



Academic excellence for
business and the professions

Starting the job search & successful applications

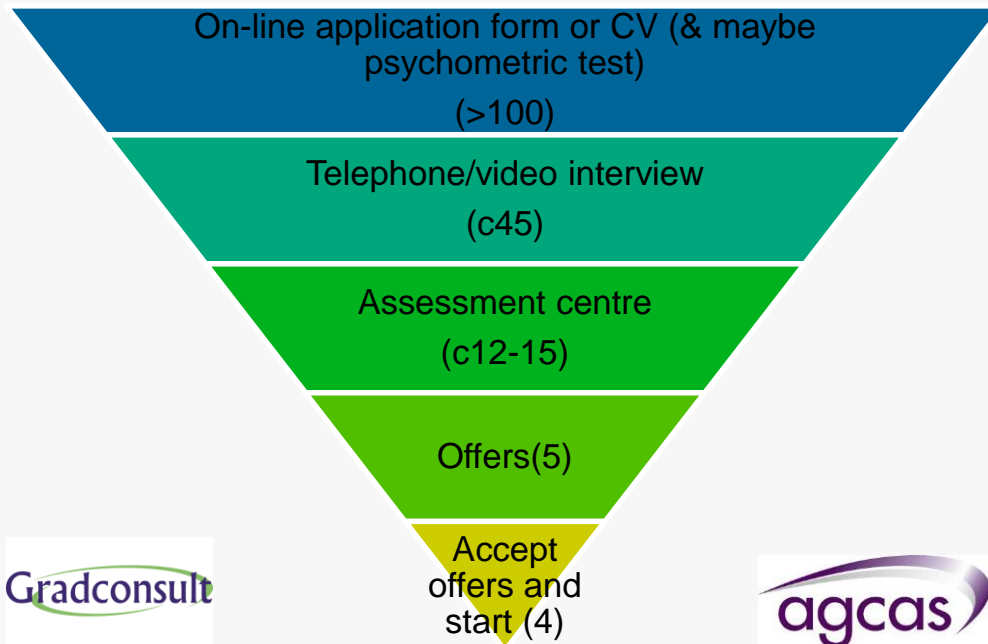
IN2015 Workshop 3 2018/19

By the end of today's workshop you should be able to:

- Attempt to write an online placement application, cover letter or personal statement
- Use the STAR technique to answer competency questions
- Complete Assessment 1 by the due date (October 21st at 5pm)
- Appreciate the importance of the 7 c's of communication when making applications
- Experience using recruiter's application screening principles
- Know what to do if you would like to access neurodiversity support

Typical graduate recruitment processes

- For 4 hires this is how many applicants are needed at each stage
- More than 50% of candidates will be filtered out at application and psychometric test stage
- Pay attention today to make sure your online application converts to an offer!
- Drop out rates of approx 1:3 cause recruiters problems. If you accept an offer stop making other applications.



Online application forms

- Online or offline method of compiling data about applicants
- Enable comparison of applicants on a like-for-like basis - all applicants answer the same questions
- Easy to filter out large volumes of candidates (even just from typos!)
- Cost effective for recruiters
- Most competitive stage - candidates lose out for basic reasons like not following instructions, poor English and lack of research
- Sifting is often outsourced to specialist recruitment agencies and reviewed by non-technical people

Online application form sections

- Your personal details
- Screening questions such as if you are eligible to work in the UK, if you have enough UCAS points or if you are in your penultimate year
- Personal statement
- Education/qualifications
- Work experience
- Questions to evidence your suitability for the role
- Usually include questions about any disabilities so that employers can make reasonable adjustments or provide extra assistance with attending an interview
- Equal opportunities information
- Additional information – this could be a way to explain disappointing A Level grades if you experienced difficulties at that time

The image shows a screenshot of a 'Job Application Form'. At the top, it says 'Job Application Form'. Below that, there are fields for 'Post Applied for:' and 'Post Number: 1245b'. The form is divided into sections. 'Section 1 Personal details' is highlighted. It includes instructions: 'Instructions: Please complete Section 1 in BLOCK CAPITALS'. The form contains the following fields and values: 'Last Name: Khan', 'First Name: Patricia', 'Address: 123 High Street, Warrstead, London, E11 2NX', 'Home Telephone N°: (020) 8123 4567', 'Email address: p.khan@gmail.com', and 'Mobile Tel N°: 07777 123 456'. 'Section 2 Present e' is partially visible at the bottom.

