

Personal History Profiles (PHP)

The most common way of applying for vacancies within the UN system is through the Galaxy online application form – the PHP. The UN Secretariat and many of its agencies use this system. Other agencies use a more flexible electronic application form (P11), and still other agencies ask for paper applications, CVs/resumes and covering letters. Some agencies require completion of an electronic form similar to the P11, but there is also an option to upload a more interestingly formatted CV.

The PHP is an electronic document that can be updated and changed, as required, when you apply for any position. The PHP is space-limited to a certain number of characters per section. Therefore, it is important to write concise and pertinent information related to both your experience and competencies/skills.

When drafting your PHP, it is advisable to have a specific vacancy in mind in order to target and best match the way you present the information with the requirements of that particular vacancy in mind. Apart from general administrative details: address, relations, education, languages and references, the main focus of the PHP is on your employment history, the skills acquired, the competencies developed and your achievements while carrying out those duties.

Employment History: The PHP asks you to list this in chronological order starting with your current employment. Emphasis is now given not only to duties/responsibilities but also to a definition of achievements accomplished while executing those duties.

Description of Duties: (2000 characters) When listing duties/responsibilities, it is important to highlight those that best match the requirements outlined in the vacancy announcement for which you are targeting your specific PHP. Describe each duty using an action verb (Example: Research and compile materials on specific areas of social development, such as ...). Wherever possible, make the duty measurable for the reader to understand the complexity of the task (Example: Manage a budget of \$200,000 and provide primary support to...) (Organize and coordinate twenty seminars annually on ...).

Summary of Achievements: (3700 characters): Increased importance has been given to this section in recent years. It asks you to provide concrete examples of how you have provided value, and/or made an impact, in your current and previous positions. Relate these achievements as closely as possible to the requirements of the position for which you are applying. Again, use action verbs and measurable descriptions (Example: Reduced staff turnover by 16% over a two-year period).

CAR Statement Model: When writing achievements, it is helpful to use the CAR statement model (Context-Action-Result). This helps to contextualise your achievements concisely. Here you are emphasising the actions you took (individually or as part of a team) or the behaviours you demonstrated which resulted in a successful outcome, made an impact and/or brought added value to the team/unit/organization.

Reasons for Leaving: For previous positions, it is good to emphasise the motivation for moving to another position was the desire for some form of professional development, citing where possible the specific experience thus gained. For your current position, focus on why you are particularly interested in the vacancy, and describe in some detail your motivation for applying.

Competencies: All vacancy announcements define both the job responsibilities required for the position, and a range of competencies considered necessary for effective execution of those responsibilities. It is important that you use the language of the competencies as defined in the vacancy announcements when describing your previous working experience, skills developed and achievements relevant as far as possible to the particular vacancy in which you are interested.