

Recruiting, Selecting and Appointing: Suitability Requirements

Merit and suitability

Merit has traditionally been thought of as the extent to which a person has the skills, knowledge and abilities required to undertake the position. This concept has been broadened to include a person's 'suitability' for the position.

Suitability recognises there is a range of other factors – along with having the skills, knowledge and abilities – that constitute merit. These factors include a person's eligibility, ability to demonstrate the right behaviours, ethical alignment and cultural fit.

Setting suitability requirements

Agencies should consider the 5 suitability areas set out in [Commissioner's Instruction 48: Recruitment, Selection and Appointment to Permanent Vacancies](#) and [Commissioner's Instruction 49: Recruitment, Selection and Appointment to Fixed Term Vacancies](#) and decide if criteria are required. It is not mandatory to set criteria for each area. Agencies identify and describe the suitability requirements for each position. Some examples are set out below.

Area	Criteria examples
Eligibility	Qualifications Professional licence/certificate Right to work in Australia (citizenship, residency, relevant visa) Statutory or regulatory requirements related to the position
Pre-employment conditions	Integrity screening Police check Security clearance Working with Children Check
Job requirements	Functions and tasks to be performed including: • skills, knowledge and abilities • experience relevant to the requirements of the position

Area	Criteria examples
Personal attributes	Behaviour and ethical attributes now and in the future including: - alignment of conduct with the Public Sector Code of Ethics and agency code of conduct - alignment of behaviour with agency values - expected behaviours for roles in different contexts (see Building Leadership Impact and Leadership Expectations)
Organisational requirements	Diversity and other outcomes determined by the agency including: - consistency with relevant equal opportunity legislation, genuine occupational requirements and measures intended to achieve equality - operational needs such as start date, specific worksites and geographical locations

Assessing applicants against suitability requirements

A variety of methods can be used to assess suitability requirements. Agencies need to consider and set the methods they use.

Some requirements (such as those relating to eligibility and pre-employment conditions) may be assessed by applicants providing relevant documents. Other requirements (such as those for the job, personal attributes and organisational requirements) may be assessed by methods such as interviews, referee checks, individual or team tasks and formal diagnostic testing.

Agencies should consider the nature and level of the role when setting suitability requirements, and ensure applicants have the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities and suitability.

Assessing suitability requirements during the recruitment process

An example of the timing of assessments for each criteria is set out below.

Criteria	Application	Shortlisting	Assessment	Appointment
Eligibility	Y			
Pre-employment conditions				Y
Job requirements	Y	Y	Y	
Personal attributes		Y	Y	
Organisational requirements	Y			

It is important for eligibility requirements to be stated in the advertisement or when using limited search and assessed early in the recruitment process such as during the shortlisting of applications.

For more information about eligibility and assessing applicants, see [Chapter 7 of the Hiring Managers' Toolkit, Assess applicants](#).

Informing applicants about suitability requirements

To ensure fairness, transparency and applicant understanding, agencies should communicate all requirements related to vacancies including:

- eligibility requirements and when they are checked
- that applicants who do not meet eligibility requirements are not progressed to the next stage of the recruitment process
- the other 4 suitability requirements to be assessed
- the assessment methods or types of information needed for assessment.

Assessing suitability for backfilling acting arrangements

When backfilling acting arrangements (generally for less than 12 months), decisions about suitability can be more flexible. This is due to the temporary nature of the appointment and other factors that provide employees and/or agencies with possible longer term benefits.

In addition to the suitability requirements for positions, consideration can be given to employees':

- immediate ability to step into the role
- professional development likely to be gained from appointment
- past performance
- practical ability and knowledge to maintain business continuity.

Pre-employment checks

Pre-employment checks are verification processes carried out after suitable applicants have been identified. It is done to confirm applicants can be lawfully, safely and appropriately appointed to positions consistent with legislative and risk requirements.

Pre-employment checks include:

- National Police Clearance
- Working with Children check
- a statutory declaration
- medical checks.

Suitability requirements related to behaviours

The [behaviours](#) in Building Leadership Impact and Leadership Expectations are not mandatory. They are provided as a guide to assist agencies when developing suitability requirements.