Job Club
Histon and Impington

Get the Right Job Programme
CVs & Application Forms

SESSION 2

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What is a CV or Application Form for?

The purpose of the CV or Application Form is to get an interview

It is a snapshot of your career, not an in depth story

- Should prompt questions at interview (that way you know the answers)
- Want the reader to engage with it quickly and be left wanting to find out more about you

Needs to have a clear message

- Ultimately it is an advert for your skills

There is no “right” way of doing it

- Your CV or application form is personal to you

What makes a successful CV or Application Form?

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Targeted at your audience
- With appropriate language and examples

Brief
- Ideally 2 sides for a CV

Clear
- Not too much jargon – will be read by HR and hiring manager

Clean
- Simple fonts, no colour, clear paragraphs, use whitespace

Focused on results
- Be clear about what you have achieved

Test everything with ***"Will this help me get an interview?"*** and remove what does not help

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Style and language

Use positive language

- Use power words from the list
- Start sentences with the most important words

Use short clear sentences and bullet points

- Break up large blocks of text, they are hard to scan

Focus on achievements

- Where possible use facts and figures
- Remember to include the benefit to the organisation

Highlight your keys skills

- Use examples to make them real not generic

words.pdf

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Main Elements of a CV

Contact details

Profile

Achievements

Employment experience

Educational qualifications

Skills

Interests

References

The file

Bold = essential

Main Elements of the CV
Contact details

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Needs to have correct contact details at top

- Name in bold at the top - this is easier for people handling your CV
- Address – especially if you live near where you applying
- Phone number (mobile)
- Email address (professional)
- Possibly LinkedIn address

Don’t usually include

- Age
- Nationality – But if from overseas useful to explain that you have a right to work in UK
- Photo
- Gender
- Marital status

No need to say CV or Curriculum Vitae

Main Elements of the CV
Employment Experience

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In reverse date order with your most recent at the top

- Can include full time, part time, temporary or voluntary, paid or unpaid

Include your job title, the name of the organisation and dates

- Don’t undersell it

Describe your duties, and especially your achievements, plus relevant skills.

- It is important to use keywords that match the skills and experience that the job requires

Think of ways to make your most relevant experience stand out

- May want to have ‘Relevant work experience’ and ‘Additional work experience’ sections
- Again this should be in reverse chronological order with your current or most recent work at the top
- Can highlight in cover letter

Main Elements of the CV
Educational Qualifications

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In reverse date order with your most recent at the top

- Level of detail depends on how relevant it is to the role you're applying for
- Summarise qualifications such as GCSEs where listing them all could take up too much space

Make sure you include the qualification, name of the institution and the dates

- Include grades if relevant and recent *"Will it help me get an interview?"*

Translate qualifications into terms useful to employer

- Employers may not be aware of the specifics of your course
- Especially important for overseas applications

Include any relevant content or projects

- Major elements are part of your experience
- Think about how these showed your technical and general skills

Optional Elements of the CV
Profile

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Can be used at the top of a CV to summarise who you are

- Don't have to have one
- Helps focus on the key issues around your job search

Needs to be short, clear and positive

- Can be very hard to write but the effort is worthwhile
- Avoid clichés and vague claims

A Useful Template structure - 3-4 sentences long

- 1: **You**
  - Who you are in terms of occupational background, experience and sector knowledge
- 2: **What**
  - What you have to offer in terms of know-how, skills, what you have done and achieved
- 3: **What Else**
  - What in your mix of skills and experience makes you unusual or attractive
- 4: **Next**
  - What's next? What kind of role, organisation, culture and challenges would provide the right next step for you?

Optional Elements of the CV
Achievements

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An optional section for people with experience

- Lets you to highlight significant achievements

Make sure achievements are relevant to the type of job you are applying for

- Make sure that the employer will see them as achievements
- Where possible use facts and figures
- Describe specific examples with the outcome for the organisation

Don’t repeat text from the skills or employments sections

- Should be clear who achievement was for

Optional Elements of the CV
Skills

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This is an optional section

- Lets you to outline the personal skills you offer, such as communication, leadership and organisation.

Make sure your headings reflect the skills for the job you are applying for

- Do not simply list all your skills
- Describe specific examples of how you have gained them
- Try to show how your actions made a difference to the organisation (the result)

Don’t repeat information that you have covered in other sections

- If you’ve already described all your skills, you don’t need a separate skills section

Make sure that practical skills are listed somewhere in your CV

- Including IT, languages and driving licence

Optional Elements of the CV
Interests

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Good to include short descriptions of some of your different leisure interests

- Try to demonstrate a good cross-section of your abilities and personality
- Don't just produce a long list of activities or take up so much space that this section dominates your CV
- What would you say if asked about them at interview?

