

Example Application Form Answers

This Information Sheet should be read in conjunction with the Careers Service's Guide '**CVs, Covering Letters and Applications**' www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/flipbooks/applications which describes how to write good CVs, covering letters, and online applications, and provides some examples of these. In this Information Sheet, we provide a much wider range of examples covering two main types of application form questions:-

Questions about your **skills/competencies** and questions about your **motivations** for applying. The examples below provide a weaker answer and then a better answer to the same question. There are comments which explain the relative strengths and weaknesses of each answer, to help you understand what makes a good answer.

Writing a Personal Statement or Additional Information section

Many applications have a 'blank page' section entitled 'Personal Statement' or 'Additional Information'. It is the key section on the application form. In many ways it is similar to the Personal Statement you had to complete when you applied to University. In this Information Sheet, we have provided a job specification and then written a good answer as an application for that job.

IMPORTANT: you should NOT simply copy the style of any of these answers – after all, they do not relate to your experiences. Instead, use the information to help you follow best practice when completing application forms. You should also use the other resources on writing applications provided on our website www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob

Skills questions with example answers

Some questions ask for examples of when you have used particular skills, or competencies that are needed for the job concerned. The following 'Skills questions', typical of many questions posed in online and paper-based applications, highlight examples of good and bad practice.

1. Team working

Give an example, from outside of your studies, of when you have worked in a team. What was your role and what did you contribute to the team's performance? (200 words)

Answer A) I am on the Committee of the University Drama Society and last semester we had to organise a Community Event. We met to decide who was going to do what and I was given the task of getting enough money for the event. My Father is a member of the Chamber of commerce and he put me in touch with some of his friends and I managed to generate £200 sponsorship money. As a team we met together regularly to discuss progress. The event was a big succes and the rest of the team appreciated me getting together this amount of money. (102 words)

-This answer is too short, with not enough detail - What is the purpose of the event? How was it judged to be a success? You should always write close to the word limit, but don't include repetitious or irrelevant material just to reach the count, it all has to be meaningful content

-It says very little about her role and how it contributed to the team's performance. Does not talk very much about team working

*-Referring to getting help from her father and saying "I was **given** the task of..." does not make her sound very dynamic*

- Contains spelling and grammatical errors



Answer B) As a committee member of the Drama Society I recently worked with the other members to organise a Community Event. Our aim was to run some workshops for local primary school children. The group met initially to plan and allocate tasks. My role was to generate the funds for the event. I established a plan for this task with a time-line of what I had to do and by when. I contacted the local Chamber of Commerce who put me in touch with local companies and I managed to generate £200 sponsorship money which covered our costs and enabled us to have money to be used for prizes. Our group met weekly to discuss progress and stayed in touch in the interim via Facebook. This ensured that if one team member was having problems completing their tasks on time then others could provide additional support. The event was a great success with very positive feedback from the pupils and teachers. The team members said that they appreciated me taking on the task of raising funds, as this was something that no one else wanted to do, and that the prizes had significantly contributed to the success of the event.
(199 words)

-The answer is a good length - close to the word limit

-It answers the question and focuses on team working

*-Uses the 'STAR' structure, by stating the: **Situation** (the context in which the example took place), the **Task** (the activity to be undertaken and the objective), the **Actions** taken to complete the task, and the **Results** (including clear details of the outcome, with measurable evidence of the applicant's success, if possible)*

*-Clearly explains **her individual** role and how it contributed to the team*

-No spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors

2. Time Management

Describe a situation where you have had to manage your time to achieve your goals. How did you achieve this? (250 words)

Answer A) In my first year I was studying for my degree course in French, which included a major group project, and I had a part-time job at Sainsburys and I was also playing cello in the University Orchestra. I had also joined the University lacrosse team and been told that if we were to be successful we would have to train twice a day and every weekend. I found that all this were a lot of demands on my time and caused me quite a bit of pressure.

