



# POSTGRADUATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD



## Promoting your Postgrad Skills in CVs and Cover Letters

Anna Flatt – PGT Careers Adviser

By the end of this session you will be able to...

**Describe how to  
structure a CV and  
cover letter**

**Explain the value of  
undertaking  
postgraduate study  
from an employer's  
perspective**

**Articulate your skills  
effectively on your CV  
and in your cover  
letter**

# Why do I need to promote my postgrad skills?

Postgraduates are more likely to gain 'highly-skilled' employment than graduates without a PG degree...

- A. True
- B. False



**Vote now...**

# Why do I need to promote my postgrad skills?

Postgraduates are likely to earn more than graduates without a PG degree...

- A. True
- B. False



**Vote now...**

# Why do I need to promote my postgrad skills?

What percentage of employers believe that students with a postgraduate degree have better skills than other students?

A. 68%

B. 15%



**Vote now...**

# Why do I need to promote my postgrad skills?

What percentage of employers set postgraduate degrees as a minimum requirement when recruiting?

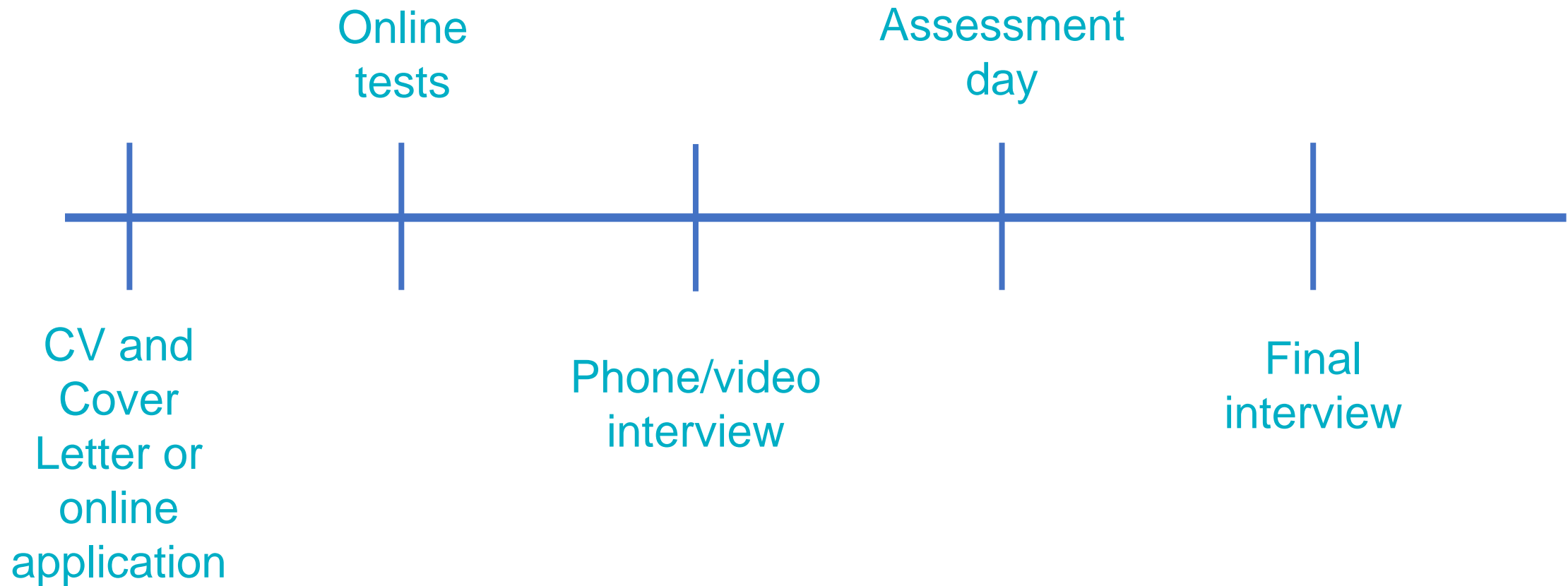
A. 15%

B. 4%



**Vote now...**

# Typical stages of the application process





# Your CV – The basics



# Different types of CV

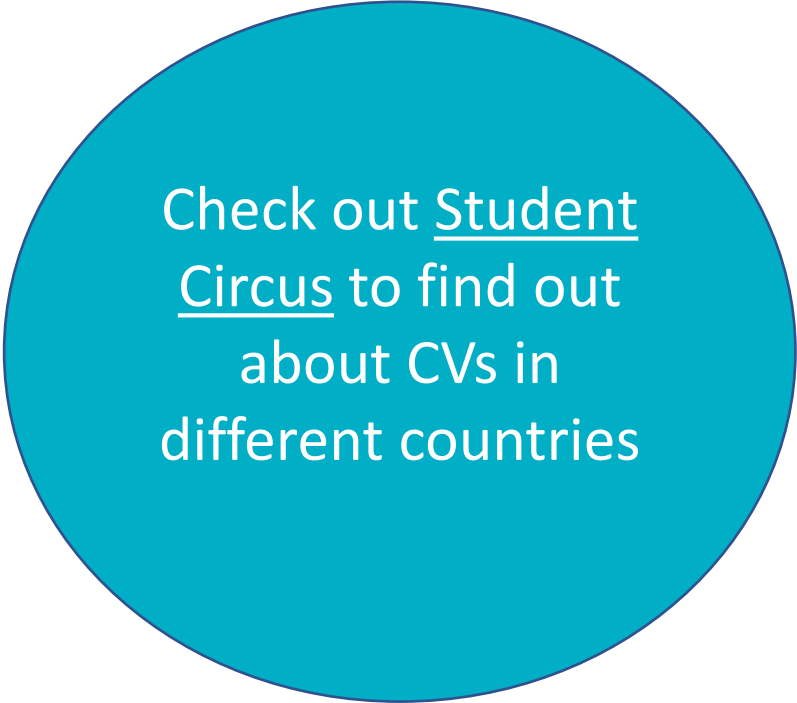
Personal Details  
Personal Profile  
Education  
Relevant Experience  
Skills  
Positions of Responsibility  
Awards and Achievements  
Interests

Personal Details  
Education  
Research Experience &  
Interests  
Relevant Research Skills  
Academic Awards  
Conferences & Presentations  
Publications  
Relevant training  
Memberships

# CV conventions around the world...

Would you include...

- A photo?
- Your marital status?
- Your date of birth?
- Information about your health?



Check out [Student Circus](#) to find out  
about CVs in  
different countries

# Personal details

**Anna Flatt**

123 Road Avenue, Birmingham B15 3RX, 07XXX XXXXX a.l.flatt@bham.ac.uk

Linked In: <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/anna-flatt>

# Personal Profile

Highly motivated, hard-working postgraduate student who works well in a team looking for a job with excellent training where I can develop to my full potential

# PERSONAL PROFILE

Highly motivated, hard-working postgraduate student who works well in a team looking for a job with excellent training where I can develop to my full potential

**Vs.**

Masters student in Computer Science with event organisation and team work experience gained as a conference assistant, seeking formal experience in supporting students.

# Education

- Reverse-chronological order (most recent first)
- Include your Masters degree
- Include qualification title/level, subject, place and dates of study, and grades if the qualification is complete
- Formal qualifications only
- No need to list all subjects from school!

