



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Public Service**  
**Commission**

# Cracking the code

How to apply for jobs in the Australian Public Service



# Contents

Introduction: Using the guide. . . . .	1
Fact Sheet # 1: The big picture . . . . .	2
Fact Sheet # 2: Finding APS jobs . . . . .	4
Fact Sheet # 3: Understanding APS jobs . . . . .	6
Fact Sheet # 4: Applying for APS jobs . . . . .	8
Fact Sheet # 5: Addressing selection criteria . . . . .	10
Fact Sheet # 6: Entry points. . . . .	14
Fact Sheet # 7: Entry level pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people . . . . .	16
Fact Sheet # 8: Supporting the employment of people with disability . . . . .	18
Fact Sheet # 9: The interview . . . . .	20
Fact Sheet # 10: Frequently asked questions . . . . .	22
Fact Sheet # 11: Top tips . . . . .	24

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# Introduction: Using the guide

## In the know...

## Tips and hints

Understanding our recruitment process and knowing how to apply can increase your chances of getting an APS job.

## Get the facts

The Australian Public Service (APS) is not just a job. It is a good career choice for people who are:

- returning to the workforce
- looking for a career change
- graduates from university or TAFE
- still studying
- school leavers

It is not as hard to get an APS job as people think. Most Australians are eligible to work in the APS which employs over 146,000 people across Australia and overseas.

This guide will help you know:

- who we are
- what we do
- where to look for jobs
- who to talk to
- how to apply

So if you are interested in:

- developing professional and personal skills
- a diverse career through a range of jobs
- good working conditions in a job that gives you personal satisfaction
- an opportunity to contribute to the Australian community,

then read on to find out more about applying for jobs in the APS.

## Find out more

Get *the big picture* about what we do and why you should work with us at *fact sheet 1*.

If you need help *finding APS jobs*, see *fact sheet 2*.

Found a job, but not sure what it means? *Understand APS jobs* with *fact sheet 3*.

Find out how to *apply for APS jobs* and *address selection criteria* at *fact sheets 4 and 5*.

If you are beginning your career, or thinking about a new one, see *fact sheet 6* for information on *entry points*.

*Entry pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*, are covered at *fact sheet 7*. *Fact sheet 8* covers the *employment of people with disability*.

Got a call for an *interview*? Check out *fact sheet 9* to see what might happen on the day.

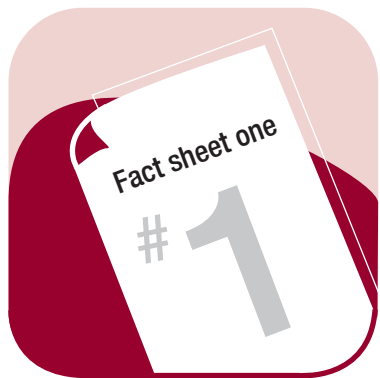
Our *frequently asked questions* and *top tips* are at *fact sheets 10 and 11*.

## Myth vs reality

### Public service careers are boring, limited and unproductive

Some people think that the public service is a place where you get stuck in a dead end job for 30 years and achieve nothing. In fact the APS provides one of the most flexible and diverse career paths available. Our jobs are varied, rewarding and we work on issues that affect Australian life.

We employ people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences and qualifications and provide access to a range of professional development opportunities. The APS is a great place to work and build the skills needed to be a senior leader in either the public or private sector.



# The big picture

## In the know...

## Tips and hints

APS organisations are referred to as agencies or departments. This guide uses the term agency.

**There is no standard process for filling APS jobs. The application process can vary greatly between agencies, and jobs. The only requirement is that recruitment decisions be based on merit.**

## Get the facts

### So you think you want to work in the APS but don't know much about us

In Australia, the public sector includes local, state and territory and federal government agencies. The APS is the federal public service and consists of a large number of organisations, each focusing on specific areas like communication, defence, finance, environment, education and training, health and community services, workplace relations, immigration, science, tourism, transport and so on. In addition, there are also a range of statutory and executive agencies which work on issues at the national level. Behind almost every facet of life in Australia is an APS job.

### Why should you work with us

- We offer great working conditions including good salaries, excellent leave conditions, and flexible work practices (including the option of negotiating your work hours).
- The APS has a range of career opportunities, while also providing the scope for you to easily change career direction at any time. So you can start in an administrative support or client service role and then develop your skills for

managerial, technical or professional careers. The APS supports professional and personal development, further study, career and leadership development.

- The APS has jobs across the country and across-the-board, as well as overseas. Our workforce includes accountants, biologists, customer service officers, policy advisers, graphic designers, lawyers, IT specialists and contract managers to name a few.
- We provide the opportunity for you to pursue your interests while contributing to the Australian community. It may be as part of a large agency providing a broad range of services across the country or in a small agency working on specialised issues in one sector of society. The choice is yours.
- We value and encourage supportive workplace environments based on fair and equitable treatment. How we work and treat each other is governed by the **APS Values and Code of Conduct**.

