

Postgraduate & Early Career Researcher Series: CVs

CV styles and “norms” vary across countries and work sectors. In this tip-sheet we focus on CVs that are appropriate for positions based in the UK, and for academic roles in the UK and beyond.

Key points to bear in mind as you create your CV are:

- They are *factual marketing documents* designed to get an interview or meeting (not a job)
- They are living documents that should be *updated and tailored* each time you send them out
- They need to be *clear and attractive* - your prospective employer may spend only *30 seconds* deciding whether to put you on the *long list or discard* your application so put your *key information on page 1*

BEFORE YOU START

Consider the role you are applying for.

Find out as much as you can about the position and organisation:

- What are the key areas of expertise the role needs?
Look at the advert / job description (JD) / person specification
- Does your future employer have a particular ethos / set of attitudes you need to reflect?
Look at the website / news articles
- Can you find out about the individuals you will be working with?
Explore LinkedIn etc. / use your network of friends & colleagues
- Does the advert have a contact for enquiries?
Consider calling and asking (non-obvious) questions to get information about the role, the person you will be working with, and to create a positive impression

Consider yourself.

Remind yourself of your strengths, abilities and potential – get into a positive mindset:

- Make a long list of your strengths, knowledge and skills. The [Vitae RDF domains](#) and/or the following list can be used as prompts to help you:
 - *Technical skills & Discipline knowledge*
 - *Interpersonal Skills (communicating; teamwork; adaptability, leading...)*

- *Personal effectiveness (managing yourself & projects; organising; problem solving...)*
- Note down some instances / anecdotes where you have demonstrated them (they do not necessarily have to be from the workplace)

Consider the recipient of your CV.

They will be reviewing lots of applications - do everything you can to make it easy for them to see you are an excellent candidate for the role:

- If you were in their shoes what would you be looking for?
Review the advert / JD and highlight key words
- What makes a CV appealing / easy to read?
Think about the presentation:
 - *Areas of dense, justified text can be off-putting – try left-aligning text and using 1.15 line spacing*
 - *Include plenty of white space – it is inviting and gives people an area to write notes*
 - *Keep to a clean sans serif text (Arial, Verdana and Calibri are good examples)*
 - *Ensure the text size is not too small - point 11 is a good option (or possibly 10 for Arial)*
 - *Using bullet points and / or indents can help break up lots of text*
- How can you help them scan your CV and find relevant, engaging information easily?
 - *Use headings (in a larger size and/or bold text) to help people navigate your CV*
- What sort of language and tone do they use?
As you write, reflect the language they use – it

will make it easier for them to relate to your application

- How can they believe you have the experience they need?

Prepare to give them specific evidence of what you have done:

- Work your anecdotes into **STAR** (Situation; Task; Action; Result) stories. See the ECC [“Presenting your skills to an Employer: STARS” leaflet](#)
- Use the **SMART** acronym (Specific; Measurable; Action; Relevant; Timebound) to give detail

CV FORMATS

There are 3 general formats that researchers use: Chronological, Skills-based and Academic CVs. The format to use depends on the role you are applying for and your relevant experience. Details of a standard layout for each are given below, however it is possible to modify these in order to showcase your skills and experience for your audience

Chronological:

This is what most people consider a CV to be:

A 2 side document that uses the following layout:

Side 1:	- Contact Details - [Personal Profile] - Employment
Side 2:	- Employment (cont.) - Higher Education - [Additional skills / Interests] - [References]

This CV is suitable when there is a link between the areas you have been working in and the role you are applying for as your recent work / achievements are presented on page 1:

- List the roles that you have been doing by category starting with most recent first
 - If you are completing your PhD, this is studying, so employers will expect your first heading to be Education
 - If you are an ECR, you are paid staff, so your first heading will be Employment
- Highlight your relevant skills / experience / STAR stories within each role

- Supply more detail for your more recent roles. You do not have to include ALL roles (e.g. does evening bar work help your application?)

Skills / Competency-based:

This can be a particularly effective format of CV but needs to be crafted with care:

A 2 side document that uses the following layout:

Side 1:	- Contact Details - [Personal Profile] - Relevant Skills / Experience
Side 2:	- Employment - Higher Education - [Additional skills / Interests] - [References]

This is particularly suitable when you are looking to move to a different sort of role:

- Select examples of your relevant experience and skills (whether recent or historical) and place these under suitable headings on page 1
- Summarise your Employment History and Education on page 2 – this can be limited to: dates; job title; employer

Academic:

Use this when applying for academic roles:

A multi-page document based on a Chronological CV that uses the following headings / layout:

Side 1:	- Contact Details - Qualifications - Employment
Side 2-3	- Employment (cont.) - * Grants & Awards - * Teaching - * Supervision - * Public Engagement / Impact - * Evidence of Esteem - * Positions of Responsibility / Departmental Administration - * Membership of Professional Bodies / Learned Societies - [References]
Appendix	Publications
Appendix	[Research Statement]

This CV gives extra space for you to provide information that is important for an academic career

Main document basics:

- Do not include a personal profile on an academic CV
- Start by summarising your educational qualifications in reverse chronological order: level; date awarded; title
- List your Employment / Work History as for a chronological CV. Place most emphasis on the last 5 years
- Review the position you are applying for and determine the order they refer to **Research**, **Teaching** and **Administrative** tasks
 - The one referred to first is generally more important for the role and needs most detail
 - Pick and mix from the “*” headings to give evidence of your relevant achievements

