

MAKING APPLICATIONS

CVs, application forms and covering letters



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INTRODUCTION

The first step in getting any job, placement or internship is to introduce yourself to the employer by sending them a CV or application form.

This is the most important stage of the whole application process and it is not an easy one. Summing up your lifetime's experiences on one page, or answering detailed questions about your skills and experiences, can seem an impossible task.

This booklet helps you through the process by outlining what employers are looking for in applications, offering advice on how to present yourself effectively and providing links to further sources of information and help. It also includes examples of CVs, covering letters and answers to questions on application forms.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



INTRODUCTION (CONT)

What do application forms and CVs do?

Your application will not, by itself, get you a job – it is only the first stage in a selection process that will almost certainly include interviews, and perhaps psychometric tests and assessment centres too. The aim of your application should be to get you to the next stage of selection by giving the employer evidence that you have the essential abilities needed for the job. This evidence should be set out clearly and concisely: an employer may take less than a minute to scan through each application.

What are employers looking for?

While every recruiter will have their own 'wish list', the following are the personal skills and qualities that employers in all fields of work most often look for in their graduate recruits:

- Motivation and enthusiasm
- Verbal communication
- Ability to work in a team
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Initiative and self-reliance

What makes a good application?

A good application is:

- Well-researched
- Targeted to a particular job, employer and/or career area
- Accurate
- Informative
- Interesting
- Easy to read
- Enthusiastic

On average, only about 10% of applications are taken forward to interview. Many of those people rejected will potentially be able to do the job well but have failed to show this effectively in their application. It is essential to research the job and show the employer that you have the skills and abilities which they are looking for.

Before you start: research the employer

This is the first, and most important step in any application and is the key to its success. Researching the organisation will help you to:

- answer the question 'Why do you want to work for us?'. You will find this question, or one very similar, on most application forms. Even where it is not actually asked, your application overall should answer it!

- make sure that you can show the qualifications, experience and personal skills that the employer is looking for
- demonstrate your motivation by the fact that you have taken the time and trouble to do this research

When doing this research, try to go beyond the graduate recruitment pages of the company website. You should also use their news section and information aimed at customers and shareholders.

Small and medium-sized employers are likely to be more difficult to find out about than the big graduate recruiters. They are unlikely to produce detailed information for graduates, or even for customers, so that all you have to go on may be the job advert or a not-very-comprehensive website.

Don't worry – these employers will not expect the same depth of knowledge as the household-name companies – but do try to find out whatever you can about their general area of business and ask lots of relevant questions at interview!



Tell them what they want to know

Some of the most popular employers will receive many hundreds of applications for every graduate vacancy. To get yours noticed you will need to show that you know what qualities they are looking for and that you have them!

With such strong competition for vacancies, you cannot assume that your academic record, however good, is enough to get you noticed. Employers' application forms are designed to bring out your personal skills and abilities – the ones you will need to use in the job. Chief among these skills are those of planning and organisation, teamwork, leadership and initiative

– almost all graduate employers will look for these particular qualities and design their application forms to reveal them.

- Be informative, detailed but concise: give the employer the essential detail but leave them wanting to meet you to find out more.
 - Keep in mind the qualities that the employer is looking for, and show that you have these;
 - Be positive. Show that you are genuinely interested in the position you have applied for. Even if you are viewing this position as a stop-gap job or a stepping stone, you need to convince the employer that you are genuinely interested in the work and the organisation;
- Don't undervalue your previous experience. Students often assume that their part-time job as a waiter, bar person or sales assistant can be of no possible interest to a graduate employer, but this is not true. As a waiter, for example, you will have had to work under pressure, communicate effectively with customers and sort out problems: skills that are useful in most workplaces;
 - Don't make lists: 'reading, cinema, sport' under 'Interests' won't tell the employer anything useful about you. Give details of the extent of your interests and any clubs, societies, posts of responsibility or achievements related to them;
 - Finally, be honest – it may be tempting to 'improve' your academic grades a little, or to invent a post of responsibility that you never actually held, but if these deceptions are discovered (and employers will almost always ask for copies of your degree/exam certificates) you will lose any chance of ever getting a job at that organisation.

CVs

CV stands for ‘curriculum vitae’ – Latin for ‘the course of one’s life’ and is defined as ‘an outline of a person’s educational and professional history, usually prepared for job applications’

A CV is the most flexible and convenient way to make applications. It can convey your qualifications, skills and/or experience in the way that presents you in the best possible light and can be used to make multiple applications to employers in a specific career area.

A CV should be used when:

- an employer specifically asks for you to send your CV;
- an employer states ‘apply to ...’ without specifying the format;
- making speculative applications to employers who have not actually advertised a vacancy but who you hope may have an opportunity;
- applying to recruitment agencies or going to graduate recruitment fairs.



Many large graduate recruiters require candidates to fill out an application form rather than to send a CV. The advantage of application forms, from the employer's point of view, is that they are standardised and often based around the personal qualities and competencies that the employer requires. In addition, the time needed to fill out these forms is seen as a reflection of your commitment to the career and the company.

Job advertisements will usually tell you whether to send a CV or to use an application form: our vacancy database always will. Be sure to use the right method of application: sending a CV to an employer that requires you to complete an application form will get you nowhere.

What makes a good CV?