## Find out more

### What are the APS Values and Code of Conduct?

The APS Values and Code of Conduct apply to all APS employees, and contribute to the integrity and professionalism of the public service. The Values and Code of Conduct guide how we act in our relationships with the government, parliament, the public and colleagues. The Code of Conduct sets the standards of personal behaviour expected of APS employees. For more information see [www.apsc.gov.au/values](http://www.apsc.gov.au/values) and [www.apsc.gov.au/conduct](http://www.apsc.gov.au/conduct).

When applying for an APS job you may be asked to demonstrate how you would uphold the Values. Describing how you have acted and behaved in previous employment or other areas of your life is a good way of showing you understand the Values and Code of Conduct.

### What is merit?

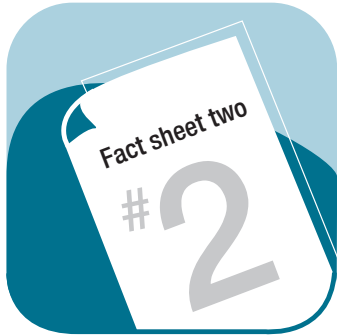
We recruit staff based on merit, which means that from a field of applicants, we need to select the best person for the job. To do this we compare and weigh-up the skills, experience and abilities of each candidate. We use different tools and techniques, such as written applications, interviews and/or work-sample tests, to collect the evidence we need to make a merit-based decision.

## Myth vs reality

### APS managers are mostly men in grey cardigans

Promotion to management positions is based on your skills and abilities, not your age, gender or how long you've worked in the APS. Forty-two percent of APS managers are women, and 35% of senior executives are women. Just over half of our managers are aged under 45 years.





# Finding APS jobs

## In the know...

### Tips and hints

Multiple positions are advertised to fill a number of jobs at once. If the jobs are at the same level, agencies may use generic selection criteria based on core skills and abilities, and an assessment centre to assess a number of candidates at once.

Writing exercises, computer skills tests, group activities or job simulations may be used in the assessment centre.

### Get the facts

APS jobs can be advertised as:

- individual positions
- multiple positions within an agency
- anticipated positions
- cadetships and graduate positions
- traineeships and school leaver programmes
- temporary employment

In most cases, APS agencies run their own recruitment. Agencies advertise jobs in the **APS Employment Gazette**, in newspapers, through recruitment agencies, on their own websites, and on websites such as [www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au).

Various APS agencies keep a temporary employment register in the agency or through a recruitment company. Some recruitment companies specialise in placing people in temporary government jobs. People are selected for short term, temporary jobs based on the skills and abilities required for the job. These jobs provide a good opportunity to gain experience in the public service. You can either ask a recruitment company if they have a register you can join, or if you are interested in a particular APS agency, check the **agency's website** to see if they have an online register.

## Find out more

### What is the APS Employment Gazette?

The Gazette lists all appointments and vacancies in the APS. The online Gazette allows you to search for vacancies by job category, region, agency or salary range. New jobs are advertised at [www.APSjobs.gov.au](http://www.APSjobs.gov.au).

### Where can I find agency websites?

APS agencies also advertise jobs on their own websites. Find a list of agencies at [www.australia.gov.au/portfolios](http://www.australia.gov.au/portfolios).

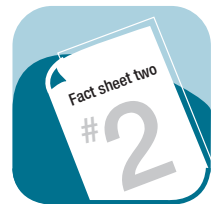
## Myth vs reality

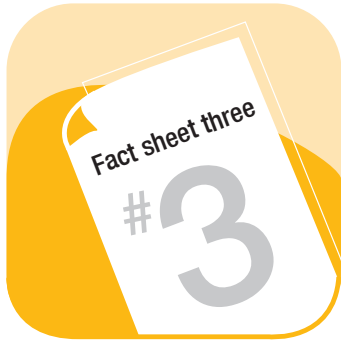
### I'll have to move to Canberra

Some of us work in Canberra, but most don't. Almost two thirds of jobs are outside Canberra. Our work requires us to be in many diverse locations including cities, regional and rural areas and overseas.

### Only public servants can apply for jobs in the APS Employment Gazette

The vast majority of jobs are open to the Australian community. Only a tiny number are for people already in the APS, these are marked in the Gazette with a clover leaf symbol (♣).





# Understanding APS jobs

## In the know...

### Tips and hints

Applying for the sake of it means spending time and energy applying for jobs that you may not be really suited for. Understanding the job, what is required and whether you have the right skills and experience are important in deciding whether to apply or not.

## Get the facts

The APS has a wide range of jobs corresponding to different roles and levels of responsibility (grouped as classifications). These include:

- service delivery and advice to the public
- policy advice, programme design, implementation, stakeholder management, and high level decision-making
- corporate services such as information technology, human resources, records management, accounts processing and ministerial and parliamentary processes
- technical and professional jobs such as lawyers, journalists, accountants, scientists, engineers, librarians, inspectors and economists.

In addition there are a range of administrative support positions.

We offer full time and part time jobs on either a temporary or ongoing basis. If you are interested in part time work, speak with the **contact officer** about the possibility of flexible hours or part time work, even if the job is advertised as a full time position.