I made sure that I always did my academic work first and always got my work in on time. I decided to prioritise lacrosse and gave up my job at Sainsburys and playing in the orchestra. In my final year we won the inter-university lacrosse first team trophy at the national competition and I achieved a 2:1 in my degree. (147 words)

-This answer is too short - if they say they want 250 words, then this is what you should write but don't include repetitious or irrelevant material just to reach the count, it all has to be meaningful content

-It does not talk in much detail about how time was managed

-It isn't very positive ("caused me quite a bit of pressure"....."been told that")

-Spelling and grammatical errors

Answer B) In my first year, I joined the University Lacrosse club and was selected for the First Team. We decided that in order to be fully competitive we would need to train twice a day and every weekend. I realised that in order to achieve this goal and not adversely affect my studies I would need to be disciplined and focused. At the beginning of each semester, I scheduled every training session, match, lecture, seminar and essay in my diary. When the morning sessions ended at 9am, I went to lectures or the library. The fact that I had to finish at 5pm in order to return to training meant that I was far more focused. If we had away matches at weekends I learnt not to waste any time and took my work with me and read whenever I could. I was very successful in adapting to this schedule. I found that under pressure I studied more effectively, and my work was of a higher quality. In addition I learnt the value of time management and developed the

discipline to stick to a routine. I discovered that it was possible to succeed at both my studies and my sport. I sometimes had to say no to other social activities in order to achieve my primary goals but I felt that this was worth doing. In my final year we won the inter-university first team trophy at the national competition and I achieved a 2:1 in my degree. (247 words)

- The answer is a good length – close to the word limit
- It answers the question and focuses on time management and achieving goals
- Uses the STAR structure (Situation, Task, Actions, Result)
- It is positive and the writer indicates that he/she understands what is meant by time management
- No spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors

3. Planning skills

Describe a challenging project or activity which you have planned and taken through to a conclusion. What was your objective, what did you do and what was the outcome? Include any changes you made to your initial plan (150 words).

Answer A) As a member of my university's Music Society I helped with a visit to the Albert Hall for some of the Choir. I arranged a bus and hotel for anyone wishing to go. I promoted the event by putting up posters across the campus and using the Society Facebook page. I set a deadline for payment from anyone wishing to go. Based on this I arranged the appropriate transport of a mini-bus and made a cheap price booking. I had to change my plans as more students wanted to go than had said they did at first. I ordered a larger bus and arranged extra space with the hotel. The visit was a success as it went well and everyone enjoyed it, and we made a profit from a raffle. (130 words).

- Uses a STAR format and answers all elements of the question.
- Some use of good vocabulary but tends to be a bit simplistic in wording
- Repetitious style, e.g. number of sentences start with 'I...' and repetition of phrase, e.g. '..anyone wishing to go'.
- Lack of specific detail makes it a bit vague and lacking in evidence of the complexity of the task, e.g. a visit for 'some of the choir' could have meant only two or three people originally taking part.

Answer B) As a member of my University's Music Society I helped organise a visit to the Albert Hall for twenty five people. My role was to arrange travel and accommodation for anyone wishing to take part. I promoted the event by using posters across the campus and using the Society Facebook page, emphasising the main benefits of the visit. I also set a deadline for payment to create an efficient cash-flow. Based on this I arranged a mini-bus and negotiated a reduced rate booking at a small hotel.

As an additional ten students expressed an interest after the deadline, I decided to change my plans. To cope with this, I ordered a larger bus and secured extra accommodation with the hotel. The visit was a huge success receiving positive feedback and staying within our budget, while generating £25 revenue for the Society from a raffle held on the trip. (148 words).

- Uses STAR format; answers all elements of the question.
- Uses positive/action words in places.
- Uses an advanced level of vocabulary and varies the style of writing to make it interesting
- Includes specific information such as figures for revenue generated, and number of students involved.

4. Problem solving

Describe a difficult problem you have solved. What was the problem? How did you analyse and solve it? What did you learn from the experience? (200 words)

Answer A) I have recently faced significant problems submitting assignments on time for my course. Although I have always met deadlines in the past, this year I have had major personal demands on my time, including the need to work part-time to fund my studies and, as I am a mature student living at home, having to provide care for my elderly parents. This began to affect my studies, leading to missed academic deadlines for a key assignment.

To solve this, I took the following steps:

- Discussed and agreed an extension for the most pressing assignment with my personal tutor.
- Restructured my hours with my employer to allow time to complete the remaining assignments on time, and work additional hours after my assignment deadlines had passed.
- Liaised with other members of my family to share 'caring' duties and got help from a community centre.

