

FAFS Career Services Office

CVs and Covering Letter

What is a CV?

“CV” is an abbreviation of curriculum vitae, a Latin term which can be translated as ‘course of life’. Also known as a résumé, a CV is a document which sets out the skills, experience and knowledge you have which will enable you to perform well in a job, course, or other opportunity.

Your CV is usually one of your first chances to communicate with an employer.

It should do several things:

- Provide a clear timeline of your major activities in recent years
- Show where you have built up the ability to do the job you are applying for
- Demonstrate professionalism with its logical, appropriate layout and wording

Why Do I Need a CV?

Whatever type of career you want to pursue, you will certainly need to write a CV and Cover Letter at some stage. For certain sectors, and especially for small scale organizations and companies, application by CV and Cover Letter is the standard type of written application.

If you are applying to an advertised job vacancy, you should go through the company’s specification or entry requirements and identify where you have evidence of the skills, knowledge or experience needed.

If you are writing a speculative application, research the career area and find out what skills are in demand.

What are the different types of CV?

- **Chronological** – this is the most popular style of CV for new graduates. Education, work experience and other major activities are listed in date order. This is usually the best choice if most of your adult life has been spent in education, or if you have followed one career path.
- **Skill Based** – this type of CV centres on a list of the main skills you have to offer, with examples of when you have demonstrated them. This can be a good choice if you are changing career direction, or need to tell the employer about multiple technical skills.
- **Academic** – for academic careers, CVs tend to be much longer, with details of research carried out, and lists of publications, conferences attended, etc. •
- **Alternative/creative** – for certain creative industries, it is important to demonstrate your creativity by taking a bold approach to designing the CV so that it shows off your talents.

- **Combination** - The combination or mixed CV is the one that distributes information both chronologically and by skills. It always starts with the skill based CV format and finishes with information organization by dates. This way, skills stand out and at the same time, experience and education.

What do I need to include?

There are few hard and fast rules about what to include on your CV, and in what order. However most people include the following sections.

Contact details

- **Name:** use the name you are usually known by in a work context.
- **Phone:** give one number, so you know which one employers will call or text you on. Use a mobile number, if possible.
- **Email:** it is fine to use your personal email account, and this has the advantage of not expiring when you leave Sussex. Ensure you have a professional-looking username, preferably a variant of your actual name.
- **Social media:** it is increasingly essential to have a positive social media profile for certain areas of work, so it is a good idea to include the details of your accounts, especially LinkedIn and Twitter.

Profile/introduction/summary

- Increasingly, CVs include a short introductory section, highlighting your key skills to encourage the reader to read the rest of the document.
- Avoid generic statements with no supporting evidence. Writing ‘Successfully combining a full-time degree (average 2.1 to date) with part-time work and playing hockey every week’ provides the evidence that you are working hard.
- Be brief but informative – for most undergraduates, a three- to four-line profile should be sufficient.

Education

- For many current students, your most significant achievements to date come from your education, so it makes sense to place this section towards the top.
- List your current or most recent course, and then work backwards to A-level and GCSE. • You can summarise the number of your GCSEs and total grades obtained, but do mention if you have English and Maths.
- Give the start and finish dates, title of the course, and name of the institution, followed by the result if known.
- If you don’t have A Levels or GCSEs, give the original name and grade of your pre-Sussex qualifications, with UCAS points if possible.

- For your most substantial qualifications, and any which are relevant to the job you are applying for, you can give more details, such as a selection of the modules studied; a brief description of your dissertation; transferable skills which you gained during the course.

Work experience/career history

- This section should also be laid out in reverse chronological order.
- You can include any type of work, including part-time, temporary, and voluntary experience.
- It is a matter of choice how far back in time to go, and whether to include every work experience you have had – think about what is most relevant to what you are applying for, and how much space you have available.
- Lay out the information in a similar way to the education section – dates, job title, name of employer.
- It is usually better to use bullet points to describe your experience, rather than paragraphs.
- Highlight any achievements, with evidence to quantify them wherever possible, for example: ‘increased membership by 20% within six weeks’.
- For experience that is not relevant to what you are applying for, focus on transferable skills. So if you have worked in retail, for example, you could write about building teamwork, communication and customer service skills.

