Accounts Officer interview questions

careertips.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Accounts officer interviews tend to be practical rather than abstract. Panels want to see that you understand the AP/AR cycle, can use standard accounting software without hand-holding, and won't let discrepancies or overdue accounts slip through the cracks. Expect a mix of process checks, past-behaviour questions and a couple of realistic scenarios.

- **Process:** Questions checking you understand the actual steps in invoice processing, reconciliation and month-end support, not just the theory.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about handling discrepancies, difficult debtors or high workloads, usually looking for a structured answer.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations testing judgement, such as what you'd do with a mismatched invoice or an aggressive customer.
- **Software/technical:** Direct questions about which packages you've used (Xero, MYOB, SAP, Excel) and how confidently you can use them.

Most interviews open with general background and motivation questions, move into process and software questions to confirm technical competence, then use one or two scenarios to see how you'd handle real problems on the job. Panels are usually the finance manager plus someone from HR or the wider team, and interviews run 30 to 45 minutes.

1. Walk me through how you'd process a supplier invoice from receipt to payment.

Why they ask

This checks whether you actually understand the AP workflow, including matching, coding and approval steps, rather than just naming software.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a straightforward step-by-step walk-through: receipt, verification against PO, coding, approval routing, entry into the system, payment scheduling.

Example answer

“When an invoice comes in, I first check it against the purchase order to confirm the quantities and pricing match. I code it to the correct cost centre and GL account, then send it through the approval workflow if it's above the threshold that needs sign-off. Once approved, I enter it into Xero or MYOB, set the payment date according to the agreed terms, and file the supporting documentation. If anything doesn't match the PO, I hold it and query it with the supplier or the purchasing team before it goes any further.”

2. Tell me about a time you found a discrepancy in a reconciliation. What did you do?

Why they ask

Reconciliation accuracy is core to the role, and this looks for a methodical response rather than panic or guesswork.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

“While reconciling a supplier statement, I noticed our ledger showed a payment as outstanding that the supplier had marked as received. My task was to sort out which record was correct before the

statement went to month-end close. I pulled the bank statement and found the payment had actually processed but hadn't been matched to the invoice in our system. I corrected the allocation and left a note in the account explaining the fix. The reconciliation balanced and I flagged the matching issue to the team so we could tighten the process going forward.”

3. A customer is well overdue on payment and becomes defensive when you call. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Tests judgement under pressure and communication skills, since chasing receivables is a regular and sometimes uncomfortable part of the job.

How to structure your answer

Scenario response: state the immediate approach, the reasoning behind it, and how you'd escalate if it didn't resolve.

Example answer

“I'd stay calm and keep the conversation focused on finding a solution rather than assigning blame. I'd confirm the amount owing, ask if there's a reason for the delay, and offer a payment plan if that's within what I'm authorised to arrange. I'd document the call and agreed outcome straight away. If the customer remains uncooperative or the account is significantly overdue, I'd escalate to my supervisor with a clear summary so they can decide on next steps, such as involving credit control or putting a hold on further supply.”

4. Which accounting software have you used, and how would you rate your confidence in each?

Why they ask

Direct technical question to confirm you can be productive quickly on the employer's actual systems.

How to structure your answer

Straightforward technical rundown: list each tool, your level of use, and a specific feature or task you've handled in it.

Example answer

“I've used Xero daily for invoicing, bank reconciliation and reporting, and I'm comfortable setting up recurring invoices and chasing overdue accounts through it. I've used MYOB for payroll-adjacent reconciliation tasks and general ledger entries. My SAP experience is more limited, mainly entering and approving invoices within a larger finance team, but I pick up new systems quickly. In Excel I'm confident with lookups, pivot tables and building simple reconciliation templates.”

5. How do you manage your workload when invoices, queries and month-end deadlines all land at once?

Why they ask

Accounts officers juggle repetitive processing with periodic deadline pressure, so this checks time management under competing demands.

How to structure your answer

Behavioural response, but framed around a general approach rather than one single incident since this is about ongoing habits.

Example answer

“I keep a running list of what's due and when, and I tackle time-sensitive items like month-end reconciliations first thing, before the day gets taken up with ad hoc queries. Routine invoice processing I batch at set times rather than doing it piecemeal. If something urgent comes in, like a supplier chasing an overdue payment, I'll deal with it quickly but make sure it doesn't derail the rest of the day's priorities. I also flag early to my manager if a deadline looks at risk, rather than leaving it

until the last minute.”

6. Why are you interested in an accounts officer role with us, and where do you see this fitting into your career?

Why they ask

Standard motivation question, but for this role it also indirectly checks whether you see it as a stepping stone (common, given typical transitions into bookkeeping, payroll or superannuation administration) or a long-term fit.

How to structure your answer

Simple narrative answer: connect your interest to the actual tasks of the role and be honest about your direction.

Example answer

“I like the structure of accounts work: there's a clear right answer when everything reconciles, and I get satisfaction from chasing down a discrepancy until it's sorted. I'm looking to build depth in accounts payable and receivable and eventually move toward a bookkeeping or payroll-focused role, so a position like this where I'd be handling the full invoice-to-payment cycle and supporting month-end close is exactly the experience I want to build on.”