Icebreaker ...........

In groups of 2 or 3:

• What do you want to get out of today’s session?

• Why do some organisations use Application Forms rather than request a CV & Cover Letter?
APPLICATION FORMS, COVER LETTERS, PERSONAL STATEMENTS

UCL CAREERS ESSENTIALS PROGRAMME

ROBERT DONOVAN
UCL Careers Consultant
What we’ll cover

- Context
- Application Forms
  - Motivation
  - Competency
- Cover Letters
- Personal Statements
CAREERS ESSENTIALS CONTINUES..
WWW.UCL.AC.UK/CAREERS/EVENTS/ESSENTIALS

Booking now, June 2017….

- 5th: Your future and how to find it
- 6th: Sourcing jobs and work experience
- 8th: Interviews
- 9th: Find and fund a PhD
Personalised email alerts through your My UCL Careers account:

- Jobs
- Events
Context

What are you responding to? What are they asking for?

Aims:
- Self-marketing
- An interview
- Provide evidence
- Easy to navigate documents of sufficient depth

Self-marketing package: what does it consist of?
National Centre for Applied Social Research
Research Programme Team Leader

The Role:
- Leading a research programme to understand the impact of technology in relation to the raising of educational standards, skills development, and social inclusion

Core Responsibilities:
- Sourcing and co-ordinating small teams of researchers
- Planning and delivering a series of qualitative research projects
- Liaising with a range of stakeholders

Person Specification:
- educated to minimum degree level  essential
- experience of conducting qualitative research  essential
- the ability to clearly present information  desirable
- interpersonal skills including listening / persuasion  desirable
- the ability to work to deadlines  essential
- an interest in technology  desirable
National Centre for Applied Social Research
Research Programme Team Leader

The Role:
- Leading a research programme to understand the impact of technology in relation to the raising of educational standards, skills development, and social inclusion

Core Responsibilities:
- Sourcing and co-ordinating small teams of researchers
- Planning and delivering a series of qualitative research projects
- Liaising with a range of stakeholders

Person Specification:
- educated to minimum degree level  essential
- experience of conducting qualitative research  essential
- the ability to clearly present information  desirable
- interpersonal skills including listening / persuasion  desirable
- the ability to work to deadlines  essential
- an interest in technology  desirable
Why do employers use application forms?
Online Application Forms

- Increased control of the process
- Focus on relevant areas
- Candidates are compared on a like-for-like basis
- Deters those not prepared to take on the task
Types of application form questions

**Biographical**
- For each position, describe your role and responsibilities telling us specifically about any areas of specific leadership experience (100 words) (BP)

**Career choice and motivation**
- Why do you want to work for this organisation? (75 words)

**Competency / Strength**
- Describe a recent situation where you have used your initiative to achieve a goal. (75 words)

**Industry specific**
- Describe a recent development that has impacted on this sector. What implications might this development have for our future strategy? (300 words)

**Personal Statements**
- In the space below, tell us about your motivation for applying to this position and how your academic background, experience and skills are relevant.
Motivation

“BrandsDirect are looking for trainee account managers to work with our exciting portfolio of clients.”

Whilst no previous experience is required, we are looking for graduates who have a passion for this business.

You must be able to build relationships, manage multiple projects and make the right decisions in what is a stimulating but pressured environment.

Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (150 words)
Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (150 words)

**Candidate A:**

• “Your organisation is an award-winning leader in its field, employing 3,000 people globally.

• It has an international reputation and is also one of the most respected agencies in the UK.

• It is important for me to work for a successful organisation and I would welcome all the different opportunities available to me.

• I would also like to work abroad at some point and so the global nature of your organisation appeals to me.

• Finally, I’d like to work for the organisation because the role matches my skills, particularly my communication and teamwork skills.

• I am a creative person and I am also interested in developing new skills, and believe that your graduate account management scheme would help me to achieve my goals.”
Candidate B:

• “I have researched your client-base and am excited by the thought of working for prestigious brands such as Continental and L'Oreal. I have been following your recent campaign for the L’Oreal Paris brand.

• I am attracted to the ‘creative hot-house’ reputation of the agency as described in Campaign Magazine’s agency profile of 27 April.

• My skills are a good match for the position of account manager.

• I have been involved with the innovative re-branding strategy of the student union through a range of media channels which will help me to assume responsibility for high-profile campaigns from an early stage.

• After examining your website and attending your UCL Skills4Work presentation in September, I understand the value of good organisational skills in order to successfully manage client campaigns.

• My organisation skills greatly improved during my time at L’Oreal, where I reported into three demanding brand managers and worked to extremely tight production schedules.

• I have also been impressed by the honesty and enthusiasm of recently recruited trainees of the organisation I met at this year’s UCL Careers Fair who spoke very highly of the creative culture at BrandsDirect.”
Why are you interested in our organisation ....and how does that relate to you?)

- What does the company do?...products, services, clients

- What are their USPs? what have they done recently?
  - projects/ news items
  - perceived strengths - how do they differ from competitors?
  - what does the press say about them?

