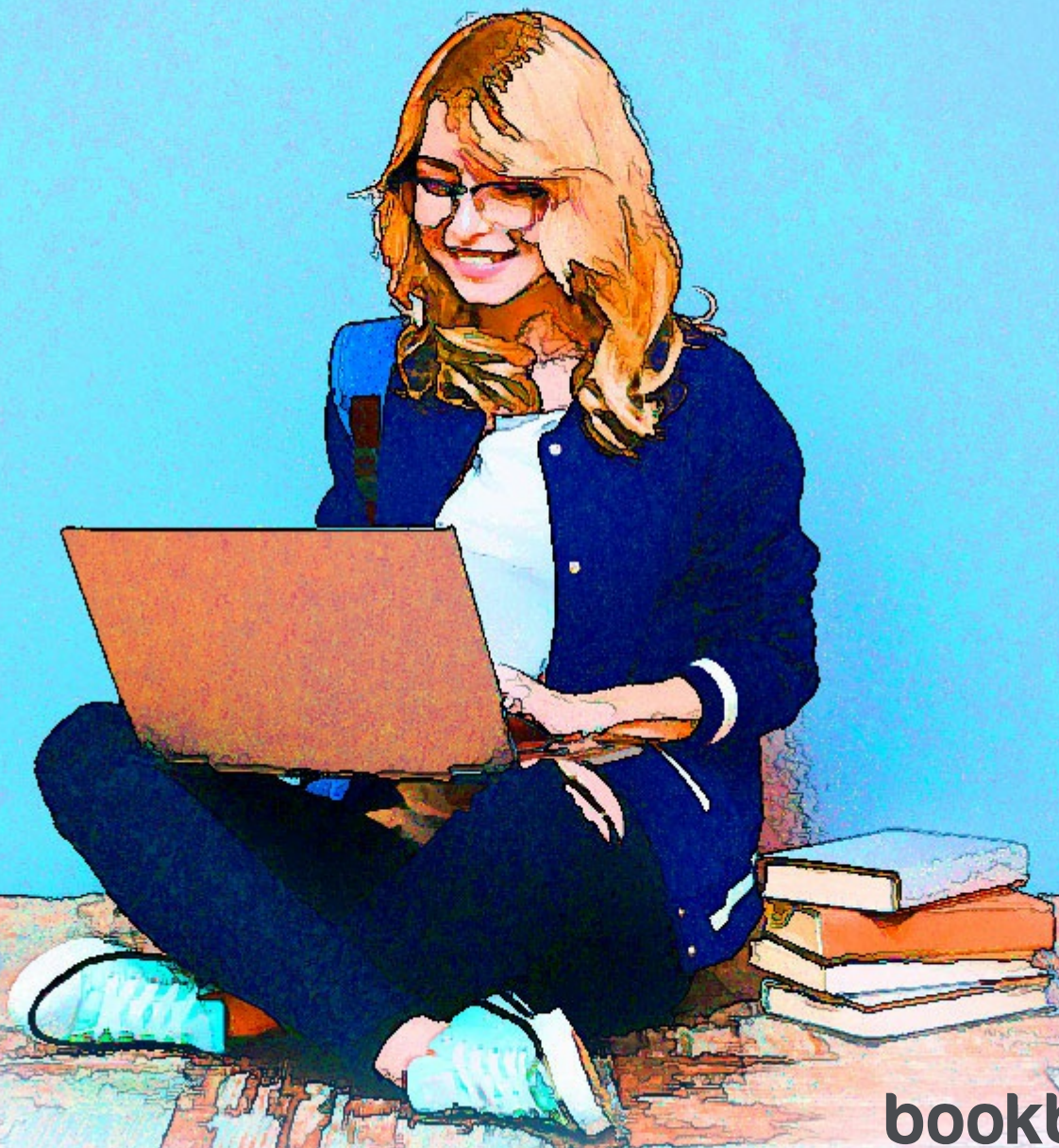


Anne Galloway

# Motivation letters & resumes

A guide for students



ANNE GALLOWAY

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# **MOTIVATION LETTERS & RESUMES**

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Motivation letters & resumes: A guide for students

1st edition

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne Galloway is an international careers consultant and Certified Advanced Resume Writer. She is an Associate Member of the Association of Career Professionals International and a member of Career Directors International which ensures that she remains up-to-date with current resume writing techniques and job search trends.

Help clients return to work after a career break, make a complete career change or accelerate their current career, Anne works with people across many career stages (from students to senior executives), industries and geographical locations.

The methodology she uses is very practical and results focused to ensure that her clients have a clearer picture of the direction they want to take their career and are both capable and confident in selling themselves for their next job.

Anne knows the right questions to ask to get her clients to really dig deep and think about their careers and what they have achieved so they can confidently move forward.

*"I consider myself extremely lucky to have a job I love doing and that enables me to help others get a job they love too."*

# PREFACE

As a Certified Advanced Resume Writer and Careers Consultant, I help people to identify their skills, strengths, and achievements and show them how to use this information to sell themselves confidently on their CV, Motivation Letters and Social Media, increasing their chance of getting the job they want.

I am currently working with 50+ clients, from 30 nationalities across 10 countries (you can find out more about how I can help you on your path to career success by visiting my website, [www.power-to-change.eu](http://www.power-to-change.eu) ).

In addition, I have worked with numerous students with their applications to universities in the UK, Netherlands, and the USA. Many teenagers become overwhelmed by the thought of writing a personal statement as part of their university application. Likewise, many people struggle with what to include in job applications. By knowing the questions to ask to bring out the information required to write a personal statement or motivation letter I have simplified the process and reduced the stress for numerous clients.

Everyone is unique so your personal statement, or motivation letter, should also be unique. The words personal statement, motivation letter, and job application cover letter, are interchangeable and effectively mean the same thing; that is, in brief, they are all about explaining why you are the right person for the university place or for the job to which you are applying. For ease of reference, the term ‘motivation letter’ will be used throughout this workbook.

What you will not find in this workbook are any examples of motivation letters and I would like to ask you never to go online to see examples of personal statements or motivation letters because even with the best will in the world, you will end up copying parts of the text into your own or you will end up using a very bland and boring template which does not sell you. Companies and universities want to know more about you, what you are capable of as well as something about your personality - you are unique so make sure that you reflect this in your motivation letter. In addition, universities use plagiarism checkers and they kick out students for plagiarism so there is no way your application will even get looked at if it doesn't pass the plagiarism checker.

There are however some examples of CVs (the words CV and resume are interchangeable throughout) but these have been included more to give you an idea of layout and how to write them.

This workbook is designed to show you that writing your unique motivation letter and CV is not that difficult if you follow the simple steps that are clearly outlined in the following pages.

Let's get started!

*All photos courtesy of Microsoft clip organiser*



# 1 WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT AND WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

Companies frequently receive hundreds of applications for each vacancy they advertise; likewise, universities receive many more applications than they have places for students, sometimes there can be ten or more students chasing every place on their chosen course.

Employers and universities need to have a process to ensure that they accept the best applicants and a key part of that process is the motivation letter or personal statement.

It is effectively a one-page advertisement of you, so it must be brief, enthusiastic and interesting. One of the main functions of a motivation letter is to describe how your qualifications match a specific job vacancy or how your interests match with your chosen course of study, it is pointless to send a boilerplate motivation letter that is not tailored to the targeted position or course.