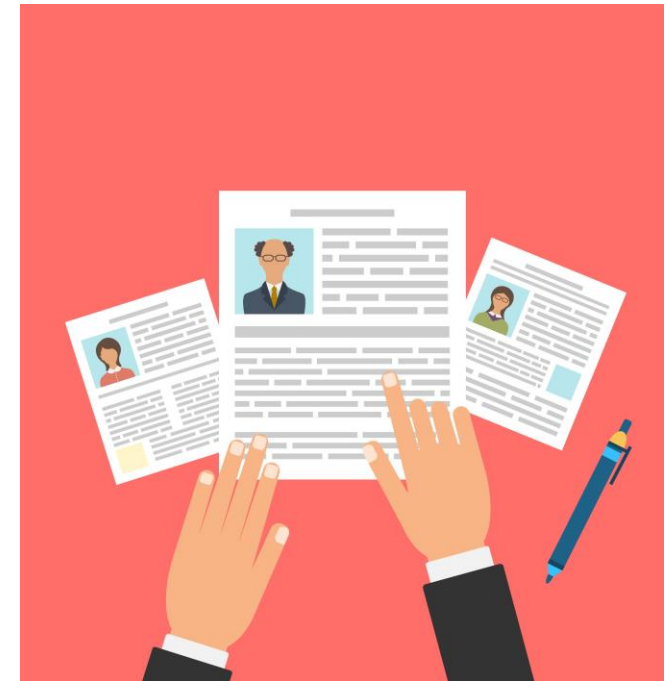
# Education

**MA Translation Studies**, University of Birmingham, 2022 – 2023

**BA Modern Language Studies**, University of Leicester, 2018-2022  
1<sup>st</sup> class honours

# Relevant Experience

- All experience counts (especially if it's ***relevant***)! Volunteering, part-time work, extracurricular etc.
- Use bullet points to emphasise key skills, actions and achievements...





# Using bullet points

- Each bullet point should:
  - Respond to an item (e.g. skill, trait) that the employer is seeking
  - Ideally give **a concrete example from your experience that evidences this skill/ trait**
- Echo employer's key words! (but don't go overboard with 'buzzwords'...)
- Use bullet points to emphasise **key skills and achievements**, rather than just listing 'responsibilities' or 'what you did'...

□ ***Verb -> Action -> Result...***

# Giving evidence of your skills

- I have excellent communication skills

# Giving evidence of your skills

- I have excellent communication skills

VS

- Adapted research on the psychology of language learning into an accessible lecture for thirteen-year-olds, demonstrating strong verbal communication skills

# Giving evidence of your skills

- Acted as a student rep on SSF
- Regularly worked in a team with other reps

# Giving evidence of your skills

- Acted as a student rep on SSF
- Regularly worked in a team with other reps

VS

- Represented the voice of fellow students in student-staff forums; worked with 2 colleagues to successfully negotiate additional library resources for my peers

# Interests

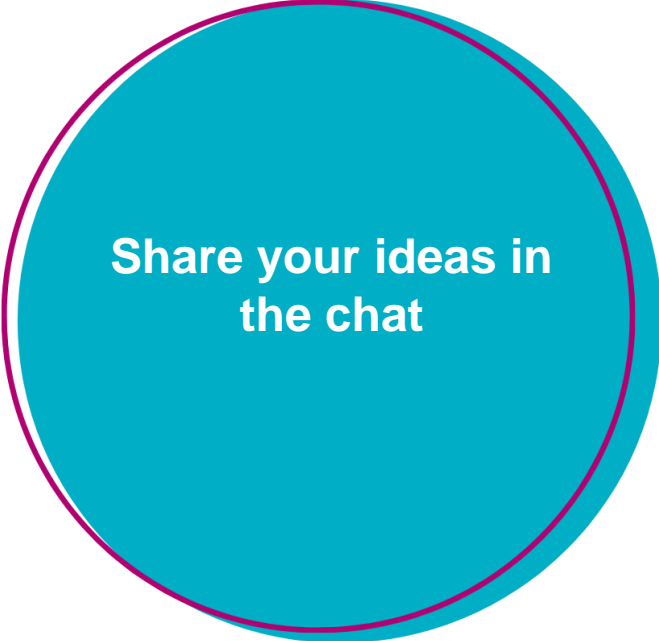
- Avoid clichés e.g. ‘socialising with friends’
- Show a range of interests, especially anything unusual
- An opportunity to demonstrate leadership
- Show interests that are relevant to the role and pick out relevant skills ...



