

Recruitment to the 1st AIF Activity: Instructions for teachers

Purpose:

For students to:

- understand the purpose of the Attestation Paper.
- understand the enlistment criteria used to accept soldiers and what it means.
- appreciate that over time that the selection criteria changed – with the standards dropping due to declining numbers of men enlisting.

This activity will assist students who complete the biography task to read and interpret the Attestation Paper in the Service Record of the serviceperson they will complete the biography for.

The Attestation Paper was designed for men who enlisted, as can be seen from the nature of the questions. Nurses had the same Attestation Paper completed when they enlisted (nothing special was designed for women). The only criteria nurses needed to meet to successfully enlist was to have at least 3 years nursing experience, and to be single - as was the case for all working women in Australia at the time. There were no other restrictions on enlistment for nurses and they did not undergo the medical. Essentially any single qualified nurse who wished to serve was accepted, therefore, this task only involves the enlistment of men, as they could be rejected for numerous reasons.

Note: Nurses had equal rank to men but were paid half! If they married, they had to resign (that's if their marriage was discovered).

Description of task:

Your students will apply to join the 1st AIF. You will be the recruitment officer, medical officer and commanding officer (or you may wish to nominate students to take on a couple or all of these roles). You will decide whether to accept or reject each student's 'application' (refer to the *accept or reject table*).

Each student will be given the details of a false identity to complete the Attestation Paper. Some students will be accepted, and others rejected, so ensure that you distribute a mix. Be careful with the distribution of the rejected identities to ensure that the student who receives it will be able to cope with the reason why! The date that they apply to join is very significant regarding whether they are accepted or rejected as the criteria for enlistment changed over time (see page 3). Some will be rejected due to not meeting requirements for the questions on the first page, others will be rejected due to failing the medical.

Preparation

1. Print each student an *AIF WW1 Attestation Paper blank*.
2. Print an *Identity sheet* per student ensuring there's a mixture of identities that will be accepted or rejected (see the table). Each identity is numbered for easy reference.
3. Print the corresponding *medical examination* for each identity you print (referenced with the same number as the *Identity Sheet*)
Note: You could give the student "their" medical information OR you could keep the medical information a secret from the student until they go through the medical examination as part of the enlistment process.
4. Print *Enlistment Activity Reject or Accept table* for your easy reference
5. Find a Bible or print off an image of a Bible.

It will take time to 'process' each student's 'application' so have other work for students to complete before and after they are 'processed'.

Process

Step 1 – Explanation of Attestation.

Project the 'AIF Attestation Paper with explanatory notes' on a screen. With your class go over the explanation for each question and the medical examination.

Step 2 – distribute materials.

Give each student an *AIF WW1 Attestation Paper blank*, and an *Identity Sheet* with the details needed to complete the first page of the Attestation. (Decide if you are going to give them their medical details, if so, hand these out too. Students can then complete 'their' description at the top of Page 3. If not, you will complete this as part of Step 5)

Step 3 – checking as Attestation Officer

**you may want to ask students to predict whether they will be accepted or rejected...*

Students bring you (the Attesting Officer) their completed Attestation Paper and the copy of their *Identity Sheet*.

Check each student's completed Attestation Paper. Go over each question, cross checking against the student's identity details. Ensure the student has signed the section at the bottom of the first page, using the enlistment date from their *Identity Sheet*.

Check against the *accept or reject table* as to accept them at this point so they can move on to the medical, or whether they will be rejected at this point of the process. To reject, do not sign the 'Certificate of the Attesting Officer' and instead write reject on the top of the paper. If the student can be accepted at this point, you sign the 'Certificate of the Attesting Officer' at the top of the second page using the same enlistment date as the one on the student's *Identity Sheet*. If the student's identity is a 'Natural Born British Subject', then cross out the last line – 'I have examined his naturalization papers...'

Step 4 – Oath (Bible needed)

Student reads aloud the Oath while holding the Bible. If they object to holding the Bible, have them read the Oath minus the line 'So Help Me, God', you cross this line out and initial it.

Students sign the form again using their enlistment date.

Once again you sign the paper as the Attesting Officer, also remembering to use their enlistment date.

Step 5 – Medical Examination.

Complete the details at the top of Page 3 from the student's Identity Sheet.

Find the student's Medical Examination and check against the *accept or reject table*. If they have any of the conditions listed, circle them.

If the student is fit for service then sign to accept the application as the Medical Officer. To reject, do not sign the 'Certificate of Medical Examination' and instead write reject at the top of the first page of the paper.

Step 6 – Commanding Officer Approval

Sign the last section of the Paper as the Commanding Officer using the same enlistment date.

Step 7: Debrief.

Debrief as a class, students who were rejected need to share why. Students are bound to have questions as part of this activity which can be addressed.

Enlistment criteria/standards from the Department of Veterans Affairs

As the war progressed, the AIF needed more men to reinforce units with casualties and expand its army. Physical conditions for enlistment were relaxed so that more men would be eligible to serve in the war.

Enlistment standards for the Australian Imperial Force over the course of World War I

Minimum physical requirements	August 1914	June 1915	April 1917
Age	19 to 38 years	18 to 45 years	18 to 45 years
Height	5 ft 6 in (168 cm)	5 ft 2 in (157 cm)	5 ft (152 cm)
Chest measurement (fully expanded)	34 in (86 cm)	33 in (84 cm)	33 in (84 cm)

Source: <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/military-organisation/enlistment>

Further information:

Australian Indigenous service during World War I: <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/personnel/indigenous-service>

Australian Army Nursing Service in World War I: <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/ww1/military-organisation/australian-imperial-force/australian-army-nursing-service>

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