## Find out more

### What are classifications?

The level of APS jobs is based on the duties that are required to be performed. Jobs are classified and paid at different levels according to the complexity, responsibility and skills involved. The most common classifications used are as follows:

- APS 1 and 2—general administrative and service positions, cadetships and trainees
- APS 3 and 4—general entry level positions and general administrative, technical, project and service positions, and graduate positions
- APS 5 and 6—senior administrative, technical, project and service positions, which may have supervisory roles
- Executive Level 1 and 2—middle management positions
- Senior Executive Service Band 1, 2 and 3—senior leadership and management positions. More information is available at [www.apsc.gov.au/ses](http://www.apsc.gov.au/ses).

Classifications grouped together, such as APS 1 to APS 3, are called broadbands.

Sometimes agencies may use different classifications, job titles and terminology to describe their jobs. The duty statement and selection criteria can help you understand whether you have the skills and experience needed for that position. In addition the contact officer may be able to provide further information on the roles and responsibilities of the job.

### Glossary

**Contact officer:** often a manager or supervisor, they can tell you more about the job, the roles and responsibilities, the agency and so on. The contact officer is there for the specific purpose of answering your questions. Do not hesitate to call them and ask them to explain anything about the job or recruitment process that is unclear.

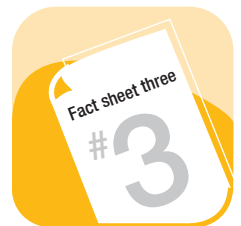
**Executive/personal assistant:** provide administrative support to senior managers.

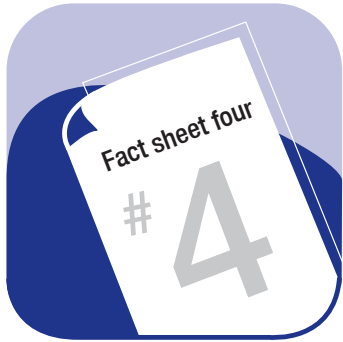
**Secretary:** in some of the larger agencies in the APS, the head of the agency is referred to as the Secretary, similar to Chief Executives in the private sector.

## Myth vs reality

### You have to know someone to get a job in the APS

Getting a job in the APS is based on your skills, abilities and experience and how well they fit the requirements of the job.





# Applying for APS jobs

## In the know...

## Tips and hints

Remember to check spelling, punctuation and grammar, and be succinct. The written application itself shows how well you can communicate, and if written well, can make a positive impression.

**Sometimes people get jobs without going through an interview. Is your application good enough to get you the job?**

If you are currently working and you don't want your employer to know that you are looking for another job, then it is okay to not include referee contact details in the application. However, it is important to clearly state that you are willing to provide these details if you are in close contention for the job.

**If you need more information about the role or the process, call the contact officer and ask them. For example, you may want to know about upcoming work priorities, the work environment or the time-frame for announcing the decision.**

## Get the facts

APS job ads usually include the following, which will help you decide if it is the right job to apply for:

- the name of the position
- the location of the job
- the salary range and the **classification** level
- a description of the job and its role
- whether it is **ongoing** or **non-ongoing**
- a phone number or web link to the **duty statement, selection criteria** and/or **application kit**
- the name and contact details of a **contact officer**.

Good applications make a positive impression and can lead to an interview. Don't apply just for the sake of it. Select the right job and prepare a strong (and accurate) application highlighting your skills, experience and abilities, and how they meet the requirements of the job. Your application will be assessed on the basis of **merit**.

It is important to provide all the information specified in the **application kit**. This may include some or all of the following:

- a cover letter advising which job you are applying for, and including a short summary of your skills and abilities
- a **cover sheet**
- a copy of your CV (or resume)
- a statement addressing the **selection criteria**
- contact details for your referees.

You may be asked if you are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, from a non-English speaking background or have a disability. It is not compulsory to provide this information. However, by doing so you will assist the APS in providing a fair and equitable selection process and monitoring our commitment to overcoming possible employment-related disadvantage.

## Find out more

### Glossary

**Application kits:** provide information about the job, the agency, the duty statement and selection criteria.

**Classification:** refers to the level of the job. See fact sheet 3.

**Contact officer:** can provide information about the job. See fact sheet 3.

**Cover sheet:** a form asking for your contact details, recent work history, citizenship status, whether you have a disability, are from a non-English speaking background, or are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

**Duty statement** (or role description): describes the work you would do in the role, including the key tasks and responsibilities of the job.

**Mandatory qualifications:** some jobs require specific qualifications or skills that you must have to be considered for the job.

**Merit:** means you will be assessed on your skills, abilities and experience and how well they meet the requirements of the job, compared to other applicants. See fact sheet 1.

**Non ongoing:** employment for a specified timeframe or task, most commonly six, 12 or 18 month periods.

**Ongoing:** permanent employment, subject to termination provisions.

**Selection criteria:** details the skills and qualities required by the person to perform the role. It is likely that you will have to provide a written response to the selection criteria as part of your job application. See fact sheet 5.

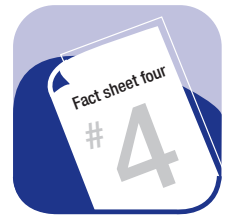
## Myth vs reality

### My CV is all I need to get an interview

Unless otherwise stated, you should include your CV, a response to the selection criteria, a cover sheet or letter, and if possible the contact details of your referees. Read the application kit to ensure you are providing the required information.

