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:

Applications are invited for two posts to join our Cryptography team.

The first role concerns R&D of next-generation quantum cryptography networks and will be conducted in collaboration with a well-known company's R&D centre in Tokyo. Candidates should have practical working experience and demonstrated achievement in optics, electronics and/or programming in C/C++.

The second role concerns experimental verification of quantum cryptographic systems towards industrial standardisation, in collaboration with the European Telecommunications Standards Institute. Prior experience of fibre optical systems and/or working with standardisation bodies would be an advantage.

Candidates for either post should hold a degree or PhD in Physics, Electronic Engineering, Computer Science, or a related discipline. Prior knowledge of quantum cryptography is not necessary.

Early applications are encouraged. Applicants should state clearly the role for which they are applying and send a covering letter, CV and contact details of three referees to: XXX

James Jackson

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Email: xxxxx.xxxx@student.manchester.ac.uk, Mobile: 0123 456 7890, www.linkedIn.com/xxxxx

Education

2009 - 2013   The University of Manchester
MPhys (Hons) Physics   Expected Result: 1st

First year result: 69%   Second year result: 74%

- Modules included Quantum Mechanics, Statistical Mechanics, Atomic & Molecular Structures, Solid State Electrical Devices, Lasers and Particle and Nuclear Physics
- Leader of 3rd year team project to investigate (via internet research and simple laboratory experiments), the technical reliability and commercial viability of the latest biometric identification technologies such as automatic face, fingerprint and iris recognition systems.
- I led an initial brainstorming session from which we developed our outline plans and approach. I approached Manchester Airport to arrange a visit for our team to meet with their specialist Security department to discuss our project and to get their perspective of the design, operational and reliability needs of any proposed system for use at an Airport. We persuaded several specialist manufacturers to loan us appropriate units for test. I discussed with the School of Physics laboratory staff how best to set up the experiments to give reliable results. We compiled a short list of the technologies available and each took complete ownership for one of them, from on line research through to in-lab testing and evaluation. Against a previously agreed project evaluation criteria I compiled all data into one database from which we then all worked to develop our overall conclusions.
- We presented our final written design report and presentation both to our design tutors, to the head of Manchester Airport security and to the technical directors of each contributing company.

2002 - 2009   Park Royal High School, Surrey

A level: Chemistry (A), Mathematics (B), Physics (A), Applied Mathematics (B)

GCSEs: 9 (5A, 3B, 1C) including Maths and English

Relevant work experience

July -Sept 2012   Internship in Rotary Engines PLC (Derby)
- Assigned to the Specialist Fluid Dynamic Computer modelling department.
- Joined a team of 10 that was developing a new turbine blade for the latest new generation ultra-quiet jet engines.
- Given responsibility to develop a new add on software package for predicting performance characteristics of a given range of turbine blades under various extreme operational and environmental situations.
- After receiving initial training on Rotary Engines' existing in-house fluid dynamic software, I met with the turbine design and test crews and wind tunnel operations staff to understand the test work done to date as well understanding the technical and physical limitations of both.
- With help from my technical manager I developed a new proposal on how to modify the existing software for the new blades, how to correlate this to the existing experimental data and then how verify the software changes through repeated comparison tests.
- This I presented to the rest of the team for their input and comment.

- I then executed both the changes to the software and then in parallel worked alongside the wind tunnel staff to set and run the fresh tests.
- In order to meet the deadlines and to fit in with the wind tunnel availability, I suggested that we worked one weekend. After some persuasion as to the business benefits of maintaining the schedule and after securing extra time off in lieu for the wind tunnel technicians, this was adopted successfully.
- The software changes have now been adopted into the main in-house programme.

Other work experience

July – Sept 2010   BUNAC Children's Camp Counsellor, New Jersey USA
- Took lead role as Camp Sports Manager organising 12 other Counsellors
- Created new games and activities to entertain and develop up to 100 US young people in 12 -15 age range
- Organised day trip into New York for group of 50.

Sept 2010 -   Front of House Team Leader
July 2012   Lorenzo's, Tapas Bar, Chorlton, Manchester
(term time)
- Promoted to Team Leader after working for the company for ten months. Managed a team of five. Motivated them to meet individual sales targets by devising a graph which plotted the amount of bonuses they could earn through securing additional sales.
- Successfully trained two new members of staff to be able to perform well in all areas of the business.

Positions of Responsibility

2011 - current   University Electronics Society
- Elected to Committee and then to Chairman within 1 month.
- Set up visits to local Engineering companies.
- Increased membership by 35%
- Led team to organise annual Christmas Ball for 350 students and partners. Biggest attendance so far!

Additional Skills

IT   Proficient in the use of Microsoft Office, SPSS statistical package

Driving   Full clean driving licence.

Interests and Activities

- Student Member of the Institute of Physics
- Member of University Golfing Society
- Keeping Fit – ran The Newcastle Great North Run in 2009 and raised £350 for Cancer Relief

References available on request.