



Careers

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[Jobs Available Now](#) ▶[Why Choose NRC](#) ▶[Who We Hire](#) ▶[Employment Programs](#) ▶[Our Trailblazers](#) ▶[NRC Accomplishments](#) ▶[Preparation for an interview](#) ▶[Newcomers to Canada](#) ▶

Preparation for an interview

All of the hours you've devoted to preparing your résumé, making contacts and researching potential employers are little more than preparation for the single most important stage of the job search, the interview.

The success or failure of an interview is often determined before the meeting actually takes place. Your performance in this situation will reflect the thoroughness of your research, as well as the thought and practice you've given to the process.

You need to see the interview as an opportunity to sell the prospective employer on the benefits you can bring to the organization. Sales is the process of uncovering needs and demonstrating how you can satisfy those needs as well as facilitating the prospect in making a decision in your favour. You must be able to see yourself as a product. You must offer your skills and strengths to match your future employer's needs. You must convince the interviewer there is a match and that you are the person for the job.

Pre-interview

- Gather as much information as you can about the position, including the statement of qualifications (list of elements that are needed to do the job) and the job description. This can be provided to you by the HR office responsible for the competition (contact name can be found at the bottom of the competition poster).
- Increase your knowledge of the organization by taking a look at its annual report, vision and value statement, and organizational structure. The NRC website is a great source of information in this regard.
- Try to anticipate the questions that could be asked during the interview and prepare replies, including incorporating relevant examples of how you have demonstrated competencies and skills the position requires. In order to do so, take each element indicated in the statement of qualifications under technical and behavioural competencies and try to imagine the questions. For example, if the job requires a knowledge of project management, you could anticipate that you may be asked something like "What are the key steps in managing a project?" or "What are two common project management models and describe them?".

During the interview

Recommended:

- Prepare yourself by reviewing the job description and statement of qualifications (available from the contact person listed on the job poster). Familiarize yourself with the competencies associated with the position you are being interviewed for (these can also be found on the job poster).
- At the NRC, we conduct Behavioural Event Interviews, or BEIs. Essentially, what this means is that when we ask questions about your competencies (such as initiative or results orientation), we ask that you draw upon past experiences to explain how you have demonstrated such competencies in the past. You may wish to review the competencies required and think of examples where you have displayed the skills being asked of you. You will be asked for detailed examples so prepare yourself accordingly.
- Answer questions clearly and succinctly and ask for clarification if a question is not understood
- Prepare questions you may have about the position and/or the organisation.

Definitions of key terms

When seeking employment, it is important to be mindful of terms used in job posters and their meanings. We will briefly describe some key terms to help applicants better understand what is meant by them (and how to make the most favourable impression).

What is a job description?

A job description is the who, what, where, when and why of the position. It is used to describe the position's role and placement within the organisation. It can be useful for applicants because it describes the duties and requirements of the position.

What is the Statement of Qualifications?

The statement of qualification is a listing of basic requirements of a position, namely education, language, and experience, as well as the rated requirements of a position, which include technical and behavioural competencies.

What does screening criteria mean on the job poster?

Screening criteria lists what an applicant must possess in order for him/her to be given further consideration in a particular job competition. It usually includes minimum education, language and experience requirements for the position. Applicants must

clearly demonstrate within the context of their application (résumé and cover letter) that they meet the screening criteria listed in the poster to be given further consideration as candidates. In other words, these are the basic requirements of the job. When an applicant is shown to meet these criteria, he/she will be considered for further evaluation. This is the first phase of the selection process.

What does assessment criteria mean?

It is important to distinguish between screening criteria and assessment criteria. Assessment criteria is the criteria a candidate is required to demonstrate at the selection or second phase of a competition, and usually involves an interview and/or knowledge test or some other recognized method to evaluate candidates. This criteria includes technical and behavioural competencies and security requirements. These are explored once a candidate has met the screening criteria, and the candidate is rated on these criteria based on clearly predetermined answers that are scored by a selection panel. It is the assessment criteria that will determine whether a candidate is offered a position with the organisation.

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