Likely question types and topics

- Motivation for applying
- Career choice and long-term career goals
- Achievements and things you are proud of
- Activities and interests
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Competency-based questions relevant to the role will test the likelihood of you performing well based on previous experiences

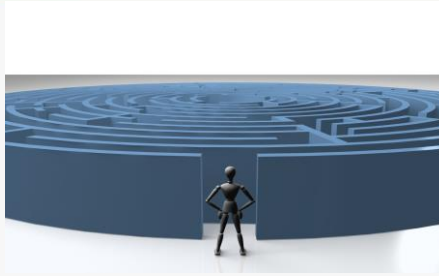


What are they testing?

- Research skills
- Commercial awareness about the company and the sector
- Understanding of what the job will actually involve
- Motivation for the role and company
- Potential for growth into the role based on previous success
- Application writing technique
- Ability to follow instructions
- Ultimately - your 'fit' for the role and company



Before you start



- Check that you are eligible to apply – UCAS points/relevant degree
- Analyse the job role – do you know what role you are applying for?
- Look at the core competencies required – do you have them?
- Log-in to the company careers website - register, look at the application process, make a copy of the questions, work on them from a Word doc
- Do not copy and paste from your last application - the questions might seem the same for each company but they will be subtly different
- Research the organisation, sector and similar roles in other companies

Typical motivation questions

- *“Why do you want to work for us?”*
 - Don't copy and paste information from the company website into your answer
 - Use your commercial awareness to give specific reasons for wanting to work there like maybe wanting to work on a particular new product or project they are launching
 - Try to be original, sincere and interesting
 - You could refer to meeting company representatives at careers fairs and networking events and being impressed by something they told you about the company
- *“Why have you chosen the area of business you are applying to?”*
 - You need to show you understand what the main divisions of the company are and what they do and match your interests and skill-set appropriately
- *“How is our company different to our competitors?”*
 - Show a deep level of research – know what the company USPs are, look at strategic plans, annual reports, competitor websites, news alerts, social media

Typical competency-based questions

- “Tell us about a time you have worked as part of a project team. What was your role and how did you contribute to the overall success of the project?”
- “Tell us about a time at work when you have initiated something (project/task) without being asked?”
- “Tell us about a time when you have been in a leadership role?”

These questions will always test the competencies required for the role

- Treat each question like an exam question - answer the set question
- Focus on what the employer is looking for - refer to the job description and person specification and match your answers to their requirements
- Structure your answers so they are concise - there will be a word limit
- There is a standard protocol to use when answering competency-based questions...

Structuring your answers



Situation - Set the scene, give context, what? when? where? what? who?

Task (What did *you* do? What was *your* task, responsibility or challenge?)

Action (How did *you* do it? What steps did *you* take?)

Result (What was the outcome? What did *you* achieve? Did *you* make a profit or efficiency saving? Try to make this part quantifiable. What did *you* do well? Did anything go wrong? How did *you* cope?

Learn To really impress, show that you have reflected and say what you learnt – if relevant include how you might do it differently next time or what skills you need to develop

Using the STAR technique well

- Use recent and relevant examples
- Try to include a task and action that are related to the role
- Use 50-60% of the word count to describe the action; don't spend too much time scene-setting
- Make sure that the action you took shows that have the skills *and* qualities the company are looking for
- Try to choose an example with a positive outcome; if it was not positive show what you learnt or what you might do differently next time (STARL)
- Don't describe what the competency is or how it may be useful to the company (they know that) – tell them what level of expertise you have of it by using a strong example