### An internal person is already lined up for the job

The position may be vacant, or it may be temporarily filled by an APS employee. However, this does not guarantee them the job. If that employee wants the job they have to apply through the same process as you and be assessed against the strengths of all applicants. If you want the job and are confident you have the skills and abilities required, then you should apply.





# Addressing selection criteria

## In the know...

### Tips and hints

Some recruitment companies help prepare job applications. If you use one, it is your responsibility to ensure your application accurately reflects your skills, experiences and abilities.

**Do**—address each criterion, use relevant examples, be clear and to the point and be honest and factual

**Don't**—write lengthy responses or rely just on your CV

Your CV should:

- cover relevant work history
- list your work and education history in chronological order, starting with the most recent examples
- not include personal details such as age, marital status or religion (but do include contact details)
- only include interests / hobbies if they demonstrate personal achievements, or relate to the selection criteria.

## Get the facts

Most of the time, your CV alone will not be enough to get you an APS job. When applying for a position it is likely that you will be asked to address the selection criteria.

The duty statement or role description will help you understand the responsibilities and tasks required in the job. The selection criteria describes the personal qualities, skills, abilities, knowledge and qualifications (if any) a person needs to perform the role effectively.

The agency's selection team will assess the responses of all applicants to each criterion. From time-to-time this will be enough to identify the right person for the role. More commonly though, this process creates a shortlist of applicants suitable to move to the next stage—usually an interview.

Some common examples of selection criteria include:

- demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively
- good organisational and administrative skills
- proven ability to work as part of a team
- well developed customer service skills
- proven ability to manage projects.

It is essential to respond to each criterion, writing at least one to two paragraphs explaining how you have demonstrated the particular skill or quality. Provide relevant examples from your work, study or community roles. Be clear and to the point. If a word or page limit is set, make sure you stick to it, and edit your responses for grammar, spelling and punctuation.

It is important to provide evidence to back up your claims. Where possible use actual examples of what you have done, how well you did it, what you achieved, and how it relates to the requirements of the job. The **STAR model** can help you form your answer.

## Find out more

### What is the STAR model?

The STAR model is one way of presenting information against selection criteria. For each criterion think about the following and use these points to form sentences:

**Situation**—Set the context by describing the circumstance where you used the skills or qualities and gained the experience.

**Task**—What was your role?

**Actions**—What did you do and how did you do it?

**Results**—What did you achieve?  
What was the end result and how does it relate to the job you are applying for?

An example of how to address selection criteria is provided on the following pages.

## Myth vs reality

### I'll have to sit the public service exam

The public service exam no longer exists. Centralised testing used by the APS closed in June 2000. Agencies are now responsible for their own recruitment.



# Example of how to address selection criteria

## How do I address the selection criteria?

The most important aspect of addressing selection criteria is to provide evidence through relevant examples. Support your claims with actual, specific examples of what you have done and how well you did it. The following steps provide guidance on how to address selection criteria.

### Step one

#### Understanding the selection criteria

As an example, take written communication skills. The associated selection criterion could be:

*‘Well developed written communication skills. This includes the ability to:*

- *structure written communications such as reports to meet the needs and understanding of the intended audience*

- *express opinions, information and key points of an argument clearly and concisely*
- *write convincingly in an engaging and expressive manner’.*

It is important that you clearly understand what is meant by each selection criterion before putting pen to paper. Your application itself may also be used to assess this criterion.

### Step two

#### Opening sentence

Begin each selection criteria with an opening sentence that clearly states your claim to this criterion. For example:

*‘I possess strong written communication skills, which I have developed over the course of my career’.*

Support the statement with detailed examples of where you demonstrated these skills. The following steps will help you to provide a structured, easy-to-understand response.

### Step three

#### Brainstorm ideas for each criterion

For each selection criterion, brainstorm ideas from your recent work life. Ideally, confine your examples to the last two or three years of employment, or other relevant examples (e.g. study, community participation). The following is an example response for a Senior Project Officer (APS6) role, which includes a selection criterion on *‘well developed written communication skills’*. An applicant may come up with the following situations to illustrate their skills before they start to write their application:

- Project Officer at Department of XYZ—wrote report on project planning methodologies
- when Research Support Officer at Department of XYZ—designed and compiled a monthly newsletter
- research project when at GBL Company—collated diverse sets of data, organised the information into topic areas, and synthesised into a paper for senior management.

At this stage, it is useful to generate as many examples as possible.



## Step four

### Expand on your brainstorming ideas and provide the evidence

Expand on these points from step three. Go back to each criterion and choose which examples to use, by matching them against the wording of the criterion. Once you have finalised your examples, you need to demonstrate how they meet the different aspects of the criterion. Be specific and describe exactly what you did, including the outcome, to demonstrate convincingly that you have met the requirements of each criterion. Here, the STAR method described earlier can be used. For example:

**Situation**—role as Research Support Officer at Department of XYZ

**Task**—needed to ensure that managers were kept informed of policies and procedures.

**Action or approach**—initiated monthly newsletter, which was emailed to each manager. Took responsibility for writing the main articles. This involved obtaining ideas and input from other stakeholders to ensure that the articles reflected managers' needs (in terms of content and language).