## **How do you show that you are good enough?**

The quick and dirty answer to this question is very simple, show, don't tell. You want to be able to describe your interests, skills, experiences, and motivation in a way that others can't, then show that you are ambitious, confident, and goal oriented. You do this by using words and phrases that demonstrate creativity and an ability to think outside the box.

In addition to "Show, don't tell", the way in which you write your motivation letter is as important as *what* you write.

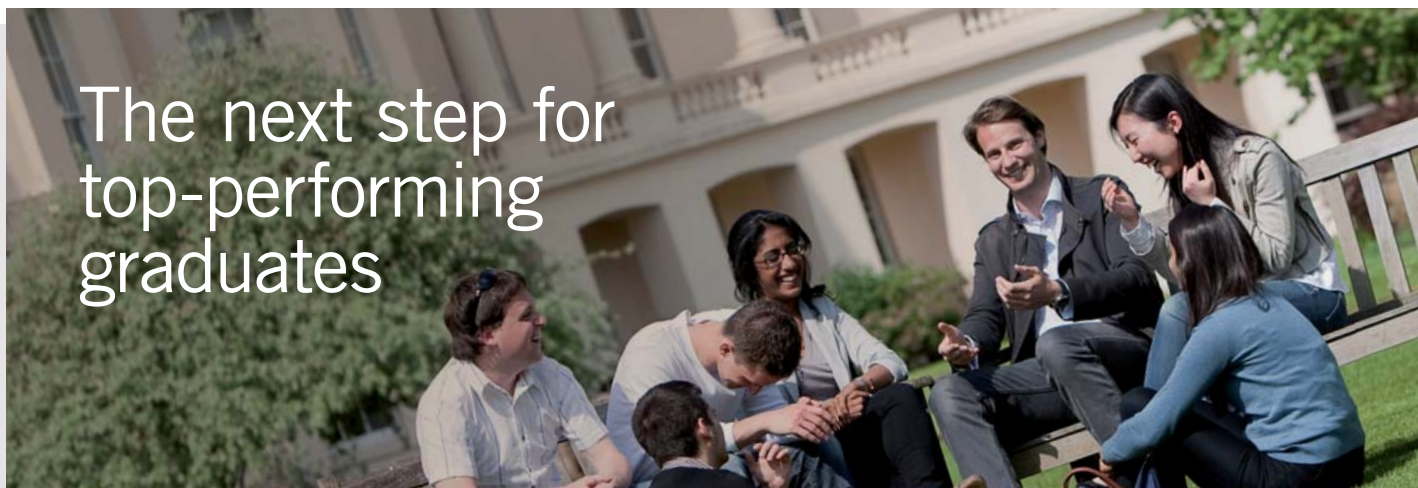
A quick example:

- For university applications anyone can write, "I am highly motivated to study politics." In fact, so many students use something similar that it has become a meaningless cliché. If it is true for you, and you want to get this across, you need to think carefully about how you can express this statement so that instead of just saying that you are motivated, you *show* that you are.

- For job applications anyone can start by writing, “I am writing to apply for the sales intern position you have posted on your company website.” However, this is boring and will not make you stand out.

So just how do you show that you are the right candidate?

The answer is to follow the simple steps outlined in the following chapters and where better to start than **Part 1 – Know your skills, strengths and achievements.**



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\* Figures taken from London Business School's Masters in Management 2010 employment report

# **PART 1 - KNOW YOUR SKILLS, STRENGTHS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

## 2 KNOW YOUR SKILLS

Before you can start to write your motivation letter, you need to know your skills and be able to communicate them confidently.

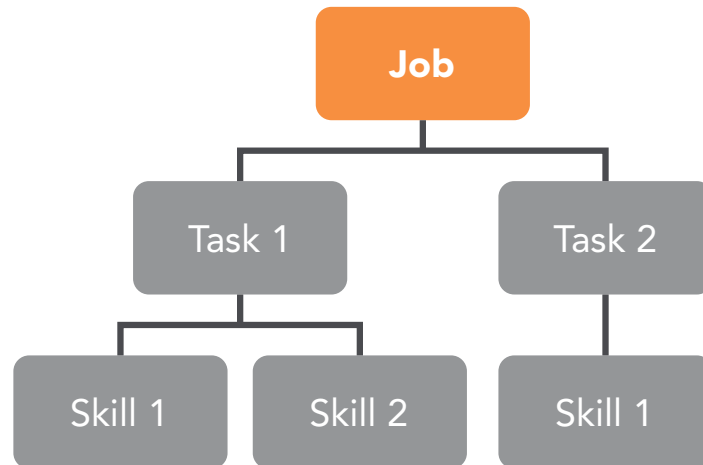


You might be surprised to know that you already have many of the skills which are essential for employment. These are not the specific knowledge-based skills you would learn during an apprenticeship, in university or at work, but the '*transferable skills*' which we all need to use when we work with other people, on projects, or even by ourselves. These skills are developed by being involved in everyday activities.

The skills we are talking about don't really stand out, which is why we usually don't notice them. These 'ordinary' skills are so often taken for granted that we seldom make any effort to improve or develop them. Some, for example 'communication skills', 'people skills' and 'organisational skills', are the skills which most people develop without even noticing it.

Which transferable, or 'soft' skills do you have?

Let's think about some of the different types of work or hobbies that you have already done and recognize the skills that you have developed. The reason you are going to do this is that sometimes we don't realize that every job involves transferable skills which you can use in other jobs. So, we are going to use the following diagram to identify the skills you already have.



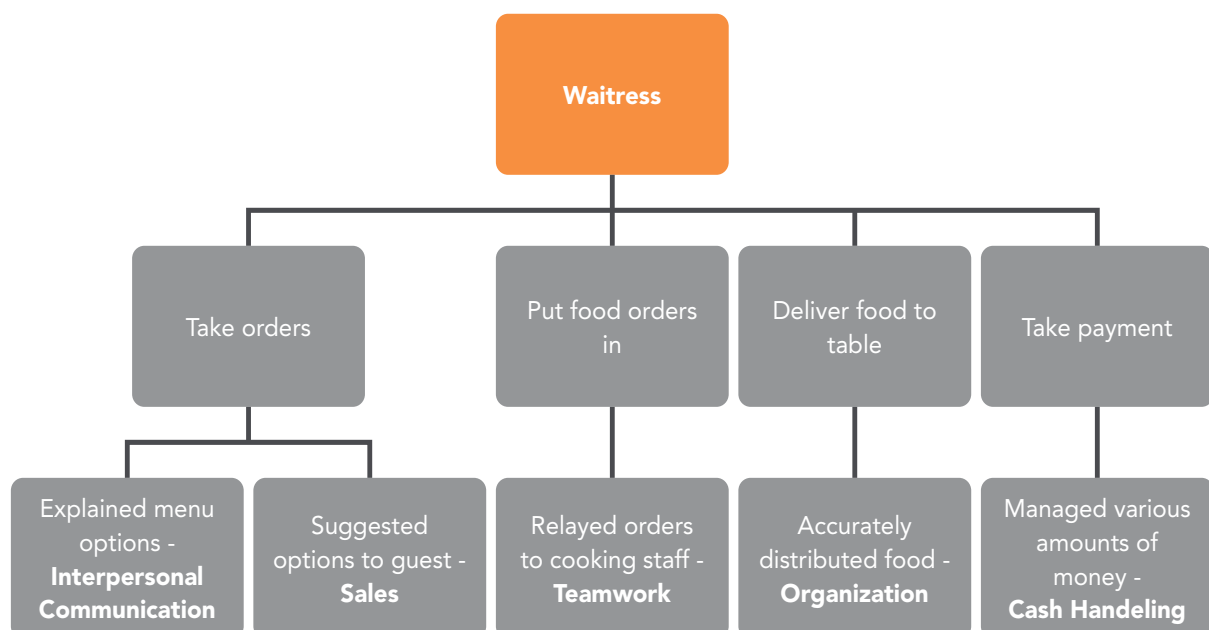
Let's run through an example.:

Waiter/waitress

The first things that come to mind are that a waiter has to be:

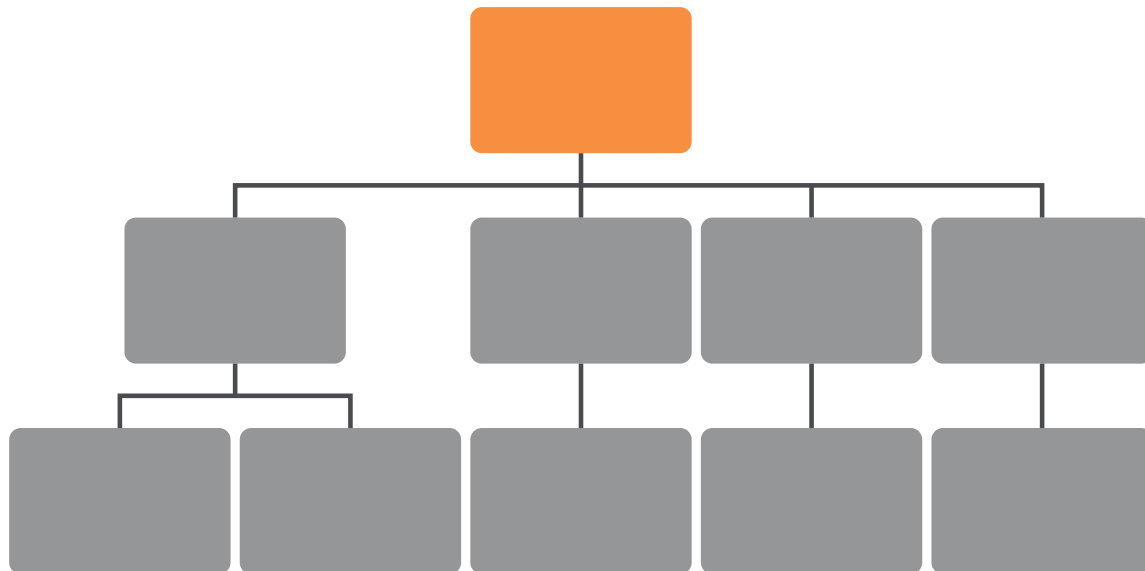
- Honest – handling money;
- Reliable – must arrive on time and stay as long as required;
- Good customer handling skills – some customers are difficult to deal with;
- Good at maths – able to give correct change.
- Able to communicate with kitchen staff.

By breaking down the key tasks of a waitress, you can more clearly identify the skills involved.



### Exercise 1

Now it's your turn. Think of a part-time job you have had or a sport/hobby you take part in and complete the following chart.



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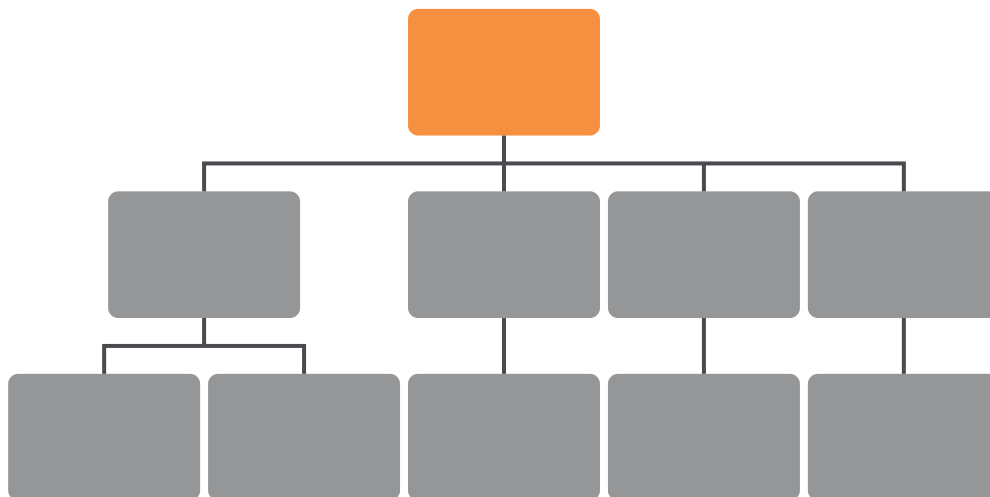




Think about other things that you have done too. For example, have you:

- helped out backstage for a school performance? – *Teamwork*
- helped sort out a disagreement between others in your class? – *Communication*
- organised a party or event? – *organisational skills*
- captained your football team? – *Leadership, teamwork*

Complete the following chart for another (part-time) job, sport, or hobby.



Make a list of your transferable skills below:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Does your list include any of the following top 10 transferable and essential skills?

1. Communication Skills	6. Learning Skills
2. Teamwork Skills	7. Computer Skills
3. Time Management Skills	8. Listening Skills
4. Problem-Solving Skills	9. Creativity Skills
5. Organization Skills	10. Leadership Skills.

## **Technical skills**

When you apply for a job you will probably be evaluated on the basis of your technical or hard skills – these are the skills that can be learned through formal education, on the job training or volunteer experience. Examples of technical skills include: computer programming, accounting, designing, operating machinery, scientific knowledge, car repair, etc. Technical skills often constitute the bare minimum that an employer looks for in a candidate.

Make a list below of all the technical skills you believe you have.

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

## **Personal skills and qualities**

We all have our own set of personal skills and qualities, for example, the ability to get along with people, persistence, adaptable, enthusiastic, reliable, accurate. Employers will always look for these skills to some extent and they can be the one thing that separates you from another candidate.

Make a list below of what you believe are your personal skills and qualities.

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
-

Take time now to go through your all your skills with a friend or relative to make and add any that they think you have missed.

Now that you have a complete list of your skills, take a close look at them. Can you truly say that you have all of these?

The thing is, it is not enough to just say what your skills are, you have to be able to demonstrate that you really do have the skills you say you have. To do this, you need to be able to show what you have achieved by using these skills. The following chapter will show you how.



**YOU WOULD NEVER ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO DO THIS**

**SO WHY LET THEM DO THIS?**

It's a scary thought. If you have a crash, the impact is much the same as falling from the roof. And should your child be flung from the car during a crash, possibly worse. It's worth remembering the next time you set off in your car.

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## 3 YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Who do you know that has achieved something really great?

What do you admire about this achievement?

Why do you think it is important to recognise your achievements?

Being able to identify and communicate achievements is an important part of deciding what to put in a motivation letter, it is also really important when it comes to job interviews.

When you value and appreciate yourself, this helps others to value and appreciate you.

### Exercise 2:

Think about a time when you did something and felt a real sense of achievement (alternatively, think about a time when you used one of your skills you identified in the previous chapter) and answer the following questions:

To help you out, we will start with an example in italics.