As a result, I passed the relevant module.

In retrospect, I would have planned ahead better, and discussed the situation with the relevant parties sooner. (170 words)

- Describes a relevant situation for the question asked and answers most elements of the question.

- Uses positive/action words in several places, e.g. restructured, liaised, prioritised

- The 'Action' part of the answer is concise with effective use of bullets, but second sentence of the answer is too long and confusing.

- Bit vague about the outcome. Has the problem been solved or merely 'managed'? Will it occur again and affect the applicant's future study or employment?

- Could be more effective in demonstrating that he understands how to anticipate & avoid similar problems in future.

- Fails to use the available word count.

- Use of the term 'significant problems' in the first line may create an unnecessarily negative impression. Avoid volunteering too many weaknesses.

Answer B) I have recently faced problems submitting assignments on time for my course. Although I have always met deadlines in the past, evidenced by my first class marks in the first year, this year I have experienced major personal demands on my time. These include needing to work part-time to fund my studies and having to provide care for my elderly parents. This began to affect my studies, leading to missed deadlines for a key assignment.

I recognised early action was necessary to solve this so I:

- Prioritised the main tasks needing completion.
- Discussed and agreed an extension for the most pressing assignment with my personal tutor.
- Restructured my hours with my employer to allow time to complete the remaining assignments on time, and work additional hours after my assignment deadlines.
- Liaised with other members of my family to share 'caring' duties, and organised help from a community centre.

As a result, I passed the relevant module at 2.1 and have ensured better future care for my parents.

In retrospect, I would have planned ahead better by identifying possible future difficulties. I also know the importance of communicating my position to others and seeking help when necessary. (200 words)

- Describes a relevant situation for the question asked and answers all elements of the question.

- Uses positive/action words e.g. Restructured, liaised, prioritised.
- Uses short sentences with effective use of bullets.
- Clear about the outcome with evidence of success.
- Implies that the problem has been solved and will not occur in the future.

5. Interpersonal skills

Describe a time when you have had to communicate with a range of different people to achieve a particular goal. Outline the task, the people you dealt with, and the outcome. (100 words)

Answer A) In my work experience at Burke's Property Lettings, I worked in a cross-departmental team carrying out a review of customer service.

To do this I:

- conducted a series of client interviews
- spoke to over clients via both telephone and face-to-face interviews
- organised the collation and recording of the interviews from our department , writing a section of the final report
- presented my results to senior colleagues.

The outputs were used to develop improved our practices. (79 words)

- Not a bad answer. Describes a relevant example, with concise statements and some business-style, positive vocabulary.
- Evidence of communicating with customers and senior colleagues.
- However, uses fewer words than the word count allows, and so could have given more specific detail.
- Repetition of the word 'interviews' in the bullets weakens the writing style.
- Could say more about the purpose of the review's and about how its findings were used.

Answer B) During work experience at Burke's Property Lettings, I worked in a cross-departmental team to review our customer service. The aim was to provide a report to support management decisions about future service delivery.

To do this I:

- independently scheduled and conducted a series of client interviews
- interviewed over 100 phone and face to face contacts
- organised the collation and recording of our department's findings, writing a section of the final report
- presented my results to senior colleagues and staff from other departments.

The outputs were used by the firm to improve client support and response times. (100 words)

- Relevant example, presented in STAR format with clear outline of the Task, Objective, Actions and Results.
- Concise statements and a business-style and positive vocabulary.
- Evidence of communicating with customers and colleagues at different levels.
- Uses the available word count well.

6. Leadership

Describe an occasion when you have had to lead a team of others to achieve a goal. Identify the qualities that enabled you to fulfil the task. (125 words)

Answer A) In my current job, I am responsible for organising the rota for all part time staff member's in the customer service department. I need to ensure the department is adequately staffed at all times and ensure customer's needs are met.

