

The canteen manager/supervisor is responsible for operating the canteen in accordance with the canteen policy. The canteen manager is essential to the success of any school canteen. Therefore it is worth spending time recruiting the right person for the job. The following qualities and skills are often found in successful managers.

### Personal qualities

- Enthusiasm and the ability to work hard
- Flexibility and adaptability
- An interest in the health and wellbeing of students and the broader school community
- Enjoys working with volunteers, staff and students
- Has excellent time management skills
- Tact and diplomacy. Someone who is able to discuss and take suggestions from the canteen committee and others
- Trustworthiness.

### Technical skills

- Has good written and verbal communication skills
- Has experience working in a school canteen
- Has knowledge of food safety and hygiene standards
- Has knowledge of food and drinks suitable for sale in a school canteen
- Good understanding of nutrition and the ability to prepare healthy food
- Basic book keeping skills

### Past experience

- Has some management skills e.g. ordering from suppliers, dealing with sales representatives, cash handling and banking, accurate record keeping, stock keeping, basic book-keeper knowledge
- Has the ability to plan ahead:
  - Estimating daily canteen sales and order food from day-to-day
  - Correctly estimate how much stock is needed
  - Shop and cook wisely to minimize wastage
  - Correctly price food for sale (in conjunction with the Treasurer)
- Is adaptable when:
  - Volunteers and staff do not arrive as organised
  - Deliveries are late or incorrect
  - Issues arise with staff, volunteers or customers.

## Steps in the employment process

1. Prepare a written job description
2. Advertise the position in appropriate newspapers and websites as well as within the school
3. Organise interview for suitable candidates
4. Arrange an interview panel which includes the employer (or representative), the Principal (or representative), and an independent panel member (desirable). If recruiting a canteen assistant it is advisable to have input from the canteen manager
5. Complete a reference check
6. Allow a quick break between each interview for panel discussion
7. Notify all interviewees whether they are successful or not. Start by offering the job to the most preferred applicant. That way, if they turn it down, you still have other options available
8. Develop an employee contract/letter of appointment and final job description; both should be signed and dated by the employee and employer. Ideally, they should be overviewed by someone with legal or industrial relation experience
9. Make necessary arrangements for pay, tax and superannuation
10. Once a year the canteen manager's performance should be reviewed by the canteen committee or employer. Both parties go through each aspect of the job description and determine if they have been successfully achieved. This should be seen as an opportunity to review practices and seek further training (if required), raise any issues, as well as celebrate successes.

### Obtaining expert advice

It is advisable to consult with experts when employing staff, dismissing staff or drawing up contracts. Advice may be sought from:

- P&C council (the peak body advising all individual P&C associations)
- Federal Government Departments including Fair Work Australia
- Independent legal advice from a lawyer.

## Sample interview questions for a canteen manager

- Have you worked in a canteen previously? Where, and for how long?
  - (If yes) what were your responsibilities? How many students attended the school
  - (If no) Have you worked in other food services?
- Are you currently employed?
- Why do you wish to work in our school canteen?
- What food would you like to see served from the canteen?
- How would you market the canteen and its menu?
- How would you promote healthy eating?
- What role do you feel the canteen committee should play in the operation of the canteen?
- How would you encourage more volunteers to help in the canteen?
- How would you cope with abusive or unruly students at the canteen?
- Have you undertaken any relevant formal training?
- Are you aware of the food safety and hygiene requirements of working in a food business?
- When would you be able to start work if your application is successful?
- Do you have any questions for the panel?

*Note: at the conclusion of the interview tell the applicants when you will let them know if they have, or haven't, got the job.*

## Acknowledgment

FOCiS gratefully acknowledges Management Sense Food Sense: The essential guide to food service in your school (1997); ACTSCA 2011; and WASCA 2017 as the source of information for this fact sheet.