There is no ‘one best way’ to construct a CV; it is your document and can be structured and presented as you wish within the basic framework set out below, but the following general rules apply:

- It is targeted on the specific job or career area for which you are applying and brings out the relevant skills you have to offer
- It is carefully and clearly laid out: logically ordered, easy to read and not cramped
- It is informative but concise
- It is accurate – in content, spelling and grammar

What should a CV include?

- Personal details
- Education and qualifications
- Work experience
- Interests and achievements
- Skills
- Referees

The order in which you present these, and the emphasis which you give to each one, will depend on what you are applying for and what you have to offer.

Some frequently-asked questions about CVs

What personal details should I include?

Only your name and contact details are essential: there is no need to include your date of birth, marital status, health or National Insurance number on a CV.

Should I put a photo on my CV?

UK employers do not usually expect you to include a photograph on your CV unless you are applying for a job where your appearance is important, such as acting or modelling.

How long should my CV be?

Again, there are no absolute rules on this but, in general, a new graduate's CV should cover no more than two sides of A4 paper.

If you can summarise your career history comfortably on a single side, this is fine, but don't leave out important items, or crowd your text too closely together, in order to fit it on to that single side.

If you do go onto a second side, fill as much of it as possible: a CV of one-and-a-half sides or less looks half-hearted and incomplete.

Can I use the same CV to apply for jobs in the UK and abroad?

Employers in other countries may have different expectations of what a CV should include and how it should be laid out. Sites such as Eurograduate www.eurograduate.com/planning.asp will help you prepare CVs for overseas employment.

The following sections give more tips on constructing, presenting and targeting your CV and on different styles of CV.



TYPES OF CV



1 Chronological

- This is the 'conventional' style and the easiest to prepare. It outlines your career history in date order, normally beginning with the most recent activities;
- It usually works best for 'traditional' students with a good all-round mixture of education and work experience;
- Not everyone, though, will find this style beneficial. Mature students often find that it emphasises factors such as age, career breaks and less-relevant experience. Younger students with little work experience but lots of extra-curricular activities may also prefer to use a different style of CV.

2 Skills-based

- These highlight your skills, abilities and major achievements and relate them to a specific job or career area. The factual, chronological details of your education and work history are noted much more briefly;
- This style works well for mature students and for anybody whose degree subject and work experience is not directly relevant to their application;
- Skills-based CVs should be closely targeted to a specific job.

3 Hybrid

- It is fine to mix elements of both the above styles and this can often work well.

Whichever approach you choose, make sure that it shows you to the best advantage. Remember that your CV is a marketing document and should be as relevant to the job and the employer as possible.

Tips on presentation

- Your CV should be carefully and clearly laid out: not cramped but not with big empty spaces either.
- Use bold typefaces for headings and sub-headings;
- Use bulleted lists of key points rather than long paragraphs: this makes it easier for the reader to pick out important information;
- Be concise: a CV is an appetiser and should not give the reader indigestion. You don't have to list every exam you have ever taken, or every activity you have ever been involved in: just the ones which are the most relevant and/or impressive;
- Be positive: put yourself over confidently and highlight your strong points. For example, when listing your A-levels, put the highest grade first (providing that it is in a subject that will be seen as relevant);

- Don't print double-sided: each page should be on a separate sheet of paper. You can put your name in the footer area to ensure that you are identified on each sheet;
- If you are posting your CV, put it in an envelope of at least A5 (ideally A4) size so that it doesn't arrive creased (remember to use the right stamp!)

Targeting your CV

If your CV is to be sent to an individual employer you should research the organisation and the position as outlined on page 4 and tailor the CV to this particular job.

If your CV is to be used for speculative applications or recruitment agencies, you will not be able to focus it so closely. It is still important, though, to fit it to the general career area in which you

want to work. Use careers resources such as www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm to get an idea of what the work involves and what skills and personal qualities are needed to do it successfully. This will help you to relate the CV to the work and to highlight the most relevant skills and experience that you have to offer.

Even if you are using the same CV for a number of employers, you should personalise the covering letter by putting in a paragraph on why you want to work for that organisation.

On the following pages you will find examples of different types of CVs and a covering letter, with notes highlighting points relating to the content and style. These should be used as general guidelines and not as templates to be followed exactly! Each of the CVs and the covering letter relate and are targeted to the person specification on page 11.

This may not relate to the job sector you are interested in applying to but the principles are the same. Also, please note that, because this booklet is printed in A5 format, the example CVs are half the normal size: your own should always be printed on A4 paper.

All students and personal details in these CVs are fictional.





TYPES OF CV (CONT)

Person Specification

Person Specification

Visitor Services Officer, The Museum of World War History

Key competencies

- 1 Able to work flexibly and adapt to change
- 2 Able to work with members of the public of all ages
- 3 Able to work as part of a team

Essential criteria

- 4 Experience of working with the public in a customer facing role
- 5 Experience of presenting information to people and/or leading tours
- 6 Educated to a minimum of GCSE level or equivalent
- 7 Proficient in using all aspects of the Microsoft Office package, in particular Word and Excel
- 8 Knowledge of Social Media platforms
- 9 Good knowledge of World War 1 and 2 history

Desirable criteria

- 10 Experience of working to targets in a sales environment
- 11 Experience of implementing emergency procedures
- 12 Knowledge of one or more foreign languages

TYPES OF CV (CONT)

Chronological

Jennifer Marethis

49 Bridge Place, Canterbury, Kent CT1 11V

Mobile: 07688 43650

Email: jenmarethis@kent.ac.uk

linkedin.com/jenmarethis

1

2

Profile

Third year History student with previous work experience in museums and in a retail environment. Seeking a full time Visitor Services Officer role. Excellent customer service skills. Experienced in delivering tours and workshops and proven track record of meeting sales targets.