I achieve this through my ability to:

- Communicate with all colleague's, both face-to-face and by keeping a written staffing rota.
- Help other staff when they have problems or have customers who have questions.
- Knowing how to deal with difficult people. I often have to sort out customers with complaints or colleagues who need help with customers.
- Talk to colleague's to solve specific shop-floor problems.
- Resolve individual staffs' preferences for working hours through discussion and clear agreement, frequently negotiating compromises. (124 words)

- This answer provides some evidence of organisational ability and communication skills, but fails to really convince that this is an example of leadership.

- The phrase 'my current job' fails to specify what kind of employment the applicant is referring to.

- Frequent incorrect use of apostrophe will count against this candidate.

- The style of the final bullet point statement is inconsistent with the style of the others, and does not follow on from the lead statement before the bullets.

- The phrase 'Knowing how to deal with difficult people' does not explain the necessary qualities, and has a negative tone.

- The topics covered by the bullet points overlap, and so could be seen as repetitious. They also swap between different themes rather than follow a logical progression.

Answer B) In my current job at Sainsbury's, I am responsible for organising the rota for all part time staff in the customer service department. I need to ensure the department is adequately staffed at all times and that colleagues meet customers' needs.

I achieve this through my ability to:

- Communicate with all colleagues, both face-to-face and by keeping a written staffing rota.
- Provide a point of contact when staff members' preferences for working hours need resolving.
- Achieve decisions through discussion and clear agreement, frequently negotiating compromises.
- Ensure all staff members know where to find me when faced with issues regarding staffing or customer issues.
- Advise colleagues faced with shop-floor problems and successfully resolve customer questions and complaints. (121 words).

- The applicant provides evidence of leadership by using terminology which clearly indicates how he or she supports colleagues.

- Good use of bullets to quickly and effectively summarise their role.

- Grammatically correct and maintains the same style throughout the bullet points.

- Positively worded when describing the challenges presented by customers and colleagues.

- The bullet points add additional information and follow a more logical order.

Motivations questions and example answers

'Motivations questions' seek to get an insight into what drives you, particularly your reasons for applying for the job and to that industry, and why you want to work for that employer.

1. Motivation/Suitability for the Industry – What makes you suitable for this type of business?

Example question: *Please indicate how your interests, skill and abilities demonstrate your suitability for this sector. (Accountancy and Finance) (max. 280 words)*

General advice: To answer this question you need to:-

- Show that you have clear understanding of the sector- do some background research before starting to write your answer. (You will find Prospects website www.prospects.ac.uk useful for this)
- Think about everything you have to offer – (qualifications, work experience, interests/activities, qualities etc) and **relate** them to the sector. Show them why you think that there is a good match between you and, in this example, Accountancy and Finance
- Be specific in your answer and give examples

Answer A) In my childhood, I started showing interest in my father's employment which was accountancy. When I entered secondary school, it was no surprise that I had an affinity for mathematical subjects. Then I realised that 'money makes the world go round'. So when I was about to enter University for my undergraduate studies, I chose to study for a Business and Management degree. I have studied for a variety of modules related to banking, accountancy and finance throughout my degree. I have some work experience in an areas related to business and accountancy. I am determined to contribute to the goals of your company through the application of my business and management skills and knowledge in general, and accountancy and finance in particular. (123 words)

-This answer is too short, general, vague and clichéd

-Not enough detail about degree subject

-Doesn't say what the work experience is

-Spelling and grammatical errors

Answer B) I am a numerate, analytical, well organised person and enjoy finding realistic solutions to financial problems. The modules I have studied include accounting, financial management and economics and next semester I am looking forward to modules in auditing, taxation and corporate finance. I feel I have a sound understanding of the basic systems involved in financial and management accountancy as well as their application and issues arising from them. I am most proud of my ability to relate this knowledge to real life applications.

My third year project on Corporate Governance has brought together many disciplines related to finance and accountancy, which I am finding extremely rewarding. From this I have learnt to adapt my skills to areas I have not encountered before.

During my vacation employment with Aviva I have enjoyed relating to customers via email and telephone and working to solve their problems in relation to their insurance queries. This has further developed my communication, commercial awareness and problem solving skills. It has also given me insight into the financial management of a major company.

