

Guidance for applicants (including use of AI)

What we look for in applications

First of all, thank you for showing an interest in considering applying for a post at PCS.

In completing your application, it is important to remember that we want to find out about you and how you align with the PCS. Your application should represent your skills and personal experiences accurately and authentically.

Good applications help PCS understand:

- how your skills and experience align with the role you are applying to
- what motivates you to do your best work
- what you have achieved and how you did it

The two main parts of the process are the written application and interview stages. In each stage there are different things that AI might help you with.

Why authenticity is important

Your application and interview should give PCS an accurate and authentic picture of your skills and experiences. It is vital that you do not use AI during any live assessments at any stage of the selection process. This ensures a fair selection process for all candidates where we assess everyone based on merit.

All PCS staff follow the PCS Values and we are looking for talented candidates who resonate with these values. Authenticity and honesty in your application is vital to determine whether you are a good fit for the role.

Before you submit an application we will ask you to confirm the information you provide is true and accurate. More details about this will be provided in the application form and we may reject applications where AI is used inappropriately at any stage of the process.

Your job application

All job applications are submitted to PCS via CVMinder. It allows us to securely share only the essential details from your application between permitted recruitment panel members. It ensures that recruitment panel members who are involved in the review and shortlisting of applications cannot access protected characteristics and other sensitive information. This ensures a fair process that is free of bias.

Before you start your job application

Study the advert, job description and person specification. Your application will be assessed upon the strength of your evidence which should indicate how you meet all of the essential criteria on the person specification.

Think about how this relates to your work, outside activities, voluntary activities and so on.

- Can you talk to colleagues in similar jobs to get an insight into the day to day work?
- Jot down your examples as you go
- Complete the application with clear and concise examples
- Keep to the maximum word limit.

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A good answer to a question will be based upon experiences that are both recent and relevant to the post. Your answer will evidence what **you** have done. Think about the structure of your answers. They should include:

- Beginning – briefly outline the scenario (10%)
- Middle – demonstrate your skills, knowledge and experience (80%)
- End – what was the outcome/result? (10%)

Using AI to assist with completing the application form

The goal of using AI in your job application is to help you demonstrate who you are and what you are good at. It's not about creating a persona that isn't you.

Acceptable use	Unacceptable use
You can use AI in the application process to: • help you refine and clarify your ideas and thoughts • research public information about PCS and the trade union movement • find out information about trends in industries or professions that you can relate to personal experiences • check the spelling, grammar and clarity of what you have written	Do not use AI to: • inflate or invent your skills and experiences • create generic responses and copy these into your application • complete assessments that evaluate personality and abilities such as situational judgement and numerical tests • provide an AI tool with sensitive information about your organisation data or personal details

There are several ways that AI can improve the clarity and quality of your written application and remain an honest reflection of your skills and experience.

Examples of effective use:

- think about your own personal leadership experiences and ask AI to help you improve how you present them
- ask AI to summarise public information about PCS that you can think about in your responses
- ask AI to help identify relevant skills and PCS Values in the job advert and then think about how you've demonstrated these skills in previous roles as you prepare your responses
- write a list of examples with details of how you relate your experience and skills to the role, then ask AI to help you structure them to strengthen your examples
- ask AI to check your answers are concise and recommend improvements that maintain their meaning

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A note on word limit

Most of our application forms ask you to keep to a word limit within a section.

Typically this will say:

“In no more than 450 words under each of the following headings, consider the Job Description and describe how you meet the following essential criteria.”

Note the section heading and the bullet points for the criteria. Complete each section, covering all of the criteria under that heading, without exceeding the word limit.

For example, there might be five bullet points under the heading of Experience. Your answer should demonstrate your experience of the five bullet points, using no more than 450 words.

Once you have completed your job application

Once you have answered all of the questions, check you have fully completed the application.

Tip: Ask someone else to check your application before you submit it.

Tip: Don't leave it to the last minute. There is no advantage in being the last person to apply and you risk missing the deadline if your internet connection fails or you are called away.

Your application is also an indication of your attention to detail and ability to manage your time.