Group Activity - Using the STAR technique

- Get into groups of 4.
 - Look at the IBM application form competency questions
 - Each person should select 1 competency and take 5 minutes to write an answer that evidences that they have experience of that competency using the STAR technique.
 - You will each have one minute to feed your answer back to your group.
-
- **Adaptability** - *How do you cope with changing demands and stress? Do you respond positively to change? Can you adapt to new situations quickly? Are you flexible? Have you successfully completed several projects with competing deadlines?*
 - **Effective communication** - *Do you present information clearly, precisely and succinctly? Can you adapt the way you communicate to your audience? Do you listen to others?*
 - **Self-motivation and drive to succeed** - *Will you proactively learn new skills – even if they're beyond the scope of your current job? Will you put in the time and energy needed to achieve results?*
 - **Client focus** - *Can you see a situation from a client's viewpoint, whether that's colleagues or customers? Can you anticipate their needs?*
 - **Technical skills** – *This could include programming languages, notable accomplishments, and your greatest technical achievement.*

How to impress recruiters



- Highlight achievements not just tasks
- Be specific – where, when, how, who, what?
- Quantify - how many people/ how much profit/ how much time saved?
- Justify decisions or actions you refer to
- Use interesting examples (what will make you stand out?)
- Use original examples (lots of people refer to team projects)
- Talk about when you taught yourself something or created something like an app or a game – think about your portfolio development option!
- Use recent examples across a range of activities; education, employment, sports, volunteering, societies and hobbies
- Show you know what impacts their business

Before you submit your application



- Spell, grammar and sense check it
- Correct any casual/informal language
- Make sure your answers are not too generic or vague
- Check that you haven't typed the wrong company name
- Ask somebody to proof-read it for you
- Make sure you haven't lied or exaggerated – your interviewer may quiz you on anything you wrote
- Print or save a copy for future reference – always review your application before an interview
- Make sure you have followed all of the instructions

Assessment 1 is due 21st October at 5pm

1. Professional Development Plan - establish SMART goals (objectives) to achieve over the short, medium and long term
 2. Application Form Questions – Find the template in the assessment 1 area of Moodle and answer 5 (out of a possible 10) application form questions. You must all answer question 1.
- Assessment 1 is worth 30% of overall PDIT module grade

Job specifications tell you what to write about!

- Look at the Assessment 1 job description, note that there are 3 roles to apply for
 - Specify which role you are applying for
 - You must all answer question 1 and then choose another 4 questions
-
- The job spec provides a lot of information about: the company, location, salary, duration, application method, what the job will involve and the skills required.
 - Coming up are lots of ideas for you about how to answer the questions.
 - It does not mean that if you do all this you will get 100% - it will depend on your style of writing and your overall approach
 - Please take the following as general guidance and *not* a prescriptive set of instructions

Q.2 – ‘Why have you chosen to pursue a career in IT?’

- This is a motivation question. Motivation for studying IT will link to motivation for pursuing a career in the IT sector
- You need to show that you are genuinely interested in careers in IT; try really hard to be original but truthful here. What inspires you about the IT sector?
- You need to make the link that the role you are applying for will be an important part of your future career in IT

Q.3 – “Describe a situation where you have been required to develop a software solution, what were the steps involved, and on reflection, what would you have done differently?”

- Think about previous module assignments and/or a personal software project
- Show that you can take logical steps when solving a problem/creating something – you might want to cite software development processes that you have been taught
- Show that you can reflect on and learn from your experiences
- There are 3 parts to this question. Answer each part
- Show that you can write clearly and succinctly, structure your answer well (use STAR/L and writing for employability tips in this workshop)
- Look at the *job description* for the Software Developer. Link to information that has been provided such as the product development lifecycle.
- Look at the *skills required* for the Software Developer role. Use every opportunity to evidence that you have those skills through your answer

Q.6 – “Provide evidence that you can communicate clearly, in particular your ability to explain or teach difficult concepts to a wide range of audiences, either written or verbally.”

