated
Communicated	Helped	Presented	Verified
Completed	Identified	Reorganised	Wrote
Constructed	Improved	Repaired	
Co-ordinated	Initiated	Reviewed	



Engineers Ireland,
22 Clyde Road,
Ballsbridge,
Dublin 4,
Ireland.
Tel: +353 (0)1 665 1300
Web: www.engineersireland.ie

Membership team
Tel: +353 (0)1 665 1334
Email: membership@engineersireland.ie