3

4

Education

2018-2021 University of Kent, History, (expected grade 2:1)

Key modules:

- Origins of the Second World War
- Making History: Theory and Practice
- Introduction of Military History
- Britain and the Falklands War
- British Army and Empire

As well as theoretical knowledge, I have developed a number of skills through these modules including working as part of a group, presenting and report writing. I have developed my IT skills, including advanced knowledge of Word and Excel, through completing my European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL).

5

2015-2018 Dover Grammar School for Girls

A levels in History (A), English (A) and Mathematics (B)

10 GCSEs at A* to C grade

6

Work Experience

May 2017 – August 2017 Sales Adviser, Sports United, Dover

- Temporary summer sales adviser role
- Developed excellent customer service skills and the ability to work flexibly through my various roles working on the till, in the fitting rooms and on the shop floor
- Regularly exceeded weekly targets for account card openings
- Resolved customer complaints to ensure excellent customer service

7

8

Volunteer Experience

9

June 2016 – present Volunteer, The Technology Museum, Sittingbourne

- Working in a team of 10 volunteers and 3 paid staff
- Assisting paid members of staff with tours during school visits to the museums
- Assisting at seasonal museum events on an ad hoc basis
- Developed a new family event during the summer holidays which increased attendance on that day by 70% compared to the previous year. This resulted in additional income for the museum. I am developing a similar event with a Christmas theme.
- Created social media content for the school summer holiday programme of events.

July 2015 – present Football Coach, Dover Youngsters Football Club

- Coach the under 12s team on Sundays and during holiday periods
- Adapt my coaching style to each child, taking into account their learning style
- Work in a team of 2 other coaches
- Plan and organise games with other local clubs
- Trained in health and safety procedures as well as first aid

Interests

General Secretary of the University of Kent Paddle Boarding Society

- Responsible for all society administration
- Advertising of monthly events at various locations
- Reading and responding to society emails
- Have increased Facebook likes by 72%

In my spare time I am learning French through a Study Plus extracurricular course and I also enjoy hiking with friends. I recently completed the Three Peaks Challenge and raised £500 for charity in the process.

References available on request

10

11



TYPES OF CV (CONT)

Chronological

Notes on Jennifer Marethis's CV

This is an example of a chronological CV.

- 1 Centering the address and contact details under your name looks stylish, saves space, and removes the need for address and telephone number headings;
- 2 **This is optional** but, if you have a **professional** website, LinkedIn and/or Twitter account that you are actively using and that showcases your skills, you can include these with your contact details. Make sure that any content is relevant and appropriate;
- 3 Make use of **bold typeface** to mark the start of each section in your CV: it looks better than underlining;
- 4 If your degree subject is relevant to the type of work you are applying for, then you should normally list your modules in some detail. You don't have to list every single module, but should include the most relevant;
- 5 Projects or dissertations are also likely to be important if they are relevant to the work you are applying for. Even if not, they may still allow you to demonstrate useful skills such as problem solving or team work;
- 6 It is OK to summarise your GCSEs as shown here, to save space. Remember though to mention any important subjects, such as English or Maths;
- 7 Make sure that you evidence the skills described in the person specification. This might mean that each CV you send will be slightly different as each role will require different skills to be emphasised. Remember to show evidence for each skill you mention;
- 8 Don't just describe your duties in a job. Try where possible to outline your achievements in that role;
- 9 Voluntary work and work carried out as part of a family business can and should be included;
- 10 It is not essential to put references on a CV, unless you have been specifically asked for them by an employer. Even then, you can put them onto the covering letter instead. References are often taken up after interview, and the 'available on request' formula is fine to use;
- 11 Spelling and grammar are important so do proof read your application before sending;

TYPES OF CV (CONT)

Skills-based

Alex Bucksheath

14, Wychurch Road, Canterbury, Kent. CT2 7SJ.

Tel. 01227 764521

Mobile: 07844 312223

Email: azdb9199@kent.ac.uk

Profile

A final-year History student with excellent communication and team working skills gained in nursing, now seeking to move into a role in the museum sector. Able to work members of the public of all ages and competent in using IT.

Skills

Communication

- As Ward Sister it was important to be able to communicate with a variety of staff ranging from cleaners to consultants;
- Working with patients and their relatives required me to communicate with members of the public of all ages and to handle difficult and emergency situations;
- I presented my degree project on 'The Impact of the Corn Laws' as a PowerPoint presentation at a History seminar as well as in writing.

Flexibility and adaptability

- As Ward Sister I managed a team of nursing and support staff, which included organising staff rotas and prioritising tasks. I also managed patient admissions, liaising with staff in other departments;
- As Secretary of the History Society I was responsible for organising events and excursions, booking speakers and carrying out risk assessments;
- My degree project required work to a tight deadline; researching in local archives and managing a database;
- Bringing up two children whilst working and studying has required flexibility.

