

Obtaining that next job

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James' interest in medical education, especially that of early career doctors, grew during his role as the Director of Prevocational Education and Training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, from 2008 to 2014. This led to his current role as the NSW Prevocational Training Council Chair at the Health and Education and Training Institute (HETI). James works clinically as an Emergency Physician at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and is Director of the Department. The need to better prepare students for their first years of practice led James to take on the role of the Chair of the Sydney University Pre-internship (PRINT) block in 2012. James has a Masters in Medical Education from the University of Sydney. When not being a husband, father to two beautiful girls, juggling his multiple roles he loves to watch the Adelaide Crows (AFL) win and play tennis.

Around this time of the year, many Directors of Prevocational Education and Training will receive a number of requests from Resident Medical Officers, for assistance in applying for jobs.

Helping junior doctors with their career development is an important and exciting part of the role of a Director of Training. It's great to see doctors that you have been responsible for during their foundational training, go on to obtain that specialty training post they have desired for so many years. It's even more exciting to be called out of the blue one day from someone you trained 6 or so years ago to hear that they just got their Fellowship.

So what questions have I been asked by JMOs that are applying for jobs? Here are some of the common ones and some of the answers I've generally given.

Q. When should I start preparing my CV?

A: Today at the latest. This is irrespective of your level of training.

Your CV should sit on your desktop and be updated whenever you have completed a new course or term (or at least every 3 months). It also provides a map of your career progression and importantly identifies where your gaps lie. See it as a career needs analysis.

Have your CV reviewed by a senior colleague if possible. Your DPET (or DCT) should be able to help out.

Make it easy

For the selection panel - make all the information easy to find with clear headings. Use reverse chronological order for most of the sections especially work and educational qualifications.

Your CV - should aim to show a pattern of achievement over time.

Is there an achievement that separates you from the group - aim to put it on the first page of your CV.

For most jobs, the number of candidates are 10 - 20 fold greater than the number of positions available, so you need to make it easy for those reviewing CVs.

You can also use tools like [World's Largest Professional Network | LinkedIn](#) 400 million members | Manage your professional identity.

Build and engage with your professional network. Access knowledge, insights and opportunities to keep your CV up to date. This is a really useful tool for quickly sending someone an up to date version of your CV but I'd recommend that if you have time to make sure to reformat the content into a word document.

Q. Should I include what school I went to?

A: Your high school is not usually relevant for a post graduate job and does not need to be included. Similarly, your secondary school results do not usually differentiate you from other candidates. We assume that if you were smart enough to get into medical school, your academic results in secondary school would reflect that. However, an exception may be for doctors applying for jobs with a rural component or if you are telling prospective interviewers that your career goal is to [work in a rural centre](#). Evidence of attendance at a rural high school would add weight to your claims of wanting to work in the country and support your intended career pathway.

Q. What extra-curricular interests should I include?

A: Try and make them relevant to the job that you are applying for. Do your extra-curricular activities demonstrate leadership, teamwork, community service or excellence in a field? If so, include them. However, describing your love of photography and walks on the beach at sunset adds little to your CV.

If you have been involved in volunteer work, include the organisation's name and a one-line description of what its role in the community is, if not commonly known.

Q. How do I ask for a reference?

A: It is very important that you ask [the referee](#) if they are willing to provide you with a reference before submitting your application. Make sure that you have their current email address and best contact details (mobile if possible). It is also prudent to ask if they will be in the country at the time references will be sought. You will not be offered a job until references have been checked.

If you have the feeling that the referee is lukewarm about providing a reference for you, ask another. Consultants should be jumping out of their skins to provide you with a glowing reference. You can politely ask them to write a bit about you in the comments section of your end of term report, as just writing “good” doesn’t cut it. To assist the referees, email them your CV so that they can refer to it if needed.

The end of your term is a great time to ask for a reference, especially if the feedback on your performance has been positive. If you are an Intern and the job application process is not until next year, tell your referee that you will email them (with a copy of your CV and your end of term assessment). Then call them closer to the date of the application process to confirm that they are still happy to be a referee for you.

The referees that you choose are also important. If there are no recent referees or referees from your current hospital that looks bad. Try and have a referee from the area of specialty that you are applying for if possible. Referees should be consultants and not registrars. The number of references will depend on the position that you are applying for but should be between two and four.

Q. How do I best answer the selection criteria?

A: It is important that you answer each of the selection criteria. Writing ‘yes’ or ‘no’ is not enough.

It will be difficult to differentiate yourself from the other applicants for many of the questions asked, but some questions will allow you to shine. That’s where the money is. So spend some time and effort answering these questions to lift yourself above your competitors. Try and answer the questions with specific examples based on your experience as a junior doctor.

Many future employers use the selection criteria to ensure that you are able to write in a clear and effective manner. Spelling mistakes and, poor grammar don’t help!

It often takes some time and effort to address all the selection criteria. As such, rather than writing directly into websites containing the selection criteria, use a text-editing program such as Word and cut and paste the text into the website when you are satisfied with your answers. This allows you to use spell check and prevents you from losing all your information if the website times-out (which it usually does after 30-60 minutes), or if the website crashes (which is often the case on the night before job applications close).

The selection criteria are also very important when it comes to the interview as most interview questions will address the selection criteria. Reviewing the criteria is integral when [preparing for an interview](#).

Some final tips for applying for jobs

- Don’t leave your submission for your job application to the last minute.
- It is unlikely that your CV will change in the weeks leading up to application closing. So why wait? The process always takes longer than you expect and online application

systems always crash when overloaded with submissions as the deadline looms. Don't go through the stress of wondering if your application made it in time.

- And don't put all your eggs in one basket.

No matter how confident you are about getting the job always have a back-up plan. This means applying for more than one job.

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