I have been a committee member and treasurer of Sheffield University Sailing Club for over 2 years. This has given me the chance to develop my team working, leadership and negotiation skills and I have learnt to be very well organised and to work under pressure. It has given me the opportunity to put the learning from my course into real situations. I am particularly proud of the fact that we won the 'Best Run Club' Award at the Annual Student Union Society's Presentation Event and that I personally raised £3000 worth of sponsorship from local companies and organisations. (276 words)

-This answer is a good length. You should always write close to the word limit, but don't include repetitive or irrelevant material just to reach the count, it all has to be meaningful content

-It gives full details of the course, work experience and extra-curricular activities and relates everything to the question. Also it includes details of key achievements that are likely to be of interest to the recruiter

-No spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors

2. Motivation for this employer / organisation – Why do you want to work for us?

Example question: *Why have you chosen to apply to our firm?*

Research Assistant, Independent financial research organisation (max.150 words)

General advice: To answer this you need to:

- Find out as much as you can about the organisation to demonstrate a genuine interest in working for them.
- Show that you have a clear understanding of aspects such as; what the organisation does, the training and development it offers, and its values and ethos.
- Persuade them that their values and approach to their business match yours.
- If you have spoken to someone in the organisation to find out more about them, refer to this in your answer using that person's name.

Answer A) I have long wanted to work for such an esteemed organisation as FDT Limited. I would be able to apply the theories and knowledge gained on my degree and learn more about financial analysis in the real world.

The opportunities you would provide for my career development are also attractive to me. The training outlined on your website looks interesting, and would no doubt lead to me being an expert that others could rely upon.

Being a good team player and problem solver means I would fit in well with FDT's approach to business and its clients, which I have demonstrated throughout my experience. In my current job at a local supermarket I help others on a daily basis by offering advice and have received good customer feedback for this which shows reliability and the ability to communicate. All of these are important to what FDT's analysts do for your clients. (151 words)

- This answer is too general and doesn't indicate any real insight into the organisation.

- Although the applicant refers to the training provided by FDT Ltd, it is too vague (e.g. the training looks 'very interesting') and could be written with any organisation in mind. Remember, if you could substitute the employer's name with another and the statement would still be true, then your answer is likely to be too general.

- There is too much emphasis on what the candidate would get out of working for FDT, and not enough about what they can actually contribute.

- Referring to your relevant skills and knowledge is a good idea, but the information given is very basic and unconvincing in terms of how it equips the applicant for the role and the organisation.

- The answer attempts to flatter the employer but sounds false. Terms like 'esteemed organisation' should be avoided.

- Do not exceed the word count, even by one word. It suggests you cannot follow instructions.

Answer B) Having studied aspects of the financial markets throughout my degree, I am aware of the vital importance of reliable data and analysis for successful investment decision-making. I am therefore attracted by the idea of working for a firm with a reputation for high quality financial forecasting. By

regularly following the financial news both for my studies and my own interest, I know how FDT's provision in this regard has contributed to its clients' performance.

Being part of a successful firm with clients in over 90 countries would also help satisfy my career aim to develop a global expertise in this field. Following research into your organisation and the sector in which it operates, I recently held a telephone discussion with one of your senior analysts, Ms. Luisa Lopez, who further convinced me of FDT's ambitions, making your organisation one I would definitely like to be part of. (147 words)

- *This answer clearly states specific aspects of the employer's business that the applicant finds attractive, and explains why these aspects appeal.*

- *The applicant includes activities from their experience that shows they share the organisation's values and approach to its products/services.*

- *The answer shows how the position and business relate to the candidate's career objectives.*

- *It uses language that conveys enthusiasm and interest, and no spelling or grammatical errors.*

3. Motivation/Suitability for the job – Why do you want to do this type of work?

Example question: 'What attracts you to this job and tell us what makes you suitable?'
Marketing & Communications Assistant, with a local Sports Association (max. 100 words)

To answer this you need to:

- show that you have a clear understanding of the job you are going for
- describe how it suits your interests and motivations
- explain why you consider yourself to be a strong candidate

Answer A) Having completed a Media-related degree, this job would be an ideal first step for me. It would provide me with the right kind of experience to develop a career in the field of Public Relations, which has long been an ambition of mine, and why I chose to study aspects of this work. As well as completing many written assignments to a high standard, I have excellent oral communication skills, am able to relate well to different people, writing articles and reports for my sports club which were published in our local newspaper. (93 words)

