

Person Specification Classification Schemes

1. Alec Rodger's Seven-Point Plan

- 1) **Physical make-up**: health, appearance, bearing and speech.
- 2) **Attainments**: education, qualifications, experience.
- 3) **General intelligence**: intellectual capacity.
- 4) **Special aptitudes**: mechanical, manual dexterity, facility in use of words and figures.
- 5) **Interests intellectual**, practical, constructional, physically active, social, artistic.
- 6) **Disposition acceptability**, influence over others, steadiness, dependability, self-reliance.
- 7) **Circumstances**: domestic circumstances, occupations of family, special demands of the job, such as ability to work unsocial hours, travel abroad, etc.

2. Munro Fraser's Five-Fold Grading System:

- 1) **Impact on others**, appearance, speech and manner.
- 2) **Acquired qualifications education**, vocational training, work experience.
- 3) **Innate abilities** quickness of comprehension and aptitude for learning.
- 4) **Motivation, individual goals**, consistency and determination in following them up, success rate.
- 5) **Adjustment, emotional stability**, ability to stand up to stress and ability to get on with people.

The characteristics identified as necessary through analysis of the job description are then entered against the appropriate heading. It is usual to enter two levels, indicating what would be sought in the ideal candidate, and what would be the minimum acceptable level to do the job. It is also important to indicate those personal characteristics or circumstances which would definitely be unacceptable in the prospective job-holder.

Problems with classifications

The problem with Rodgers and Fraser's models are that they were "of their time". Whilst they provided a useful framework for selection criteria, they could well fall foul of current legislation

Why might this be the case?

Both are open to interpretation and therefore facilitate subjective and value judgments
Physical and circumstance criteria may contravene anti-discrimination legislation eg disability and gender-based.

Attainments required may be set too high or may be irrelevant.

They may be seen as are culturally insensitive – eg speech bearing, manner

Whilst these methods are still used in some organisations, many have moved away from these specs and have introduced more specific criteria, competencies, and essential and desirable requirements for post-holders.

3. Hays Recruitment recommends that the person specification should cover:

Skills & abilities

- Abilities you expect your ideal candidate to demonstrate
- Think in terms of technical, organisational, communicative or creative skills
- Apply each skill required with the specific job tasks

Qualifications & experience

- What specific education or course background do you require?
- What level of experience (if any) is needed?
- Is the candidate required to have held a prior job of similar description?
- Length of experience gained – in which specific industries and departments

Character & personal qualities

- What sort of personality would fit in with your team?
- Use descriptive words that would describe the nature of your ideal candidate
- Think of traits that would help them complete the job efficiently
- Character traits of a person with a love of the industry or a similar role

Ideal qualities

- What other qualities would you like your employee to display?
- Include any other areas of the person and job that you have not included
- Think laterally in your descriptions – delve into the underlying nature of the person and job

Don't be vague

By specifying as much as possible your exact needs, jobseekers will know exactly what the job entails and be able to say better if they fulfil your expectations. By specifying exactly who it is you are looking for, you are avoiding the problems that can arise once the successful applicant has actually started work.

Vague (or non-existent) descriptions can result in an employee leaving prematurely because they have found that the job has not fulfilled their ideals, or you can feel continually frustrated due to mistakes that have been made on the job because the employee has not known the job requirements. In essence, a job or person spec is a

communicative document between you and your department, your HR or personnel officer and your job applicant.

4. ACAS recommends

Person specification

Drawing up the person specification allows the organisation to profile the ideal person to fill the job. It is very important that the skills, aptitudes and knowledge included in the specification are related precisely to the needs of the job; if they are inflated beyond those necessary for effective job performance, the risk is that someone will be employed on the basis of false hopes and aspirations, and both the employer and employee will end up disappointed in each other.

Another good reason not to set unnecessary requirements is to avoid any possibility of discrimination against particular groups of potential applicants. The very process of writing a job and person specification should help the employer to develop and implement a policy of equal opportunity in the recruitment and selection of employees.

Factors to consider when drawing up the specification include:

- skills, knowledge, aptitudes directly related to the job
- the type of experience necessary
- the competencies necessary
- education and training but only so far as is necessary for satisfactory job performance, unless the person is being recruited on the basis of future potential (eg graduate trainees), when a higher level of education may be specified
- any criteria relating to personal qualities or circumstances which must be essential and directly related to the job, and must be applied equally to all groups irrespective of age, sex, race, age, nationality, religion or belief, disability, membership or non-membership of a trade union. To do otherwise is potentially discriminatory. For instance, a clause requiring the successful candidate to move their place of work should be included only when absolutely necessary, as it is likely to discourage applicants with family care commitments.

The person specification helps the selection and subsequent interview to operate in a systematic way, as bias-free as possible. The use of competency-based approaches can help by focusing on the 'match' between candidate and role, but they are best used where they are an integral part of the continuing assessment and development of staff.

Note: Many organisations classify criteria under essential and desirable headings – so for example for some jobs the ability to speak Welsh may be essential and for other jobs it may be desirable, or not required at all.