Research:

Your ability to obtain funding and potential to contribute positively to the [REF](#) exercise are important for a research career. Consider using the following headings to showcase your achievements:

- **Grants and Awards:** include successful applications that you have won or were actively involved in securing. Do not include unsuccessful applications. Give the monetary amount and duration where possible
- **Evidence of Esteem:** include any relevant examples of how you / your research is esteemed e.g. invited to give a talk; member of editorial board...
- **Impact / Outreach:** highlight any particularly successful Impact / Outreach activities you have performed recently – especially if you obtained additional funding to help deliver this

Teaching:

If you are applying for a teaching fellow position or to work at a teaching intensive HEI, your pedagogical qualifications, experience of teaching and assessing, familiarity with the [HEA](#), [QAA](#) and arising [TEF](#) are important for your career:

- **Teaching:** give examples of your breadth and depth of teaching experience. What level courses? What size of group? What format? (include any online / flipped classroom approaches) Highlight areas where you have developed lectures / programmes / been a course co-ordinator.

Include any demonstrator activities within this section. If you have a lot of information to put in this section, consider using sub-headings to help people navigate your CV easily

- **Supervision:** include examples of where you have supervised / managed others – whether you were the designated supervisor or not

Administration:

All positions in academia include some level of administration. Showing that you understand and/or have experience of this will help your application:

- **Position of Responsibility:** note down specific roles you have in addition to your main job e.g. Safety Officer; Athena-Swan representative; Committee membership...
- **Departmental Administration:** use this heading instead of the one above to note down general administrative duties you perform but are not particularly named for e.g. managing group budget; co-ordinating UCAS visits; organising seminar series...

Appendices:

- Start each appendix on a new page (or in a new document if requested)
- List your publications in reverse chronological order using a standard referencing method
- Depending on the strength of your publication record, you can separate or mix up your peer-reviewed publications, posters, talks, book chapters etc. But make it easy to navigate
- Provide a research statement if requested – it is not expected otherwise

CV GENERALITIES

Although the type of CV you create vary, the following are guidelines for common elements

Contact Details

Head the CV with your name and contact details (there is no need to use the title Curriculum Vitae):

- If you are applying for a research position, ensure you include research qualification next to your name (e.g. Dr / PhD / DEng)
- Give your home (not work) address
- Supply a contact telephone number (may be at work if you can take confidential calls)

- Give a personal email address that you monitor (ensure it appears professional)
- Do **not** include marital status, health, date of birth or age

Personal Profile

This optional section is used to entice the reader to peruse your CV further:

- Keep it short and punchy - limit it to 2 (or a max of 3) lines only
- Use it to give a brief insight into who you are and what you can bring to the role
Think about your: Strengths; Background experience; Personality; Ambitions
- For more information see the ECC "[Writing a personal Profile](#)" leaflet.

Employment

List your work history and give evidence of your skills and achievements that "sell" you:

- Head up each entry including the name of your job title, employer, and dates in that role
Make the most important message prominent using formatting (bold / font size change / line returns). Is your job title or where you worked more important for this particular application?
- Do not try and include everything that you did in a role - review your **STAR** and **SMART** stories and select relevant examples to feature under each role
Generate short sentences starting with action words to highlight your relevant skills and achievements. For more information and useful action words see the ECC "[Effective Writing](#)" leaflet
- Try to ensure different job roles evidence complementary skills that together demonstrate you have what the employer wants

Higher Education

Unless specifically requested to do otherwise, limit your Education section to your Bachelors degree and beyond – list in reverse chronological order:

- Head up each entry including the degree type and title, grade achieved, institution name, dates attended
- Treat your PhD as you would a job role – think of your **STAR** and **SMART** stories and select relevant examples to feature. As this took up a considerable amount of your postgraduate life, you can spend a lot of space on this

- Only include your supervisors name if they are very well known in your field and being associated with them will help your application. YOU are applying for the job, not them

Additional Skills / Interests / Information

These optional sections allow you to showcase other strengths you have that are relevant:

- Create and use headings that allow you to draw attention to important, useful information:
 - Write if you are a citizen from a non EEA country but have the right to work in the UK
 - If the role requires specific techniques / skills – note any expertise / training here
- You do not have to write an interests section. If you do, consider carefully what to include and why. Stick to interests that could be a talking point in an interview, or show what kind of person you are
E.g. if you write about playing tennis at national level during university, this could show that you are a determined, motivated, competitive person able to focus on achieving stretch goals

References

Do not be free with your referees!

- Unless specifically asked to put references on your CV, write "References available on request", or do not include a heading at all.
Putting referee details on your CV takes up space on your CV that you can use to sell yourself. It also means people can contact your referees at any point – you lose control of the activity and your ability to "prime" your team
- Always ask permission and inform referees about the jobs you are applying for

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Jobs.ac.uk](#) and [Vitae](#) both have useful resources specifically tailored for researchers
- [Targetjobs.co.uk](#) and [Prospects.ac.uk](#) both have useful resources for graduates, much of which is useful for researchers

FINAL TIPS

- When printing use good quality, A4 paper
- If sending electronically – send as a pdf
- **Check spelling, grammar and punctuationand check again!**