

CVs and Covering Letters in Brief

THE CV

The reverse Chronological CV is suitable for most situations. It lists education and work experience in reverse date order (most recent first). Evidence of skills and achievements are built into the CV against the relevant experience.

Format and Structure

- Most UK CVs should be two A4 sized pages, unless otherwise stated by the employer.
- Your best selling points should always come first within a section.
- Allocate space according to importance to the job for which you are applying – expand on areas of relevance.
- You can draw the recruiter's attention to relevant experience by grouping it together under an appropriate sub-heading eg Legal Work Experience, Financial Work Experience, Scientific Work Experience, Technical Work Experience or Relevant Work Experience.
- Use headings which best describe the content of the section. Adapt the headings to fit your needs, eg Awards and Achievements, Positions of Responsibility and Achievements.
- Putting lines between sections and the use of boxes or tables with lined borders can clutter up your CV making it difficult to read. Tables without borders can be useful for formatting neatly in columns.
- Use a standard font that is easy to read and looks professional. Use the same font style throughout.

Style

- Keep sentences short and precise.
- Bullet points can look effective and help you to write short, dynamic sentences. If you want to use paragraphs keep them short.

Content

- Must be tailored to the requirements of the reader. What skills and experience are they looking for?
- Spelling and grammar are very important; do not rely on spell checks.
- Personal profiles are optional; they are best suited to speculative applications or in circumstances where you are not using a cover letter.
- All skills claims must be backed up by evidence.

Structuring your examples - the CAR Model

Context – What was the situation – keep it brief, but specific.

Action – What did YOU do? What was your role? What actions did you take? Use action words.

Result – What was the outcome? What did you achieve? What was improved? Qualify and quantify.

References

Unless otherwise stated, provide names of two referees. These will depend on the role, your circumstances and what has been requested. More on references:

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/students/applicationsinterviews/af/references

THE COVERING LETTER

When sending a CV, you need to include a covering letter. The covering letter is your personal sales pitch, where you introduce yourself as a candidate and discuss why you want the job. It should be professional and business like in style and layout. In brief it should cover:

1. Why you are applying to this company? - What makes them stand out from other similar companies?
2. Why you are applying for this role? - Your motivation for applying, show your understanding of the role.
3. The skills and experience you have that match the job description.

Covering letters should be tailored for each job. If you cut and paste the company name and use the letter for any other employer, your letter will not convince the reader that you want to work for them. Even the least experienced recruiter can spot a 'mailshot' at a glance!

Sample job advert: Summer Student Programme

The majority of our trainee seats are offered to candidates who have already proven their ability during our Summer Student Programme. Successful applicants will have the opportunity to join us for two weeks, rotating between different practice groups each week. One of the most important experiences for Summer Students is to be invited to sit in on client meetings, closings or attend court sessions. There is, of course, a sociable side to this programme which provides a great opportunity to meet with the rest of the London office. The goal is for you to partake in substantive projects that show off your writing, research, and analytical skills and work on a variety of other projects that give you a perspective on daily dealings as a lawyer.

Qualifications : Penultimate year law/final year non-law students.

Skills:

- **Commercial awareness** - The best degree in the world isn't much use if you don't know how to apply it in the real world. You'll need a keen interest in and awareness of how business works plus plenty of common sense.
- **Communication and team skills** - These are vital, as you'll usually be working as part of a team. You'll need to be able to explain complex issues clearly and to advise and negotiate with others in order to deliver the best service.
- **Lateral thinking** - Nothing in the law is set in stone. Precedents are routinely overturned so you'll need to be able to react and adapt quickly.
- **Focus and commitment** - Like any rewarding career, law can be very hard work. Perseverance, enthusiasm, resilience and motivation will be vital.
- **Personality** -We're going to be working together, so we look for people with a spark about them who'll be able to contribute to our open culture.

Important Law CV Guidelines:

- If you are studying for/have a law degree and are applying for a training contract, pupillage, or other legal position, you should list and grade the modules for each year of your degree.
- If you are a non-law student/graduate, mention any law-related subjects and business/commercial subjects if applying for a commercial firm/chamber.
- It is useful to include a 'legal work experience' or 'legal sector experience' section. This can include vacation placements, mini-pupillages, participation in mooting, negotiation competitions, Student Legal Advice Centre work, court visits, work shadowing lawyers, etc.
- In other work experience it is useful to highlight customer/client-focused work, plus commercial awareness and team working.
- Include two referees with full address, plus email and telephone number (if agreed with the referee).