**Result**—led to improved lines of communication between managers and the Research Support Unit. Feedback was consistently excellent. Received divisional achievement award for newsletter quality.

Once this has been achieved, you can then write the draft paragraph in full. For example:

*'As Research Support Officer at the Department of XYZ, I needed to ensure that managers were kept informed of policies and procedures. To do this, I initiated a monthly newsletter, which was emailed to each manager. I took responsibility for writing the main articles in each publication. This involved obtaining ideas and input from other stakeholders to ensure that the articles reflected the needs of managers, both in terms of content and language. I received consistently excellent feedback in relation to this newsletter from these internal clients and my own manager. I received a divisional achievement award for the quality of this newsletter from management. Importantly, this initiative resulted in improved lines of communication between managers and the Research Support Unit.'*

Remember to use only one or two of your strongest examples to respond to the selection criteria.

## Step five

### Checking work

At this stage, you should read through your application, and check the following points:

- Have I been honest? Your responses should reflect an accurate picture of your role and achievements.
- Have I used positive and specific language? Avoid ambiguous or unclear expressions such as *'involved in'* or *'assisted'* as it makes it difficult to understand exactly what you did. Words and phrases which could reduce credibility should also be avoided (e.g. some, a little, limited, somewhat).
- Have I used strong action (doing) words? Avoid using passive language. For example, *'I received consistently excellent feedback in relation to this newsletter from these internal clients and my own manager'*, is better than simply stating, *'Feedback in relation to this newsletter was consistently excellent'*.
- Have I avoided unsupported claims about my capabilities? For example, rather than simply saying, *'The newsletter was received well by others'*, this assertion is substantiated in the following way: *'I received a divisional achievement award from management for the quality of this newsletter'*.
- Have I addressed all aspects of the criterion? It is important that you go back to the wording of the particular selection criterion. In the example provided, it is clear that the content refers mainly to the first descriptor, *'structure written communications to meet the needs and understanding of the intended audience'*. To make a full statement against the criterion, *'well developed written communication skills'*, it would be necessary to address the remaining two descriptors in additional paragraphs.
- Have I paid attention to the language of the criterion? For example, writing a response to the criterion *'well developed written communication skills'* requires a focus on actual experiences and the degree of skill in this area. However, if the criterion was phrased *'knowledge of effective written communication skills and techniques'*, this would require different examples which do not necessarily rely on describing actual performance in the workplace.

Fact sheet five

#5



# Entry points

## In the know...

## Tips and hints

Find out which agency best suits your skills and interests. For a list of agencies go to:  
[www.australia.gov.au/portfolios](http://www.australia.gov.au/portfolios).

We look for people with a wide range of qualifications including law, economics, finance, psychology, international studies, policy and public administration to name a few.

## Get the facts

The APS offers career opportunities for people who have previously worked in the private, community or other government sectors. In addition, for people just beginning their careers, or developing new skills to change jobs, the APS offers entry points for:

- school leavers
- trainees
- cadets
- graduates

School leaver programmes, traineeships and cadetships are generally appointed at the APS 1–2 level, while graduates are appointed at the APS 3–4 level (see fact sheet 3 for information on levels).

In most cases, agencies run their own programmes annually, advertising in newspapers, the APS Employment Gazette ([www.APSjobs.gov.au](http://www.APSjobs.gov.au)) or on agency websites during the middle or end of the calendar year.

You may be asked to complete an application kit, including addressing selection criteria (see fact sheet 5 for information on selection criteria). If your application is successful, you may be invited to an interview or assessment centre as part of the selection process. Fact sheet 9 will give you more advice on this.

If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, you may also be interested in Indigenous career pathways for trainees, cadets and graduates. Fact sheet 7 will give you more advice on this.



## Find out more

### What is a school leaver programme?

These programmes are for people who have recently completed Year 12. They may include work placements within various areas of the agency, and provide good learning and development opportunities to begin your career. In some cases, the agency may also support you through tertiary study if it relates to your work.

If you can't work out the type of job you want, go to [www.jobjuice.gov.au](http://www.jobjuice.gov.au), or [www.skillsforthefuture.gov.au](http://www.skillsforthefuture.gov.au).

### What are traineeships?

Traineeships are suitable for school leavers, TAFE graduates, or people already working. They usually involve work experience with an agency, and the opportunity to gain a formal qualification.

### What is the difference between cadetships and graduate programmes?

Cadetships recruit university students to start working while they finish their degree. They generally involve full-time study, with work placements during study breaks, allowing you to begin developing your professional skills. In most cases agencies provide some form of financial assistance towards your study.

If you have graduated, you may wish to consider a graduate programme. Over the course of a year, the agency will give you on-the-job training and professional development opportunities.

Cadetships and graduate programmes provide excellent opportunities to start putting your skills into practice, learn new skills, undertake professional development and begin building your future career.

## Myth vs reality

### You can only apply for traineeships, cadetships and graduate programmes if you are young

With the general exception of school leaver programmes, age is not a factor when applying for APS jobs. It is about your skills, experience, and capacity to perform the requirements of the job.

