



# **PG Essentials: CVs and other types of written application**

Elizabeth Wilkinson

Careers Consultant (Postgraduates)

# CVs and other types of written assessment

- What should go into a CV
- A quick formula for your covering letters
- How to structure application form answers



# CV laws?



- What comes at the top of a UK CV?
- How long is a UK CV?
- Would you include -
  - Your age?
  - Your nationality?
  - Details of referees?
  - A ‘Career Objective’ or “Personal profile”?
  - Details of your publications and/or presentations?

# Why CV conventions matter

- Some recruiters are very conventional
  - Applicant Tracking Schemes are the most conventional of all
- “First sift” humans can be fairly junior
  - and risk averse



# The “could I give this CV to my boss?” test



- Does it have perfect grammar and spelling?
  - “3 strikes and you’re out” policies – if you’re lucky
- Can they write and format in professional English?
- “*beermonster99@gmail.com*” – are you serious?
- So they’ve got an MA/MSc/PhD – so what?
- Does it look like AOG\* / a robot?

(\*any old graduate)

# Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)



- More likely to be used by large organisations
- They're ultra conventional – use standard formats, section headings, conventional job titles
- Keywords – be guided by job/person spec and ad
  - BUT avoid the “white font” trick ...

# Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)



- Use acronyms ***and*** the full phrase to ensure they get picked up by the ATS
- Include dates in a job (ATS will create a “career summary”)
- Avoid “eye-catching” templates with extra graphics, photos, symbols, tables, extra text boxes, info in headers and footers
- Saving your CV: .RTF or .DOC are the safest formats

# Preparation

- What's the purpose of your CV?
- Who is going to read your CV?
- How do you know what they are looking for?





# Finding great content for your CV

## You

- Draft a long “foundation” CV with all your dates & examples
- Mine your life for all your achievements, where you’ve demonstrated skills and strengths, how you’ve lived your values

## The specific job/PhD

- Deconstruct the ad, job spec, mine the website or any other info from the employer/PhD provider
- Look for skills, knowledge, experience, strengths, values needed

## Match them up – and edit

C<sub>3</sub> A<sub>1</sub> R<sub>1</sub> E<sub>1</sub> E<sub>1</sub> R<sub>1</sub>



# Do I want to read this?

- Arms length test
- Edit ruthlessly — no size 8 fonts and tiny margins
- Line up text in columns
- Short sentences
- Break up text with bullet points
- NOT TOO MANY CAPITALS AND *Changes* of **font**

#### Education

2006 - 2009

PhD "Investigation of Tri-Phasic Fuels for Warp Core Manufacture"  
*Torres Centre for Dilithium Research, University of Manchester*  
Supervised by Dr Benjamin Sisko - due for submission in Autumn 2000

In collaboration with the Cochrane Corporation, my thesis investigates novel fuel strategies and containment methodologies for warp cores. I have successfully drawn on work from 3 departments in the fields of

- Propulsion Technology
- Quantum Plasma Studies
- Theta Band Radiation Science

plus our industrial partner's research expertise in warp core developments.

# Can I find stuff quickly?

- Logical structure
  - Tell the story, clear headings
  - Don't just “bolt-on” your PhD to your old CV
- Give important info plenty of space
  - Get the good stuff on the 1<sup>st</sup> page

## **Education**

- 

## **Finance Work Experience**

- 

## **Other Work Experience**

- 

## **Interests & activities**

-

# Chronological CV

- Personal details
- Work History (reverse date order)
- Education
- Positions of Responsibility\*
- Skills eg. IT, languages (or could be on further up)
- Interests
- References (2 referees)\*



\* Optional

# Academic CVs

- Name and contact details
- Education
- Research interests
- Conference papers
- Publications
- Teaching experience
- Administrative experience
- Work history
- Professional memberships
- Prizes and awards
- Other relevant qualifications
- Personal interests
- Referees (3 or more)

# Chronological/Hybrid CV

- Personal details
- Personal profile\*
- Key skills/achievements\*
- Education (reverse date order)
- Work History
- Positions of Responsibility\*
- Skills eg. IT, languages
- Interests
- References (2 referees)\*

\* Optional

# CVs in 2018/19



What's changed? Remarkably little...

- Address
  - Not necessarily needed – town/country only?
  - Email and phone more important
  - LinkedIn profile url?
- Content
  - Hyperlink to useful examples eg of your work, your publications
- Logistics
  - Save the CV using your name as part of the filename (not just *their* name)
  - Simple sans serif font – easy to read on screen
  - Save as pdf to retain formatting? .RTF or .DOC are ultra safe though for ATS systems

# Covering letters

One page, A4

Write to a named individual:

1. Get to the point at the start  
– who are you, what do you want?
2. What do you have to offer?
3. Why do you want this type of work?
4. Why are you interested in this employer?
5. Positive ending – what should happen next?



# Application forms

- Don't write 'see CV'
- Preview all questions
- Draft answers in Word – easier to edit
- Think of key words – may “auto-sift”
- Use specific examples where requested
  - *Give an example of where you've had to lead a group of people ...*
  - **C**ontext **A**ctions **R**esult

# Personal Statements

- Find out what they are looking for
- Break it down into headings/paras - structure your argument
- Be guided by the space allowed
  - if there's only room for 200 words, that's what they want
- Edit and get someone to critique it

# Resources

- CVs, LinkedIn, Covering letters, Application forms – Starting Point Sheets

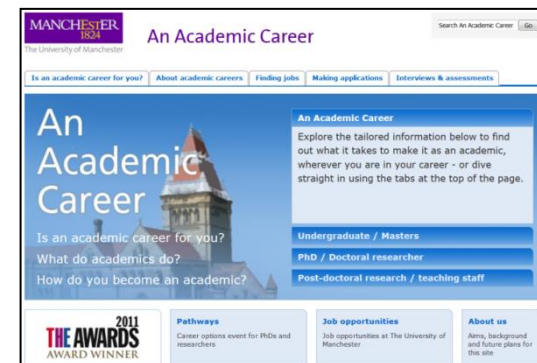
[www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/services/downloads/startingpointseriesofhandouts](http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/services/downloads/startingpointseriesofhandouts)

- University of Manchester Postgrad careers resources

[www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/pg](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/pg)

- An Academic Career –

[www.manchester.ac.uk/academiccareer](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/academiccareer)



# Coming up ...

## **PG Careers - The Essentials:**

### **Finding a job**

- 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1:00-1:50 Location: Stopford LT 4

### **Interviews and other types of assessment**

- 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1:00-1:50 Location: Stopford LT 4

## **PG Careers – Beyond the Basics:**

### **Written applications**

- 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb, 11:00-11:50 Location: Stopford LT 4