Extra-curricular activities

- Mention any structured activities, especially those in which you have an official role, for example: student societies which you help to run.
- Put the most recent or current activities towards the top of this section, although you can be more flexible than in the previous two sections.
- Specify your level of involvement e.g. ‘I have played football regularly since early childhood and am Vice-Captain of the 1st XI at University’.

Skills

- Avoid lists of skills without explanation, e.g. ‘team work’. Either produce a skills CV, or use bullet points in your Education, Work Experience and Other Activities sections to show where you have gained most of your skills.
- Most people include skills such as IT and languages. Be informative but brief, e.g. ‘Excel – can create pivot tables and design charts’, and/or ‘Spanish – intermediate written and spoken’.
- Only include your driving licence (if you have one) if the job is likely to require you to drive.

Referees

- Traditionally, CVs included full details of referees, but this is less common now. Of course, you should include them if the job advert asks you to do so.
- For most purposes, you can write 'Details of referees are available on request'.
- If you are asked for referees, it is usual to give two: one from your current or most recent course, and one from a current or recent employer if possible.

What to leave out

- It is not customary to include a photograph.
- It is unnecessary to include your date of birth, place of birth, marital status, or any other personal details which are irrelevant to your ability to do the job.
- Your nationality is also not usually needed.

How should I format it?

- Your CV should not be longer than two pages (except for academic CVs). A one-page CV can work well when applying for part-time jobs.
- It is best to use conventional fonts, such as Arial, Calibri or Helvetica.
- Use black ink – CVs are often photocopied, and other colors can look unappealingly grey.
- Use bold, underlining and other emphasis sparingly and consistently, e.g. for section headings.
- Don't cram in more text than can comfortably fit – leave standard margins at the top, bottom and sides of each page. Leave at least a line between sections.

CV Tips

DO

- Be consistent in format & content
- Make it easy to read
- Use consistent spacing, fonts, capitalization
- List headings in order of importance
- List information in reverse order (most recent first)
- Use active verbs

DON'T

- Abbreviate
- Use slang
- Include picture
- Include age or gender
- Start each line with a date
- Use personal pronouns (like I)

LEADERSHIP

Accomplished	Achieved	Administered	Analyzed	Assigned	Attained	Chaired	Consolidated
Contracted	Coordinated	Delegated	Developed	Directed	Earned	Evaluated	Executed
Handled	Headed	Impacted	Improved	Increased	Led	Mastered	Orchestrated
Organized	Oversaw	Planned	Prioritized	Produced	Predicted	Proved	Recommended
Regulated	Reorganized	Reviewed	Scheduled	Spearheaded	Strengthened	Supervised	Surpassed

COMMUNICATION

Addressed	Arbitrated	Arranged	Authored	Collaborated	Convinced	Corresponded	Delivered
Developed	Directed	Documented	Drafted	Edited	Energized	Enlisted	Formulated
Influenced	Interpreted	Lectured	Liaised	Mediated	Moderated	Negotiated	Persuaded
Presented	Promoted	Publicized	Reconciled	Recruited	Reported	Rewrote	Spoke
Suggested	Synthesized	Translated	Verbalized	Wrote			

RESEARCH

Clarified	Collected	Concluded	Conducted	Constructed	Critiqued	Derived	Determined
Diagnosed	Discovered	Evaluated	Examined	Extracted	Formed	Identified	Inspected
Interpreted	Interviewed	Investigated	Modeled	Organized	Resolved	Reviewed	Summarized
Surveyed	Systematized	Tested					

TECHNICAL

Assembled	Built	Calculated	Computed	Designed	Devised	Engineered	Fabricated
Installed	Maintained	Operated	Optimized	Overhauled	Programmed	Remolded	Repaired
Solved	Standardized	Streamlined	Upgraded				

