

University of Leeds Careers Centre

Guidelines for writing CVs and Covering Letters

These guidelines identify the principles of a good CV and covering letter. They are a starting point and will need to be adapted for specific employers.

Structure / Format

- CVs - 2 pages, Cover letter - 1 page.
- Have a consistent format across the CV and Covering letter.
- Use Font size 11 (Arial and Calibri).
- No boxes, columns or borders or photographs. Avoid CV templates.
- Use **Bold** sparingly for section titles only, not dates.
- Bullet points (not dashes, stars etc.) Each bullet point should be 2-3 lines only.
- Dates on the left hand side.
- Use full stops at the end of each statement.
- Phone number - mobile only (5 digits space 6 digits)
- When using numbers in descriptions, express them as one to ten (in words) 11-10,000 (in numerals)
- Margins can be narrower for a one page CV.

Sections

Start with what you are currently doing and work backwards in each section, reverse chronological order.

- At the top – name, email, mobile phone number, LinkedIn and/or website link if appropriate. Use a professional email address. Don't include date of birth, nationality or gender.
- Education – Degree first, relevant modules, include all relevant qualifications. Year Abroad, Year in Industry. For details of alternative qualifications see our Careerweb website. Include grades, actual and expected.
- Work history - This will include paid and unpaid work and volunteering.
- Skills section – if appropriate, or incorporated into work history. Start bullet points with a past tense action verb, see list at the end.
- Interests and achievements.
- References – one academic and one work, or 'Available on Request' if not enough space.
- Don't need a personal profile unless it is specifically asked for by the employer or the CV does not have a covering letter with it.

Content

Use the CV and Covering letter to show how you meet the essential and desirable criteria for the job. The type of CV depends on the level of experience for the role. Broadly speaking, traditional CVs are easier to read. With little or no experience, a skills-based CV may be more suitable, but discuss this with your Careers Adviser/Careers Consultant/Employability Staff. A one page CV is preferable for some areas of employment. If in doubt check with the employer.

- Clear and concise, an employer needs to access the relevant information quickly.
- Check spelling and grammar. Avoid using the same word multiple times and proofread that there are no missing words in sentences.
- Use plain English to express experience. Use technical terms where appropriate. Mirror the company terminology where appropriate.
- Always give the context not just a list of things you have done.
- Group relevant experience together, don't always have to stick to date order where appropriate.
- Pick the most relevant information for the role, don't have to include everything you have ever done.

For further support please see examples on our website <http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk> or book an appointment for application support at <http://mycareer.leeds.ac.uk>.

September 2018

Traditional CV

NAME

Contact Details can include

Address, email, mobile phone number (**** *),
LinkedIn and/or other relevant online presence

Education

Dates from – to, University of Leeds, Title of Degree, Grade (actual or expected)

Include modules if they are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Year in Industry – Title of Degree (Industry)

Study abroad – Title of Degree (International) Details of relevant modules studied.

Dates from – to, Name of School / College

A Levels (or equivalent) – Subject (grade), Subject (grade), Subject (grade).

GCSEs (or equivalent) – e.g. 10 GCSEs grade A*-C (including Mathematics and English).

Project Work

Projects carried out as part of degree - research projects, group projects, group tasks and presentations may be relevant to some applications to demonstrate specific technical knowledge for example. Adapt the title of this section to be relevant to your sector e.g. if studying a Marketing degree and applying for a marketing role, this could be called 'Marketing Projects'.

Use bullet points:

- What was the project?
- Who did you work with & what was the aim?
- What did you do? (duties) – start with action verb (see Action Verbs List).

Skills developed: Identify skills which are relevant to the job description e.g. Communication, problem-solving.

Work History

This can be placements, internships, work experience, paid employment, voluntary work and extra-curricular experience. Start with examples which are directly related to the job for which you are applying.

Date from - to, Job Title, Company, Location

What did you do? start with action verb (see Action Verbs List) and use metrics if applicable.

What was the result? Did you receive positive feedback from colleagues / clients? What impact did you make?

Skills developed: give examples which illustrate the skills required for the job.

Additional Skills

Language (level) e.g. French (Intermediate), German (basic).

IT skills – Outlook, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SPSS, Facebook, Twitter.

Full UK Clean Driving Licence (if requested in the job description).

Interests and Achievements

Add any activities you do in your spare time with some detail e.g.

Running – ran Race for Life (2017), raising £230 for Cancer charities.

Member of University of Leeds Symphony Orchestra, demonstrating commitment through weekly rehearsals and monthly concerts.