Teamwork

- Worked as part of a team on a busy ward, sometimes under great pressure. Here team working and initiative were essential;
- The Psychology module of my Access course involved a group project where I worked with three other students investigating the effect of returning to work on women's self-esteem. I was responsible for co-ordinating interviews and qualitative analysis of interview transcripts. Our project was awarded the highest grade of any in that year;
- As an office temp it was necessary to fit into a team immediately and to pick up information quickly.

IT

- Good knowledge of MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint;
- Designed History Society web page using HTML;
- Created a Facebook page for the History Society which now has 250 likes.

Sales

- As a waitress in a fast food chain I had weekly sales targets which I regularly exceeded.

Education and qualifications

BA (Hons) History, University of Kent 2018-2021

Achieved 63% in second year examinations: Key modules included Origins of the Second World War, Making History: Theory and Practice and Introduction of Military History. expected result 2:1.

Canterbury College Access Course 2015-2017

Including History (75%) and Psychology (83%)

William Harvey Hospital, Ashford, Kent 1992-1995

State Registered Nurse Training Course

Study of anatomy, physiology, diseases and treatment and practical nurse training

Surbiton High School 1986-1992

5 O Levels including English, Mathematics, Science

Work experience

Elite Nursing Agency, Canterbury 2006 – present

Part-time nurse, whilst bringing up my children and studying for my degree.

Canterbury Hospital, Ward Sister 2002-2005

Responsible for patient care, clinical procedures, administrative duties and staff training and development while in charge of a busy surgical/medical ward with a 4 bed critical care unit. Also responsible for staff training and development.

Canterbury Hospital Staff Nurse/Senior Nurse 1995-2002

Working within multi-disciplinary teams on a variety of wards.

Other jobs have included temporary office work and waitressing.

Additional information

7

- On my own initiative I successfully completed the University of Kent Careers Award which covered identification and development of employability skills, self-awareness, identification of relevant career options, researching opportunities, CV preparation and interview skills.

References available on request



TYPES OF CV (CONT)

Skills-based

Notes on Alex Bucksheath's CV

This is a skills-based CV from a mature student and career changer.

- 1 A Personal Profile, or Career Aim/Goal/Objective, can be a useful way of highlighting your main selling points and flagging an interest in a particular career on your CV, especially if you have no directly-relevant work experience. Keep the profile brief, focused and relevant and don't make it into a list of good qualities with no evidence that you actually have them!
- 2 Put skills in order of their relevance to the job. Focus on skills used in the job rather than tasks done, unless you are applying for routine vacation and part-time work such as retail and hospitality where the ability to operate a cash till will be more important than higher level skills.
- 3 Alex wants to enter the museum sector and has targeted his CV towards this area. Any evidence that you have come into contact with the job that you are applying for and know what it is about will enhance your application. Getting work experience will enhance your chances tremendously in the job market.
- 4 If your degree has no direct relation to the job then you may just want to give its title without any further details such as module titles.
- 5 Include your grades – especially if they are good. Begin with your most significant and most recent qualification. Here 'achieved 63%' is a concrete result which will carry more weight than expected degree class. If your grades are not so good, you still need to include them – if you leave them out employers may assume that they are worse than they really are.
- 6 Other jobs have included. This can be a good way of mentioning jobs which were less relevant, short-term or which you did a long time ago. A brief summary like this is better than a long boring list which takes up half the CV.
- 7 Additional Information. Rather than putting in a separate section for interests, which may not be appropriate if you are a mature student or don't feel that your interests will help your CV to stand out, you can use this section as a catch all, and include driving, computing, languages and awards or prizes here as well.

TYPES OF CV (CONT)

Hybrid

Emma Louise Kirkpatrick

129 Dover Street, Rochester, Kent ME1 9ZZ
Tel: 0779 111 1111 Email: elkie25@yourisp.com

1

Profile

A graduate with strong communication and team working skills developed through experience in teaching, promotional work and marketing, seeking to begin a career in the museum and heritage sector.

Key Skills:

- Outstanding customer service and communication skills developed through teaching English and promotional work;
- An impeccable track record of meeting customer engagement and leafleting targets in a promotional role where I represented a number of large brands;
- My promotional experience enables me to easily build relationships with people of all ages and backgrounds;
- Excellent IT skills, including social media, Microsoft Word and Excel
- A passion for History demonstrated by my reviews of historical sites in my university student newspaper.

Work Experience

English Language Teacher: London Bridge School of English, Shanghai

July 2015-June 2018

- Taught English to students from a wide range of age groups and backgrounds, both one-to-one and in small groups;
- Wrote blogs about my experiences of teaching and everyday life in China;
- Used creativity to develop new teaching methods to motivate and entertain students;
- Developed organisational skills through lesson planning and flexibility in adapting to the needs and demands of students in a new cultural environment.

2

3

Plum Promotions, Maidstone 2014-2015

- Working on a flexible basis representing various companies to promote technology products, retailers, concerts, festivals and other events;
- Responsibilities included demonstrating, customer engagement, marketing and leafleting;
- Events Manager for a Vodafone internet campaign at universities in Kent and Sussex;
- Worked to deadlines, met and exceeded targets and developed persuasive communication skills.

English Language Teacher, King Street English Language School, Brighton, April 2014

- Worked on a residential teaching programme, responsible for my own class of 12 students from 8 different countries;
- Organised evening and weekend activities for the 80 students on the programme as a whole, including outings to London and Windsor where I acted as a tour guide.