Think about what these say about you and get the balance right

- Think about the test *"Will it help me get an interview?"*
- Some are seen as positive – acting, team sports,
- Some generally seen as negative eg watching TV, facebook (unless going for social media job!)

Optional Elements of the CV
References

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Usually two people who can comment on what you have done recently

- Include the referee's name, relationship to you and full contact details
- Always ask permission first and keep them informed about what you are applying for
- Can be work and academic
- Some companies are very limited in what they can say

Depends if you are required to produce references

- Can just put "References available on request" but need to have them ready if asked

Main Elements of the CV
The File

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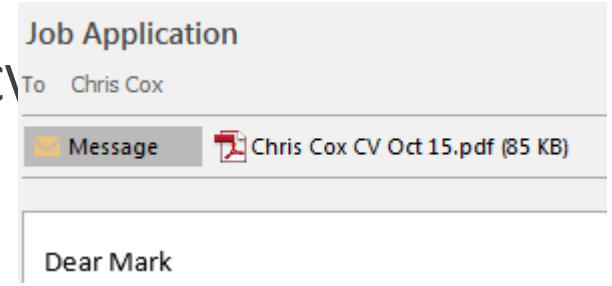
Use a clear filename

- On email this is the first thing the recruiter will see of your CV



Include your name in the filename

- Makes it easy to find when they have saved it

Avoid generic or working titles

- Document23, CV version 6, CV corrected by VR…..

Send as PDF

- Avoids possible formatting issues between mac and PC and on printers

Keep a copy of what you sent

- Important when preparing for interview - especially if tailored to the job

Checking, checking, checking

Some employers will **reject any** CV with mistakes in it

- Get someone else to check it
- One tip is to review from the bottom up

No spelling mistakes

- An absolute no-no as Word will highlihgt the obvious ones
- Check company names and job titles carefully

Other typos

- Check for random double spaces (use find and replace)
- Consistent capitalisation for job Titles and Technical terms
- Make sure there are full stops at the end of sentences.
- Be consistent in styling, especially with bullet points – capitals, full stops…
- Check the length of dashes – word can change them - sometimes

Consistent formatting

- Make sure everything is aligned and font sizes are consistent

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Why employers use application forms

Easier to compare different candidates

- Puts everyone on the same basis

Less open to accusations of discrimination

- Less subjectivity than you get judging CVs and cover letters

Can ask questions which are appropriate to them

- Make sure they have what they need to shortlist

Makes it easier for recruiters

- But much more work for applicants…

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Read all the instructions carefully

Read all the instructions carefully and follow them exactly

- Make sure you know when and how to submit the form

Some questions may have several parts to them

- Read them carefully and make sure that you answer all parts

Complete ALL sections of the form

- Don’t leave something blank just because you don’t know how to approach answering it
- Your form may be rejected
- If a question really isn’t applicable to you, write ‘N/A’ (not applicable)

When completed check the instructions again

- In case you have missed anything

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Overview of the form

Come in different formats

- Normally online
- A few still use paper

Factual sections

- Personal details, qualifications, work experience etc.
- These should be similar between forms
- Can cut and paste from CV or previous applications

Sections for other selection criteria

- Need to write about your skills, knowledge and experience
- Show how you match their criteria
- Will vary from form to form

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Understand the role

Read the job description and person specification carefully

Be clear about the role and competencies required

- Write your application in relation to these
- Use their keywords from the job description

Identify the main criteria

- Note down examples from your experience which show how you meet them
- Use these as a basis for writing the long answers