SARAH PRITCHARD

Crawford House, Booth Street East, Manchester M13 9QS
xxxxxxx@pritchard.com; 0123 456 7891; LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/xxxxxxx

EDUCATION

- 2011 – 14** **LLB (Hons) Law** **University of Manchester (Predicted result: 2.1)**
- | | | | |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Year 2 | Land Law | European Law | Equity and Trusts |
| | Company Law | Jurisprudence | Constitutional Reform |
| Year 1 | Contract Law – 68 | Criminal Law – 67 | Legal Methods - 45 |
| | Public Law 1 – 64 | Public Law 2 – 61 | Tort – 63 |
- Awards: RG Lawson Junior Legal Scholarship for first year grades.
- 2010 – 11** **Year out (see below)**
- 2008 – 10** **A-Levels** **Sir John Deanes Sixth Form College, Cheshire**
Politics (A), History (A), Philosophy (A), English Literature (B), French AS (A)
- 2003 – 08** **GCSEs** **The Heatons School, Cheshire**
Six A grades and six B grades in subjects including Law, English, Maths, ICT, French and History
-

LEGAL SECTOR EXPERIENCE

- November 2012** **Mini Pupillage with Nicholas Phelps, Crown Prosecution Service, Manchester**
- Observed a trial in which the defendant was accused of burglary of the home of a vulnerable adult.
 - Gained an insight into the work of the CPS including how solicitors and barristers prepare cases for court gathering statements, interviewing clients and drafting skeleton arguments.
- April 2012** **Vacation Placement, London Legal, London**
- With the Corporate team I worked on a case for a commercial client who was buying a company and wanted the firm to help negotiate the terms of the purchase agreement.
 - Researched the law relating to the transfer of existing staff contracts, drafting my findings in a letter for the client. Gained an understanding of trainee responsibility and services firms offer to clients.
- February 2012** **Law in the City, London**
- Completed a one day placement visiting commercial firms' offices to meet partners and trainees.
 - Commended for my work on a case study with a team of four other students which involved drafting advice on registered land titles in real estate.
- January 2012 - date** **Pro Bono, School of Law Legal Advice Centre, University of Manchester**
- Apply legal principles to real-life client situations. Explain legal principles concisely in client meetings and when drafting letters.
 - Work on housing, debt and employment cases, recently seeing a disciplinary case develop through the tribunal process.
- June 2011** **Work Experience, Poole Alcock & Co. LLP**
- Shadowing an associate in conveyancing, I collated data relating to the transfer of properties.
 - Analysed official copy registers and title plans to provide advice on registered freehold titles.
-

EMPLOYMENT

2010 – Supervisor, At Your Convenience, Cheshire date

- Front-of-house customer service responsibilities in a busy convenience store.
 - Promoted to supervisor in December 2011 gaining an insight into the operations of a small business, including managing budgets and developing business.
 - Coordinate the work schedules of a team of five staff ensuring high sales and customer satisfaction. Targets were met for the past quarter.
-

ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

Project StudentSafe - Set up and led a project that aims to raise awareness of personal safety in the student population. Recruited a team to conduct 1,000 questionnaires in four different student communities in Manchester. Using the results of the surveys I organised four successful promotional campaigns, identifying champions within the Students' Union and Halls of Residence.

Manchester Mooting Society - Successfully won first three rounds, now preparing for the final as Senior Counsel for the appellant. Entered the BPP & OUP National Mooting competition 2012 beating Queens College in the first round.

Streetlaw Society – Worked on a project to improve access to legal services for the local Chinese community. Researched the issues under the supervision of an academic and presented key recommendations to the Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society.

Hockey – Member of Cheshire County under 18s team, finishing runner up in the league in 2010. Founding member of the Manchester University Law Society team 2012.

Year out 2010/11 – Worked at the Whitechapel Inn full time for six months to self-fund travelling through Europe via Eurorail. Spent two months working in a Deli in France using conversational French language skills.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

IT - Proficient user of MS software and a fast and accurate touch typist.
Languages – French (basic conversational).

References available upon request.