### You need a good UAI to get into the APS

The University Admissions Index (UAI) applies to entry to university, and is not required when applying for APS jobs. For some jobs, it may be beneficial to provide a copy of your university transcript when applying for jobs, such as cadetships, graduate programmes or jobs which relate directly to areas you have studied. For other jobs, this will not be the case. Also, there are a number of entry pathways into the APS, and having a degree is not always necessary.





# Entry level pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

## In the know...

## Tips and hints

We are working towards improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the APS. You can find out more at <http://www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous>.

A lot of APS agencies will have Indigenous employment strategies on their websites. These tell you more about the steps agencies are taking to improve employment outcomes for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

## Get the facts

Workplace diversity makes a major contribution to the capability of the APS and we are looking for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work at all levels.

If you are interested in starting a career in the APS but have limited experience in public administration, or related fields, there are a number of employment pathways to help kick-start your career. These include Indigenous entry level positions, cadetships and graduate positions. Some of these positions are restricted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants under arrangements known as **special measures provisions**.

Entry level positions, traineeships and apprenticeships are ideal for people with limited experience.

Indigenous cadetships are a great way to get financial assistance to complete your degree while gaining professional experience. The National Indigenous Cadetship Programme (NICP) links Indigenous tertiary students with employers. To find out more visit [www.dewr.gov.au](http://www.dewr.gov.au).

If you have a degree, or are just about to complete one, the APS Indigenous Graduate Programme may be for you. More information is available at [www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous/recruitment.htm](http://www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous/recruitment.htm).

You may have also heard of **identified positions**. These are commonly targeted at Indigenous applicants but anyone can apply. These positions are most suited to people who want to work in Indigenous affairs.

Fact sheet 6 provides general information on entry points into the APS, including traineeships, cadetships and graduate programmes.

## Find out more

### What are special measures provisions?

Special measures provisions are aimed at improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They are permitted by the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwlth) and are used to reserve certain positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You may hear these jobs referred to as special measures positions.

### What are identified positions?

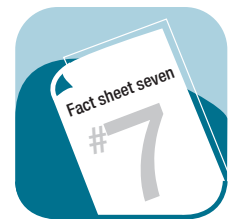
These are jobs where knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures, as well as the ability to communicate sensitively with Indigenous Australians are required. Generally they will involve the development or delivery of Indigenous specific policies, programmes or services.

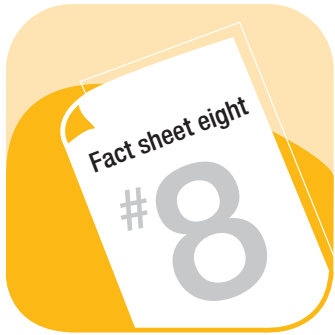
Your experiences as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person may assist you to meet the identified criteria used in these positions. You do not have to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to apply for an identified position.

## Myth vs reality

### Indigenous people have to work in Indigenous specific areas in the APS

We employ people from all different backgrounds and cultures to do a variety of jobs. Indigenous people are encouraged to apply for jobs in all areas of the APS.





# Supporting the employment of people with disability

## In the know...

### Tips and hints

If you need a reasonable adjustment to be made during the application or selection process, make contact with the position contact officer. The contact officer will be able to assist you with organising any adjustments required.

Contact the human resource section of the agencies that you are interested in working for and discuss the employment pathways they offer.

## Get the facts

The APS encourages and values diversity by supporting workplace cultures based on fair and equitable treatment of employees. Supporting the employment of people with disability is a key focus of the APS commitment to workplace diversity.

A job in the APS can provide you with opportunities to apply your skills, work in various areas and access professional development.

During the application process you may be asked to identify if you have a disability. It is entirely your decision to do so and you are not required to disclose this information. However, if you do choose to disclose that you have a disability it will enable the contact officer to get in touch with you to see if any reasonable adjustments need to be made to the process to assist you in presenting your case fairly.

Reasonable adjustment, sometimes referred to as reasonable accommodation, reflects the understanding that people with disability can often perform the tasks of a position where adjustments are made to accommodate the effects of their disability. Reasonable adjustments can also be made available to assist you in the job. There is no exhaustive list of what kinds of changes can be made. There are many different types of disability, and they affect people in highly individual ways.

In most cases, APS positions will have a contact officer when advertised. This person is there to provide information about the position and assist you with any questions or assistance you may need during the application and selection process.

Any information you provide is confidential.

## Find out more

### **What support is available for people with an intellectual disability?**

There is a special measure currently in place in the APS for people with intellectual disability. The measure is aimed at improving employment outcomes and opportunities for people with intellectual disability. This means that some jobs will be advertised as open only to people with intellectual disability.

### **Where can you find more information?**

The Australian Government provides a number of services and assistance for people with disability looking for employment. Further information about these services is available at [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au).

## Myth vs reality

### **If I identify that I have a disability I won't be considered for the position**

The APS encourages and values diversity by supporting workplace cultures based on the fair treatment of all employees. Including people with disability in our workplaces also helps us to better meet the needs of the wider community. Identifying your disability will enable the selection panel to ensure that any reasonable adjustments are made so you can perform at your best.