1. What was the task or challenge?  
*Captain my football team and take them from bottom of the league to being in the top 3.*
2. What did I have to do to achieve this?  
*Plan game strategies and ways to motivate the team*
3. What obstacles did I have to overcome?  
*Some team members had lost motivation and weren't making any effort.*
4. What skills did I use?  
*Leadership, planning, communication, teamwork, organisation.*
5. How did I work with others?  
*Asked for their input into game strategies, got agreement for extra training sessions.*
6. What did I do best?  
*Finding ways to get the team to listen to my ideas.*

7. What did I learn from this?

*It is important to be able to adapt the way I communicate to ensure that I was understood by the whole team as not everyone has the same communication style.*

Now it's your turn to answer the questions below.

1. What was the task or challenge?
2. What did I have to do to achieve this?
3. What obstacles did I have to overcome?
4. What skills did I use?
5. How did I work with others?
6. What did I do best?
7. What did I learn from this?

Later you can develop these achievements into short statements, each with the same structure:

- Begin with a short explanation of the problem,
- Give a brief overview of what you did,
- Indicate the positive outcome.

This is how you show rather than just say what your skills are.

The final part of the information gathering phase is to relate the information you have gathered about yourself to either:

- the exact course and university you want to apply to – see Part 2
- the job vacancy and company you want to apply for – see Part 3

# **PART 2 - PERSONAL STATEMENT (MOTIVATION) FOR UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS**



## 4 WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO TO UNIVERSITY?

When you apply to study at university, you usually have to send in a number of important documents including your C.V, predicted marks, language certificate etc., but one of the key documents required - the one that can really make the difference and assure you a place on your desired course - is the personal statement; your motivation for studying.

Universities frequently have more than one applicant for each position on the course and I have seen courses that have up to 20 students applying for each position. All these students have the required entry qualifications so how can a university decide on who should get the place? Whether or not your application is accepted will depend largely your personal statement.

This puts a lot of stress on many students - how to convince universities that you are the right student to be chosen for the course.



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You may have top marks in your school exams, however having good marks does not always guarantee you a university place. You must find an effective way to present yourself and your qualifications. The best way to do this is to interweave your skills, achievements, and personality traits in a brief presentation that shows the university that you have what they are looking for and are good enough to be offered a position.

The ‘why’

Having a clear idea of why you are motivated to study a particular subject has to come across on your personal statement.

### **Exercise 3 - What motivates you?**

Motivation is what causes us to act, whether it is getting a glass of water to reduce thirst or reading a book to gain knowledge.

What motivates you to study this particular subject? What are the reasons for wanting to follow the course you’ve chosen?

The key here is to keep asking yourself ‘why?’ until you get to the real answer behind where your interest comes from.

Let me give you an example:

*What do I want to study?*

*“I want to study politics”*

*Why?*

*“I’ve just always been interested in politics so thought I would like to study it at university.”*

This is a bit boring so it’s time to dig deeper so that you can come up with a more unique answer that shows that you are driven, enthusiastic and keen to discover more.

*Where did your interest in politics come from?*

*“I’ve always read lots of books and watched political programmes on TV”*

*Which books and programmes in particular?*

....

*Why those ones?*

....

*What particularly grabbed your attention in them?*

....

*Who have you had interesting political discussions with?*

....

*Why do these discussions stand out in your memory?*

....

Now it's your turn, to write down your answers.

What do I want to study?

Why?

What really makes you interested in this subject?

Why?

Who has influenced you in this subject?

Why?

What do you see yourself doing with this subject once you graduate?

Why?

The more you can delve into your own positive experiences of enjoying a subject, the more your unique personality will show through.

Now that you have brainstormed why you want to study your chosen subject, the next step is to carry out some research into your chosen course.

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## 5 COURSE INFORMATION

Before you can begin to write your personal statement, you need to find out as much as possible about the university that is offering your chosen course and about the course itself. Usually the university's website is clear and informative about their requirements, expectations and about what qualifications and qualities they hope their candidates have. Knowing a little bit about their requirements, about their main projects, activities, course structure etc. will help you get an idea of what to include in your personal statement.

This area of information gathering is one that you really need to spend time on. Go through the university website and the pages relevant to the course you want to study in detail and take notes.

Answering each of the following questions will help you get more of the key information needed for your personal statement.

### **About the course:**

- What does the website say is the aim of the course?
  
- How is the course presented? Is it all lectures or are there workshops, practical situations/case studies? How does the teaching method appeal to you?
  
- Is industry involved either in the development of the course or as guest speakers? Is this important to you? Why?
  
- How will you be assessed? Is it all written theory exams or is there a practical aspect or does project work count toward your marks? Are you better at exams or do you prefer the practical element? Are your core competencies assessed each year?
  
- What subjects are included each year? Which are of most interest to you and why?

- How much flexibility is there for you to choose your major and minor subjects? Which do you see yourself choosing and why?
- Does the course offer the chance to do an exchange or internship? Is this something that interests you? Why?
- Is there an opportunity to collaborate with students on other courses? Is this something that interests you? Why?
- What core skills will you be able to develop on this course? Why do you think they are important and how will you use them in the future?
- Is there a list of possible jobs you can do when you graduate? Which direction do you see yourself going in and why?

Now that you have a more in-depth knowledge about the course and subjects involved, it is time to turn your attention to the university itself and what it offers.

**About the university:**

- What is the university's vision and values? Do they resonate with you?
- Does the university have an international network and/or strategic partnerships and if so is that important to you? Why?
- Does it have a global alumni network?



- Does it have a student's union? If so, are there any extracurricular activities e.g. student societies, sports or volunteering opportunities that interest you? Why?
- How can you make a positive contribution at this university?
- How do you know you will fit in at this university?

Now that you know a lot more about both yourself and the course you are applying for, you are ready to start pulling all this information you have gathered into creating the first draft of your personal statement.



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## 6 THE FIRST DRAFT

Now that you have gathered all the information you need, just how much of it should you include in your personal statement? In order to create your first draft, you need to know the questions that have to be answered to ensure your personal statement gets you a place on the course.

You are probably thinking, “have I not answered enough questions?!” Well yes, however the previous questions were all about gathering the necessary information together to be able to answer the key questions listed below!

When you first start writing your personal statement, allow yourself to go crazy. Use the information you have pulled together about yourself in the previous chapters and write absolutely everything that comes to your mind when answering the questions below. At this stage you aren't trying to write a formal essay.

Key questions to answer:

### 1. **Why do you want to study the course you have chosen?**

What motivates you to take this course at a university-level?

How has your interest/enthusiasm for it developed?

This is where you need to tell a bit about your background. You may think that this is a waste of time because the other documents you have to submit with your application already contain this information, i.e. where you studied, your predicted grades, the classes you took however, now is your chance to make all this sound far more interesting by creatively describing your experiences.

### 2. **What makes you the right person for the course?**

This is where you get to show that not only do you meet the selection criteria but that you have also done your research and are prepared for what is involved in studying your chosen course. Mention how you want to further develop the skills you have learnt from both school and your extracurricular activities that are relevant to your chosen course.

Don't make the mistake of mentioning all your skills though; instead, focus on those that are a requirement for, or most relevant to, the course.

Remember to demonstrate these skills rather than just say you have them - you spent a lot of time identifying your transferable skills so be sure to include them!

**3. What else have you done that is relevant to the course?**

Have you done any extra reading, voluntary work or work placement, competition, etc. related to the subject? If so, what did you find particularly interesting.

