



Writing effective CVs through thinking first

This guide includes the following SECTIONS :

1. What is a CV and for what purpose?
2. Different types of CV
3. Key principles – must do's if you want quality in your CV
4. Content
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6. Further more detailed information including CV examples

1. What is a CV and for what purpose?

Curriculum Vitae is a Latin expression of 'Course of my life' though currently it is used predominantly to apply for and secure: jobs, placements, internships, volunteer roles & other e.g. Membership.

Additionally, for Students and Graduates, writing a CV is a useful exercise in itself as it is a powerful form of reflective thinking and processing. This is one approach to thinking about your Career.

ADVICE NOTE 1: It's never too early to start a CV.

ADVICE NOTE 2: Writing a CV in your first term/year is not about perfection. It's about getting started and gaining confidence. You can also use it as a comparator for your 'employability progress' made through university and afterwards

2. Different types of CV

Should you research this further you will notice that there are several variations. These include:

Stock/Tailor: A *Stock* CV gets you started. A *Tailored* CV is adapted for each individual opportunity

Live vacancy/Speculative: The *first* requires a CV which addresses the criteria advertised; the *latter* requires more thinking through and an excellent introduction

Structure styles: These include *Chronological/standard*, *Skills based*, *Teaching*, *Academic* and *Technological/Technical* (amongst others). Examples can be found via the links further below

International context: The USA refers to *Resume* whereas the UK prefers CV. 90% of the content is the same but presented in short 1 page format for USA

Other variations: The *Creative Industries* tend to have a specific style and format but in truth many students & graduates from these programmes also apply for work outside the industry necessitating more than one style of CV (note that 80% of the content is common for both styles)

Another consideration is the role of the *Covering letter*.. It is often useful to write the two documents together so they complement each other. If no covering letter is required or not accepted then more emphasis is required in the CV, particularly the personal statement section.

ADVICE NOTE 3: 1 or 2 pages? Aim for 2 typically unless very limited in experience

ADVICE NOTE 4: Avoid getting hung up on the different styles referred above. The majority of content is common to most styles.

ADVICE NOTE 5: If you are not currently actively seeking an opportunity why not produce a basic stock CV to just get in the swing of things? Use the chronological/standard style

ADVICE NOTE 6: If you have a stock CV, practice adapting it for the purposes of a live vacancy

ADVICE NOTE 7: Your CAREERS ADVISER can help explain all the above – it's your Careers Service so why not use it?

3. Key Principles & one simple approach (3 stage model)

Based on research and experience your Careers Service advises as follows:

- Just like an assignment, the more work you put in, the higher the probability of success
- Just like an assignment, the skilled reader tends to discern those who have put in the work
- Just like an assignment, you get a first or 2:1 by addressing the criteria
- Just like an assignment, if these are not clear to you, ask, research and think
- Just like an assignment, it often requires thinking, planning and only then writing
- Just like an assignment, there is often a deadline
- Just like an assignment, you should not just photocopy & use for all subsequent assignments
- Unlike an assignment, you can write a CV for practice sake in the way of a 'stock' CV
- Unlike an assignment, your CV covers more than 3 years of your life (often 30 or 40 years +)
- It is a skill which you can practice and learn
- Help is available to you (Careers Service again)
- You can include an element of 'Personal Brand' as well as addressing the criteria

- Q. What is the last thing you do? A. Write your CV?
- Q. Wouldn't that be the first thing? A. No – there are two other stages to consider
- Q. What's the plan then? A. 'Simples' ... follow our suggested **3 stage model** below

3 stage model:

- Part 1:** **ESTABLISHING THE CRITERIA – Reading, researching, asking & thinking**
- Part 2:** **FORMAT & STRUCTURE – what type of CV, information & in what order**
- Part 3:** **WRITING STRONG EVIDENCE AGAINST THE CRITERIA – good relevant evidence, well written using power verbs, direct English and excellent grammar & spelling**

ADVICE NOTE 8: If you are a 'natural freeform writer' and can process the criteria and the structure at the same time as writing strongly, then do this. If you're not, just follow the 3 step model above

ADVICE NOTE 9: If you just use a short-cut approach such as a 'CV template' from the web or an automated CV builder, it is possible to develop a CV. However, if you take just a little more time to understand and apply the principles above then you can develop a CV writing skill for life.