References Name, email address and telephone number of personal tutor and a work related referee or write "References available upon request" if you don't have the space. Make sure you ask permission first.

Skills-based CV

NAME

Contact Details can include

Address, email, mobile phone number (**** *),

LinkedIn and/or other relevant online presence

Education

Dates from – to, University of Leeds, Title of Degree, Grade (actual or expected)

Include modules if they are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Year in Industry – Title of Degree (Industry)

Study abroad – Title of Degree (International) Details of relevant modules studied.

Dates from – to, Name of School / College

A Levels (or equivalent) – Subject (grade), Subject (grade), Subject (grade).

GCSEs (or equivalent) – e.g. 10 GCSEs grade A*-C (including Mathematics and English).

Relevant Skills

Use this section to highlight how you meet the essential criteria for the job. Use skills from the essential criteria as headings with specific examples to demonstrate this skill. Draw examples from your degree, projects & presentations, paid work, placements, internships, extra-curricular activity, voluntary work. Start each example with an action verb (see Action Verb list). No more than 2/3 lines per bullet point.

E.g. Communication

- Presented to 150 delegates at House of Commons as a representative of Asthma UK, proposing solutions to poor air quality in UK.
- Led talks and tours to groups of 10 students around campus on open days, answering enquiries and promoting university courses and services.

Organisation & Time Management

- Liaised with venue to organise 'Strictly Come Dancing' event as Vice-President of the Latin & Ballroom society, attracting 100 students to try dancing for the first time.
- Updated records of students and employers in Campus Internship, adhering to GDPR regulations when inputting data into spreadsheets and databases.

Additional Skills

Language (level) e.g. French (Intermediate), German (basic).

IT skills – Outlook, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SPSS, Facebook, Twitter.

Full UK Clean Driving Licence (if requested in the job description).

Work History

A summary of experience including job title and brief duties if relevant.

July 2017 – June 2018 University of Leeds, Student Ambassador

Oct 2016 - June 2017 Asthma UK, Leeds, Volunteer Outreach Assistant

May 2015 – June 2018 Laura's Café, Harrogate, Retail Assistant

Interests and Achievements

Add any activities you do in your spare time with some detail e.g.

Running – ran Race for Life, raising £230 for Cancer charities.

Member of University of Leeds Symphony Orchestra, demonstrating commitment through weekly rehearsals and monthly concerts.

References

Name, email address and telephone number of personal tutor and a work related referee or write

"References available upon request" if you don't have the space. Make sure you ask permission first.

One Page CV

NAME

Contact Details can include

Address, email, mobile phone number (**** *),
LinkedIn and/or other relevant online presence

Education

Dates from – to, University of Leeds, Title of Degree, Grade (actual or expected)

Include modules if they are relevant to the job you are applying for.

Year in Industry – Title of Degree (Industry)

Study abroad – Title of Degree (International) Details of relevant modules studied.

Dates from – to, Name of School / College

A Levels (or equivalent) – Subject (grade), Subject (grade), Subject (grade).

GCSEs (or equivalent) – e.g. 10 GCSEs grade A*-C (including Mathematics and English).

Work History

This can be placements, internships, work experience, paid employment, voluntary work, university projects and extra-curricular experience. Start with examples which are directly related to the job for which you are applying.

Date – Date, Job Title, Company, Location

What did you do? Start with action verb (see Action Verbs List) and use metrics if applicable.

What was the result? Did you receive positive feedback from colleagues / clients? What impact did you make?

Skills developed: give examples which illustrate the skills required for the job.

Interests and Achievements

Add any activities you do in your spare time with context e.g.

Running – ran Race for Life, raising £230 for Cancer charities.

Member of University of Leeds Symphony Orchestra, demonstrating commitment through weekly rehearsals and monthly concerts.

References

Name, email address and telephone number of personal tutor and a work related referee or write

“References available upon request” if you don’t have the space. Make sure you ask permission first.

Cover Letters

Your Address
Postcode
Date

Employer Name
Employer Address
Employer Postcode

Dear (named individual or Sir/Madam)

Title of job, as advertised

Paragraph 1

Introduce yourself and why you are writing. Make it clear which position you are applying for and where you saw the advertisement.

Paragraph 2

This paragraph is a summary of why you are a suitable candidate for the role and why are you interested in the job. Pick highlights from your CV which illustrate the relevant skills and experience you have for the role, refer to the job specification's essential and desirable criteria. Emphasise what you can do for the company, rather than what they can do for you.