Customer Services/Marketing Assistant, Medway Car Sales Ltd, 2013-2015

- Initially employed as Customer Services Assistant, progressing to Marketing Assistant after one year;
- In Customer Services I worked to ensure good relations and high customer satisfaction levels for all departments;
- Learned complex product information and answered customers' questions at all levels, from the basic to the highly technical;
- As Marketing Assistant, I reorganised the database in order to make more effective use of the existing customer base;

Volunteer Pre-School Assistant, South Africa, Summer 2013

- Worked in a township programme, assisting teachers on a community project involving 200 children aged 3-6 years;
- Helped children to develop numeracy skills through counting and shape recognition games;
- Devised creative and fun learning materials within limited resources;
- Raised funds to take part in this programme through sponsored events such as cake bakes;
- Developed cultural awareness and confidence.

Interests

- Elected Secretary of the Ski and Snowboard Society where my responsibilities included organising club trips to Austria and Romania and creating the society's website and other marketing materials;
- Played lead guitar in a band and performed at University and charity events;
- Wrote many features and reviews for the heritage section of the student newspaper;
- Attend French and Mandarin evening classes.

Education and qualifications**University of Kent**, 2018-2021

BSc Social Sciences: First Class Honours

The Havisham School, Rochester, 2007-2012

A Levels: Geography (B); English Language (C); Biology (D)

GCSE: 8 GCSE's at A* or A, 1 B and 2 C's

References: Available on request



TYPES OF CV (CONT)

Hybrid

Notes on Emma Kirkpatrick's CV

This is a 'hybrid' CV, focusing on work experience but with a short section listing the skills the candidate can offer, including personal skills as well as practical skills.

- 1 If you use a personal email address make sure that it is sensible and businesslike. This one is OK but avoid anything 'funny', childish or offensive.
- 2 'Work Experience' is a very broad heading and can include full-time or part-time paid work but also volunteering and even extra-curricular activities: there is no need to put these under separate headings.
- 3 Emma also notes the skills developed through her various jobs and volunteering experience. This is particularly helpful where the work that you have done in the past is not related to the posts that you are applying for now.
- 4 It is normal for a final-year student or recent graduate to start with their degree, but you don't have to do this. Although Emma has achieved a first-class degree, her A-level results are not outstanding and she may have therefore chosen to put her skills and experience first so that the reader has formed a positive impression of her before reaching this information. She has used the profile to mention that she is a graduate without giving any further detail at this stage.



COVERING LETTERS

The covering letter is vital to your CV. This is why it is the first page and not an addition. 'Please find attached my CV and covering letter' won't get you very far. You should use the email text, which will be the first thing an employer sees, for your covering letter, and send your CV as an attachment.

The covering letter puts flesh on the bare bones of the CV. It gives the employer detailed evidence that you have the qualities the job calls for, and makes a statement about yourself and your suitability for the job. It should give the personal touch that a CV will intrinsically lack.

- Keep the letter clear, concise and to the point: it should normally consist of three or four paragraphs, or no more than one side of A4 paper when printed out;
- Visual impressions are important, so don't crowd the paper: space out the paragraphs and don't use margins that are too narrow;
- Use your own words rather than formal long-winded clichés;
- Spell-check and then double-check your spelling and grammar. Spell checkers won't pick up *form* instead of *from* or *sex* instead of *six*!
- Answer the question 'Why should I interview you?'
- Demonstrate your understanding of the work/knowledge of the company. 'I am passionate about' will not do alone: you must say why you decided to pursue this career; what attracts you to this employer, what you have found out about it, etc;
- Relate your skills to the job and show how you fit the criteria required. Show the employer, in a clear and concise manner, that you have demonstrated the skills that they specify for the job. Give evidence, using examples from your studies and/or previous experience;
- Say when you are available to start work (and end, if it's a placement) – be as flexible as possible;
- Match the tone of the letter to the organisation and try to 'mirror' the style of language used by the employer. For example, if the job description and their website repeatedly describe the organisation as results-driven you can use your application to show how you could fit in with this culture – however don't go overboard!
- Start and end the letter with one of the following formats:
 - Start: 'Dear Mr/Ms Jones'; end: 'Yours sincerely'
 - Start 'Dear Sir or Madam'; end: 'Yours faithfully'
 - (You should address the letter to a named person whenever you can, but it is not always possible to find out this information)
- DON'T forget to attach your CV to an emailed covering letter – it's easily done!



Dear Mr Croft,

I am writing to apply for role of Visitor Services Officer at the Museum of World War History as advertised on your website. Please find attached my CV.

I am a 3rd year undergraduate student studying at the University of Kent for a BA (Hons) degree in History. I have always loved looking at many different areas of history, as demonstrated by the broad module choices I have made during my time at Kent from Medieval modules to Britain and the Falklands War. One of my favourite modules that I undertook as part of my degree was Origins of the Second World War which appears to link well with the collections at the museum, and inspired me to apply for this role.

Being part of a family of three museums is something which really appeals to me about working at the award winning Museum of World War History. I am particularly excited to see your current major exhibition True Tales: Exploring the Story Behind the Name. The museum excels at creating interactive exhibitions suitable for all the family and this particularly appeals to me as I have a number of years' experience working with children.