**4. How is this course relevant to your chosen career?**

Clearly describe your chosen career path and how what you have learnt both in and out of school relate to it. Why is this particular course the right one for you to be able to follow your chosen career? Make it interesting and personal so that you stand out.

While you may know the subject you want to study, you may not yet have decided exactly what path you want to take your career. If this is the case for you, don't worry about it, instead just talk about what you're looking forward to learning about the subject and what you want to gain from it.

**5. Why are you a good match for this course?**

This is also where you can bring in a few additional points about what you hope to gain from studying at university and the contribution you hope to make. You can mention extracurricular opportunities and how you believe you will fit in.

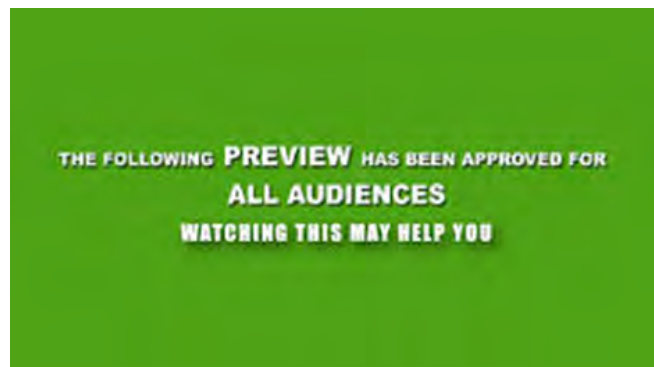
Now take a break before re-reading your answers and trying to formalise your notes. This is when you start deciding what is going to go into your personal statement and what you now feel is perhaps less relevant.

Think about the words you want to use; can you make any of the verbs and adjectives stronger to more uniquely describe what you want to say? If you are struggling, take a look at the list of power words at the end of this workbook for ideas.

This is effectively the first draft of your personal statement – congratulations!

However, it is probably far too long!

## 7 YOUR MOVIE TRAILER



It's time to think of your life as a film. You are the director and producer of your own personal film which shows everything you have ever done in your life, every moment that you have achieved something and every time that you have used a particular skill.

You now want to advertise your movie and to do this, like all good movies, you have to produce a trailer which shows all the best bits condensed into about 30 seconds – that's the body of your personal statement, a trailer showing an all action version of your life's movie. Effectively, your answers to the questions in the previous chapter are your movie so now you just need to condense your them into a trailer that highlights all the best bits!

The key is to use brief paragraphs to write:

1. Introduction

Start by stating why you are applying for the course and how it fits with your career plans, *i.e. the key points from your answers to questions 1 and 4 in chapter 6.*

2. The body

Write about how you have the necessary skills and what you hope to learn from the course, *i.e. the key points from your answers to questions 2 and 3 in chapter 6.*

3. End

Summarise why it is the right course for you and what you are looking forward to – here you can add some information about the extracurricular activities you are looking forward to taking part in - *this is where you can include the key points from question 5 from chapter 6.*

Use the space on the next page to write your movie trailer.



## 8 THE FINAL STEP!

Once you have completed your movie trailer, walk away from it for a day or two then go back and re-read it to see if you can improve it further. Make sure the information is organized in a clear and easy-to-understand way. Also, check for grammar errors, and make sure your tone is appropriate. Get someone else to read it as they may pick up things that you have missed, don't rely on spell check – read it backwards! The letter should sound both enthusiastic and professional and not contain any spelling or grammar mistakes!



At this point, there are 2 things I want you to make sure that you avoid:

### Clichés

This is one of the most common mistakes people make when writing a motivation letter for job applications, and the same goes for students when writing their personal statements for university applications.



Typical clichés include the following:

“I am highly motivated to study maths at university.”

“My greatest ambition is to become a top accountant.”

“Since I was a child I have always been interested in science and especially chemistry....”

These and other similar clichés frequently appear in university personal statements.

While these sentences appear meaningless, they can actually prevent you from getting a university place because the reader may think that you either can't come up with anything creative or original to write, or can't be bothered spending the time to write your personal statement which may make them think that you are lazy or not really interested in going to university.

A single cliché in your essay can be enough to remove you from the list of candidates. Therefore, it is important that you go out of your way to avoid these sorts of statements.

## **Plagiarizing**

At this point in your career you most certainly know that plagiarizing is strictly forbidden in any remotely academic context. With students being kicked out of universities for plagiarism, there is no way that you will be accepted for a university place if your motivation letter is not unique. Universities use plagiarism checkers and any plagiarism will give them more than enough reason to reject your application.

This is exactly why I have not included any examples of personal statements in this workbook; you are unique, and your personal statement should therefore also be unique. When writing about how you are a good fit for the university, it is also important that you don't copy text exactly from the university website; if you really must then be sure to quote it correctly.

## **PART 3 - MOTIVATION LETTER FOR JOB APPLICATIONS**

## 9 HOW TO GET YOUR CV READ

Before you can even begin to write a motivation letter for a job application, you need to complete Part 1 of this guide in order to be able to write confidently about your skills and achievements and really sell yourself for the position. Then you need to do your research. In the following chapter you will learn what to include and how to actually write your motivation letter

Of course, there are mixed messages in the value of a motivation letter. I have heard some recruiters say, “Don’t waste your time on a motivation letter. No one ever reads them,” while some hiring managers say, “Always include a motivation letter when sending your resume; it can make or break whether you are invited for an interview, or not.”

I believe that you should never take the risk of not sending one. It is another opportunity to sell yourself, get your CV read and hopefully get you an interview.

The first step to deciding what to include in your motivation letter is to analyse the position. This involves reading and re-reading the job description, so you have a clear understanding of what the hiring manager is looking for. The second step is to do your research on the company.

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## Research the Position

As you can see from the example job description on the following page, the majority of job descriptions begin with a brief description of the job, often followed by a list of roles and responsibilities, and then a profile or list of requirements.

## Example Job Description

### *Commercial Contracts Officer*

*As a Commercial Contracts Officer at Company Z you will **guide the full contracting cycle** from entering into commercial contracts throughout the correct execution and actual performance of contracts in the Benelux & France. You will ensure that the correct contracts are used and contain proper customer information, **liaising with the commercial back office** and credit department. Also monitoring correct signatures, duly filing of the contracts in the Group's Contract Management system and **checking that the right GT&C are used** is part of your responsibilities.*

*Furthermore, you make sure that Legal is involved when there are deviations from ordinary business / standard contracts. Besides this, you **support the Business by obtaining additional legal documentation required for certain deals** (for example corporate information, bank guarantees), which involves co-operation with Legal and Treasury departments.*

*Driven by getting things done in line with company Z's Legal Policy, you **provide overall management support and assistance** to the Senior Legal Counsels implementing standard contracts in the Company Group.*

### *Profile*

- **Bachelor** (BA) or **Master** (MA) degree in law
- **Starter or up to 3 years of working experience** as a Paralegal/Legal Assistant/Commercial Assistant, preferably within an international operating commercial contracts or legal department
- Experience with **contract management** is considered a plus
- **Attention to detail, able to prioritize and meet deadlines**
- **Pro-active, flexible and analytical**
- **Good communication skills, culturally adaptive**
- Proficient with **Microsoft Office** and preferably experience with Sharepoint
- **Fluent in English**, spoken and written, German is considered a plus

Read through the job description a couple of times and then highlight (or mark in bold as I have done above) the points that you believe are most important for the job. Then make a few notes, from the exercises you completed in Part 1, of things that you can use to show that you are a match.

