

TIPS FOR COMPLETING A TRAINING & EXPERIENCE EVALUATION



PERSONNEL COMMISSION AT SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

WHAT IS A TRAINING & EXPERIENCE EVALUATION-SCORED QUESTIONNAIRE?

Just like a multiple-choice exam or an interview, a Training & Experience Evaluation – Scored Questionnaire (T&E-SQ) is a type of assessment. Specifically, a T&E-SQ is a structured, systematic tool for evaluating a candidate's education and/or experience that is beyond the minimum requirements for a given position. The T&E-SQ is completed as part of the online application, and will typically consist of a series of questions pertaining to your education or experience; for each question, you will be asked to select the response(s) (A, B, C, D, etc.) that best match your background. Each question has a pre-determined point value; the number of points you receive for each question is based on the response you select. The maximum number of points obtainable in most T&E-SQs is equal to 100. Your total score on the T&E-SQ will be equal to the sum of the points you obtain for each question. An example of a T&E-SQ question is shown below:

Sample Question #1: How many years of full-time experience (40 hours per week, 12 months per year) do you have in a customer service role, which included responsibility for attending to customers' needs and resolving customer complaints by phone or in-person?

- A) Less than 1 year
- B) At least 1 year, but less than 2 years
- C) At least 2 years, but less than 3 years
- D) 3 years or more

In the above example, you would select the response that best reflects your background. In some cases, the responses are very objective and clear-cut; for example, in "sample question #1" above, if you have 2 years of experience performing customer service work, then you would selection response "C". However, there may be instances where responses are more descriptive, and less quantitative in nature. For example, consider the following question:

WHAT IS A TRAINING & EXPERIENCE EVALUATION-SCORED QUESTIONNAIRE? CONT'D

Sample Question #2: Which of the following responses best describes your HIGHEST level of experience managing and overseeing projects in the area of employee training and development for a period of at least 1 year?

- A) I do not have experience in this area
- B) I have assisted higher-level employees with day-to-day activities in support of project goals, but did not was not responsible for managing the project.
- C) I served in a lead role on a project, where I was responsible for providing guidance and work direction to other staff members.
- D) I was responsible for overseeing and managing a defined portion of a project, which included responsibility for activities such as setting deadlines, assigning work to staff, and reviewing work to ensure completion. Although I was accountable for the specific part of the project to which I was assigned, ultimate accountability rested with higher-level staff.
- E) I was responsible for overseeing and managing an entire project, which included responsibility for activities such as identifying and securing resources, setting deadlines, ensuring quality control, and accountability for the final project result.

When answering questions that are more descriptive, and less quantitative in nature (such as the example above), you may sometimes find yourself torn between two or more responses. Give yourself the benefit of the doubt, and select the higher of the responses you are considering. For example, if you were torn between responses “B” and “C” above, select response “C”.

As part of the “validation” process, the raters will review all information that you include in your application materials; if the raters feel that your response is insufficiently supported based on the information you provide, they will lower your score to be consistent with the level of expertise you indicated in your application. However, do not intentionally exaggerate your background in an effort to achieve a higher score.

All questionnaire responses will be reviewed by subject matter experts (SMEs), and may be subject to verification through reference checks; candidates who are found to intentionally and significantly fabricate or inflate their backgrounds may be disqualified from participation in current and future employment opportunities.

HOW WILL MY T&E-SQ BE REVIEWED?

As mentioned above, for each question, SMEs will compare the response you selected with the information contained in your application materials. In an effort to obtain specific, targeted information regarding your background, you will be asked to answer follow-up questions. These follow-up questions often immediately follow a T&E-SQ item, and will be used by raters to determine if your response was adequately supported. For example, follow-up questions for “sample question #1” and “sample question #2” might read as follows:

Follow-Up for Sample Question #1

Please provide information which supports the response you selected for the above question. In your response, please include the following:

1. The organization(s) where you obtained your customer service experience.
2. Your job title(s).
3. A detailed description of the customer service duties you performed.
4. The dates when you performed these responsibilities (beginning and ending month/year) and the number of hours per week and months per year that you worked.
5. The name and contact information of the person who supervised you during this time

Follow-Up for Sample Question #2

Please provide an example which supports the response you selected for the above question. In your response, please include the following:

1. The organization where you obtained this experience.
2. Your specific role on the project and a detailed description of the duties you performed, including any responsibility you had for establishing project goals and timelines, identifying and securing necessary resources, and overseeing the work of other team members.
3. The dates when you performed these responsibilities (beginning and ending month/year).
4. The name and contact information of the person who supervised you during this time.

HOW WILL MY T&E-SQ BE REVIEWED?

CONT'D

Each follow-up question will list the specific pieces of information that you should provide (for example, “a detailed description of the duties you performed, including any responsibility for...”). It is critical that you answer each part of the follow-up question with sufficient detail, so that people who are unfamiliar with your background can understand exactly what you are trying to say. Read each follow-up question carefully and make sure to include all requested information. Failing to provide the information requested will likely cause a reduction in your score, and may impact your likelihood of obtaining a job.

Additionally, you should make sure that the information you include in the follow-up questions (e.g., previous jobs, job duties performed) is also included in your application and resume (if applicable). By ensuring that your education and experience is consistently communicated across the different parts of your applicant packet (online application, questionnaire responses, etc.), you can help send a unified message to the raters regarding your preparation for this position.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PERFORM MY BEST ON A T&E-SQ?

Here are some general tips for providing follow-up responses:

- As mentioned previously, if you find yourself torn between two response options (A, B, C, D, etc.) when answering a T&E-SQ item, give yourself the benefit of the doubt and select the higher (more complex) option. If the raters feel that your response is insufficiently supported by the information in your application, they will adjust your score accordingly.
- When responding to follow-up questions:
 - Do not respond to a follow-up question by writing “refer to resume”. Often times, the follow-up questions will ask you to provide a level of detail that may not be addressed in your resume; as such, even if you have attached a resume, take the time to provide a detailed and thoughtful answer to the follow-up question. Unfortunately, failure to provide the information requested in the follow-up question will likely result in a downward adjustment of your score.
 - Try not to use acronyms or terms that are unique to a specific employer/company (company-specific computer programs, etc.). If you do use acronyms or company jargon, make sure that you explain what these terms mean. Remember, your responses should be written so that people from outside of your workplace can understand them.
 - It is okay to use technical terminology (for example, when describing experience in the IT or Financial fields), but the terms should be commonly used in the industry and understandable to other experts.
 - It is always safer to provide more details instead of less. Much like interviews, details provide specific information about what you did in previous jobs, and can help the raters better understand the nuances of your work. The better the raters understand what you have done, the better they will be able to evaluate your background and experience. However, make sure that the details you provide are relevant to the job and the question being asked; do not include unrelated information that has no relevance to the job.
 - It never hurts to get a second opinion on your follow-up responses. Having others review your response may help you identify any areas that are unclear, so that you can clarify them before submitting your application.