Over the past year I have volunteered at the Technology Museum in Sittingbourne and have had the opportunity to learn from paid members of staff. As part of this experience I have assisted school tours around the museum and I also had the opportunity to observe and help out at seasonal events involving crafts, games and object handling sessions. I have continued to volunteer my time during various events at the museum and have even created an additional event which took place during the summer holidays and resulted in additional revenue for the museum. I have also had the opportunity to create content for the Museum's social media pages.

Additionally, I am an enthusiastic team player who is comfortable leading and working within a group. This was a result of working as a football coach as a Sunday and holiday job for the last four years. Furthermore, as a member of the university Paddleboard Society I was elected as their General Secretary. This resulted in working closely with the other committee members to ensure that the club ran well.

My part time Saturday job in Sales United has enhanced my customer service skills and sales technique. I have regularly exceeded my targets for opening customer account cards. Furthermore I have completed my European Computer Driving Licence qualification which has enhanced my IT skills, especially my knowledge of Excel and databases.

I believe I have the skills to fulfil the duties of this role and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Marethis
Jennifer Marethis

COVERING LETTERS (CONT)

How to structure your covering letter

A covering letter is a highly individual document and there is no one way to set it out. The structure below, though, suggests a way of covering the key points in the limited amount of space that you have available.

Introduction

- State the job you're applying for – the employer may be recruiting for more than one position!
- Where you found out about it (for example, Target Jobs, Milkround, a local paper or job site) – organisations like to know which of their advertising channels are working successfully;
- When you're available to start work.

Why you want the job

- Why you're interested in that type of work;
- Why the company attracts you.

Why you are the right person for the job

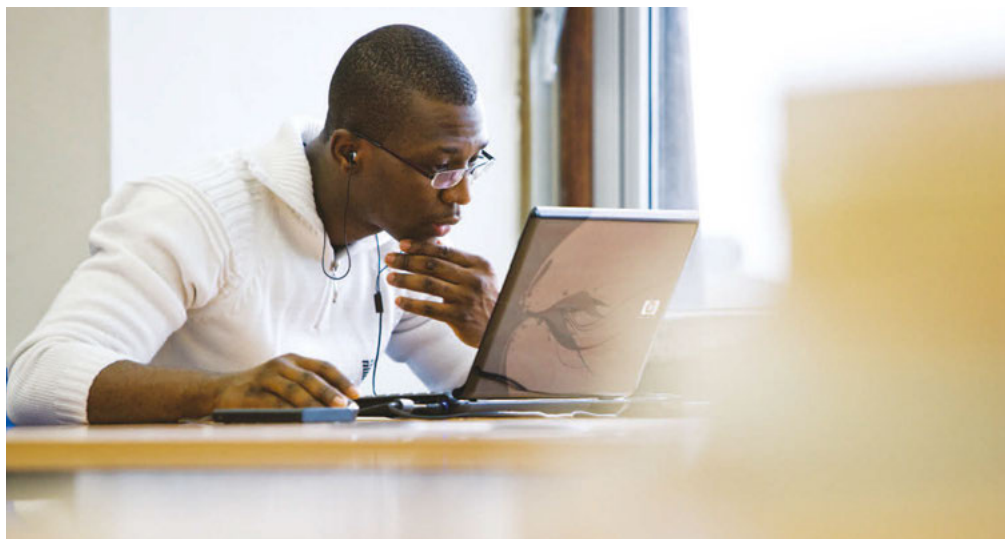
- Using the job description and person specification, say what you can offer in terms of skills, qualifications and experience, and relate these to the competencies that will be required in the job.

Any further relevant information

- You may, for instance, want to explain poor exam results or any gaps in your career history due to illness, course changes, etc. Don't go into too much detail but keep this section brief and, as far as possible, positive.

Conclusion

- State when you will be available for interview (and any dates that you won't);
- Thank the employer and say you look forward to hearing from them soon.



LINKEDIN



What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn www.linkedin.com is a business-oriented social networking site with over 467 million members worldwide. It allows you to network online with professionals from all kinds of different sectors: there are also groups for different regions and institutions such as universities (including one for University of Kent alumni and a group for 'students and recent grads').

Why should I use LinkedIn?

You can use LinkedIn to research jobs, careers and employers; to promote yourself and your skills, qualifications and experience and to network with people who may be able to help your career. Many organisations will also advertise jobs through LinkedIn.

How can I use LinkedIn most effectively?

- Set up a good, informative profile;
- Add connections and get endorsements;
- Join groups and follow organisations;
- Use LinkedIn regularly and keep your profile up to date.
- Tips for using LinkedIn: creating a profile, building relationships and finding a job <http://students.linkedin.com/uk>
- A guide to using LinkedIn from TARGET Jobs <http://bit.ly/1Jc7ojv>
- University of Kent LinkedIn page www.linkedin.com/school/11866



APPLICATION FORMS

Public sector organisations, large commercial companies, professional firms and many other types of employer normally produce their own application form and require all candidates to use it. Application forms are also commonly used for applications to postgraduate courses.

While many employers will have a form designed specifically for graduate trainee candidates, others may use the same form for all posts within the company, from factory-floor workers to senior executives. The graduate form may be more demanding but the generalist form can also present difficulties if it puts more emphasis on experience than on qualifications.

To apply by this method, you may be asked to complete an online application form or to download a form in Word or PDF format to be completed and returned by email or post. However, the basic techniques for completing a form successfully are the same whatever its format.