### Research the Company

Go a step further and research the company, its current products and services, market position, etc. Make sure you check out the company's mission statement and values; hopefully the company values are a close match with your own. It is also useful to see if the website has a careers page which may give details of the kind of people they employ, what they expect from their employees, what the company culture is like and what it is like to work there.

This is all useful information that you can use in your motivation letter when mentioning why you want to work at the company and/or why you know you will be a good fit.

Once you have completed your research, you can turn to the next chapter to see how to pull it altogether to create a strong motivation letter.



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# 10 WRITING A STRONG MOTIVATION LETTER

The key purpose of a motivation or covering letter is to get your CV read and to get you an interview. Therefore, it has to be even better than your CV. It is effectively a one-page advertisement of you, so it must be brief, enthusiastic and interesting. One of the main functions of a cover letter is to describe how your qualifications match a specific job vacancy, it is pointless to send a boilerplate cover letter that is not tailored to the targeted position. The following is a guide to help you do this.

*The examples given below are from a motivation letter that was written for the job description from the previous chapter.*

## **First Paragraph:**

Your first paragraph must grab the interest of the reader, provide information about the value you will add to the employer's organization, and make you stand out from other candidates. Do not waste the opening paragraph of your cover letter by using such clichés as,

“Enclosed please find my resume,”

“Please accept the attached resume for your advertised opening,”

or

“As you can see on my resume enclosed herewith....”

Employers can see that your resume is enclosed or attached; you don't need to tell them. Phrases like these just take up precious space – remember that your cover letter should be no more than one page, ideally less. Focus on what makes you different i.e. your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and highlight a few of the benefits you bring to the employer.

Historically, motivation letters began with sentences like,

“I am writing to apply for the sales director position you have posted on your company Website.”

However, this is a very weak way to start. You want to grab the reader's attention and to do so you need to start with something like,

"I am a recent graduate with a Master's Degree in International Law and nearly one year of work experience as an intern covering a wide range of legal areas. I bring an eye for detail, enjoy taking the initiative, solving challenges and achieving results even when faced with tight deadlines. This is why I believe that I can add value to the position of Commercial Contracts Officer."

### **Second Paragraph:**

Your next paragraph should expand on your professional and/or academic qualifications. Provide examples that illustrate your ability to provide the benefits you mention in the first paragraph. Use the information about your skills and achievements that you identified in Part 1 to make clear connections between the job requirements and your skills and achievements, for example,

"I understand the importance of listening closely to clients and customers and while working as a legal Trainee, this approach made an impact on my clients which resulted in both client retention and an increase in clients for the company. As well as having an international mindset and passion for working in a multicultural environment, I am ambitious, adaptable, and quick to learn. I have knowledge of contractual law having worked on international legal contracts. In addition, I am proactive with experience of working confidently on my own and taking responsibility for my work however I also enjoy working as part of a team and am known for always being there with my sleeves rolled up to support the team to meet our targets."

You will need to use examples that illustrate *why* you're a good fit for the job because simply stating that you have excellent time management skills and won't land you a job.

### **Third Paragraph:**

Describe your fit with the company and position. This is the paragraph in which the research that you did in the previous chapter can pay off. You can show how you are a good fit by demonstrating your knowledge of the organization. This is the ideal paragraph in which to relate yourself to the company's mission and values or mention a news item you've seen about the organization; for example:



“I am keen to work for Company Z because I have a broad legal background which fits well with the requirements for the position of Commercial Contracts Officer. I am a keen and fast learner and believe that I will be able to both learn a lot from and make a positive contribution to this position.”

Or,

“Over the last two years I have followed the unfolding events at Company Y with great interest as your firm moved into financial and broadband services.”

#### **Fourth Paragraph:**

Just like all good sales people, you need to have a strong call to action. The final paragraph of your cover letter must include a proactive call to action without being overly pushy. An example of a good call to action is,

“Thank you for your time. I would love the opportunity to meet with you in person to further discuss the position and my qualifications and can be contacted on *telephone number* or via email to *email address*. I look forward to hearing from you soon.”

Or,

“I look forward to meeting with you in person to further discuss my motivation and experience for this position. Until then, should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on *telephone number* or via email to *email address*.”

#### **Points to Remember**

1. Always direct your letter to a named person rather than Dear Sir/Madam. If there is no name on the advert for the job vacancy, then do some more research either on the company website or LinkedIn or even call the company to get the correct name to address your letter to.
2. Speak the language of the job description – if they are looking for someone who can work well on their own, give an example of what you have achieved with minimum supervision. By showing that you have the skills that they are looking for, it also shows that you have taken the time to read the job description and have tailored your cover letter to the specific application rather than sending a generic letter. Never send a generic cover letter.



3. Never lie and say that you have the skills and experience they are looking for if you don't – you will always get caught out! If you have never used a specific piece of software, knowledge of which is a requirement for the job, but have used a similar one, then mention it instead, show that you are a quick learner and that you will be able to quickly pick it up.
4. Don't include any information that is not relevant for the job. The purpose of the cover letter is not to brag about all your skills and experience rather it is to show that you understand the job requirements and can show that you are a good fit.
5. Always include your contact details at the end to make it easy for the reader can contact you without having to search for your contact details.
6. Writing a cover letter is like telling a story — if you really want to relate to an employer, you need to add a personal touch to it. Don't be afraid to share your passions. Explain to the employer how and why you're the perfect fit for the company.

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## **PART 4 - YOUR FIRST CV**

# 11 HOW TO WRITE YOUR FIRST CURRICULUM VITAE

Your CV is a crucial document for both university and job applications - it is your first opportunity to impress prospective employers and therefore it must be excellently written and tailored to clearly represent you, as an individual, coupled with the job description.



Did you know that errors on your CV can cost you the job? In fact, a recent study indicated that 47% of the recruiters who took part said that they would reject a CV if it had just one spelling mistake on it! This is why it is so important to pay very close attention to detail so that it reads concisely, professionally, articulately, and free from spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.

But when it is the first time you have to write a CV, just what do you put in it?

Your CV must highlight your own personal brand; your unique skills, competencies, and experiences. It is important that it is both properly edited and formatted, with consistent layout and font so that it provides a professional impression of you to the reader; and it must contain all the necessary information about you to increase your chances of an interview.

Having gone through this workbook and completed all the exercises, you will already have a clear idea of your key skills and strengths which need to be highlighted on your CV.

Remember, an employer is not looking for the skill alone e.g. 'I am creative' – just what does that show. You need to provide an example of when you were creative at solving a particular problem and what the positive outcome was. It is even better when you can show how you combined two or more of your skills in an exciting or impressive way and the benefits that can be gained from combining these skills.

## How to Write a CV

There are lots of different ways to write and set out a CV and each employer will have their favourite but the most important thing to know is that it will normally be read in about 7 to 20 seconds – and after you have spent hours creating it!

Keep it clean, clear and easy to read.

As a student, or recent graduate, employers won't expect you to have lots of work experience. Think about everything you've done at school, in your spare time including your interests (the information you gathered about yourself in Part 1 will help you here). Is anything that you've done relevant to the job you're applying for? If it is, make sure you put it on your CV. However, you should keep your CV to no more than one page by making it relevant and to the point so that it is immediately interesting – it is not your life story! It must state who you are and what you can do with sufficient evidence to back it up.