- See how written and verbal communication is a ‘skill required’ for all three jobs roles but especially the Business Analyst and Helpdesk Assistant
- “The ability to explain complex technical issues clearly both verbally and in writing.” is a requirement
- The questions says “Provide evidence”
- You need to give an example of when you have done this and you need to use the STAR technique to structure your answer well
- If you just say that you can communicate clearly but you don’t give an example of when you have actually done it your answer will not be very credible

Q.10 – “Write about any achievements you are proud of that set you apart from your peers.”

- Ideally you will write about achievements that are directly relevant to the role you are applying for but this might not be possible.
- Realistically at student level most of you will need to look to team projects, personal technology projects or other experiences that are not directly relevant to the job but try to make a link with a relevant behaviour, attitude or technical / transferable skill
- You could make a connection to the job by finding at least one skill (but preferably more) required for the job and construct an answer about an achievement that clearly shows that you used the skill/s they are seeking in candidates.

Please note the following:

- Draft versions of assessments will not be reviewed
- Staff don't work weekends - any queries about the assessment must have been directed to the PLU before 12 noon on Friday 19th October
- **Moodle will automatically stop accepting submissions after 5pm Sunday 21st October. It does not matter what time your laptop says it is, Moodle will decide when it is 5.00pm. Don't submit with 30 seconds to spare – you might miss the deadline!**
- You should refer to all assessment guidance in the handbook and in the workshop slides before submitting your work
- The mark schemes for all PDIT assessments are in the handbook.
- *If you submit your work in Pages format, we won't be able to download it from Moodle. **It needs to be a Word document or a PDF**

If you have problems submitting your work...

- Any issues re submitting via Moodle need to be directed to the IT service desk (<https://cityuni.service-now.com/>)
- If you have problems uploading to Moodle when staff are not contactable, e-mail your assignment to your PDIT Tutor ideally *before* the deadline but as soon as you realise that you cannot upload
- If you fail to submit by the deadline, you will receive a mark of zero (unless ECs are approved)
- ECs are dealt with by the Programmes Office and must be submitted within 7 days of the submission deadline

Writing for employability

An essential part of the recruitment process is the ability to write professionally. When you apply for jobs, you need to put forward a convincing argument about why you are the best candidate for the job.

Developing your written skills will help you develop your ability to:

- Craft strong job applications
- Articulate your skills
- Present your point of view
- Produce reports
- Present relevant information



Even in IT roles it is essential to be able to communicate professionally in writing with colleagues and clients. Many employers will use job applications to indirectly assess a candidate's ability to write formally.

It is important to plan each piece of writing. Before you start, ask yourself:

- Why are you writing?
- Who is it for?
- What type of document is it?
- What examples you are going to use to evidence your points?

Start by writing a draft, then go back and refine it. Writing is a process:

- Think
- Plan
- Draft
- Edit
- Proofread

Remember that any written communication provides a permanent record of your skill and ability to communicate effectively, so proof read your applications and have them checked (by your PDIT tutor) to make sure you are completely happy with them before you submit them.

Remember to proof read your IN2015 assessments before you submit them too.

7 c's of communication

When writing to employers, remember the 7 c's of communication:

Clear - be clear about your message. Why are you writing to this person?

Concise - keep your message focused and to the point.

Concrete - be clear (and sure) about the details you are providing.

Correct - make sure there are no errors; factual or grammatical.

Coherent - write your message in a logical sequence, connect all points and keep them relevant to the main topic.

Complete - include all relevant information – contact names, dates, times etc. Does the reader have all the information they need to take action?

Courteous - write in a polite, professional manner.

What is wrong with the following e-mail?

Hello,

Has your role been filled now or are you still considering my application? Its been 3 weeks since I sent my cv for you're placement and I haven't heard from you yet.

Michael

Clear – The full name of the placement role hasn't been specified, if the company is advertising multiple roles, they won't know which role this relates to.

Concise – Possibly a little too brief.

Concrete - Adding a specific date of application would have helped.

Correct – Its and you're are typos.

Coherent – The message would read better if the sentences were swapped around.

Complete – The e-mail would read better if addressed to someone, the full job title should have been included and the student's surname should have been included.

Courteous – The e-mail is not written formally and does not make a good impression. The tone of the e-mail could be interpreted as rude.