## What can you add as a Postgrad?

You may be against other applicants who don't have a PG degree. Think about the advantages this might give you...

- Evidence of motivation
- Research skills
- Project management
- Working independently



Share your ideas in  
the chat

Academic essentials	Skills employers value
Producing a thesis or dissertation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designing and/or managing a research project</li> <li>- Collecting data</li> <li>- Analysing sources/ texts/ results</li> <li>- Self-motivation</li> <li>- Problem solving</li> </ul>
Giving presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Verbal communication skills</li> <li>- Conveying complex information in an accessible way</li> <li>- Engaging different audiences</li> </ul>
Writing essays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Written communication</li> <li>- Reviewing and editing</li> </ul>
Dealing with your supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building professional relationships</li> <li>- Negotiating and influencing</li> </ul>







# Tailoring your CV

## Start with the job description

Most job descriptions will have details of the required skills, experience, qualifications and attributes for the role. This is called the **person specification**.

The person specification is used by the recruiter as their criteria for shortlisting candidates for the next stage of the recruitment process.

**Use it as your checklist – have you demonstrated that you meet the criteria?**

## Where can I tailor my CV?

- **Personal profile – make it specific to the role**

A confident and reliable Masters student with good communication skills, looking for a part-time job to support my studies.

VS

A confident and reliable MSc Computer Science student with strong communication skills and customer service experience, seeking an opportunity to support future students.

## Where can I tailor my CV?

- **Education** – Include relevant modules, dissertation etc. if the job is linked to your subject
- **Experience** – Lead with your relevant experience and focus on specific elements of your previous role which were relevant e.g. similar duties, required skills
- **Skills** – Match your skills with the ones listed in the person specification

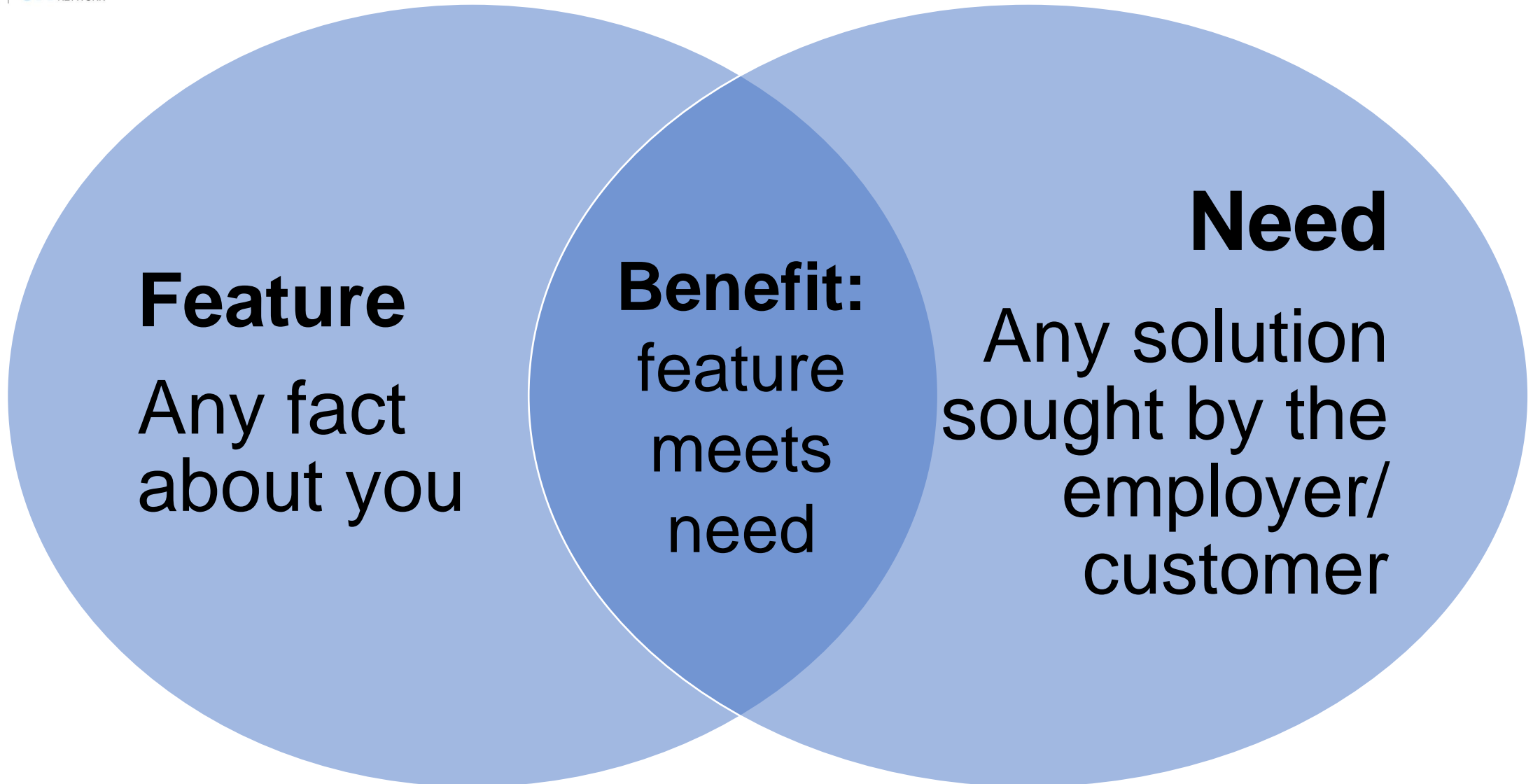
**You might have a different version of your CV for every single job you apply for!**