The key to a great CV is to make sure that it is really strong and contains all the key information to ensure that the reader will read to the end. This should include:



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- **Your contact details**

Make sure that your contact details, including a professional looking email address, are written clearly at the top of the first page.

- **A summary of who you are and what you are looking for**

Your opening paragraph needs to be a strong message that summarizes your background and indicates what you are best at and what you can offer an employer. That creates a theme that is then followed by your 'proving' that you are great at these things by showcasing supporting accomplishments in each job. Use summary words like 'qualified', 'graduate' to get your message across. Make sure to focus on what you do well as nearly everyone can say that they are 'dynamic, enthusiastic, creative' etc. It is also a good idea to try and match your experience to the requirements of the job.

- **Education**

List key qualifications and recent courses attended.

- **A brief summary of your career to date**

Discuss each job you have done (most recent job first). Summarise the job in 2-3 lines, then set out your key achievements in bullet points. Just put in enough to give the recruiter a complete overview of your career.

Use active language e.g. 'initialised', 'organised', 'managed', etc.

Include facts, numbers and percentages where possible.

Explain jargon or abbreviations where necessary to help the reader.

List significant awards or targets achieved.

- **Languages** - refer to whether spoken and/or written and to what level of proficiency

- **Interests**

Include interests that might be relevant to the job, those that indicate co-operative or team working, or just things that you talk about at an interview with enthusiasm. When you're describing your interests, highlight the things that show off the skills that employers look for. Some things to include are:

- any examples of working in a team
- relevant voluntary work or work experience
- positions of responsibility
- any activity that shows where you took the initiative

When a hiring manager is seeing the same old resume time and time again which includes the cliché words and phrases such as “highly dedicated individual” or “great team player” you are guaranteeing that your resume will be deleted.

Poorly chosen words and clichéd phrases can destroy the interest of the reader. Power words when chosen correctly can have the opposite effect of motivating and inspiring the reader and will help you stand out from your competition! A list of example power words has been included at the end.

Important points to consider:

1. **Watch your grammar.** Sentences in resumes are written like headlines and are in the first person. For example, the statement “I am known for consistently exceeding my sales targets” becomes “Known for consistently exceeding sales targets.” Another one of the biggest mistakes when writing a resume is when people mix first person and third person. For example, although “Easily learns new software” sounds right, that is the third-person (“she learns”) and it should really be “Easily learn” (“I learn”). Small but important point, as you want your resume to be grammatically correct.
2. **Include only one telephone number rather than multiple numbers.** Preferably one where the caller can leave a message.
3. **Do not include discriminating information.** Avoid information that can lead the reader to discriminate against you, for example: age, sex, religion, marital status, and ethnicity.
4. **Eliminate technical skills for basic software programs.** Most employers today expect you to be familiar with the basic computer programs, such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
5. **Do not include references unless requested.** Employers today expect you to offer references when requested, which is typically during the latter part of the interview process.

Writing a strong CV is all about finding the right information and words to present it in the best light to demonstrate that you have the specific experiences and skills the employer is seeking. Fancy designs and graphs etc., while they may look impressive, are not needed unless you are applying for a creative role and even then you need to be careful as the Applicant Tracking Systems that many companies use to scan CVs cannot read the information in graphics and text boxes. Best tip, keep it clean, clear and easy to read.

The following pages provide you with a couple of examples of real client CVs although names, contact details, etc have been removed.



Name 1 – CV example for university application

Name 2 – CV example for internship application

Name 3 – CV example for first job on graduating

Hopefully you will agree that these examples present a clear and focussed approach to showing an employer, or university, that they are ideal candidates.



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The collage features several circular buttons with the following text: "Reduce, reuse, recycle" (green), "WORK WITH US" (yellow), "to gether ness" (pink), "save water. shower together" (blue), "everyone deserves good design" (blue), and a button with a red lamp. The IKEA logo is also present in the bottom left corner.

NAME 1

*Proactive and self-motivated student with diverse experience in working with the public. Known for strong work ethic and being calm under pressure.*

City

 telephone number

 email address

 LinkedIn profile

## EDUCATION

### European Baccalaureate

European School Bergen,  
Bergen, N.H., The Netherlands.

#### Subjects:

Maths (5 period), Physics, Chemistry,  
Lab Science, English (Language 1),  
Dutch (Language 2), Music, Sport, Moral,  
Philosophy, History (in French), Geography  
(in French).

## CERTIFICATIONS

- Solidworks Mechanical Design Associate
- Valid First Aid Certificate
- Lifeguard Beach
- Lifesaver 3 (highest rescue swimmer qualification in the Netherlands)
- NHA Photography Diploma
- "Starting a business" Certificate – Santa Clara University Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

## OTHER INTERESTS

Music: 8 years playing guitar, DJ.  
Sports: skiing, golf, mountain biking,  
rugby, swimming  
Photography  
Entrepreneurship

## LANGUAGES

English - native speaker  
Dutch - fluent  
French - conversational  
Spanish - basic

**Date of birth:**

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPERIENCE

- Achieved Gold International Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Voluntary lifeguard and first aider with Reddingsbrigade at Bergen aan Zee and first aider at various local events.
- Represented school in the European Schools Science Symposium held in Alicante, Spain March 2012.
- Attended orientation day with Bristows Search and Rescue helicopter team in Den Helder.
- Won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Petten Science Project Competition for project entitled "The Pendulum Putting Swing".

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

**Driveline Engineer** Sept 2015–Dec 2015  
Human Power Team Delft and Amsterdam, Delft  
Assisted in initial driveline concept design for the Velo X VI of TU Delft Human Power Dreamteam. Worked under supervision of Chief Driveline Engineer carrying out research into potential driveline systems and new bicycle driveline concepts.

**Swimming Pool Lifeguard** April 2013–Sept 2014  
Hoorne Vaart Sport Complex, Alkmaar  
Responsible for safety and well-being of public in/around swimming pool.

**Reddingsbrigade Volunteer** - Bergen aan Zee June 2011–present  
• Quickly responding to different situations and informing public of dangers. Trained to lead a team on a rescue or medical emergency. Experienced in team work under extreme pressure, working with other emergency services such as Police, Ambulance and SAR helicopter.  
• Planning and executing fun yet challenging lessons and teaching rescue swimming to children around 9-14 years old.

**Sound and Light Technician (volunteer)**  
European School Bergen Oct 2009–June 2014  
Ensured correct use and maintenance of school's sound and light equipment; taught other students on its use and worked with local company to install and use lighting and sound system for one off show.

**Volunteer Activity Instructor** - KGadventure, Worksop, UK July 2013  
Organised games and events for international children attending summer camp; encouraged children to improve their spoken English.

**Strandpaviljoen Zuid (Beach Cafe)** - Bergen aan Zee May–Sept 2012  
Sold drinks, made snack food for customers and ensured kitchen was clean.


**Voluntary work experience**  
Willteco B.V. engineering, Broek op Langedijk June 2012  
Shadowed mechanics engineers and assisted with maintenance and testing of B.O.Ps, hydraulic cylinders and a gear box for use in the offshore industry.