Recruiter's screening principles

Flexible

- Using judgement **vs** tick list approach
- Evaluating evidence *wherever* **vs** evidence in the *right* box
- Assuming minimum criteria is met **vs** stopping marking if it is not
- Perfect English **vs** graded
- Consistent ratings for each question **vs** some questions being given more weight
- Positive ratings only **v** both positive and negative

Fairly common

- Fairness, objectivity and legal requirements such as making allowances for neurodiversity
- Minimum criteria and 'killer questions'
- Indicators and rating scales
- Power - strength & range of evidence
- Frequency – consistency of evidence
- *Just be aware that companies use different styles but all will scrutinise your application!*

Application form screening exercise

- Applications are for a Customer Service Officer for a Digital Learning business.
- No job description is provided because we have given you some screening principles instead. This will give you an experience of how recruiters screen application forms.
- Use the scoring guide on the sheet:
0 = No evidence (blank answer) 1 = Unsatisfactory evidence 2 = Satisfactory evidence
3 = Very good evidence 4 = Excellent evidence
- Score each separate bullet point for all the education sections and work experience
- Look at the master sheet for what are positive indicators and what are negative indicators
- You will need to use your personal judgement to award just one score for the teamwork and communication boxes. **Don't** give a separate mark for each bullet point in the teamwork and communication sections. Just use the bullet points as *indicators* of what is poor and what is excellent.
- 'Communication' refers to the way the entire form is written and presented
- If you can see they do not meet the minimum criteria stop marking
- Mark evidence as present *only* if it is in the correct box
- Work alone to score the applications and add up all scores to give each candidate one numerical score
- **YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES!**

Personal Statements

- Used to more explicitly position you for a role than is possible through a CV or application form alone.
- Recruiters will tell you what points they want you to address – usually why you want the job, why you think you are a good fit for it and how you meet the requirements of the person specification.
- Follow the guidelines carefully
- Your aim is to perfectly match yourself to the role and show your knowledge of the role and company
- Start at the top of the list of 'skills required' and work your way down providing examples that evidence your competence
- Write in a concise and systematic way
- Check the word/character length allowed before you finalise your statement

Cover letters

- Not many of the big corporates ask for cover letters but some of the exclusive vacancies that we advertise will require one
- Your CV on its own does not tell the employer why you are applying, or what you know about them
- A cover letter provides additional information about your skills, abilities, experiences and your motivation for applying
- It is an opportunity to impress the employer and show your 'fit' for the company
- As with application form questions and writing personal statements; use a range of experiences to present yourself as a well-rounded person
- If there is a job description you need to carefully match yourself to it

- **PLAY VIDEO**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MD_U-YpD6c

Cover letter guidelines

Your letter should explain:

- 1- Why you want to work for their organisation
 - 2 - Why you want to work in that particular role
 - 3 - Why your strengths, skills and experience make you the right candidate
- Don't copy and paste from your CV – nobody wants to read anything twice
 - Expand on relevant, interesting and impressive points from your CV
 - It must make sense to someone who is reading it without your CV
 - Keep it to one page
 - Use the tips below to help you to think about what to include in a cover letter.
 - **Note that they are just *suggestions*. You will not be able to address all of these points or the letter will be far too long**
 - Take the ideas that you like and leave the rest. There is no one 'right way'

Cover letter structure

Your name
Your address

Date

Recipient Name - call to find out who to address the letter to if you don't have a name, or write to the title of the department such as Human Resources, Talent Team or Graduate Recruitment department.

Address of the company

RE: add job reference number if there is one and/or job title e.g. Software Developer ref 123ABC

Dear – Ideally title and surname 'Dear Mr Khan' is better than 'Dear Sir'

First paragraph

- Introduce yourself. Say what year you are in, what degree you are studying and at which university.
- Tell them why you are writing to them; state what role you are applying for
- If relevant you could tell them here that you have enclosed your CV for their consideration.
- Be specific about what dates you are available to work
- Keep this section brief



Second paragraph

- Be as specific as you can about what motivates you to apply for this job with this particular employer.
- Show that you know about the company but never copy and paste from their website.
- Show a deep (not just a surface) level of commercial awareness
- Explain how what you know about the company has motivated you to want to work for them. Make them feel special
- If relevant mention meeting specific staff from the company at careers events/PDIT presentations/speed networking/Tech @City etc....