- *The candidate's information about their career aims and relevant experiences is valid but doesn't show real insight into specific aspects of the job.*

- *The statements about their skills are not really backed up with evidence and not detailed enough.*

- *This job requires strong writing skills, but this answer is too general and doesn't convey real ability.*

- *The candidate isn't particularly convincing when trying to communicate a genuine desire for this job, as the vocabulary and style fail to excite the reader.*

Answer B) I am excited by the idea of representing the Association in its dealings with the media and local community. I have studied Media Relations as part of my degree and particularly enjoyed researching sports sponsorship in my final year.

The position involves using my writing skills which I used when producing press statements that secured greater local press coverage for my amateur lacrosse club.

Helping to develop a strong marketing strategy is another attractive feature of the post, as I am fascinated by the way in which different organisations develop and maintain their image. (94 words).

- *This answer demonstrates the candidate has found out about the role and explained why they find specific elements of the job attractive.*

- Includes activities that show experience and skills that would be of relevance to the post.
- The answer uses language that demonstrates enthusiasm and interest in this work.
- It is a good length for the maximum word count which requires concise but effective statements. You should always write close to the word limit, but don't include repetitious or irrelevant material just to reach the count, it all has to be meaningful content.
- No spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

Personal Statements/Additional Information Sections

When writing a personal statement/additional information section on an application form it is very important to follow the instructions given. You should also structure the statement by **relating it directly to the Person Specification**. If there isn't a formal person specification available, then write it so that it addresses the skills and experiences they are likely to be looking for. A good structure is to have:-

- An opening paragraph which explains why you are attracted to the job and the organisation.
- Then use **headings** derived from those in the person specification or advert (e.g. Qualifications, Communication skills, I.T. etc.). If, for example, there are four points on the person specification under I.T., then cover each of these four points, in the same order, under your section headed I.T.
- End with a closing, positively-worded statement or short paragraph

It is important the employer doesn't have to infer, or hunt around for your skills /qualifications / experiences. Make it easy to see that you have what they are looking for and address all their requirements.

Here is a Person Specification and a good answer in response to it, as an example.

Admissions Assistant – University of Anytown

Person Specification

Applicants should provide evidence in their applications that they meet the following criteria.

Qualifications and Experience

	Criteria	Essential	Desirable
1	As a minimum, educated to A-level standard and have GCSE English and Mathematics (or equivalent qualifications).	X	
2	Previous relevant administrative experience, preferably within a higher educational or similar environment.		X
3	Excellent IT skills including knowledge of Microsoft Office, in particular the use of Word and Excel, e-mail and the internet.	X	

Communication Skills

4	Excellent customer service skills, with ability to respond efficiently to phone, e-mail and enquiries in person from a variety of people.	X	
5	Ability to communicate complex information clearly, both verbally and in writing, to colleagues and students, particularly in situations where English may not be their first language.	X	
6	Ability to work in a confidential manner, and exercise tact and discretion when dealing with sensitive situations and information.	X	

Organisational Skills

7	Excellent time management skills and the ability to plan and prioritise own workload under pressure to ensure duties are completed within appropriate deadlines.	X	
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8	Ability to organise and process information effectively, and to set up filing and other systems to ensure that it can be available and reported on as necessary.	X	
9	High level of accuracy and attention to detail.	X	
10	Ability to arrange small events, such as Open Days, e.g. organising room bookings, materials, catering, participants, as required.		X

Problem solving, decision making and project management

11	Use initiative to find appropriate solutions to non-standard / non-identical work issues.	X	
12	Ability to assess and organise resources, plan and progress work activities.	X	

Personal effectiveness

13	Ability to work with the minimum of supervision and act on own initiative, seeking guidance when necessary.	X	
14	A positive and willing attitude with the ability to work within and across teams, and to work flexibly / adapt to new circumstances.	X	
15	Experience of developing and maintaining a network of contacts throughout own work area.	X	
16	Willingness to undertake any training relevant to the role.	X	

Example Statement

I am very interested in the post of Admissions Assistant within the Management Faculty at the University of Anytown. Ever since undertaking a part-time job at the University, I have realised that a career in higher education administration suits my skills, values, and motivations. The post particularly attracts me as it relates to the skills developed through my experience of administration in a marketing environment. I have also very much enjoyed being a student at the University and share its student-centred ethos, and would therefore welcome the opportunity to assist in bringing others to study here. I am local to Anytown and would definitely like to build my career here.