Applying to Cambridge University

For a job on www.jobs.cam.ac.uk

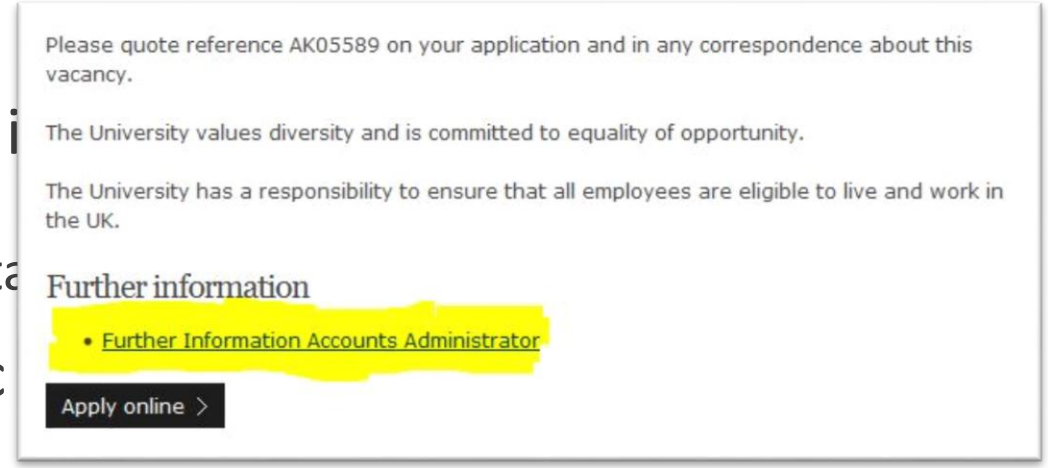
At the bottom of the general job description i
Information

- It is really important to click in this and get the deta

Often a long and detailed list out the specific
experience

Make sure that you check off all the skills listed

- Some set a threshold number eg 75%
- % of the skills and experience you have to have before they will consider an interview.
- So if you don't reference all of the ones you have in the application you probably won't get an interview.



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Include real examples

Use ‘STAR’ (Situation, Task, Action and Result) to help you provide a concise and effective answer to competency based questions.

Situation - provide some brief details about the situation you were in when you used your competencies so that the reader can understand the context of the example.

Task - outline what your objective or purpose was during that situation, again, to put your answer into context.

Action - describe what you (personally) did in that situation and how you approached it. It is worth including what you were responsible for

Result - state the outcome, for example: Were the objectives met? What did you learn/gain from being in that situation?

Filling it in

‘Sell’ yourself to the employer

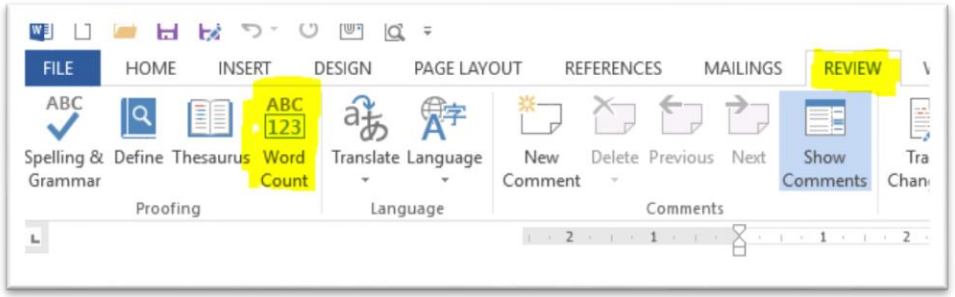
- It isn’t time for false modesty but make sure that you don’t go too far and tip over into arrogance
- Avoid exaggeration
- Keep in mind positive thinking and positive writing

Ensure that you use good English language throughout

- Check all spelling, grammar and punctuation – easier to do in Word and then paste
- This is vitally important as many applications are rejected on this basis alone
- Avoid repetition of words “I really want..”

Use the word count

- Not too long – make sure you meet any limits



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Don’t cut corners

Avoid simple ‘cut and paste’ of long answers from previous applications

- Employers can usually tell when this is done as your answer won’t exactly match the question that they asked
- Even worse, applicants sometimes leave the previous organisation’s name or a different course title in the application!
- You can use a previous application as a prompt but write a new answer for each question

Take plenty of time over the application

- A good application takes a long while to complete and rushing an application will simply be a waste of your time
- It might take you a whole day to complete your first application form properly but hopefully your efforts will be rewarded with an interview or an offer on a course!

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Application Form Tips

Create master documents

- Listing your achievements in education, work and in your personal life,
- Helps to have a database to draw from when completing an application forms

Get a friend to read it through for you

- We are taught not to boast, so sell ourselves short when completing applications.
- An honest friend can help to point out what you haven't included

Keep a copy

- Makes it easier next time and is essential when preparing for the interview
- May need to screen grab online forms

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Summary

Customise your application to the organisation you are applying to

Show enthusiasm as to why you really want the job

Show you meet the criteria

Give complete answers and provide convincing examples

Check your spelling and grammar

Keep a copy