### **If I need to have time off work due to my disability I will get fired**

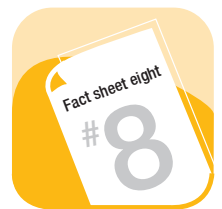
The APS has leave provisions that can assist you to manage your disability and will also provide you with assistance to return to work if you require extended time off.

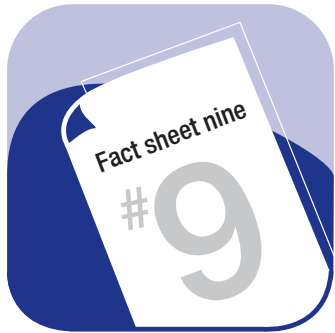
### **People with disability only get employed in lower level jobs**

We employ people based on their skills and abilities to perform the job requirements. The job description, duty statement, selection criteria and speaking with the contact officer will help you decide whether it is the right job for you to apply for.

### **If I have gaps in my work history due to my disability they will hold it against me at interview**

The APS recruits employees for their skills and work related qualities. Your ability to demonstrate these will be the most important factor in winning the job. If you have any concerns, you may wish to talk to the contact officer.





# The interview

## Get the facts

If your application is short-listed, you may be invited to an interview by a selection team.

Using the selection criteria as a guide, you may be asked a range of questions to demonstrate your skills and abilities. These could include **behavioural based questions**, and **hypothetical scenario questions**.

You may also be asked to do exercises such as a **work sample test**, presentations, or **psychometric testing**.

If an agency is recruiting for a number of positions, you may go through an **assessment centre** which could include group work exercises.

You can prepare for the interview by:

- looking at the agency website to understand what they do (their most recent annual report may be helpful, along with their corporate plan)

- reviewing your responses to the selection criteria, picking a few additional examples to use in the interview
- doing a mock interview using the selection criteria to think up possible questions.

In a typical recruitment process the selection team will rate your suitability for the role based on your performance at interview, statement against the selection criteria, other activities (e.g. **work sample test**), and referee comments (if sought). The most suitable person will be offered the position. In some processes, an **order of merit** may also be established.

## In the know...

## Tips and hints

Think of your top three skills/qualities and why you have applied for the role. You may be asked to talk about this at the interview. Use examples that best relate to the duties of the job, and be honest.

**Choose referees who can provide evidence to support your claims by commenting on your skills and abilities, and past work performance. It is generally expected that one of your referees be a current or recent supervisor.**

If your application is not successful, you may not be notified by the agency. The application kit should inform you of the process for unsuccessful applicants.

**During the interview it is okay to:**

- take time to think about your answer
- ask the selection team to rephrase the question if you don't understand
- take a copy of your application, or other notes with you for quick reference.

## Find out more

### What happens now?

Following the interview, the selection team will decide who is most suitable for the job. They may contact your referees for confirmation of your skills, abilities and experience. Once their recommendation is approved, the successful applicant will be offered the job.

Some agencies may let you know quickly if you've been successful, others may take longer.

You can ask about the expected timeframe for filling the job. If you haven't heard anything in the weeks after the interview, call the contact officer, and enquire about the timeframe for announcing the decision.

If you're unsuccessful, you can seek feedback from the contact officer, including a copy of your individual assessment. You may wish to seek feedback about:

- your performance at the interview or on other assessment activities
- your strengths and those areas where you may need to improve your skills, abilities or gain more experience.

### Glossary

**Assessment centres:** involve a number of applicants doing activities such as job simulations, role-playing and group discussions. Skills and behaviours are assessed according to the job requirements, e.g. team-work and interpersonal communication.

**Behavioural questions:** usually begin with a statement like 'Tell us about a time when...' or 'Describe a situation where...'. They are based on the principle that past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour, and demonstrate what you did, thought, said, and how you acted in a work-related situation.

**Hypothetical scenario questions:** set up fictitious work-related problems which require a solution. Applicants are asked to describe how they would respond to, or deal with the situation.

**Order of merit:** from the recruitment process, a range of people may be found suitable for the job, based on the evidence collected. The order of merit can either consist of a pool of applicants all rated as suitable, or as a list ranking applicants in order as suitable for the job. The order of merit is valid for 12 months from the date the job was advertised in the Gazette, and the agency can draw from the list to fill other similar positions.

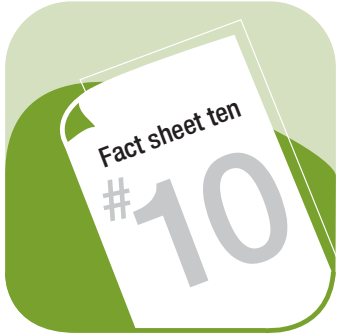
**Psychometric testing:** these are sometimes used to assess your abilities, personality, behaviours and interests and may include aptitude and/or personality tests.

**Selection team or panel:** may consist of two to three people, usually APS employees, who assess applicants based on their skills and abilities and how well they fit the requirements of the job. The team often includes the job supervisor.

**Scribe:** this person takes notes for the selection team during the interview, helps write the selection report, and may contact and document referee comments. Usually they are not involved in the decision making process.

**Work sample test:** involves doing exercises or activities similar to those required in the job, e.g. a writing exercise.





