HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR VMOCK SCORE

HELP WITH SPECIFIC TOPICS

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WORD TO THE WISE

Focus more on VMock's practical feedback, and less on the score.

• VMock's standards are high and strict, so don't worry about scoring 100 before sending it out. If your score is in the 60s, you're well on your way to a great CV.

• Keep in mind that VMock is not meant to replace real-person feedback—**you can still have your CV reviewed by your University of Leeds Career / Faculty Team when you have an opportunity to apply for an opportunity and have reached a score of 60**. Use VMock first and make changes based on its feedback. That way your face to face review can focus more on targeting towards a specific opportunity.

• VMock gives you feedback specific to your CV in both System Feedback and Bullet-Level Feedback. System Feedback evaluates all aspects of your CV. Bullet-Level Feedback shows how select criteria—those relevant to the way you describe your experience—apply to each bullet point, one by one.

For maximum benefit, check out VMock's in-app guides.

• Within System Feedback, guides are provided for all elements of the Impact and Competencies modules. There's also a guide within Bullet-Level Feedback for additional help on writing great bullet points.

• To access the guides, simply click the "see guidance" button wherever it appears.

When using VMock's feedback, make as many changes as you can at one time before uploading it again.
• You get 10 uploads per year, so if you're only making small changes each time, you'll quickly run out. Spread your 10 throughout the whole academic year so that you don't run out of uploads before an important application.

IMPACT

The Impact scoring module is a style guide for your bullet points. Here's what recommends to do:

• Start with a focus on what you did (Action-Oriented).
• Indicate the tools, techniques and skills used; specify the amount and frequency of what you did and produced (Specifics).
• Avoid repetitive language (Over usage).
 • Leave out unnecessary words while still maximising meaning and detail (Avoided Words).

Action-Oriented

Begin bullet points with action verbs.
• Starting with phrases like "Responsible for…" or "Market research…" or "Poster presentation…" will get flagged as a problem.
Use action verbs that are specific rather than generic.
• Starting with verbs like "worked" or "helped" will get flagged by VMock as weak verbs. For better action verbs, identify what the work or help consisted of.
 • Use the VMock guides in the Impact module for examples of specific, action-oriented bullets.
 • Also check out the verb list below, organised by type of action, for more precise language.
Weak vs. Strong verbs
• When verbs get flagged on your CV as weak, VMock's examples of strong verbs aren't always the best fit so don't worry if you get pulled up for this.
• Our verb list below is organised by type of action, so that should be more helpful.

Specifics

• VMock loves numbers, so try to quantify everything you can. If you can't be precise, ranges and estimates are fine. Keep in mind, quantifying something is not only about amount (how much) but also frequency (how often).
• Include information about tools, techniques and skills used to get something done.
• When listing technical or language skills, include information about your level of ability.
• See our verb list below for action verbs that signal specific accomplishments and improvements.

Avoided Words

• Good CVs have a concise, punchy style. So VMock flags articles (a, the) as words that are generally safe to delete. Try doing that but **do** check whether the meaning is still clear.
• Avoid pronouns (I, we, me, our). Leaving these out is generally accepted practice.
• VMock flags certain adverbs (successfully, effectively, independently, etc.) as filler words that pad your bullet points without adding substance. For example, "Successfully completed all assignments" is just a puffed up version of "Completed all assignments."

PRESENTATION

The Presentation module in VMock evaluates your CV's layout and formatting of information. From our testing, this is where students can usually improve the most and do so pretty easily. Check out these tips to help you solve some things that VMock flags as problems.

Avoid stock CV templates that come with MS Word or other applications.

These templates use unconventional design elements—colours, images, layouts, and text formatting—and will trigger multiple error flags. A simple, straight-forward layout, one you build from scratch, is the way to go. You'll do more than just raise your VMock score:

• People who read a lot of CVs prefer a simple layout because it's easier for them to navigate and find the information that matters most to them.

• Templates tend to lock you into a structure—section headings and the way they are ordered—that doesn't put your background in the best light.

• Using a template risks sending the wrong message to your reader—that you can't be bothered, or manage your time, or learn how to use MS Word well enough to create it yourself.

• Writing your own CV isn't just about a single document, it's about learning how to frame and present your experience in a persuasive way. This is a general skill you'll apply in different ways, over and over throughout your career.

For creative CVs such as graphic design: focus on content feedback, not presentation feedback.

• The unconventional design elements of a creative CV will result in a low Presentation score, so feel free to skip over that part.

• Feedback for Impact and Competencies, along with Bullet-Level Feedback, will still be valid and useful, so focus on that to improve how you describe your experience.

• We also recommend having two versions of your CV, one with a conventional design and layout (such as the example provided).

Number of Pages

A two-page CV is appropriate for most targets (but not all – Investment banking being one exception).

• Two page is the norm for most industries and job functions, however there are a number of industries that ask for one page so VMock is set for either one or two pages.

Make sure there are no blank pages at the end of your original document.

• By accident, many CVs are created with an extra page of blank space at the end. This will make a one-page CV look to VMock like two pages (and a two-pager look like three). As a result, the CV can get flagged as too long.