- What are their values (and how do they connect to yours)?

- What is the organisational culture?
  - who have you talked to?

Detail your sources…
Competency questions

Based on the premise that…

‘evidence of positive past performance is a reliable predictor of future performance’

‘Give an example of …’

Eg: team work… research … negotiation…leadership

(see the behaviours found in the Person Specification!)
Common Competency requirements

- Communication skills
- Teamwork skills
- Enthusiasm & motivation
- Planning, organisation and time management skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Flexibility / adaptability
- Initiative
- Independence
- Problem-solving skills
- Leadership
- Commercial awareness/ Business acumen
Specific examples of competencies...

- Growth mindset
- Consumer and customer focus
- Bias for action
- Accountability and responsibility
- Building talent and teams

- Develop self and others through coaching
- Communicate with impact and empathy
- Be curious: learn, share and innovate
- Be passionate about client service
- Lead and contribute to team success
How to answer a competency based question

**STAR**

- **Situation**: what’s the setting/ background to the story?
- **Task**: what was the task/objective?
- **Action**: what did you do? – emphasis here
  - what was your approach / steps involved
  - how did you overcome any problems you encountered
- **Result** – what was the outcome?
A typical competency question

“Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others.”
Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others.

“At BAe in 2015, I was asked if I could assist in the development of the new website. I was asked for my opinion as a ‘fresh pair of eyes’ and then joined the team developing the site.

I had a number of ideas including incorporating a pop-up menu of up-and-coming events. Some of the team were sceptical of this idea due to a growing user backlash against ‘pop-ups’.

I showed them some design ideas and eventually they agreed to give it a try in the ‘events’ sections. I then designed the ‘pop-up’ to promote various events and some of them have been used.”
“At a BAE summer placement in 2015, I assisted in the development of the new website. I took it upon myself to conduct an audit of similar sites and presented my findings to the development team recommending the use of ‘pop-ups’ to advertise forthcoming events.

Mindful of industry scepticism regarding their use, I researched available data on the area, prepared visual design ideas and presented my case. Despite their initial concerns, I persuaded them to allocate funds for an initial trial period.

The resulting click-through rates were encouraging and the pop-ups are now a permanent addition to the website and have proved a successful way of promoting attendance at our events.”
“At a BAE summer placement in 2015, I assisted in the development of the new website. I took it upon myself to conduct an audit of similar sites and presented my findings to the development team recommending the use of ‘pop-ups’ to advertise forthcoming events.

Mindful of industry scepticism regarding their use, I researched available data on the area, prepared visual design ideas and presented my case. Despite their initial concerns, I persuaded them to allocate funds for an initial trial period.

The resulting click-through rates were encouraging and the pop-ups are now a permanent addition to the website and have proved a successful way of promoting attendance at our events.”
Typical competency question scoring

- Answers typically scored between 0-4
- Make sure your answers have depth…
- What specific things did you address/achieve?

“Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team”

evidence of steps taken to understanding other people’s concerns
researching position and presenting with credibility
adaptability to change position/ argument
persistence and grit to continue in the face of opposition
ability to negotiate and compromise where necessary
successful outcome/ reflection
Preparation matrix

Person specification

- report writing
- interviewing
- analysis/problem solving
- experience of IT
- time management
- relationship building
- presentations
- communication

Evidence

- degree/masters courses
- research projects
- staff/student committee
- website redesign
- UCL student bar
- Travelling
- Society role
Applying online

- Download the form (if possible) and assess requirements
- Plan your approach and do your research
- Complete the more straightforward areas
- Break down the harder questions
- Brainstorm possible examples and decide on most appropriate

Draft - evaluate – edit...to keep to word count

Have reviewed by UCL Careers in a 1to1 appointment
Cover letters
CV and Letter = a marketing package

1. Clear opening: who you are / what you are applying for
2. Motivation for applying / personal direction
3. what you have to offer as evidenced by the CV:
   - highlight skills and experience
     - technical / relevant
   - map to person specification
     - Personal qualities / ‘competencies’
4. why that company / knowledge of them
5. conclusion – positive close

• Cut & Paste another company name?!
1to1 coaching

Current students:
- CV/ Application coaching - 15 minutes (Mon – Fri) lunch/ early evening
- Short guidance – 20 minutes (Mon – Fri)
- Interview coaching – 60 minutes (on condition ‘real’ employer interview)

Recent graduates:
- Grad appointments – 30 minutes (Mon – Thu) inc. lunchtime/ early evening/ phone/ skype
- CV / Application coaching – 15 minutes – same service as for current students
- Interview coaching – 60 minutes (on condition of ‘real’ employer interview)

Booking
- Online: up to 7 days in advance: My Careers Service
  - [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/students/mycareersservice](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/students/mycareersservice)
- By phone: (call 020 3549 5900 after 9.30am)
- In person: UCL Careers, 4th floor Student Central, Malet Street, WC1E 7HY