Qualifications and Experience

I am in the final year of a History degree at the University of Anytown and am on course to achieve a 2:1 classification. In addition I have 3 A-levels and 11 GCSEs including English and Mathematics. My part-time post as a Receptionist/Clerical Assistant in the University's Study Skills Centre has developed my administrative skills to a high degree and given me an understanding of the processes and systems behind the running of the University. I am experienced with IT using all Microsoft Office applications, the internet, and email, in producing essays and reports in my studies and throughout my various work experience placements. I used Excel frequently in my job with The Paper Goods Company and am currently developing a database for a local history community project. I also use social media to successfully publicise events run by the History Society, attracting over 200 regular followers on Twitter.

Communication Skills

In my Receptionist role at the Study Skills Centre I provide a welcoming and friendly face to students who come in to use the facilities. The Clerical Assistant aspects of the job include ensuring that all phone and email enquiries from staff and students are quickly responded to, and records are kept of these enquiries and stored in a confidential manner. At present I am developing an FAQ section of the website to further improve the customer experience. Many of the users of the Centre are on Pre-University Entry courses and English is not their first language, so I find it important to be clear and precise in my written and verbal communications with students. In addition at my appraisal, I received very positive feedback from my manager concerning the way I dealt with a student who was very angry and upset about his exam results and wanted our help. My response was to talk to the student calmly, take him to a confidential space away from other users, and clarify his requirements, before referring him to a student adviser.

Organisational Skills

Whilst at university I have remained on track to achieve a 2:1 whilst undertaking a part-time job and a summer placement. These are in addition to voluntary work within a community project, a Committee role for the History Society, and playing for the University Netball Team. This has required strong time management skills with the ability to prioritise tasks and work to competing deadlines. In addition, on my summer placement as a Sales/Marketing Assistant at The Paper Goods Company, I processed orders and administered the office systems in a very busy office to ensure that staff were able to access the data they needed. Accuracy and attention to detail were very important in this job as it was vital that sales staff were credited with the correct sales figures in order to achieve their targets. In my work with Broomfield Local History group we organised an 'Antiques Roadshow-type event' for people living in the community. I was responsible for leafleting, catering, and booking the 'expert valuers'. It was a very successful event with over 40 people attending and will run again next year.

Problem solving, decision making and project management

I organised my dissertation ('Community groups and their engagement with local history research') as a project plan with timelines and interim targets. I monitored these carefully and was able to achieve the deadlines ahead of schedule and received a First Class mark. Completing the dissertation required both strong interpersonal and networking skills to undertake field-based research with community groups. When one of the Anytown groups I was researching unexpectedly closed down, I used my initiative to approach, and successfully work with, an alternative group in a neighbouring city. As a result of this experience, I now try to formulate a back-up plan in advance so as to minimise possible obstacles during projects.

Personal effectiveness

In my work at the Study Skills Centre I usually staff the reception desk on my own, prioritise my work and act on my own initiative. However I will always seek guidance from my supervisor when needed.

As a member of the University Netball Team I always try and have a positive and enthusiastic attitude when organising training and motivating new players. I adapt my approach to the personalities of individual members and to changing circumstances, and thoroughly enjoy achieving goals as part of a team. This year we reached the semi-finals of one of the cup competitions which was a major achievement for a relatively inexperienced team.

In my committee role with the History Society and in my work with Broomfield Local History group I have personally developed a network of contacts including academic staff from Anytown University, local historians, and employees working within heritage projects. I have learnt a lot from my contact with them and have enjoyed putting them in touch with students at the University interested in their subject areas.

In all my jobs I have learnt new skills, such as my training in the use of particular specialist computer software programmes, and I would relish the opportunity to further learn and develop through undertaking relevant training.

I hope that you will consider my application positively and would welcome the chance to discuss it further at interview.