# Your Cover Letter

## Summary: The difference between features vs benefits

1. Features are facts about products or services; they add credibility and substance to your sales pitch
2. Benefits give customers a reason to buy because they explain how your product or service improves their lives
3. To translate features into benefits, answer the question “So what?”



- 400W power
- Choice of 2 speeds
- Detachable stainless steel mixer
- 0.5l chopper
- Matte black finish



Changes from mixer to chopper in one easy click, saving you time, workload and kitchen space.



# What does a Cover Letter do?

*It should be tailored to that role and argue your case as to why you're a great candidate! To do this..*

- Say **why you are interested** in this particular role/ organisation and shows you've done your research on them
- Show an **understanding of the role**
- Indicate how the role **fits into your wider plans**
- Use clear examples (preferably with results) from your experience that demonstrate the shortlisting criteria ('show,' don't 'tell')
- A very strong application **relates these skills and examples back to the role**

**Dear X**

Text of letter

1 or 2 side of A4; 4 key paragraphs. 500 – 1000 words

- WHY you are **writing** to them;
- WHY **THEM**; what appeals about the organisation and role; show your research
- WHY **YOU**; opportunity to showcase the **benefits** of your experience, skills and knowledge of the role.
- **THANKS** for taking the time and your availability

**Yours sincerely OR Yours faithfully**

**Your signature**  
**(Name in type)**

# You are the recruiter...

Imagine you are recruiting for the role of Postgraduate Student Ambassador.  
These are your criteria:

- Confident communicator
- Ability to work effectively in a team
- Ability to manage own time and workload
- Strong attention to detail

# YOU DECIDE...

- ❑ Do the candidates meet the shortlisting criteria?
- ❑ How well do they demonstrate the criteria?
- ❑ Would you interview them? Why (not)?
- ❑ Any other observations?



# Further support

- [Online CV checker](#)
- E-guidance: [Careersenquiries@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:Careersenquiries@contacts.bham.ac.uk)
- One-to-one support
- Drop-ins every Wednesday – check events listing on Careers Connect

# Find out more:

<https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/enroll/H6LJ7T>

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**CN** CAREERS  
NETWORK

Student Hub (Block C),  
Aston Webb Building  
Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/careers](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/careers)  
📷 🐦 @careersbham  
📘 /careersbham  
📺 /careersnetwork