Before you start: some do's and don'ts

- DO read the form through and follow all instructions.
- DO use a word-processing program to draft out your answers, rather than typing them directly into the online form. This will allow you to use a spell-checker before cutting and pasting the text into the form itself, and also to save your answers to refer to later;
- DO try to fill all the space provided for your answers – too much blank space makes an application look half-hearted – but DON'T waffle just to fill up the space!
- DO keep a copy of each application form. When it comes to the interview stage, it is immeasurably useful to remember what you have told the employer!
- DON'T use informal language as you would in an email or text message. Your language should be well-structured, grammatical and businesslike;
- DO be concise. Online forms may restrict the number of words or characters which you can use in any one answer but, even if they don't, your responses should still be succinct and to the point;
- DO save your work as you go along so that you don't lose everything in the event of a crash;
- DO keep a note of your passwords – in a safe place!

The questions

Application forms will usually begin with straightforward and factual information about your education, qualifications, experience and interests. Some may not ask for very much more than this but many graduate employers' application forms are much more detailed and testing.

Competency-based questions

These are used by most large organisations and are the hardest part of the form for most applicants. These questions usually begin 'Describe a time when you ...' or 'Give an example of ...' and ask for examples of specific skills such as teamwork or leadership.

- Tell us about a situation or problem that required you to think differently and come up with a creative solution (RBS)
- Please describe how you successfully overcame difficulties to ensure that a particularly important piece of work/a project was delivered to a high standard. (Microsoft)
- Demonstrate how you have worked as part of a team and outline the skills you used to influence the outputs of that team (NHS Clinical Scientists)

Remember that these skills will be the ones that are essential for success with that employer – these questions are the most important on the form.

APPLICATION FORMS (CONT)

They also now crop up in most graduate interviews and the best way to prepare for these interviews is to complete a few application forms with these questions. You can also practice competency questions on the CES website www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/competency.html.

Examples could come from vacation or part-time work; university clubs and societies; voluntary work; study at school or university; holidays and travel or personal and family experiences. Use MyFolio <http://myfolio.kent.ac.uk/myfolio/> to record these activities and reflect on the skills you have gained through them.

Compose a paragraph or so for each situation, outlining what happened, how you approached it and what the outcome was. The focus should be on **you** – even if the situation involved a group, interviewers will want to know what your specific role was in achieving the desired result.

As well as looking at what you say in answer to such open-ended questions, recruiters will be looking at how you say it. This includes your use of English: how well you express yourself, your spelling and grammar.

A good way to answer competency questions is via the STAR approach – Situation, Task, Action and Result.

- **The Situation** forms the introduction;
- **The Task** outlines what you needed to do (it may be combined with the Situation if you have a limited number of words for your answer);
- **The Action** you took should form the main body of your answer.
- **The Result** should be your conclusion – try to be specific if you can: 'We won the cup'; 'Membership of the society increased by 40%'; 'We raised £400 for charity'. If you failed to achieve your objective say what you learned and what you would do differently next time.

Some recruiters have even incorporated the STAR approach into their application forms, as in the following example:

'Please give us an example of when you have found it difficult to build a working relationship with someone. What was the situation? What action did you take to ensure the outcome was positive? (Mars)

Example

Describe how your personal planning and organisation resulted in the successful achievement of a personal or group task.

- **Situation.** How, when, where, with whom?
'During my summer job as an administrator at a chain of pubs...'
- **Task.** Describe the task or issue you were faced with. '... I took on the task of rationalising the stock control system.'
- **Action.** What action did YOU take? In team tasks applicants often fall into the trap of describing in detail the work of the whole group without mentioning their own contribution! 'I analysed factors such as when the stock was last ordered, what it was used for and how often it was used. I created a spreadsheet to manage this process and to generate weekly reports to keep track of stock'
- **Result.** What results did you achieve/conclusions did you reach/what did you learn from the experience? 'My ideas were accepted and implemented which achieved a 15% reduction in excessive stock levels.'

Unusual or difficult questions

Application forms for jobs in popular and competitive fields such as advertising, the media or multinational companies often use questions that are different from, and more challenging than, the norm. These areas require outstanding verbal and written communication skills, which may be tested to the limit by the form! Here are some examples:

- Indian restaurants are usually busy in the evenings but rarely so at lunchtimes. If you ran an Indian restaurant, how would you encourage lunchtime custom? (Ogilvy)
- Write a story of no more than 300 words about one Euro coin (Publicis)
- You and your best friend ... find yourselves the last two remaining candidates for a job you'd both die for. Write two draft letters to your friend, each no longer than 150 words: the first in the event that you get the job; the second in the event that your best friend does. (WPP)
- If you were a fictional character from a novel, who would you be? (Withers Solicitors)

We are not offering ideas for how to answer these questions: if you have the potential to succeed in these highly-competitive areas you will have the originality and initiative to think of your own! But be different, make it interesting to read and, although you should always keep the job description in mind, don't just try and give the employer what you think they want to hear.

References

Generally, employers will expect one academic and one personal reference. The academic referee may be your personal tutor who will usually be happy to give you a reference. If, though, you feel that another member of staff knows you better, or will give you a more favourable reference, it's fine to ask them.

The personal referee may give a work-related reference or a more general character reference. You can ask current or previous employers, from vacation, part-time or voluntary posts as well as longer-term jobs or placements, for a work reference. Character referees may be family friends, former teachers, religious leaders etc. who know you well. If you wish to give three referees this is usually OK.

