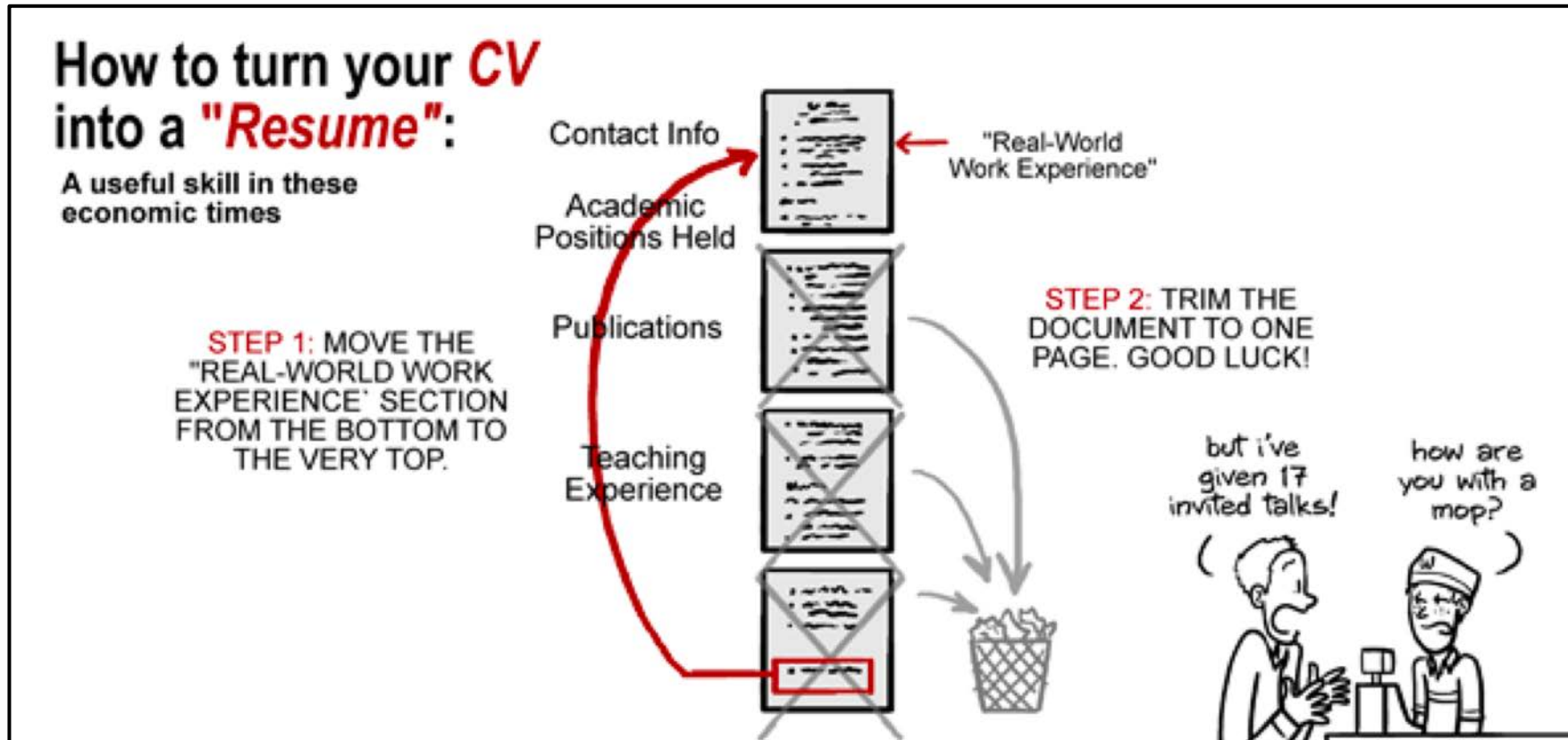


CV and Cover Letter Workshop



PhD Comics

The Job and Other Application Processes

Put yourself in the position of the reviewer: limited time, lots of applications, looking for a reason to reject an applicant.

Follow instructions carefully. If asked for a 2-page CV and you submit a 3-page CV, your application will be rejected (you've made the assessor's job easier!)

You will always need a short (typically 2 pages) and full-length (can be up to 10-15 pages) CV. Former typically needed for training, postdoc positions, fellowships, grants, funding. Latter typically needed for faculty positions or promotions.

Most job applications require a CV and cover letter

Start putting these together early and get feedback from your peers, supervisors, and mentors.

The CV

A brief and clear anthology of your career from after High School to the present

To be built on, altered, improved, and customized over time

Have two at the ready: long-form with all information, short (2-page max) for applications that require it

Getting started: search online for examples of what to (and not to) do

Getting feedback: write, read, edit, improve, then send to someone you trust to give you honest feedback.

Warning: My advice is for academic CVs. See Career Services for non-academic CV best practices.

