

LESSON 8

Shortlisting: How Applicants Are Selected

60 minutes

Strand 2.2: Engaging with the Workplace

Participating

Outcome LCW.M2.S2.APP.4

Outcome LCW.M2.S2.APP.1

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Learn how recruiters shortlist candidates by judging applications against a person specification. Practise shortlisting sample applicants for a classroom-scenario role, then revise your own form using the same objective approach, and recognise applicant tracking and related screening tools at a high level.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
LCW.M2.S2.APP.4	explain the process of shortlisting and how to maximise success in the application process.
LCW.M2.S2.APP.1	compare different methods of applying for a job and demonstrate an understanding of the role of technology in this process.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Explain shortlisting against a person specification
- Recognise ATS, AI screening and video pre-screening at a high level
- Revise your own application after reading it as a shortlister

KEY TERMS

Term	What it means here	For example
shortlisting	The first cut of applications, where a recruiter (or a system) keeps only the candidates who meet the stated requirements well enough to interview.	A café manager with 40 applications for one weekend role shortlists six people to interview on Monday
person specification	The list of essential and desirable requirements for a role: skills, qualifications, experience and practical conditions. It is the yardstick shortlisting is measured against.	Essential: Leaving Certificate, weekend availability. Desirable: retail experience, basic Irish
applicant tracking	Software (often called an ATS) that stores applications and can filter or rank them before a person reads them, using keywords, qualifications and simple rules.	An online retail application that auto-rejects anyone who ticks 'no' to weekend work before a manager opens the form

BEFORE THE BELL

- Hard checklist: Competency Application Form and source advert or competency list open on device or printed before the bell.
- Prepare a printed person specification for display on the board (mark Harbourline Retail as a classroom scenario).
- Ensure students know where the Strand 2.2 Digital Portfolio folder is and that today's file is Shortlisting Strategy (or a note titled Shortlisting Strategy).
- Students need their Competency Application Form and the job advert or competencies note open on a device or printed before the bell goes, so ask for it the lesson before. Have a paper copy of the person specification ready for anyone whose device is slow. When you introduce Harbourline Retail, say plainly that it is a classroom scenario and not a real employer, so nobody goes looking for the vacancy.
- On screen this lesson: card sort.

Shortlisting: How Applicants Are Selected

HOW THE LESSON RUNS		
5 min	introduction	Getting Started
5 min	content	Key Terms
35 min	activity	Shortlist, Then Revise Your Own
10 min	content	Think About It
5 min	summary	What you covered

STEP BY STEP

5 min Getting Started

Open with a quick show of hands: who has ever applied for something and heard nothing back? Name that silence as shortlisting doing its job, not personal failure. Keep this opening to about three minutes so that the class can start sorting the six sample applicants inside the first ten minutes of the main step.

5 min Key Terms

One sentence each on applicant tracking systems and AI screening is enough here, because a longer explanation eats the time the class needs for judging applications against the person specification. Name that larger employers may use software and that local managers often still read forms by hand. The skill today is judgement against a person specification, not technology fear.

35 min Shortlist, Then Revise Your Own On screen: card sort

SUGGESTED TIMING

- Minutes 0 to 10: the card sort and the class argument about the maybes. Jamal's weekends and Sophie's typos usually spark the best debate.
- Minutes 10 to 12: name applicant tracking systems, AI screening and video pre-screening briefly, tied back to why clear essentials matter, and mention that larger employers use software while local managers often still shortlist by hand.
- Minutes 12 to 32: silent mark-up and rewrite. Circulate, and push anyone whose only mark is 'needs more detail' to name the essential they failed.
- At minute 32, stop everyone even mid-sentence and have them paste whatever they have into Shortlisting Strategy, so that the spot-check at the summary is not a room of empty folders. The two cut-and-add notes can go if time is short; what every student should leave with is one marked-up page, one revised section and one rejection-risk line.

TEACHING TIPS

Make the reject pile use the person specification out loud: which essential is missing? Liam is a Reject for missing the customer-facing essential, not a Maybe. Being overqualified is not a reject reason, but missing essential evidence is, and pressing the class to name the absent customer-facing evidence is what makes that distinction stick. Sophie is a productive Maybe or Reject borderline on clear written communication, because of the typos and the wrong job title, so keep that debate live rather than settling it. Nothing in the sort is scored, so students can argue and move cards freely; the placements listed below are for your own eye only and the activity will not correct anyone. For Part 2, pair students briefly if someone has no form: they mark a partner's draft as the shortlister, then still rewrite one section of their own material or a short answer written for Harbourline.

LOOK-FORS

- Reject reasons cite essentials, not vibes.
- Suggested placements, for you rather than the class: Shortlist Aoife and Ciara; Maybe Sophie, borderline on clear communication; Reject Marcus, Jamal and Liam.
- The revised section contains at least one checkable evidence line.
- Shortlisting Strategy names one specific rejection risk, not 'I should try harder'.

10 min Think About It

Keep this to a short pair-share. Ask two pairs to name the rejection risk out loud without naming classmates' private details. The useful answers sound like 'no weekend availability stated' or 'competency answer had no result', not 'my form is weak'.

5 min What you covered

Spot-check that Shortlisting Strategy (or the equivalently titled portfolio note) exists in the Strand 2.2 Digital Portfolio folder before students leave. Next lessons move into interview structure; a cleaner written form is the platform for that work.

ANSWERS AND LOOK-FORS

- Shortlist - Aoife: LC complete; 18 months café work; weekends free; STAR evidence of handling a furious customer calmly; Ciara: sitting LC this June; 2 years GAA stewarding; weekends free; strong teamwork STAR; results not out yet
- Maybe - Sophie: LC complete; weekends free; retail experience; repeated spelling errors and the wrong job title in the form
- Reject - Marcus: LC complete; weekends free; writes 'excellent communicator'; no example; no customer-facing experience; Jamal: LC complete; 1 year shop-floor work; clear writing; cannot work any Saturday or Sunday; Liam: business degree; 3 years office admin; weekends free; school-leaver role; no customer-facing work...

TEACHING MOVES

- Model the shortlisting process with one sample applicant as a whole-class discussion before students begin independently.
- Circulate during the activity to listen to borderline 'maybe' cases; keep explore mode free of silent scoring.
- Teacher look-fors for the sort: Shortlist Aoife and Ciara; Maybe Sophie (clear-communication borderline); Reject Marcus, Jamal and Liam (Liam fails the customer-facing essential, overqualified is not a reject reason).
- Use the pair-share in the reflection step to surface common rejection reasons without sharing personal details.
- Emphasise that shortlisting is objective against the specification, not subjective opinion.
- If Part 2 is running long, accept minimum artefact: one marked-up page + revised section + rejection-risk line; cut/add notes as stretch.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students judge applicants on 'vibe' rather than the specification, redirect them to check essential requirements first.
- Confusing essential and desirable criteria, provide a quick reminder using the board example.
- Treating Liam as 'too qualified' instead of naming the missing customer-facing essential.
- Being too lenient or harsh on their own form, guide them with the reflection questions provided.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: Pair students during the shortlisting activity for collaborative decision-making; offer Harbourline as the yardstick if their own form is missing.
- Extension: Challenge students to write a short justification for each rejected applicant; complete full (a), (d) cut/add notes.
- Support: Offer a simplified version of the person specification with highlighted essentials.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE LEFT WITH

- Shortlisting Strategy: own form marked as shortlister, revised section, cut and add notes