

Writing a CV for Jobs Beyond Academia



Frequently asked questions: Writing a CV for jobs beyond academia

When adapting your CV in order to apply for jobs outside of academia and possibly research, you need to ensure that all the material is relevant to the potential employer. That means that some aspects of your research career may not be given the prominence you'd expect. You will need to adjust the order, structure and proportions of your CV to meet the employer's expectations and to ensure that you only include information that is important to them. This booklet sets out some of the commonly asked questions by researchers seeking to put together a CV for jobs outside of academia. At the back of the booklet is a recent example of a CV from a UEA researcher who successfully made the transition from academia to a commercial business development role.

How long should a CV for jobs outside of academia be?

Your CV should be no more than 2 sides long as opposed to an academic CV which can be up to 5 sides long. For some applications, e.g. a researcher in industry or consultancy, you may include an appendix page of research projects undertaken, publications or skills but this is unlikely rather than the norm.

Is the overall structure of the CV different?

Yes. In this case you are essentially producing a skills based or functional CV.

As the name suggests, a skills based CV emphasises the skills and expertise you have to offer an employer. It gives less space to work experience than in a chronological CV and is often used by postgraduates and post docs who have lots of specific skills relevant to the employer but less directly relevant work experience. It is a good tool for those wanting to emphasise their transferable skills in order to make a career change. Headings might include;

- Personal details
- Personal profile
- Skills profile with specific subheadings
- Education & qualifications
- Work experience
- Interests, activities and hobbies
- Referees

A functional CV is a more traditional format listing what you have done in reverse chronological order. It is the more common format used. Headings might include;

- Personal details
- Personal profile
- Education & qualifications
- Work experience
- Additional skills
- Interests, activities and hobbies
- Referees

However, there is no single correct way to write a CV, and the headings listed above are suggestions rather than templates.

How do I present my education?

In this type of CV there is a lot less emphasis on education and academia; therefore it should take up less space than on an academic CV. Make sure you read the minimum requirements in the job description carefully, it is not uncommon for an employer to specify a particular A' Level e.g. a A' level in Maths for a postdoc looking to move into business planning. Emphasise these subjects if they provide the most recent evidence of the abilities required even if this takes you back to you're A' levels. For earlier degrees make sure you give the pass mark and mention any parts of the degree that are relevant e.g. 10,000 word dissertation on Russia – US relations 1988-98 (intending newspaper journalist).

How do I present my PhD?

If applying for a job where your PhD subject is not directly relevant – only give a basic outline of PhD. Spend less time focussing on your PhD but do provide an indication of its scope making sure the title and information you give is written in a way an employer can understand, avoiding technical and academic jargon. Give the name of your supervisor only if it is relevant and would mean something to the employer. Do indicate the skills and techniques you learnt whilst completing your PhD e.g. research methods used such as web based research, interviews undertaken, use of databases, supervising a lab team and so on.

Do I list all my publications?

Are they relevant to the employer? It may not be the peer review journal articles which are most relevant. For example, an employer in a commercial company may be interested to see that you can write reports or have contributed to (for example) popular science magazines in your area of research. Where you have many publications, it is best to offer a summary e.g. over twenty publications including two in the Journal of the Sociology of Health and Illness.

How to I write about my skills?

It can be useful to start brainstorming the specific skills you have which you think are relevant to the application. Start by identifying the key skills laid out in the job description then see how closely you can match them. Many researchers find it hard to articulate their skills outside of the academic context. If you are one of these people it may be worth contacting one of the Careers Advisers at the Careers Centre who can offer support and point you in the direction of courses, workshops and resources available to UEA researchers. Here are a few examples of headings we might use on such a CV:

- Project management
- Research ability
- Supervision skills
- Team work
- Leadership
- Appraising & assessing
- Time management
- Creativity
- Financial management
- Networking and collaboration

- Problem solving
- Survey design

Make sure the skills highlighted are relevant to the position you are applying for and give evidence to back up claims wherever possible. Employers will need convincing so be explicit, for example, specify the numbers of people attending events you have organised, size of budgets you have managed etc. Provide evidence from a range of experiences e.g. work, education and social life.

I have received several awards during my research do I mention them?

Yes, highlight measures of success (awards or additional funding received, publications, presentations, membership of professional bodies / learned societies) – make it clear you are leaving research to do something more fitting not because of failure.

What is a profile and should I include one?

Also known as a personal or career statement, this is a short summary of what you have to offer “in a nutshell”. It comes near the top of the CV, and you need to keep it short, positive and punchy. If you use a profile it is likely to be one of the first things an employer reads. For those considering a career change, it is a good place to indicate what direction you want your career to take now.