Our recruitment & selection shortlisting process

Your application is considered by a panel of three to five people, trained in the PCS recruitment and selection policy and our procedures. To be clear PCS does not use AI at the shortlisting stage. Panel members will individually assess and score the strength of your evidence demonstrating how you meet all of the essential criteria on the person specification. Please note the panel members have no access to personal information about applicants, such as your name or protected characteristics.

Applicants are shortlisted for interview based on the collated scores of the panel.

Where a high number of applications is received for a vacancy, a process of long-listing may be used to reduce numbers prior to full shortlisting. This will assess and score the strength of your evidence demonstrating how you meet the most important of the essential criteria on the person specification.

The HR team will ensure the process followed is appropriate and takes account of PCS' commitment as a Disability Confident employer and follows best practice principles.

Interviews

If you have been successful at the shortlisting stage, you will be told in advance how long your interview will take and whether a presentation is required. You will also be given advance notice of any skills test or other assessment.

During your interview you will be asked around 4 or 5 questions and will be assessed on the strength of your evidence in meeting all of the essential criteria on the person specification.

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Preparing for interview

Prepare for questions and rehearse your answers, allowing around 5 or 6 minutes for each question.

It is usual for PCS to provide the questions during the interview. The questions will appear in the chat function on Zoom or will be made available in the interview room. You may want to write down the questions. This helps to focus your answer. Ask for clarification if you are unsure.

Demonstrate your experience, skills and knowledge by giving specific examples to the question asked (same as the application stage). Keep your application form handy and don't be afraid to mention what you have already said at the application stage.

- Don't assume the interview panel already know all about you or your experience.
- Mention transferable skills, e.g. voluntary work.
- Remember to say what **you** have done.

If time permits, you will be asked at the end if you have anything to add in support of your application. This is your opportunity to take a minute to remind the panel why you are the person for the job. You may wish to prepare this in advance making a list of about 5 bullet points. Consider questions to ask after interview that relate to the role or what it will offer you.

Using AI to prepare for interview

Some examples of effective use:

- you could ask AI to read the job description and create mock interview questions to help you prepare example responses based on your experiences and skills
- ask AI to generate sample behaviour questions so you can practice how you deliver your responses
- compare your responses to example questions with recommended approaches, and personalise them
- ask for tips on body language and communication styles for interviews, and practise these in mock sessions

You can use AI tools to:	Do not use AI to:
• prepare for interviews, including mock questions you might be asked • research public information about PCS and the trade union movement • find out information about trends in an industry or profession that you can relate to personal experiences	• inflate or invent your skills and experiences • create answers for questions you are asked during a live or pre-recorded interview • create answers for situation-based questions • provide an AI tool with sensitive information about your organisation such as figures or personal details

It's important to understand that while AI can help you prepare for an interview, AI must not be used to produce responses during an interview.

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Interview presentation

If you are asked to prepare a presentation, you will be given the details in advance. Ensure you know what you are being asked to present on and ensure you keep to time.

Research the main topics and ensure your presentation observes the generally adopted format:

- Introduction – yourself/presentation topic
- Middle – Findings
- End – conclusion/recommendations

Tip: Discuss the presentation with others before preparing your presentation. You may gain other points of view on the presentation question.

Tip: Rehearse and time yourself - you will be asked to stop if you go over and it will also be an indication of your time management skills. In PowerPoint there is a function in slide show called rehearsal coach that may be helpful.

A prompt at 9 minutes will be given; to say you have one minute remaining. Once 10 minutes have elapsed, you will be asked to stop. You will not be asked questions on your presentation, unless you have been told in advance.

Disability Confident

A Disability Confident employer will generally offer an interview to any applicant that declares they have a disability and meets the minimum criteria for the job as defined by the employer. It is important to note that in certain recruitment situations such as high-volume, seasonal and high-peak times, the employer may wish to limit the overall numbers of interviews offered to both disabled people and non-disabled people. For more details, please refer to the GOV website.

Reasonable adjustments

We want all candidates to be able to demonstrate their best selves at the application or interview stage. If you require us to consider reasonable adjustments, please ensure that they are noted on your application by declaring a disability and the adjustments required.