ADVICE NOTE 10: You are already doing this (following the 3 stage model) for your assignments which give you credits for your degree. In principle a good CV can get you that first breakthrough job and possibly change your life

4. Content

- Personal Details (name, address, telephone numbers and email)
- Career Objective / Personal Statement section (optional)
- Education (most recent first)
- Work Experience / Relevant Experience / Voluntary Experience
- Interests / Responsibilities / Achievements
- Skills
- Referees (usually two including one academic if you are an undergraduate or recent graduate)

These could originate from:

- *work experience/previous employment* - teamwork, IT skills etc...
- *leisure activities* - travel experiences, sporting activities, specific achievements etc...
- *hobbies & interests* - art, membership of clubs etc...
- *home life* - planning and organisation of family, personal finance etc...
- *academic life* - producing reports, collecting information or giving presentations etc...
- *voluntary work* – event management, relationship building etc...
- *committee/club society work* - decision making, communication, negotiation etc
- *Representative work* – course rep, local council, local PTA etc.

Other than where GOQs (General Occupational Qualifications) are at play, the information below is no longer expected or required on a UK CV:

Date of Birth / Age / Marital status / Gender / Dependants / Sexual Orientation / Reason for leaving / General health or Disability / Previous salary / National Insurance (NI) number / Political affiliation / Religious affiliation

Example of a GOQ vacancy – ‘*Women’s shelter Officer*’ {*must be Female*}

ADVICE NOTE 11: If you invest time in understanding the criteria, then writing strongly correspondingly becomes a lot easier

ADVICE NOTE 12: Aim to write using **power verbs** (‘doing’ words) and short punchy direct terminology and language

e.g. ‘In Pongleton’s Nursery I had to look after children’

REWORDED in punchier style

e.g. ‘Supervised Nursery age children’

ADVICE NOTE 13: Look at each element of your offer and get the maximum from it:

e.g. ‘As part of my work at McDonalds Monmouth I had to till up, lock up and serve people’

REWORDED maximising the experience ...

e.g. June ’17 – Oct ’18: Crew Member (McDonalds, Monmouth)

- *Managed security and risks’, requiring an eye for detail and common sense*
- *Completed Customer Service Training with the largest multi-national fast food retailer in the world*
- *Problem Solved in relation to stock turnover issues*
- *Team worked with range of crew member roles including shift swap-over and kitchen team*

5. Your final quick 5 minute checklist

- *DO Aim your CV at an identified target audience and vacancy criteria*
- *DO Keep your CV to 1 or 2 sides of A4*
- *DO Spell check your CV and covering letter: use a computer and a friend!*
- *DO Show a Careers Adviser a draft*
- *DO Use power verbs that make a positive impact & demonstrate your ability*

- *DON'T Put Curriculum Vitae at the top. Put your name at the top instead*
- *DON'T Send out the same CV and covering letter to multiple employers*
- *DON'T Use fonts that are hard to read or irregular formatting, colour or adaption*
- *DON'T Overuse "I".*
- *DON'T Rush the job. Better a day extra effort than waiting 6weeks for no response*

6. Links to further resources and information on writing CVs:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv.htm>

Contact our Careers Advisers:

Campus	Careers Adviser	email	Telephone
Carmarthen	Mark Thomas	mark.thomas@uwtsd.ac.uk	01267 676829
Lampeter	Jane Bellis	j.bellis@uwtsd.ac.uk	01570 424973
London	Maristela Parfitt	maristela.parfitt@uwtsd.ac.uk	0207 566 7600
Swansea	Val Davidge	val.davidge@uwtsd.ac.uk	01792 481222

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