TEACHING

Adapted	Advised	Clarified	Coached	Communicated	Coordinated	Demystified	Developed
Enabled	Encouraged	Evaluated	Explained	Facilitated	Guided	Informed	Instructed
Persuaded	Set Goals	Stimulated	Studied	Taught	Trained		

QUANTITATIVE

Administered	Allocated	Analyzed	Appraised	Audited	Balanced	Budgeted	Calculated
Computed	Developed	Forecasted	Managed	Marketed	Maximized	Minimized	Planned
Projected	Researched						

CREATIVE

Acted	Composed	Conceived	Conceptualized	Created	Customized	Designed	Developed
Directed	Established	Fashioned	Founded	Illustrated	Initiated	Instituted	Integrated
Introduced	Invented	Originated	Performed	Planned	Published	Redesigned	Revised
Revitalized	Shaped	Visualized					

HELPING

Assessed	Assisted	Clarified	Coached	Counseled	Demonstrated	Diagnosed	Educated
Enhanced	Expedited	Facilitated	Familiarized	Guided	Motivated	Participated	Proposed
Provided	Referred	Rehabilitated	Represented	Served	Supported		

ORGANIZATIONAL

Approved	Accelerated	Added	Arranged	Broadened	Cataloged	Centralized	Changed
Classified	Collected	Compiled	Completed	Controlled	Defined	Dispatched	Executed
Expanded	Gained	Gathered	Generated	Implemented	Inspected	Launched	Monitored
Operated	Organized	Prepared	Processed	Purchased	Recorded	Reduced	Reinforced
Retrieved	Screened	Selected	Simplified	Sold	Specified	Steered	Structured
Systematized	Tabulated	Unified	Updated	Utilized	Validated	Verified	

CV Example

KARIM ABDALLAH

KARIM.ABDALLAH@GMAIL.COM • +96171377528 • BEIRUT, LEBANON

EDUCATION

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| December 2016 | American University of Beirut (AUB) | Lebanon |
| Bachelor of Business Administration, Specialization: Management | | |
| June 2015 – Aug 2015 | University of California Berkeley | California, USA |
| Summer Semester; Finance courses | | |
| July 2013 | Lycée Abdel Kader (LAK) | Lebanon |
| French Baccalaureate; Scientific Track (High Distinction) | | |

WORK AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| June – July 2016 | Intern, Interior Offices | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed a full business model and tested it with customers• Worked on pricing strategies to determine the price of the packages offered to customers• Built partnerships with 15+ companies within 2 months• Worked with a focus group to adjust the product and evaluate potential pivoting possibilities | | |
| Dec 2015 - Jan 2016 | Intern, KPV | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked on evaluating potential investments, due diligence, market research, and competitive reviews for 15 startups• Learned how to build business models and worked on valuation | | |
| June 2015 | Intern, Beirut Plastics | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed a rotation internship which included the following departments: Business Development, Accounting, Sales & CS, Procurement & Logistics, HR, IT, etc.• Worked on numerous projects with Business Development & Internal Control including a 5-year Business Plan | | |

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| • Member of the AUB Men's Football Team | (2013 – Current) |
| • Member of the Heritage Club at AUB | (2013 – Current) |
| • Member of the OSB Business Council | (2013 – Current) |
| • Active Volunteer at the Red Cross | (2010 – 2015) |

ACHIEVEMENTS AND AWARDS

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| • OSB Dean's Honor List | (Spring 2014, Spring 2015) |
| • Received the MVP Award of the AUBs Basketball Men's Team | (2015) |
| • Awarded a Piano diploma from the Trinity School in London, UK | (2010) |

SKILLS

Languages: Fluent in French, English and Arabic (written & spoken)
Computer Literacy: STATA, E-views, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Power Point, Access)

What is a Cover Letter?

Like a CV, a cover letter should be a marketing document, targeted to a particular opportunity, which showcases why you are a good match. Unlike a CV, which it is not practical to rewrite for each job, a new letter should be written for each application. It should be presented as a formal letter and be no longer than one A4 page.

What Do I Need to Include?

