

# **Job Application Guide for Teachers**



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## 1 Purpose

This document provides information about how to prepare for and write job applications for advertised classroom teaching positions with Catholic Education South Australia (CESA).

A large number of people apply for advertised teaching jobs in South Australian Catholic Schools, especially in the metropolitan areas. Only a few will be selected for interview. Taking the necessary time to properly prepare for and write an application that follows the correct process, format and addresses the specific position criteria is essential if you want to make the interview list and have the best chance of being the preferred candidate.

The interview itself is another area to pay special attention. While a high quality professional written application may get you to the interview stage, you then have to impress in person (or over the phone) and convince the panel that you are the best candidate for the job and should be offered the job.

This guide includes information about how to find advertised positions, research a school to find out more about it; how to write a cover letter, if required; how to address selection criteria, as required; preparing your curriculum vitae (CV) and information to assist you with interviews.

The examples included in this guide are **not templates**, so don't just copy them word for word. Instead, use them as a basis to understand how to structure your application and the type of information you should include. **Your application must be as individual as you are.**

## 2 Finding positions to apply for

Catholic Education advertises positions on its website:

CESA website – Working with Us

<http://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/working-with-us/positions-vacant>

Some schools also advertise positions on SEEK.

Read the position advertisement carefully, research the school at which the job is advertised and submit a fresh application for each position for which you apply. Don't use exactly the same information each time, as every position will likely require some variation of skills and experiences.

As the applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that all information in the application is **complete, correct and prepared by you**. Any statement found to be misleading may result in rejection of the application. If a statement is found to be misleading after you have been appointed to the position, the appointment may be rescinded and action in relation to CESA's Code of Conduct.

### 3 Preparing in advance of your application

Before you begin your application, do some basic research on the school at which you are applying for a position. The school's website is a good place to start. Take the time to look at the school's website and any published reports, as that will provide information on what has been happening at the school, and its priorities.

Look for information like:

- the number of students at the school;
- the school's targets, e.g. in literacy and numeracy;
- the type of school e.g. primary, secondary, co-educational or a multi-campus college;
- programs that the school is involved with.

The information you obtain on a school can help you understand the context of the school and to include the best examples from your experience to address each of the criteria. For example:

- For a co-educational school you can explain how you meet the needs of both genders
- For a senior campus, provide examples of how you can meet the needs of senior students
- If the role involves teaching years 7 – 12 secondary students show how you are tailor your teaching for both junior and senior students
- Should the school have a high proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, demonstrate your teaching strategies to effectively address the literacy needs for this cohort of students
- For specialist roles such as Physical Education or Music provide examples of programs you have developed to meet curriculum needs, tailored to suit the needs of the students
- If the school has a high proportion of students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, explain how you incorporate their perspectives and learning objectives into your teaching and learning practices.

### 4 Writing a cover letter

Many schools ask that a cover letter is included as part of the application. Its purpose is to introduce you and your Curriculum Vitae (CV) so this is your opportunity to express your personality and enthusiasm for the position and provide information to support your suitability, in addition to what your CV says. Cover letters are difficult to write and must be customised for each application.

When writing a cover letter take on board the following:

- Use the same font and font size as you have in your CV.
- Be brief and concise; write in short paragraphs; keep it to approximately one page in length, and use normal margins.

- Check for correct spelling and grammar. Don't just rely on spell-check –visually read all pages of your applications it's useful to have someone else proof-read it too. There can be no spelling mistakes or typos in a job application. Your cover letter is the first impression you make so it has to be error-free - there are no second chances for a first impression!
- Don't repeat what's in your CV – expand on its highlights to show what you can do for the school, not what the school can do for you.
- Individualise each cover letter for the position - remember you are trying to convince someone why you are the best person for that particular job.

The purpose of the cover letter is to introduce yourself and explain your application and CV so it should:

- Demonstrate your keen interest in the role
- Describe clearly why you are the star candidate
- Highlight your achievements and show how your contribution will be invaluable
- Let your personality shine through – portray the genuine person behind the words!

The structure of a cover letter generally contains four sections. Within each section you reveal yourself and your intentions to the school. Be clear and to the point. You want to focus on your best attributes and most relevant qualifications for the job you are applying for so that you get to the next stage, an interview.

1. The opening paragraph: states your reasons for writing and the objective – the position for which you want to be considered;
2. The pitch: the second paragraph provides some insight about you and should refer to your past and current accomplishments that are relevant to your objective (being offered the job);
3. The “why me?” part: the third paragraph should summarise why you would be an asset to the school. What are the benefits to the school employing you?
4. The request for action: this section is often referred to the closure but don't just think of it as at the time to say thank-you and goodbye but as the chance to request a next step like an interview or phone conversation. The request for action is where you further clarify your objectives (you really want the job!).

## 5 Your Curriculum Vitae (CV)

When applying for positions, your CV is essential as it contains information that will enable the hiring school to determine your suitability and ideally make the want to interview you to find out more.

Your CV is you in words! It is a promotional document that presents you in the best possible light for the purpose of getting you invited to a job interview.

It is not a confessional.

It is not just about past jobs. It is about *you* and how you performed and what you accomplished in those past jobs – especially those achievements that are most relevant to the work you want to do next.