Paragraph 3

Why do you want to work for this specific company?

Show your research – what are the company values and how do you fit in with them?

What projects / developments are they doing which interest you? Have you met / talked to anyone from the company? E.g. at a fair or otherwise? Worth mentioning this and use it to support/ explain your interest in the organisation

Paragraph 4

This is a positive conclusion to your cover letter. This could be - I am available for interview at your convenience and look forward to discussing my application with you at interview.

Yours sincerely or faithfully,

(sincerely if you addressed a named individual, faithfully if used Sir/Madam)

Your name

Action Verbs List

Management/ Leadership Skills

administered
analysed
appointed
approved
assigned
attained
authorised
chaired
considered
consolidated
contracted
controlled
converted
coordinated
decided
delegated
developed
directed
eliminated
emphasised
enforced
enhanced
established
executed
generated
handled
headed
hired
hosted
improved
incorporated
increased
initiated
inspected
instituted
led
managed
merged
motivated
organised
originated
overhauled
oversaw
planned
presided
prioritised
produced
recommended
reorganised
replaced
restored
reviewed
scheduled streamlined
strengthened

supervised
terminated

Communication/ People Skills

addressed
advertised
arbitrated
arranged
articulated
authored
clarified
collaborated
communicated
composed
condensed
conferred
consulted
contacted
conveyed
convinced
corresponded
debated
defined
described
developed
directed
discussed
drafted
edited
elicited
enlisted
explained
expressed
formulated
furnished
incorporated
influenced
interacted
interpreted
interviewed
involved
joined
judged
lectured
listened
marketed
mediated
moderated
negotiated
observed
outlined
participated
persuaded
presented
promoted

proposed
publicised
reconciled
recruited
referred
reinforced
reported
resolved
responded
solicited
specified
spoke
suggested
summarised
synthesised
translated
wrote

Research Skills

analysed
clarified
collected compared
conducted
critiqued
detected
determined
diagnosed
evaluated
examined
experimented
explored
extracted
formulated
gathered
identified
inspected
interpreted
interviewed
invented
investigated
located
measured
organised
researched
searched
solved
summarised
surveyed
systematised
tested

Technical Skills

adapted
assembled
built
calculated

computed
conserved
constructed
converted
debugged
designed
determined
developed
engineered
fabricated
fortified
installed
maintained
operated
overhauled
printed
programmed
rectified
regulated
remodelled
repaired
replaced
restored
solved
specialised
standardised
studied
upgraded
utilised

Teaching Skills

adapted
advised
clarified
coached
communicated
conducted
coordinated
critiqued
developed
enabled
encouraged
evaluated
explained
facilitated
focused
guided
individualised
informed
instilled
instructed
motivated
persuaded
set goals
simulated
stimulated

Action Verbs List

taught
tested
trained
transmitted
tutored

Financial/ Data Skills

administered
adjusted
allocated
analysed
appraised
assessed
audited
balanced
calculated
computed
conserved
corrected
determined
developed
estimated
forecasted
managed
marketed
measured
planned
programmed
projected
reconciled
reduced
researched
retrieved

Creative skills

acted
adapted
began
combined
conceptualised
condensed
created
customised
designed

developed
directed
displayed
drew
entertained
established
fashioned
formulated
founded
illustrated
initiated
instituted
integrated
introduced
invented
modelled
modified
originated
performed
photographd
planned
revised
revitalised
shaped
solved

Helping skills

adapted
advocated
aided
answered
arranged
assessed
assisted
cared for
clarified
coached
collaborated
contributed
cooperated
counselled
demonstrated
diagnosed
educated
encouraged

ensured
expedited
facilitated
familiarize
furthered
guided
helped
insured
intervened
motivated
provided
referred
rehabilitated
presented
resolved
simplified
supplied
supported
volunteered

Organisation/ Detail Skills

approved
arranged
catalogued
categorized
charted
classified
coded
collected
compiled
corresponded
distributed
executed
filed
generated
implemented
incorporated
inspected
logged
maintained
monitored
obtained
operated
ordered

organised
prepared
processed
provided
purchased
recorded
registered
reserved
responded
reviewed
routed
scheduled
screened
set up
submitted
supplied
standardised
systematised
updated
validated
verified

More verbs for Accomplishments

achieved
completed
expanded
exceeded
improved
pioneered
reduced (losses)
resolved (issues)
restored
spearheaded
succeeded
surpassed
transformed
won

