

# Applying to the GCS Internship made easy

*A past intern lets you know what to expect when applying for the GCS Internship and provides some tips to help you along the way.*

The Government Communication Service (GCS) Internship a great opportunity to develop your skills and prepare for a career in the communications profession. As part of the Civil Service commitment to become the UK's most diverse employer by 2020, the internship is a gateway for students from diverse backgrounds into the Civil Service.



Applying for the GCS internship is a straightforward process, but to be successful you need to put a lot of thought into your application. This document will give you an idea on how the application process works and offers some advice to give you the best chance of securing a place on the scheme.



## **Before applying**

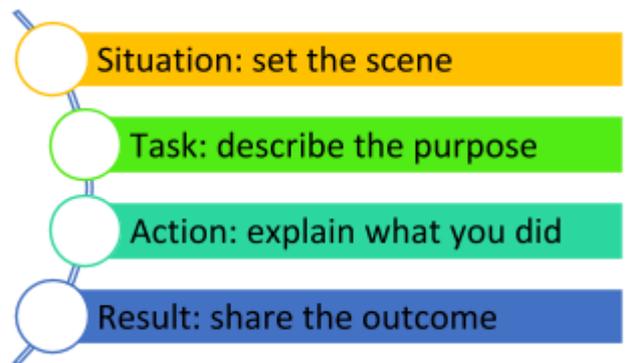
The first stage of the process is to complete an application made up of a CV, diversity questionnaire and application form, consisting of some competency-based questions. Before drafting your answers to the competency questions, read the [Civil Service Competency Framework](#) and the [Government Communication Professional Competency Framework](#).

When applying to this internship it's helpful to look at what is considered 'effective behaviour' for staff at Level 1 and Level 2. The framework describes what demonstrating the competencies looks like in practice and can give you an idea of how to show you are competent in these areas. Be careful, however, that none of your answers sound like a rewording of the competency descriptions: there's no buzzword checklist you need to complete. Instead focus on a specific example for each question that links naturally to the competency that is being assessed.

## When applying

Once you've decided on an example, use the STAR method to structure your answer.

Focusing on the Situation, Task, Action and Result of your experience gives you the best chance of providing the person reading your application with all the information they need. Make sure you identify what you personally contributed and learnt rather than talking in general terms about a project. A good way to ensure you do this is to use the word 'I' instead of 'we' throughout your answers.



Don't be afraid of using examples from contexts that might not initially come to mind as relevant to working in communications or the civil service. I've answered competency-based questions using examples such as waitressing, tutoring and volunteering to help run employability workshops in prisons. As a diversity internship, this scheme is looking for people from different backgrounds and with diverse life experiences. If you've done something interesting or exciting that helped you develop a particular skill, it's relevant.

If this is one of the first times you've answered competency-based questions, consider asking a careers adviser at your university to read over them (and take your CV too). Doing this gave me much more confidence in my answers and discussing my experiences out loud turned out to be very beneficial going into the telephone interview. Unlike many internship application processes, you do not need to complete online tests! If you get through the initial sift, the next and final stage of the application is a telephone interview. The decision to not use online tests was made by the internship team in the hope of attracting the widest pool of candidates possible. This is a great reminder that the application process is not designed to try to catch you out, but an opportunity to share why you'll make a great intern.

## Telephone interview

When preparing for your telephone interview, think again about the competencies and your motivation for applying. Although it is the job of the internship team to match you with a government department, you should be able to articulate what it is about the Civil Service that appeals to you and this might include where your dream placement would be. Also think about why you want a career in communications and why you chose the GCS as the place to start. Have a good look around the GCS website to see what current communication topics and disciplines within communications sound interesting to you. I also recommend taking advantage of the fact that the interview is over the phone by having some key points written down in front of you that you hope to communicate to the interviewer.

**Receiving an offer**

At this point you've done all you can. If you pass the telephone interview you will receive an email with a job offer detailing which department you've been paired with. Your line manager will then contact you about organising your start date and obtaining security clearance. Make sure to be on top of your emails so this process is as quick as possible. Good luck!

By Claire Madeley

*Applications for the GCS Internship close March 6*