Always ask your referees' permission to give their names, and tell them something about the jobs for which you are applying. Send them a copy of your CV or application form, so they know what you have told the employer about yourself and can structure their reference in an appropriate way. Do keep your referees informed about the progress of your job search: tell them when you get a job offer and thank them for their time and trouble.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Most forms have a space for you to add anything not covered in any other section of the form. Do use this space – if you don't, you are wasting an opportunity to make an impression as an individual. You might include evidence of further important skills, awards and prizes; expand on your experience, or your interest in the company, or give more detail about relevant aspects of your degree studies such as projects or dissertations.

It can also be used to address potential problem areas, but always do this in a positive way!

Examples here could include reasons for a year out or career break (what you did and what you gained); poor academic results (if you have a GOOD reason for these, outline BRIEFLY what went wrong); illness or disability (if relevant and in a positive manner, emphasising what you can do rather than what you can't).

Equality Monitoring

Many forms include a questionnaire asking for diversity information such as age, gender, ethnic origin, disability, religion and sexual orientation. This plays no part in the selection process but is included so that employers can measure the diversity of their applicants. They are optional, though, so you are not obliged to complete this section if you prefer not to.

Disabilities

Most employers can provide application material in alternative formats (such as large print or audio) for candidates with disabilities. Our web pages under www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/targetedinformation.html include advice and help on making applications, including the issue of how or whether to disclose your disability at the application stage, as well as vacancy information and links to useful resources for students with disabilities.

Further Help

The Careers and Employability Service web pages on CVs and covering letters at www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/cvs.html and application forms www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/applications.html will give you further advice and examples.

You can bring in your own CV or application form for feedback from an adviser at one of our drop-in sessions – see www.kent.ac.uk/ces/advice.html for times at your campus.



THE CAREERS AWARD ON MOODLE

Enhance your CV and application skills online

This is open to all students at Kent at any stage of your studies. You gain the award by completing quizzes and assignments on Moodle, the University's Virtual Learning Environment. It will not only help you to improve your CV and job-hunting skills: it can transform your chances of getting a graduate job. On completion of the award, you will receive a certificate and 60 Employability Points.

Relevant parts of the Careers Award include:

- Written Communication: skills involved, how employers assess your writing skills and a spelling and grammar check
- Learn how to produce top quality application forms in the Skills Assignment
- Do informative quizzes on CVs and covering letters
- Get your CV quickly and professionally reviewed online.

Find out more at www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/careers/moodle.html

"It has made me feel much more confident in applying for jobs and how to make my CV and covering letters 100 times better."

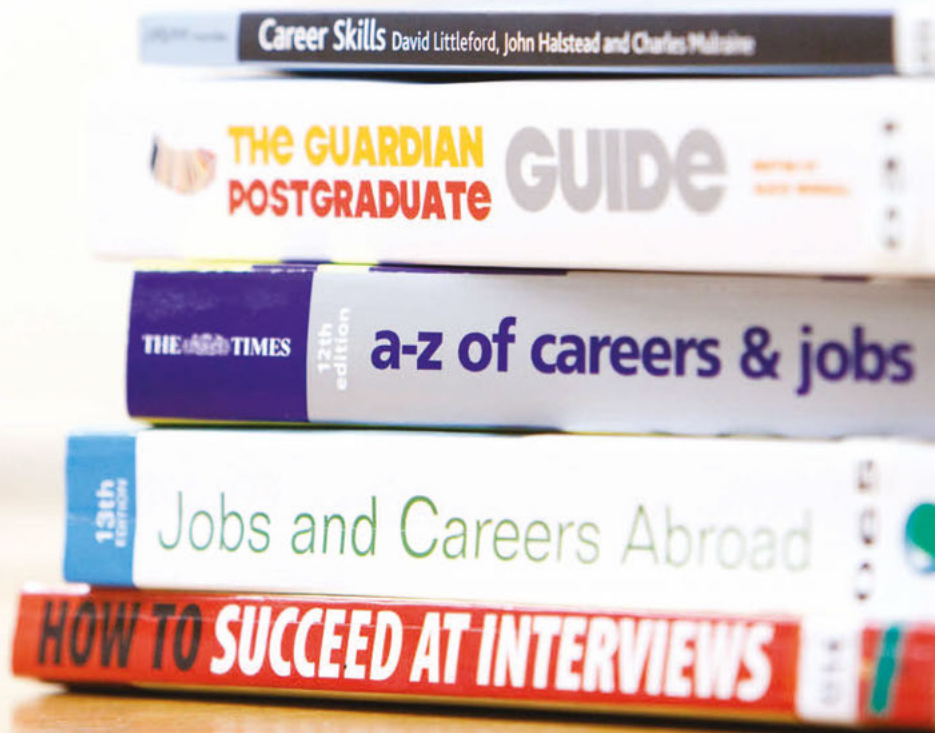
"It provides all the information needed especially for people like me who had no idea how to write a CV or cover letter. I am recommending this to everyone I know."

"I enjoyed the depth of the module. It went far beyond some general tips on how to write a good CV and prepare for an interview. Rather it went in to detail about the whole process of graduate job search from the beginning to the end. It was very instructive."

"It was so easy, quick and I learned a lot. Without realising, you have finished the course and have already put together a very good CV and covering letter."

"Thank you for this amazing opportunity it has helped me tremendously in writing a CV!"





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