Common Errors and Issues

Publications should appear on page one. These are your highest currency.

Avoid opaque acronyms. Does the assessor know what CENTA, NERC, DTP, NCEO, PM stand for?

Avoid unclear reference to experience that only you or people from the same institution know

Avoid vague statements (Leadership award, outstanding performance, internship). Leadership or internship in what? What determined your outstanding performance (top 1%/first class (>75%) pass)?

Remove fluff. Ask whether this is pertinent to the job. If not, remove. Does potential employer need to know your home address, marital status, competency in different languages?

Avoid entries that look like they're there to boost the length of the CV.

Hobbies, skills, interests are fine for postdoc CVs, but you will find that these fall away with time.

No references at end, unless expressly asked to supply these with the CV.

Save Research Experience and Skills entries for the cover letter if asked to provide a short CV.

Common Errors and Issues

Formatting

- Margins should be at least an inch (make sure it's printable).
- Avoid large white spaces that result from indented margins
- Avoid italics; use sparingly and perhaps for emphasis.
- Use simple bullets if you absolutely have to use bullets.
- Keep the format of the CV neat, simple and consistent throughout.
- Don't provide headers and no content below these. Gives the impression that the wrong (incomplete) version of the CV was submitted.

General Layout, Format and Structure of the CV

These are my suggestions, not gospel.

Solicit feedback from other academics too.

Personal Information

Purpose: gives your current professional location and a means for the selection committee to contact you

ADA LOVELACE

School of Physics and Astronomy
University of Leicester
Leicester, UK

Tel (mobile): +44(0) 116 123 4567
Email: ada.lovelace@le.ac.uk
Website: alovelave.co.uk

The selection committee doesn't want or need to know your home address

Education

Purpose: a brief history of your tertiary education (High School is irrelevant)

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Physics and Astronomy, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK 2018-*present*

*Thesis: **Development and description of the first computer algorithm***

Research Supervisor: Professor Mary Somerville

M.Sc., *distinction*, Chemistry, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK 2018

B.Sc. Hons, *cum laude*, Chemistry, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK 2017

B.Sc., *summa cum laude*, Chemistry, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK 2014-2016

Selection committee should know your thesis topic, supervisor(s), type of degree, when started, and what your foundation (Undergraduate Degree) is in.

No need to include the location of the supervisor if not the same as your institute. This can be expanded on in the cover letter.

Funding (Fellowships / Scholarships)

FELLOWSHIPS and SCHOLARSHIPS

2018-2022	UK National Environmental Research Council (NERC) scholarship (£134,000)
2017	Master of Science Fellowship, UK Research and Innovation, University of Leicester, UK (£10,000)
2014-2016	Science Achievers Undergraduate Scholarship, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK (£18,000)

Avoid unfamiliar terminology (don't sell yourself short).

Make sure that the selection committee can follow along.

Peer-reviewed Publications

If you've got a long list of publications, select your best and most relevant

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Lovelace, A. and M. Somerville, First computer algorithm intended to be processed by a machine, submitted to *International Journal of Computing*, 2019.

Lovelace, A., M. Somerville C. *et al.*, Computers: going beyond calculating and number-crunching, *Journal of Computers*, 1, 1-10, doi:10.1019/acs.joc.8b01658, 2019.

This is your currency. Make sure it starts on page one.

Conference presentations

Just attending a conference or meeting doesn't count!

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Going beyond the application of computers for crunching numbers, Second Computer Science Conference, Oxford University, Oxford, UK, 2019 (*invited*).

So, what's an algorithm? Annual Central England NERC Training Alliance (CENTA) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) conference, Birmingham, UK, 2019.

First description of an algorithm: moving beyond numerical calculations, First Computer Science Conference, Imperial College, London, UK, 2018.

Awards and Noteworthy Achievements

AWARDS

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 2018 | Innovator and emerging leader in the field, UK Royal Computer Society, Imperial College, London, UK |
| 2017 | The Mary Somerville Medal awarded to the top Chemistry student, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK. |
| 2014-2017 | Dean's commendations for outstanding achievement in Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK |

This is another CV section where you can sell yourself short if reviewer can't follow the relevance and prestige of these.

Media Coverage of your work

MEDIA COVERAGE

May 19, 2018, When will the Computers Take Over? J. K. Rowling, Mail and Guardian,
<https://www.mg.co.uk/when-will-computers-take-over/>.

This can often set you apart from your competitors.

Note though that local school bulletins don't count for much.

Teaching

TEACHING

Training

2016 *The Pedagogy of Teaching*, Leicester Learning Institute, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

→ End of page one of CV

Experience

2018 Teaching Assistant, *Earth System Science*, Postgraduate course, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

2017 Tutor and Laboratory Demonstrator, *Introduction to Laboratory Chemistry*, First Year Course, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

2016 Tutor, *Introduction to Chemistry*, First Year Course, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

Training Workshops

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

- 2019** First International Computer Science Summer School, Vienna, Austria.
- 2018** Application of Computers for Fast and Efficient Mathematical Calculations,
University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.