An example profile: A motivated environmental scientist with 5 years post doctoral research experience, proven team leadership and strategic planning abilities seeking to work in environmental management.

Are there any examples of CV's for jobs outside of academia that I can look at?

Yes. Over the page are two recent examples of CVs, where researchers are applying for positions outside of academia. On the last page of the booklet you will find some further reading references.

Action words per job sector

Advertising/Marketing: convinced, influenced, persuaded, recommended, represented.

Communication: demonstrated, disseminated, facilitated, instructed, presented.

Creativity: arranged, conceived, created, designed, developed, devised, originated.

Management: conducted, directed, implemented, managed, organised.

Negotiation: assured, closed, determined, evaluated, investigated, negotiated, proposed.

Resourcefulness: achieved, corrected, identified, persevered, solved, succeeded.

Technical skills: analysed, arranged, budgeted, catalogued, complied, examined.

Working with people: advised, collaborated, consulted, counseled, guided, motivated, supervised.

Anneke Derrick

Full postal address

Telephone: daytime and mobile numbers email: email@server.co.uk

Career Aim

Strong record in project management gained from community experience as a steering group member and governor, and a successful career in scientific research. I intend to use these abilities, together with my communication skills, proven through many publications and presentations, to take a new career direction in management consultancy.

Skills Profile

Interpersonal:

- As a mentor with MentorSET, which supports women in science and engineering, I demonstrate active listening and coaching skills. I have received high ratings from my mentees via the appraisal system.
- Attended courses on Conflict Resolution and Negotiation, Mentoring, Dealing with Difficult People, Supervising PhD students and Women into Management.

Written:

- Submitted several successful grant applications, including a regional award for £1000 to support projects for women into engineering. In my academic career, I have published a number of scientific papers, including a book chapter and review.
- Successfully nominated my Head of Department for the 2012 Women of Outstanding Achievement by writing a profile which was quoted in the Exhibition Booklet.

IT:

- Significant experience both in UNIX and Windows, and familiar with Microsoft Office, Adobe and several scientific instrument operation and analysis packages.
- Often teach myself new software packages; for example, I edited my department's webpages for a year when a colleague was on sick leave, for which I learned to use Dreamweaver.

Project Management:

- Submitted a "Travel Plan" for Crooncamp School to Cambridgeshire County Council. I undertook a survey on children's travel to school arrangements, and wrote a full report with recommendations of measures to make travel to school more sustainable and beneficial to the local community. The plan was accepted by the governing body and submitted to the local council. It raised £4 200 for the school.
- Organised and designed the contribution of CamAWiSE to the Cambridge Science Festival in 2011 and 2012, and am now doing so for 2013.
- Organised the program, catering and the travel arrangements for 20 people for our departmental away day at a conference centre in October 2011.

Innovation:

- Designed novel experiments to determine the behaviour of protein interactions whilst working as a PhD student.
- As an academic research scientist, I am used to coming up with innovative ways to solve complex problems – for example I was the first to record key data on proteins in yeast resulting in my work being published in a well-respected journal.

Employment

2009-present **Cambridge University Chemical Laboratory**

Postdoctoral position, working in a team of 20 research associates from 10 different countries, studying large biological complexes.

2003-2008 **MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge**

Postdoctoral position in a small team of researchers, working on Nuclear Magnetic Resonance spectroscopy.

2002-2003 **University of Glasgow**

One-year postdoctoral position as a result of a successful bid to extend my Wellcome Trust Prize Studentship.

Education

1997-2001 **University of East Anglia**

PhD funded by the award of the Wellcome Trust Prize Studentship. I studied the interaction between a bacterial toxin protein and a protein inhibitor by biochemistry and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance spectroscopy.

1992-1997 **University of Leiden, The Netherlands**

Dutch degree in chemistry with biochemistry. Exchange student at the University of East Anglia for one academic year.

1986-1992 **St. Maartens College, Groningen, The Netherlands**

"VWO" (Dutch equivalent to A-levels, preparation for university). Eight subjects (seven is normal).

Positions of Responsibility

- Steering group member of MentorSET, the national mentoring scheme for women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET).
- Secretary of Cambridge Association for Women in Science and Engineering (CamAWiSE).
- Governor at Crooncamp County Primary School (elected in 2009). Science and IT link governor, also Link governor. Head of the Travel Plan Committee. Clerk to the School Improvement Committee.
- Steering group member of Cambridge University Women's Network.

