

Candidates' guide to OSCE Recruitments

How to write your application and prepare for an OSCE Interview

The OSCE's greatest asset is the quality of its staff. To ensure that the very best people join the Organization, we want to make sure that you as a candidate understand the recruitment process and are well prepared when applying to OSCE vacancies, and when being interviewed. The objective of this document is to provide you with key information on the OSCE recruitment process and tips on how to best prepare for it.

1. Understanding the OSCE Competency Model and Recruitment Process

The OSCE Competency Model aims to define the behaviours that are essential to effective performance in a given position. The Model sets out the core values of the Organization, as well as the competencies needed to perform on the job. Values are shared principles and beliefs that underpin the Organization's work and guide actions and behaviours of staff. Competencies are the skills, attributes and behaviours directly related to successful job performance.

The OSCE values and competencies apply to all OSCE officials, regardless of their function or title. Supervisors must, in addition to the values and core competencies, demonstrate managerial competencies that are deemed essential in a supervisory role. OSCE values and competencies are listed and described in detail in the document "[Our competency model](#)", available on the OSCE webpage.

In order to ensure that the principles of recruitment and selection are properly implemented and consistently adhered to, the recruitment and selection process includes the following steps:

1. Issuance of a vacancy notice for the specific position and acceptance of applications. For international seconded positions, applications are submitted to the respective participating States who then decide which, if any, nominations they wish to make. For international and locally contracted positions, applications are received directly by the OSCE.
2. Candidates are evaluated on the basis of their application form and candidates who fulfil the minimum requirements of the position will be long-listed.
3. A pre-interview or pre-test may be carried out in the event that a large number of candidates meet the minimum requirements of the position. The pre-interview or pre-test are designed to test the knowledge, skills and competencies relating to the specific position.
4. A competency-based interview and a written test are carried out for short-listed candidates. The interview focuses on the competencies that are most important for the position (reflected in the vacancy notice). More detailed information on competency-based interviews is provided on page 2 of this document.
5. Other testing methodologies may be used as appropriate and checking of work-related references and verification of educational credentials takes place before a selection decision is made.
6. An offer of appointment/assignment will be sent to the successful candidate. Depending on a number of factors, a recruitment process may take between 4 to 6 months from the date a vacancy is issued until a successful candidate has accepted an offer and agreed a start date. Upon completion of the recruitment process, all applicants will be informed of the outcome.

The process outlined above is consistent for all recruitment conducted by the OSCE, for seconded and contracted posts at all levels and grades. While the finer details of how an interview/test is conducted may vary slightly from one duty station to another, the competency-based approach is applied in all locations and this should guide those applicants who apply for positions in the various work locations of the OSCE.

2. How to apply and prepare

Your online application should relate to the specific position you are applying for, and you are expected to highlight achievements that demonstrate the competencies from the vacancy notice in your application form. Submitting a generic application form, even with an adjusted covering letter, does not maximize an applicant's opportunity to demonstrate the added value they bring to a specific role. Try to keep it structured and to the point. It is particularly important that an applicant provides sufficient detail in describing their previous experience to allow for an informed assessment of their suitability for the position in question. This is sometimes not the case, and applicants make assumptions that simply including their previous title/rank will allow recruitment staff and hiring managers assess their suitability.

In addition, the OSCE advertises posts across many areas of technical expertise and at a wide variety of grades in each of those areas. While it may be the case that applicants are experienced and skilled in more than one technical area, and suited to work at more than a narrow range of grades, it is important to note that it is advisable to target vacancies that best match with your core skills and experience. It is challenging for recruitment staff and hiring managers to determine specific suitability for an applicant who has applied in many different areas and at grades from executive management to clerical and support levels.

The Competency-Based interview will be based on the concept that past behaviour and experience is the best indicator of future performance. In the interview you will therefore be asked for specific examples of your past behaviour that relates to competencies defined by the skills and knowledge outlined in the vacancy notice. Questions often begin with **"Tell me about a time when..."** or **"Give me an example of when you have..."**.

When answering these questions, you should talk about **"I"**, rather than **"We"**, in order to **highlight your own role in the given situation**.

In order to prepare, you should review the vacancy notice and think through your own professional history to identify relevant examples that relate to the skills and knowledge outlined in the vacancy notice. You should be prepared to address positive results and achievements using these examples, but also challenges you might have had. If the situation did not have a positive result, the important part to demonstrate is what you learnt from the experience and what you would do differently next time. Be aware of the specific skills each story illustrates.

If you don't have extensive work-related experience and apply for a junior-level position, you may wish to provide examples from your studies or voluntary work or other areas. Try to use an example from the more recent past where you can remember lots of detail about what you did and why.

A useful technique to use when preparing for and answering competency-based questions is the **"STAR"** method. These letters act as a guide to remind you how to structure your response.

- **Situation** - *What was happening, what was the context?*
- **Task** - *What did you want to achieve, or what were your aims?*
- **Action** - *What did you do and why?*
- **Result** - *What happened, what was the outcome of your actions?*

Listen carefully to the question and don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you do not understand the question. Take time to collect your thoughts and think of the best example you can provide to fit the question before speaking. Keep to the point and try to be as specific as possible, but be yourself and act naturally. The interview board is there to help you provide a full picture of what you have achieved in the past and won't be trying to trick you or catch you out in any way.

It is recommended that you do some research on competency-, or behaviour-based interviews. There is a lot of material available on how to prepare for such an interview structure and how to handle stress before and after the interview.

You should be prepared to answer a motivational question and provide an answer that illustrates **your motivation to apply for the position, and why you want to work for the OSCE**. If you are applying for a management position, you should also be prepared to answer questions relating to managerial competencies. Try to learn as much as you can about the department and office you are applying to and the work it does, and be prepared to answer how you could contribute to that work.

Finally, it is recommended that you practice interviewing at home, either by yourself or with a friend / family member.

For more information regarding OSCE competency-based interviewing, we recommend the following presentation available online: http://prezi.com/xldktwrbg8uz/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

The written test will relate to the position you have applied for and you can prepare for the test by learning about the OSCE at large, but more specifically about the specific department and, if applicable, Field Operation and FO's mandate. Make sure you take the time to read the instructions and understand the questions. Presentations may be used for certain positions in lieu of a written test. In such cases, the topic of the presentation will be provided in advance and you should be prepared to demonstrate effective communication skills and sound technical knowledge of the subject matter in engaging the board.