Introduction

Briefly state which job vacancy you are applying for, with any reference number given in the advert, and confirm that you are also sending your CV (if applicable). You may also want to confirm your current status, e.g. 'I am currently a final year undergraduate in Geography at the American University of Beirut.

Motivation

Say what attracts you to this particular opportunity, at this particular organization. It can be useful to say:

- What is distinctive about the organization, compared with similar places, and why this appeals to you?
- Why you are looking forward to performing this role, or studying this subject
- How it fits in with your career plans and progress to date.

In the case of a job vacancy, focus more on what you hope to contribute, rather than what you expect to gain.

Skills

Without simply repeating your CV, show how your skills meet the requirements of the role. It is important to base this on the person specification in the job advert. Lead with the job requirements where you feel you have most to offer.

Unlike a chronological CV, you can bring experience from different parts of your life together, e.g. 'I have shown the ability to multitask and organize my time while working as Events Secretary of the Mathematics Society, as well as by holding down a part-time job while studying for my degree'.

Conclusion

Briefly state another reason why you are interested in the role and that you look forward to hearing from them.

General Rules to Include in a Cover Letter

- Address your letters to a specific person if you can.
- Keep letters concise and factual, **no more than a single page.**
- Give examples that support your skills and qualifications.
- Remember that this is a marketing tool. Use lots of action words.
- Have your career services officer proof read your letter.
- Make sure your resume and cover letter are prepared with the same font type and Size.

Cover Letter No Experience

(Enter your name)

(Enter your contact details)

(Enter recipient name)

(Enter company address)

(Enter contact details)

(Insert date)

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (insert name),

As a recent graduate/current student, I am writing you to apply for the job of (insert position title) advertised on (insert date) through your website or word of mouth...

I am an extremely motivated and enthusiastic person and I have shown this on several occasions, for example (give evidence). My interests (list interests relevant to the job position) I believe will help me in this position and will allow me to work to my best capabilities.

Working with other members of a team such as (give example of when you have done this) and improving my communication skills during (give more examples) has encouraged me to apply for this position and to improve on these skills further.

I believe that I would be a good asset to (enter company name) and would be available to discuss my application further at any time. I feel that I possess the attributes that are required to be (insert job title) and I look forward to receiving a response. I thank you in advance for your time and effort.

Regards,

(Hand printed signature)

(enter full name)

Cover Letter for a Job

(Enter your name)
(Enter your contact details)

(Enter recipient name)
(Enter company address)

(Insert date)

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss (insert name),

You will find attached to this letter my CV/certificates/references/a completed application form for the job (insert name of position) posted on (give information about date of posting and where you saw it).

I am keen on working for (insert company name) has managed to achieve over the past years something no other company has done. This is what encouraged me to apply for the position as I would love to be a part of the work you do.

My strengths include (link skills to specific job position). One particular example of what that I have done in the past which me great pride was (give details of example and link back to the job position).

I am available to take on the responsibilities of being a (enter job name) from date o availability). I hope that you will contact me should you need further information and I appreciate being considered for this role. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

(Hand printed signature)
(Enter full name)

Motivation Letter for University

(Enter your name)
(Enter your contact details)

(Insert department)
(Enter university details)

Dear Professor (insert name)

It is with great pleasure that I am submitting my application for (insert course name) at (insert university name) to begin (insert start date). I am currently studying (insert subject) at (insert school name) with a great interest in the (give details of future plans) field/industry.

To me, continuing my education is crucial because (give details on why it is important to you) and especially with my interest in (enter department name). I wish to keep improving on my skills (enter details). I have recently gained experience within the field of (insert details) by working (insert details) and this opportunity showed me (insert details).

It would be an honor to be a part of the department of (insert department name) at (insert university name) as I have seen all the work they have done and am especially impressed by (give information to show you have done research). Not only am I eager to increase my knowledge about this topic which I am passionate about (insert course details), but I also want to be a member of the (insert school name) community and get involved with all the great work that you do.

I appreciate you taking the time to look over my application and enclosed documents.

Do not hesitate to contact me if there is any further information that you need. I look forward to being in touch with you.

Yours Sincerely,

(Hand printed signature)
(Enter full name)