References available on request

Mary Jane

EDUCATION

University of London - Queen Mary (London; 2010)

Ph.D. in Behavioural and Chemical Ecology

Thesis Title: "Investigating aspects of scent marking, traplining and remote detection of reward in the foraging bumblebee". Varied experiments and extracurricular activities meant I had to learn to multitask and organise my work well. I researched, synthesised & published four refereed publications & still had energy to initiate & organise a weekly interdisciplinary seminar series which continues today. I passed my viva with no corrections.

Scholarships & Grants

Westfield Trust Research Studentship (£14,000 p.a., 2006-2009)

Overseas Research Scholarship (ca. £10,000 p.a., 2007-2009)

Central Research Fund (£3000, 2006)

University of Toronto (Toronto, Canada; 2005)

Honours B.Sc. in Zoology, Minor in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Animal Physiology (85%), Plant Physiology (83%), Calculus (77%)

Twice winner of John Fletcher McLaughlin Scholarship (\$1000; annual average over 80%) and Millennium Bursary (\$3000, tuition aid)

Lisgar Collegiate Institute (Ottawa, Canada; 2000)

Advanced courses in: Biology (85%), Chemistry (86%), Math (83%)

Ontario Scholar each year (annual average over 80%)

RELEVANT SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

Researcher (University of East Anglia, Norwich; 2010-present)

- Using brand new technology to generate chemical profiles for different ant larvae
- Researched, synthesised & wrote successful application for £25,000 from British Ecological Society
- Set up laboratory by sourcing free microscope camera, chromatography columns and television worth £3500
- Negotiated forty percent discount on chromatography equipment from Sigma-Aldrich
- Manage own budget by keeping detailed records of spending

Research Intern (University of Bremen, Germany; April 2010)

- Developed a novel approach to test if honeybees can feel pain
- Placement funded by German Exchange Bursary of €795

Postgraduate Representative (University of London - Queen Mary; 2006-9)

- Communicated student perspectives at faculty administration meetings
- Initiated postgraduate satisfaction survey and presented results to Head of School and Director of Graduate Studies within school
- Collected, analysed and presented qualitative and quantitative data

Postgraduate Representative (London Evolutionary Research Network; 2007-8)

- Member of seven person committee that organised student networking events
- Co-ordinated the production of sixth annual LERN conference
- Used spreadsheets to forecast and manage spending to deliver project within budget
- 40% more attendance than previous conferences with international attendance for first time

Research and Technical Assistant (University of Toronto, Canada; 2003-6)

- Kept track of laboratory stocks and ordered supplies
- Followed instructions on protocols and statistical analysis
- Reported progress to line manager and worked with other assistants to run experiments

IAESTE Internship (University of Halle-Salle, Germany; summer 2004)

- Used Noldus Observer software to analyse gerbil video footage
- Received monthly bursary of \$1000

Pharmacist's Assistant (Minto Place Drugmart, Canada; summer 2003; 2000)

- Worked with pharmacist to dispense pharmaceutical drugs
- Managed cash register
- Dealt with customers and handled complaints
- Handled confidential patient files

Information Technology

- Expert knowledge of Microsoft Office including Excel
- Expert knowledge of Minitab and SPSS statistical software
- Self taught, proficient knowledge of Dreamweaver and Nvu
- Basic knowledge of programming (Visual Basic)

Languages

- Fluent in English, French and Arabic
- Taken one year courses in German and Spanish

AWARDS

National "Most Promising PhD Student" award- Laboratory News Awards, VWR (2007)
Best poster presentation- Queen Mary postgraduate symposium (2008)
Best oral presentation- Royal Entomological Society postgraduate forum (2007)
Second best poster presentation- Undergraduate research symposium (2005)

INTERESTS AND HOBBIES

Entrepreneurship (member of Young Entrepreneur Society at University of East Anglia)
Foodie that enjoys cooking
Reading business related biographies and books
Athletics (circuit training, running, pilates)

REFEREES Available on request

Further reading

There are many good examples of CVs available at Careers and Employability for you to look at. There are also good web resources. The URL addresses below will take you to useful information about different types of CV, some of which are aimed specifically at researchers.

<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/support/careers-and-student-development/>

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/careers/researchers>

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/careers/postgrads/>

Reading available in the Careers Centre information library

- University of Cambridge The Careers Service Guide to Successful CVs and Cover Letters.
- Why you? CV messages to win jobs by John Lees.

Who can I contact for more help?

Your Careers Advisers (for postgraduates & researchers) Rebecca Wyand (Monday - Friday. AM) and Suzanne Walker (Tuesday & Wednesday) based at Careers and Employability (Ext. 3452)