# Frequently asked questions

## Find out more

### How do I get an APS job?

Depending on your skills, abilities, experience and preferred employment arrangements, options for getting a job include:

- applying directly for jobs advertised in newspapers, on agency websites, on the APS Employment Gazette ([www.APSjobs.gov.au](http://www.APSjobs.gov.au)) or on websites such as [www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au)
- applying for school leaver programmes, traineeships, cadetships or graduate programmes
- registering on a temporary employment register for the opportunity to be selected for short term jobs. These registers are available online on some APS agency websites, and through recruitment companies.

Take the time to check all the required information when applying for an APS job. With each job opportunity there may be particular requirements, such as submitting your CV, providing a written application including addressing selection criteria, or going for an interview.

### Do I have to be an Australian citizen?

It is generally expected that people will be Australian citizens to work in the APS, however APS agencies may choose to employ non-citizens with the relevant work permits. If you are not an Australian citizen, you will need to have a traceable history, which will include employment and background checks for security clearance purposes. If you see a job advertised which you are interested in, call the contact officer to discuss your options for applying for the job.

### Why does the recruitment process take longer for APS jobs than other jobs?

Each APS agency handles their own recruitment, and some may advise you of the recruitment outcome sooner than others. People are selected for APS jobs on the basis of merit, which means we look for evidence of your skills, experience, abilities and how well they fit the requirements of the job, compared with other applicants. This comparison may be based on your CV, a written application addressing the selection criteria, and/or an interview. Because of this, the recruitment process may take longer for APS jobs than other jobs. When applying for an APS job, you can ask the contact officer about the expected timeframe for announcing that the job has been filled.



## What sort of agreement will I be employed under?

APS employees are either employed under:

- Australian Workplace Agreements (AWA), which are individual agreements with the agency covering remuneration and other terms and conditions of your employment
- Collective Agreements (CA), which are for staff in the agency not covered by an AWA, covering remuneration and other terms and conditions of employment.

Agencies offer either CAs, AWAs or both. If you are employed under a collective agreement, you could choose to be part of the CA, approach the agency to negotiate an AWA, or be approached by the agency to negotiate an AWA.

## What does a security clearance involve?

A security clearance involves pre-employment and background checks. Some jobs require a security clearance because of the type of issues/information dealt with in the job. The timeframe for starting a job may be longer, depending on the level of security clearance that is required for the job.

## Do I have to go through a graduate programme to get a job?

If you have graduated from university, you can apply for APS jobs by:

- applying to graduate programmes which are run by individual agencies. Graduates are commonly appointed at the APS 3-4 classification level.
- applying directly for jobs advertised in the newspaper, on agency websites, in the APS Employment Gazette ([www.APSjobs.gov.au](http://www.APSjobs.gov.au)) or on sites such as [www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au). The APS 3-4 classification level may be suitable for people with a degree and no experience. For those people with work experience and a degree, the APS 5-6 classification level may be more appropriate.

## What happens after I am told that I got the job?

If you are successful in winning an APS job, you will be subject to some engagement conditions, which means you must meet particular requirements to be appointed to the job. These requirements may include some or all of the following:

- being an Australian citizen
- security clearance
- health clearance
- character clearance (may include police check)
- a period of probation
- meeting all of the requirements of the employing agency's entry level training programme.

Probation will involve a period of time where your performance and suitability for the job is assessed. Once the probationary period has been completed, your performance will continue to be assessed regularly.

## Do I need a degree or lots of experience to get a job in the APS?

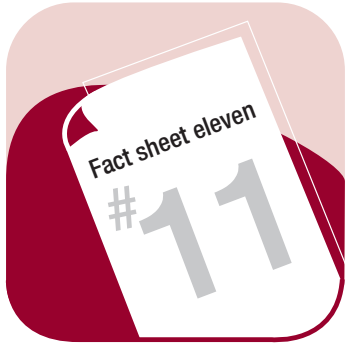
Some jobs require specific experience or qualifications, but many don't. It comes down to the skills required for the job. Some key skills for the APS include communication, problem solving and analytical skills. Your skills can be drawn from school, work, study, committees, volunteering, and community events.

## Why can't I get an interview?

If you are having difficulty getting an interview, ask yourself:

- Am I going for the right job for my skills and abilities?
- Am I providing all the required information in my application?
- Am I preparing a good application which demonstrates my skills, abilities and experience and how they relate to the requirements of the job?





# Top tips

## Make a decision

- Find a job that interests you.
- Spend time researching the job—don't dismiss it on face value.
- Read the selection criteria and duty statement to make sure it is the right job for you to apply for.
- Look at the agency website.
- Speak with the contact officer if you need further information.

## Go for it

- Complete your application as required by the agency.
- Use the STAR model if you are having trouble answering the selection criteria.
- Prepare a quality application by drawing on your experiences, skills and abilities: select examples that best relate to the duties and level of the job.

## Back yourself at interview

- Be prepared, have an understanding of what the agency does, read over your application and list practical examples against each selection criteria.
- Use specific examples to demonstrate your skills and qualities.
- Remember the interview is a discussion, not a test, and we want to talk to you because we are interested.