Essential Sections

Use section headings from the list shown in "Essential Sections"

• VMock shows allowed section headings in a bullet-point list.

• The list of section headings reflects those we recommend—and leaves off those we don't (e.g., Profile).

• The menu of section headings gives you a range of options to choose from, but VMock is strict about using exactly what is listed so use the headings suggested

• It's possible that you have a section heading that gets flagged but in your considered judgment is what works best for you. In that case, keep what you have and move on to other suggested changes.

Overall Format: Date Formatting

Use date formats listed in VMock

VMock is set for the date formats recommended by University of Leeds Careers Centre. The requirements are strict because inconsistencies and not-so-best practices in date formats are the most common we see. Here are the allowed formats, sorted by type of information. Dates must be consistent formats within each section. Either all months should be abbreviated or none of them. All dates must be consistently in bold/non-bold, no italics and consistently left aligned. One space should be present before and after the dash/hyphen in dates. Dashes/Hyphens must be consistent. Dates must be in reverse chronological order in each section.

Some common issues with date formats:

• The date used for the University of Leeds should be your expected graduation date, with your start date.

• For date ranges, use space-dash-space formatting. For example, "June – August 2017" is allowed, while "June–August 2017" and "June– August 2017 is not.

• The same style of dash (shorter hyphen or slightly longer dash) must be used consistently throughout.

• Abbreviating months in your dates is a good way to use less text on secondary information. For a clean and consistent look, VMock is set for only one way to abbreviate: first three letters of the month with no period. For example, "Sep – Dec 2017" is allowed, but "Sept. – Dec. 2017" is not.

• Align dates on the left margin.

Overall Format: Section Spacing

Add a line of blank space before every section.

• Without that blank space, the document gets crowded, making it hard to read.

• If adding space pushes you over a page limit, and you don't see an easy way to reformat (e.g., make margins smaller) or reduce content, then keep things as they are and move on to other feedback.

• If your CV goes over the desired page limit, see the recommendations below on using space efficiently and reducing content as a last resort.

Make sure line spacing between experiences within a section is consistent.

• For readability, we recommend having some blank space between experiences within the same section. It doesn't have to be a full line of space, a half-line or so be acceptable.

• If even a small amount pushes your CV over the page limit, then it's okay to use single spacing for all information within a section. (No points are deducted for single spacing between items.)
• Whichever way you format it, make sure you are consistent throughout. (Inconsistent spacing will cause a big point reduction.)

Overall Format: Bullet Check
Use standard black-dot bullets for describing your experience, and use them consistently
The Bullet-Level Feedback feature of VMock evaluates each bullet point individually. In order for it to work, your various experiences need to be described using bullet points. This is a good idea anyway, because bullets are preferred by people who read a lot of CVs.
• Bullets should not be used when listing an organisation or position, only for describing your experience within the role and organisation.
• Avoid non-standard bullet styles (arrows, dashes, other symbols). Only the standard, black-dot style is allowed.
• Make sure all bullets are indented the same amount in all sections so they line up vertically.

Section Specific: Personal Details
• Scoring for this element is a little quirky, and can seem harsh. The system checks and scores for several things at once, so if one small thing is off, it triggers a big point deduction.
• So, yes, a 15-point deduction for using parentheses for the area code in your phone number (e.g. "(01484) 547273") might seem harsh, but it's a quick and easy fix.

Section Specific: Education
• Describe it as a degree programme (e.g. "B.A. in Economics"). Then format your dates to signal that your graduation is in the future (e.g. "Expected 2020").

Spell Check
• VMock flags acronyms, jargon and organisation names (e.g., "InfoSys") as spelling errors (or possible errors).
• If you know the word is okay, hover over it and click "Add to Dictionary" and it won't be flagged as an error the next time you upload your CV.

COMPETENCIES
The Competencies scoring module looks for evidence of five skills that employers commonly look for when making hiring decisions.
• VMock scans all content—not only the experience described in your bullet points, but also position titles, degree programme, any courses, languages, software programmes, and so on.
• Guides are provided in the Competencies module for all five skills. Use the guides to see how each skill is defined, different ways it is demonstrated, and several example bullets.
• See our verb list below for a detailed list of action verbs organised by competency type.

BULLET-LEVEL FEEDBACK

Bullet-Level Feedback evaluates each bullet point, one by one.

• It uses the same criteria as the Impact module, checking for action-oriented language, lots of specifics, overused words and unnecessary filler words.

• Therefore, when you improve your bullets based on the feedback and guides for Impact, this will improve your bullet-level feedback at the same time.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CV IS TOO LONG

Step One: Use Space Efficiently

Margins

• Margins can be smaller for CVs than for other documents.

• Narrowest option: 1.5cm all around.

• If space is available, use smaller margins on top and bottom, larger on left and right.

Contact information

• Your contact information can be combined on as few lines as possible.

• Add a separator (not a comma) between items for readability. Examples:

      email • phone • address • linkedin hyperlink

      email | phone | address | linkedin hyperlink

Line spacing: don't over space

• Spacing between items in same section: only 1.5 line spacing, not double space. • For all lines within the same item—organisation, position, bullets—use single spacing.