Third paragraph

- Clearly match your knowledge, skills, strengths and experiences to the requirements of the role and the person specification
- Give an example of something that you have been involved in recently that demonstrates your suitability for the role
- Provide evidence of your competence such as getting good grades, or winning an award
- Mention relevant technical skills and how you have used them to create something
- Cite relevant work experience or the transferable skills that you gained from non-relevant work experience
- Tell them about the type of work that you enjoy doing
- Say what you would hope to gain from the position and how it fits with your long-term career objectives.
- Sometimes additional information about extra -curricular activities, positions of responsibility, entrepreneurial activity, your creativity, or extended spells travelling can further support your application if you can make a link to the job you are applying for

Summarise and close your letter

- Thank the reader for their time reading the letter
- Include a call to action and tell them that you hope to hear from them soon and have an opportunity to meet with them for an interview
- Tell them when you will be available for interview.

- Sign off with:
 - Yours sincerely, (if you have the recipient's name)
 - Yours faithfully (if you are not writing to a named person)

- *Add your signature*
- Type your name

example one-page IT covering letter

Luke Riley
129 Lime Street
Liverpool, L1 1JN

5 August 2018

Marcus Humphrey
Graduate recruitment manager
Innovation Technology Group
100 Orchid Building
Third Floor
Bristol, BS31 4UJ

Dear Mr Humphrey,

Please consider my application for the customer support engineer position at Innovation Technology Group, as advertised on TARGETjobs. My conversations with current graduates at your open days in autumn 2017 have reinforced my interest in the organisation and cemented my belief that I have the technical skills and personal attributes that the group is looking for. I enclose my CV for your consideration.

Through my four-year sandwich degree, which comprised a one-year placement as an IT support technician at ExxonMobil, I have developed a practical understanding of key programming languages and databases, including PHP, Ruby and MySQL, as well as network construction and administration. At ExxonMobil I worked closely with suppliers and a varied client base to overcome operational obstacles, and gained experience solving customer issues and providing first-level analysis. I resolved 88 per cent of the cases I handled on the placement.

I have also demonstrated, outside university and formal placements, that I have a genuine interest in computer programs and cutting-edge technology. I have designed and developed three mobile phone applications, which have been downloaded a combined 1,389 times since they were uploaded to Google Play in February. This also proves that I have the creative and design skills that you seek in a graduate recruit. My stint as a volunteer at Plymouth & District Disabled Fellowship, where I worked in a close-knit team to organise outdoor fundraising events, shows that I can work effectively with others to achieve group-wide objectives.

I am keen to discuss this opportunity and my experience with you in person, and am available for an interview at any time. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Riley

Address the recipient by his or her title and surname. If these details aren't stated on the job ad, contact the employer and ask.

State clearly which position you are applying for.

Show that you have made the effort to find out about the company and meet employees.

Mention academic and practical experiences that relate to the role.

Highlight the technical skills the employer seeks.

Include the results of the contributions you made.

Non-academic and non-IT experiences should be included if you've developed relevant transferable skills.

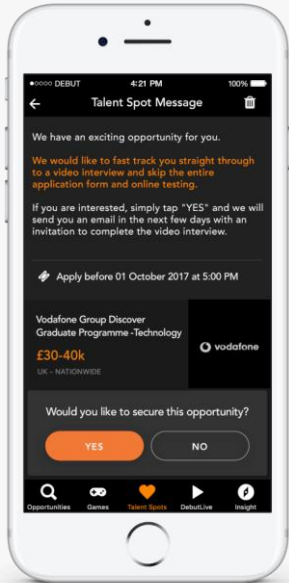
Prove that you're passionate about IT and technology.

Link your skills and experience to the employer's requirements.

State your availability for interview.