Information to include in your CV is:

- Personal information and contact details (Note: it is **not recommended** to include a photo, your date of birth, age, gender or marital status)
- Teacher registration number (optional but useful)
- Formal qualifications (most recent qualifications first) and date of completion or status if still in progress
- Additional *relevant* qualifications and/or *recent* professional development undertaken
- Teaching history, including temporary/replacement and casual positions (list the most recent experience first). For each role listed, provide a brief summary of the school and the *key* activities and achievements *directly applicable* to the position you are applying for.
- Details of three (3) professional referees including their names, position titles, employer, location and contact information (including a mobile phone number if available). If you have been working in a school, it is always preferable to include the Principal of that school as a referee. Please don't say you will provide referees on request – be complete and include the details on your CV when you submit it.

It is not necessary to mention where you went to school, unless it will be beneficial to your application. You also do not need to include your hobbies and interests, unless they specifically relate to the position requirements. In addition, any employment that does not relate to or add value to your teaching application can be excluded.

## 7 Addressing Selection Criteria

If an application requires you to address the selection criteria then it is essential that you do so, and do it well. It is important to address each criteria separately and not leave any out. Be succinct and preferably limit your response to each criteria to 1-2 paragraphs. You can use the same examples under different criteria, but do present it from a different perspective or with a different emphasis.

If you are a relatively new teacher, you can use examples from your work placements or from temporary teaching experiences.

Be sure and address the criteria as it asks. “Demonstrated capacity/experience” requires you to explain that you have practically (and successfully) used these skills in the past and can discuss specific examples. “Capacity to” means you have the necessary skills, knowledge or qualities but may not have actual experience so you will have to explain how you will apply the necessary skills into effective classroom practice. “Skills and/or experience” requires you to outline how your skills make you able to successfully achieve the criteria *or* you can explain your actual practical experience.

It is useful to include words from the Position Information Document (PID) as this creates an instant match and connection. Do this creatively though – don't just copy whole paragraphs and sentences. Weave the words in with your own to show that your skills, experience, values etc. are the ideal match with what the hiring school wants.

## 8 Interviews

So, you're at the interview stage. It all comes down to you now. A job interview is a performance. You are on show and your task is to appeal to your prospective employer.

In an interview situation, whether informal or formal, with an individual or a panel, by phone or in person, first impressions matter. This include words, voice and body language and all three have to be good.

The following are some tips for being your best in an interview situation:

1. Don't be late. Punctuality is a subtle clue about attitude and behaviour. Tardiness, no matter the excuse, is a major blunder. Research in advance your travel route and parking options and allow plenty of time. Plan to arrive at least 10 minutes early.
2. Dress appropriately. When in doubt wear formal business attire, rather than dressing casual.
3. Come prepared. Know yourself – your strengths, weaknesses and accomplishments and practice how you will communicate this information when asked. You should have already familiarised yourself about the school and its priorities etc. so refresh yourself with this information so you can reference it in your responses, as applicable.
4. Be enthusiastic – first impressions, positive or negative, dramatically affect the ultimate evaluation. You can make or break a job interview within the first 5 minutes so be animated and show high levels of interest.
5. Appear friendly and outgoing. Smile and say hello to everyone. Take note of people's names so you can address them later. A positive reaction from *everyone* you interact with at the school during your visit is an important factor in the evaluation.
6. Be self-confident, but not arrogant. High self-esteem and self-confidence are the hallmarks of a successful individual. With confidence, be able to demonstrate how you have overcome obstacles and achieved outcomes. There is nothing wrong with feeling good about yourself but don't cross that line between being too confident and cocky.
7. Come prepared for key questions. Practice your responses to all the typical questions such as "tell me about yourself" and "what is it about this role that is of most interest to you". Make sure your responses demonstrate not just your contribution, but your value or worth. Be familiar with the contents of your CV and refer to it as applicable.
8. Remain involved and attentive. The most effective job interviews are where an active two-way conversation takes place. Maintain good eye contact equally with everyone present at the interview. Sit forward in your chair and don't interrupt your interviewer.
9. If in doubt, ask. If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification. Better to check at the beginning rather than provide an ineffective response.
10. Give 1 to 2 minute responses. A minimum of 1-2 minutes of well-prepared discussion gives the interviewer insight into your interest, intellect and ability to support your claims. Don't answer questions with just a yes or no – provide context, explain actions and describe outcomes and support statements about yourself with specific examples.
11. Ask probing questions. A few strategic questions can demonstrate your intelligence and interest in making a worthwhile contribution. Avoid superficial small talk.
12. Be positive about previous roles and co-workers. Don't bad-mouth previous employers or people you worked with. No matter how well founded, it implies a negative attitude and is not a good look given you need to make a positive impression.

## 9 Summary

Applying for a job is not easy. It takes, time, effort and commitment and unfortunately there is no guarantee of success. While you may have prepared well, written a great application and interviewed even better, others also may have ticked all those same boxes and just pipped you at the post. Stay positive though and persevere, as each application is an opportunity to fine tune further so it is only a matter of time and you will succeed. At the same time though, you do need to be realistic. A new job may not just fall in your lap first time. There are many other good teachers out there also wanting the job you want so it is competitive. If at first you don't succeed, regroup, review, revise and keep on trying.

Good luck!

## 10 Revision Record

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