Font size: don't go bigger than needed

• The default font size of 12 points is larger than needed. Use font size 11 (Arial and Calibri)

Step Two: Reduce Content

Sections: options to reduce

• Combine separate sections into one (e.g. Activities and Voluntary Work)

• Change one section into a sub-section of another (e.g. put Achievements and Awards within Education)

Length of bullets: options to reduce

• For bullets barely over one line: re-phrase to fit on one line

• For two short bullets: combine to make one, single-line bullet

Last resort: options to remove content

• Eliminate less relevant bullets for experiences with more than four bullets.

• Eliminate some items altogether. Here are some guidelines for removing content:

    1. Older items that are redundant to more recent ones

    2. School information and experiences

    3. Less relevant to the position you are applying for

    4. Less impressive positions or achievements

    5. Positions with less responsibility

    6. Oldest experiences

ACTION VERBS
For specific impact

Accomplishment

accomplished	achieved	attained	awarded	competed	completed	earned
effected	ensured	exceeded	executed	generated	mastered	obtained
pioneered	produced	recognised	resulted	resolved	sold	succeeded
won						

Improvement

accelerated	automated	eliminated	expanded	expedited	improved	increased
reduced	reorganised	restored	restructured	simplified	streamlined	transformed
upgraded	consolidated	strengthened	corrected	enhanced		

FOR COMPETENCIES
Analytical
Research

collected	conducted	defined	detected	discovered	examined	experimented
explored	extracted	found	gathered	identified	inquired	inspected
investigated	located	measured	modelled	observed	researched	reviewed
searched	studied	surveyed	tested	tracked		

Analyse and Evaluate

analysed	assessed	calculated	catalogued	categorised	clarified	classified
compared	compiled	critiqued	derived	determined	diagnosed	estimated
evaluated	formulated	interpreted	prescribed	organised	rated	recommended
reported	summarised	systematised	tabulated			

Technical

assembled	built	coded	computed	constructed	converted	debugged
designed	diagnosed	engineered	fabricated	installed	maintained	operated
printed	programmed	proved	rectified	regulated	repaired	resolved
restored	specified	standardised	systematised	tested	upgraded	

Financial

adjusted	allocated	appraised	audited	balanced	budgeted	calculated
compiled	conserved	controlled	disbursed	estimated	figured	financed
forecasted	netted	projected	reconciled			

Communication
Verbal and Written

addressed	articulated	authored	briefed	clarified	conveyed	composed
condensed	corresponded	debated	delivered	described	discussed	drafted
edited	expressed	formulated	informed	instructed	interacted	interpreted
lectured	negotiated	notified	outlined	reconciled	reinforced	reported
presented	proposed	specified	spoke	translated	wrote	

Promote and Influence

advertised	communicated	contacted	convinced	elicited	enlisted	influenced
marketed	motivated	persuaded	promoted	publicized	recruited	represented
solicited						

Interpersonal

| arbitrated | consulted | conferred | interviewed | mediated | moderated | listened |
| responded | suggested | | | | | |

Leadership
Lead and Manage

administered	appointed	approved	assigned	authorised	chaired	conducted
contracted	controlled	coordinated	decided	delegated	directed	developed
enforced	ensured	evaluated	executed	headed	hired	hosted
implemented	instituted	led	managed	overhauled	oversaw	prioritised
recruited	represented	strategised	supervised	trained		

Plan and Organise (Events and People)

anticipated	arranged	contacted	convened	coordinated	logged	obtained
ordered	planned	prepared	processed	purchased	recorded	registered
reserved	scheduled	verified				

Plan and Organise (Data and Things)

created	distributed	erased	filed	grouped	implemented	incorporated
logged	merged	monitored	obtained	ordered	organised	planned
regulated	reviewed	routed	standardised	structured	submitted	systematised

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Teamwork
Administrative Support and Customer Service

aided	answered	arranged	catalogued	categorised	collated	collected
coordinated	distributed	emailed	ensured	expedited	explained	filed
greeted	handled	informed	implemented	maintained	offered	ordered
organised	performed	prepared	processed	provided	purchased	recorded
received	resolved	scheduled	served	supported	tabulated	

Collaborate and Build Relationships

collaborated	consulted	cooperated	coordinated	liaised	reached out

   Verb + object + with + # group members ("Organised fundraising event with 4 co-members…")
   Verb + object + in team of + # group members ("Created media campaign in a team of 5 interns")

Initiative
Create and Modify

authored	began	built	changed	combined	conceived
constructed	created	customised	designed	developed	devised
established	formed	formulated	founded	generated	initiated
integrated	introduced	invented	launched	originated	produced
shaped	staged	visualised	modified	revamped	revised
revised	updated				

Help and Guide

advocated	aided	assisted	cared for	contributed	cooperated
coordinated	ensured	furthered	guided	intervened	offered
referred	rehabilitated	supplied	supported	volunteered	served

Teach and Mentor

adapted	advised	clarified	coached	counselled	demonstrated
educated	enabled	encouraged	evaluated	explained	facilitated
familiarised	individualised	instructed	mentored	modelled	motivated
simplified	stimulated	taught	trained	tutored	