Include anything that goes beyond the PhD programme or DTP or other programme in which enrolled.

Citizenship or Professional Services

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

International Leadership

2018 Royal Society for Computing Committee Lead

2017 Lead and co-founder of Women in Computer Science Network

Seminar Series Co-Chair

2018 University of Leicester PhD Conference Co-Chair, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

Mentor

2019 Mentor to first-year postgraduates in the Somerville research group,
University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

2015-2016 Mentor to Chemistry Undergraduates, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

Professional Memberships

European Geophysical Union (EGU), American Geophysical Union (AGU), Royal Society of Chemistry, Royal Society of Computing, Women in Computer Science

Other Content

Outreach or public engagement.

Anything noteworthy that could make your application stand out in the pile of applicants?

Additional Content as Your Career Progresses

Professional Experience: postdoc, relevant industrial placement, faculty position

Reviewer of publications and for funding agencies.

Fellowships/scholarships changes to Grant Funding

Quantitative metrics: Amount of funding awarded, h-index, number of citations

Invited presentations (institutions and conferences). If you haven't been invited; **invite yourself!**

National or international conference session chair.

Committees or other leadership roles that contribute to national and international esteem.

Supervisory Track Record

External Examiner for PhD Vivas

The Cover Letter

General Guidelines

An accompaniment to the CV, not a repeat of the CV.

An opportunity to expand on some of your notable achievements in academia, how you set yourself apart from the competition, and why you are most suited to the position.

Share with peers and supervisor and career service (latter often deal with non-academic career options, so add more weight to advice you get from people in academia).

Everyone applying will have a PhD, undergraduate degree, hopefully a peer-reviewed publication, conference presentations, outreach, training. Some aspects that could help you stand out:

- Research highlighted by the media, led to a spin-out company or patent, used in policy
- Award for presentation at conference
- Invited to give a talk at a conference/meeting/institute
- Co-chaired a session at an international conference
- Organized a conference
- Leading and coordinating a networking group
- Reviewer for journals or funding agency
- Independent competitive funding
- Selected to participate in competitive training or short-course (IGAC, ESA).

Typical Cover Letter Layout

Address letter to the PI who is recruiting, rather than an impersonal “To whom it may concern”

First Paragraph

Brief: 2-4 lines

Say what position you’re applying for.

Express interest in the position.

Say how you found out about the position. If you heard about this from someone known in the field, give their name.

Give a brief summary of your PhD thesis topic, supervisory team, date anticipate completing the PhD programme. Expand on the PhD research and contribution to science/innovation/enterprise in the body of the letter

Typical Cover Letter Layout

Main Body Paragraphs

Bulk: 2-3 paragraphs

Intent: Use this section to demonstrate how and why you are most suited to the position:

- summarize your PhD research (in particular contribution to science/engineering/policy)
- Give skills gained during the PhD and how these fit to the position
- Say what interests you about this position (demonstrates enthusiasm/passion for the subject and an understanding of the project)
- Say why and how this position will contribute to furthering your career (demonstrates ambition).
- Only if relevant, expand on your teaching and/or outreach experience
- Where possible, provide specific examples and details (how your PhD was funded, PhD training programmes you attended, how competitive the selection process was for these, URL link if adds clarity)
- Include achievements and awards (ensure that assessor understands these are important)

Typical Cover Letter Layout

Closing Paragraph

Brief: 2-3 lines

State what material is included with the application (attached please find my CV and contact details of two references).

Thank the reader for their time.

Say that you look forward to hearing from them, and that they shouldn't hesitate to contact you if they need additional information.

Resources and Other Advice

The Professor Is In (general resource): <http://theprofessorisin.com/>

Slides in the careers talk by Richard Alexander: https://www.astro.le.ac.uk/~rda5/rda_jobs_talk_2018.pdf

Many More:

Postdoc Applications:

<https://academicpositions.com/career-advice/how-to-write-an-outstanding-postdoc-cover-letter>

https://www.asbmb.org/asbmbtoday/asbmbtoday_article.aspx?id=48927

<https://www.greatsampleresume.com/letters/application/postdoc-application-letter/>

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/ac402163j>

Academic Job Applications:

<https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/how-to-write-a-cover-letter-for-academic-jobs.pdf>

<https://career-advice.jobs.ac.uk/academic/academic-cover-letter/>

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/pursuing-an-academic-career/academic-cover-letters>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-write-an-academic-cover-letter-2060155>

<http://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/ocs/files/gsas-cvs-and-cover-letters.pdf>

<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/nov/28/academic-cover-letters-10-tips>