You should sign off your letter with 'Yours sincerely' if you have addressed the letter to a named person.

Your covering letter should not exceed one page of A4 or three to four paragraphs.



MY GRADCRACKER

DASHBOARD

Back to Gradcracker

Dashboard

My Alerts

My Referrals (Prize Draws)

New Employers

Job Diary

Followed Employers

Recently Viewed

My CV

My Key Competences

Other Relevant Opportunities

My Account

Getting talent spotted on careers apps

- If you are going to use an app like Debut, LinkedIn or Gradcracker keep your profile up to date and well written
- Make sure that you include all of your technical skills
- Employers search profiles for the skills they need
- Log in regularly to view updates and alerts

Don't worry about learning differences

- Neurodiversity should not impact your placement search but it is worth seeking support
- Go to see the Dyslexia Service on the 2nd floor next to Student Centre
- Or email them on dyslexia@city.ac.uk
- They can help you play to your strengths and consider what areas you might need support with such as memory, thinking on the spot, multi-tasking, managing deadlines and emails
- You are not obliged to tell anybody but there are advantages to disclosing such as being able to negotiate and arrange reasonable adjustments at assessment centres and in the workplace just as you would at university
- Do your research on the company – is it SpLD friendly? All companies are legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments but some companies actively recruit people who can think in an analytical way
- Look at company websites to see what they say about asking for additional support
- When applying and interviewing be positive about the strengths you bring to the workplace such as: innovation and creativity, holistic thinking, spatial awareness, soft skills and more
- Read the disclosure guide on the IN2015 list of module resources

Next week's morning lecture will be an employer panel discussion

- Our guests will be a mix of HR people and managers who have supervised City IT students in the past
- *IBM* <https://www.ibm.com/uk-en/>
- *Expedia* <https://www.expedia.co.uk/>
- *Gamma Telecom* <https://www.gamma.co.uk/>
- *Evalucom Consulting* <http://evalucom.co.uk/>
- To generate a discussion we need questions from you. Please come with questions to ask on the day or email them to Laura.Blatchford.1@city.ac.uk if you don't want to ask them yourself

Dates for your diary...

Engineering Mathematics and Technology Fair at City:

<https://www.city.ac.uk/careers/recruiters/get-involved-on-campus/fairs/engineering-science-technology>

Date: 17th Oct 2018

Time: 14:00 - 16:30

Venue: Great Hall, College Building

An excellent opportunity for you to meet many recruiters and find out:

- ✓ What opportunities are available
- ✓ What employers expect from you
- ✓ How you can make the most of your application to them

Register on Careers Hub



Tech@City2018

Deloitte.

Monday 22nd October, Northampton Suite 1:30pm-5pm
Brought to you by the Professional Liaison Unit

This is your opportunity to meet up to 25 employers, who are coming to campus to speak to you about their live vacancies (placements, internships & project opportunities)
Employers include: IBM, Deloitte, Unity, Axis Animation, Gamma Telecom, Ability Net and many more.

Bring your CV and this event may help you secure your placement or summer internship!

Note that this event replaces your **afternoon** IN2015 Professional Development in IT Lecture.



Goldman Sachs Women's Conference: Exploring Engineering

8 and 9 November 2018

Goldman Sachs
London HQ

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Are you a science, technology, engineering or maths student interested in a 2019 summer internship?

Goldman Sachs invites women graduating in 2020 to attend a two-day symposium to learn about career opportunities in our Engineering organisation and how to succeed in the recruitment process.

To find out more about this two day conference and register by **19 October** to attend, visit gs.com/careers.

We will begin taking registration for this event and applications for the 2019 Engineering Summer Analyst Programme on 1 July.



IN2015 Reading list for this week:

- Ultimate Cover Letters The Definitive Guide to Job Search Letters and Follow-up Strategies, Martin John
- How to Write: Successful CVs and Job Applications, [Judith Leigh](#)
- Successful Cover Letters in a Week, Pat Scudamore and Hilton Catt
- Dyslexia: How to Survive and Succeed at Work, Dr Sylvia Moody

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