## NAME 2

*Self-motivated sports management student, confident and experienced in working in multi-cultural teams. Keen to be challenged in an internship that will further expand knowledge and experience.*

City

 phone number

 email

### CORE SKILLS

Organisational | Communication | Interpersonal | Leadership | Customer Services | Presentation Skills  
Self-Directed | Results Oriented | Team Work | Negotiation  
Microsoft Office | Sports Management | Public Speaking | Problem Solving | Marketing Strategy

### EDUCATION

**B.Sc. Sports Management** - Bournemouth University, UK Sept 2015–present  
Subjects: Operations Management / Sports Marketing / Financial Appraisal in Sport / Event Management  
Financial Reporting in Sport / Research Skills / Social Perspectives in Sport  
Personal and Professional Development in Sport / Managing Sport Development

### ACHIEVEMENTS

- Represented school at Model European Council 2014 & 2015
  - Played role of Greek Head of State and Latvian Finance Minister on separate occasions at Euro Control in Brussels and The European Parliament Building in Strasbourg, presenting and talking in a formal and heavily regulated conference in front of 400 people.
  - Led a team of five; playing a major role on all proceedings dealing with high pressure situations in Europe and Greece, making conference newspaper on multiple occasions.
  - Debated and networked with students and politicians from all over Europe in English, French and Dutch and negotiated with multiple stakeholders about numerous European issues
- Represented school at Model United Nations 2014
  - Played role of Russian Finance Minister during economic tensions between Europe and Russia.
  - Debated and lobbied with countries in the European Patent building in Munich in front of 1000 people
  - Managed stakeholders' needs and communicated with many different cultures.
- European Science Symposium - Represented school with team project, *Hydrogen Power Cell*. 2012

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- Duinvermaak Pancake House** - Waiter 2016
  - Worked under pressure during peak hours, communicating seamlessly between English and Dutch.
- Pomeroy White Investments** May 2013–Jun 2013  
*Work Experience, shadowing an investment analyst*
  - Gained insight into investment practices for the New York Stock Exchange and learnt many financial principles and practices.
  - Acquired techniques on reading and predicting the market.
  - Participated in a simulation exercise to invest \$10,000 of fictional money in the market and monitor its progress over a few days - gained a 5% increase in the original investment.
- Act2Aid/Net4Kids** – Volunteer chairman 2012–2014
  - Grew charity from 8-22 people in one year, introduced efficiencies to maximise profit for charities.

## NAME 3

Graduate Civil Engineer

City



phone number



email address



### PROFILE

*Combine motivation, hard work and ability to understand and solve problems (particularly maths related) to produce quality results for myself and others:*

- Managed development and delivery of presentations for project teams at university within tight deadlines.
- Mentored groups of students and assisted them to understand concepts in studies by making it visual.
- Prepared models to explain things to myself to understand studies better.

### EDUCATION

#### **Master of Engineering -**

Structural Engineering, 2016

R.G.P.V., Bhopal, India

#### **Bachelor of Civil Engineering,**

2013 - CSVTU, Bhilai, India

### IT SKILLS

Windows98/XP/Vista & Windows 7

MS Office, MS Excel

AutoCAD, 3dcivil, STAAD Pro

### OTHER INTERESTS

- Participated in Nukkad Natak, Vidyut - Bhilai Institute of Technology, 2011
- Cultural secretary of AAKAR - core committee of civil department SSCET, Bhilai
- Hosted two shows, one for launch of local band.
- Dance – awarded either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> place in several dance competitions.

### LANGUAGES

**Marathi** – native speaker,

**Hindi and English** - fluent

**Dutch** – beginner

### PROJECTS AND TRAINING

- **Master Thesis - Fully stressed Design of Fink Truss using Staad. Pro.**  
A study into the optimisation of Fink Truss by Fully Stressed Design method in STAAD Pro incorporating 81 cases of three different spans and three types of loading. Includes an evaluation of the steel take off and maximum displacement in each case.
- **Major Project - Design of a Vertical Drop Weir.**  
A four month project utilizing AutoCad, 3dcivil and MS-Office.
- **Minor Project - An approach of rainwater harvesting in a residential building at Bilaspur.**  
A four month project utilizing AutoCad and 3dcivil - an approach of a residential building with the facility of rainwater harvesting which is to be implemented on the real field with minimum cost and highest quality possible taking into account all by-laws and safety factors.
- Completed 1 month training for Bachelor Degree at construction of sub-station CSEB TRANSMISSION CO. LTD., RAITA, RAIPUR - 2011.
- Undertook onsite training for construction process of buildings, 2-storey quarters and foundation for heavy pillars.
- Completed 1 month training for Bachelor Degree at CSEB TRANSMISSION CO. LTD., RAITA, RAIPUR – 2012

### INTERNSHIP

- LARSEN & TOUBRO CONSTRUCTION  
Raipur, India Oct–Nov 2015  
Worked closely with both civil engineers and construction team. Prepared and presented training report and received excellent feedback from manager.
- BHARAT HEAVY ELECTRICALS LTD. (BHEL),  
Bhopal, India Sept–Oct 2015

### ACHIEVEMENTS

- Awarded Gold Medal in National Mathematics Olympiad Contest at senior school level, 2009.
- Performed in National Service Scheme (NSS) on foundation day of NSS in Raipur, 2011.

# **BONUS MATERIAL**

# LIST OF POWER WORDS

- |                  |                  |                 |                  |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Advanced      | 26. Efficient    | 51. Maintained  | 76. Skilled      |
| 2. Assigned      | 27. Enhanced     | 52. Mentored    | 77. Saved        |
| 3. Assessed      | 28. Excelled     | 53. Measured    | 78. Scheduled    |
| 4. Absorbed      | 29. Exceeded     | 54. Multiplied  | 79. Supported    |
| 5. Accelerated   | 30. Enriched     | 55. Negotiated  | 80. Secured      |
| 6. Attained      | 31. Fulfilled    | 56. Observed    | 81. Simplified   |
| 7. Attracted     | 32. Financed     | 57. Operated    | 82. Screened     |
| 8. Announced     | 33. Forecasted   | 58. Obtained    | 83. Segmented    |
| 9. Appraised     | 34. Formulated   | 59. Promoted    | 84. Streamlined  |
| 10. Budgeted     | 35. Generated    | 60. Presented   | 85. Strengthened |
| 11. Bolstered    | 36. Guided       | 61. Programmed  | 86. Triumphed    |
| 12. Balanced     | 37. Granted      | 62. Provided    | 87. Troubleshoot |
| 13. Boosted      | 38. Helped       | 63. Projected   | 88. Taught       |
| 14. Bargained    | 39. Hosted       | 64. Qualified   | 89. Tutored      |
| 15. Benefited    | 40. Implemented  | 65. Quantified  | 90. Translated   |
| 16. Beneficial   | 41. Investigated | 66. Quoted      | 91. Trained      |
| 17. Comply       | 42. Increased    | 67. Recommended | 92. Uncovered    |
| 18. Critiqued    | 43. Initiated    | 68. Refine      | 93. United       |
| 19. Closed       | 44. Influenced   | 69. Revamp      | 94. Unified      |
| 20. Collaborated | 45. Integrated   | 70. Reacted     | 95. Updated      |
| 21. Designed     | 46. Innovated    | 71. Retained    | 96. Upgraded     |
| 22. Delegated    | 47. Instituted   | 72. Recovered   | 97. Validated    |
| 23. Demonstrated | 48. Justified    | 73. Reinstated  | 98. Viewed       |
| 24. Developed    | 49. Listed       | 74. Rejected    | 99. Worldwide    |
| 25. Detected     | 50. Logged       | 75. Sustained   | 100. Witnessed   |