



**SCOTTISH
PRISON SERVICE**

**Prison Officer
Candidate Guidance**

Application Form

The application form collects important information from applicants and is one of the methods used to assess suitability for the role applied for.

The application includes the following sections:

- **My Personal Details** – including your name and contact details. This allows for the administration of the recruitment process and to keep you informed as your application progresses through the various stages.
- **My Qualifications** – details your qualifications and any training that are relevant to the role you have applied for.
- **My Work Experience** – details of your employment history with associated tasks.
- **My Knowledge, Skills & Experience** – details of your knowledge, skills and experience and how you match the person specification.

SPS uses an online application system to gather this information and to communicate with you throughout the selection process. In order to apply for a vacancy, you are required to setup an online account. Through your account, you will be able to access any on-going, as well as any previous applications that you have made.

Guidance on Completing an Application Form

General Guidance

- Before starting the application form, familiarise yourself with the job description and person specification.
- Think about how your skills, knowledge and experience match the essential job requirements. It is important that you take the time to carefully consider this as your application will be assessed against the essential requirements described in the person specification.
- Use the word count available for each section.
- Proof read your responses – check your spelling and grammar.
- You do not need to complete your application in one sitting but remember to save your application at regular intervals (every 10 minutes).
- Don't leave it to the last minute, allow yourself plenty of time.
- Check the submission deadline date and time and make sure you submit your application in advance.

My Qualifications

- Under the My Qualifications section, ensure that you include all qualifications and training that are both essential and relevant to the role. Please be aware that where there are essential qualification requirements, these need to be included under the Qualifications section, otherwise your application will not be progressed.

My Work Experience

- Under the My Work Experience section, ensure that you include details of the key tasks and responsibilities of each role that you have performed. Remember to include all roles carried out, including acting up, secondments, development opportunities, as well as any employment prior to joining SPS. This provides the assessment panel with a full summary of your work experience, supporting the assessment process.

My Knowledge, Skills & Experience

- Consider developing your responses in a Word document (the online text boxes can be small and at times, difficult to read your response in full). Once complete, paste your responses into the text boxes, ensuring that you are pasting them into the correct box!
- Ensure that you provide evidence and example(s) against the stated standard being assessed. Read the requirement carefully and ensure your evidence relates to the area being assessed.
- Avoid using generic statements with no evidence or example to support it. For example, 'I have 15 years' experience', does not provide evidence of your work experience – instead explain the breadth and depth of your experience by providing examples of activities/tasks that you have performed within your 15 years.
- Consider how you structure your responses, you may wish to use the following approach:
 - Situation – describe the task/event/activity (set the scene)
 - Action – what did you do? How did you do it? Why did you do it?
 - Result – what was the outcome/result?

Psychometric Testing

What is Psychometric Testing?

Psychometric tests are standardised psychological measurements of knowledge and abilities. Psychometric tests work by recording a candidate's responses to a set of questions, designed to measure a specific psychological construct, such as cognitive ability. These psychological constructs have been found to be related to real-world outcomes, such as job performance, trainability and competence.

In recruitment and selection, psychometric tests provide an insight into a candidate's potential, providing a meaningful and highly valid prediction of that candidate's knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics of good job performance.

Within the Prison Officer Selection process, the specific aptitudes will be measured and evaluated using;

1. Numerical reasoning tests
2. Verbal reasoning tests

The SPS uses psychometric testing in conjunction with other selection methods (e.g. interview) in order to predict future job performance.

How to Prepare?

1. **Practice thoroughly:** Practice reduces anxiety and helps you perform to the best of your ability. You will be less likely to panic or make silly mistakes if you are familiar with the style and level of test you will be taking. Practice tests can be found at www.shldirect.com
2. **Stay calm:** If you can manage to remain calm, you are much more likely to think rationally and have better focus.
3. **Brush up on basic skills:** You should brush up on simple mathematical and verbal abilities as they will be tested extensively under tight time limits. Some tips on improving your verbal and numerical abilities can be found below.

Verbal

- When you read newspapers and articles, try to establish the main points.
- Look up the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Read passages of text and pick out the key details.
- Compare written arguments, looking for similarities and differences between them.
- Look at something you have written and try to rewrite it more concisely.

Numerical

- When you read newspaper and reports, pay attention to numerical information.
- Complete calculations both with and without a calculator.
- Look for differences such as percentage changes in numerical trends.
- Check calculations done by others.
- Take on responsibilities which involve working with numbers.
- Mathematical abilities, such as percentages, ratios, multiplication and division are all commonly tested in numerical reasoning tests and should be revised beforehand.

Interview

What is an Interview?

The interview is a structured way to gather evidence from you, involving a panel of trained assessors. It provides you with an opportunity to share your knowledge, skills and experience in more detail than other selection methods allow.

The interview process is predominantly competency based and will focus on the role requirements as outlined in the job description and person specification. In particular, the panel will ask you a range of questions to establish situations that you have been involved in and what your role was. The recommended approach in providing a response to a competency based interview question is to explain the situation (set the scene); explain what you did, how you did it and why; and explain what the outcome was.

The evidence and examples you share will provide the panel with an understanding of how you have approached situations in the past and how this will shape your performance and behaviour in the role applied for.

You can expect the interview process to last approximately one hour; however some interviews are designed to be shorter and some are designed to last longer.

How to Prepare

Be Organised

- Be prepared – know where you are going and when and make sure you read your invite carefully.

Understand the Role

- Consider the associated tasks of the role you have applied for and familiarise yourself with the purpose and key responsibilities of the role.
- You may wish to develop your knowledge in particular areas of the role; it might be helpful to speak to the current job holder or review information available on the SPS Website.

Consider your Evidence

- Think about what motivated you to apply for the role.
- Consider in advance some relevant examples from your previous and current roles, so that you are prepared to talk about challenges and achievements and how they link to the role you are applying for. Ensure that you are prepared to use examples that you have not already used in your application form. This will help the panel understand the breadth of your experience.
- Think about how you have developed yourself.
- Ensure that you provide evidence and example(s) against the question being asked. Listen carefully to what is being asked and ensure your evidence relates to the area being assessed.
- Avoid using generic statements with no evidence or example to support it. For example, 'We work well together', does not provide evidence of your team working abilities or associated behaviours – instead provide an example that will evidence your contribution to the team:

what was the team aiming to achieve (set the scene), explain what role you played in the team, the action you took, why you took that action and explain the benefit of your contribution.

- Consider how you structure your responses, you may wish to use the following approach:
 - Situation – describe the task/event/activity (set the scene)
 - Action – what did you do? How did you do it? Why did you do it?
 - Result – what was the outcome/result?
- Think about questions you may wish to ask the panel as you will be given an opportunity to ask any questions that you have.