

Career Essentials: Application forms and cover letters

Career Essentials programme 2019 - 2020

- 12 title lunchtime talks.
- Small Group Work sessions (CV).
- 3 title workshops covering LinkedIn, Mock Assessment Centres and MBTI Personality Profiling.
- 6 module e-learning course.

Talks coming up Oct 2019

Make the most of the UCL Careers fairs	8 th , 16 th
Improve your CV	4 th
An introduction to the graduate job market	7 th
Find and fund a PhD	9 th
Your future and how to work towards it	14 th
Better PhD Applications	15 th

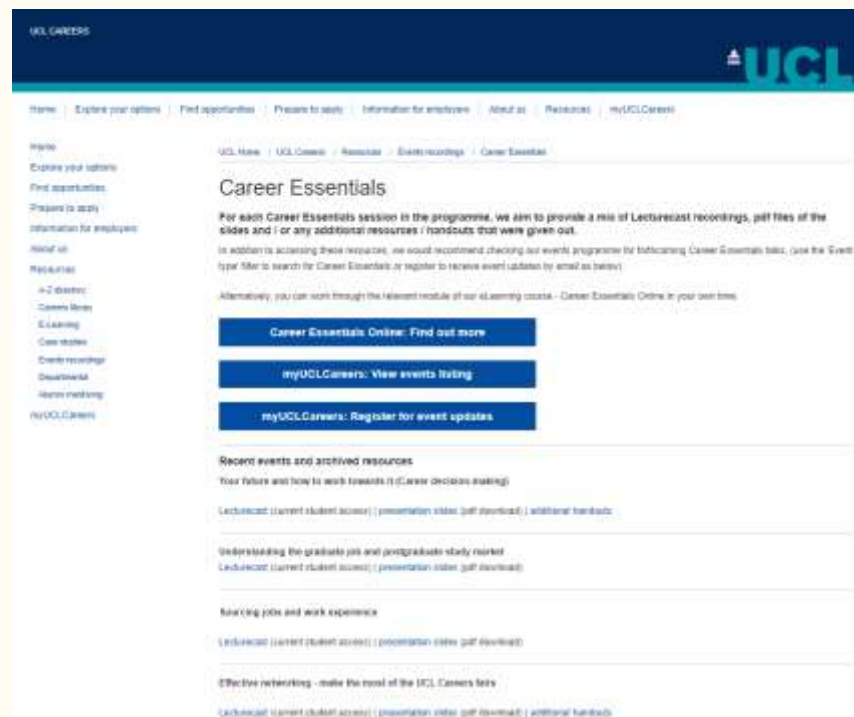
Small group CV sessions

- New this year
- Work on your CV in a group of up to 6 students, with an Applications Advisor
- October 17th, 31st, November 14th, 28th, December 12th
- 1.00 – 1.50pm, UCL Careers

Slides and recordings

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/resources/slides/career-essentials>

Search 'UCL Career Essentials'



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Career Essentials

For each Career Essentials session in the programme, we aim to provide a mix of Lecturer/lect recordings, pdf files of the slides and / or any additional resources / handouts that were given out.

In addition to accessing these resources, we would recommend checking our events programme for forthcoming Career Essentials talks. Use the 'Event type' filter to search for Career Essentials or register to receive event updates by email as below.

Alternatively, you can search through the relevant module of our eLearning course - Career Essentials Online in your own time.

[Career Essentials Online: Find out more](#)

[myUCLcareers: View events listing](#)

[myUCLcareers: Register for event updates](#)

Recent events and archived resources

Your future and how to work towards it (Career decision making)

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#) | [additional handouts](#)

[Understanding the graduate job and postgraduate study market](#)

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#)

[Finding jobs and work experience](#)

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#)

[Effective networking - make the most of the UCL Careers fairs](#)

[Lecturecast \(current student access\)](#) | [presentation slides \(pdf download\)](#) | [additional handouts](#)

What we'll cover in this session

1. Why employers use application forms
2. How to improve your **application forms**
3. Top tips for **cover letters**



Introductions



In groups of 2 or 3:

- Introduce yourself & why you have come along today.
- What is your experience of completing job application forms?
- Why do employers often request an application form rather than a CV?

Why do employers use **application forms**?

- Creates focus on areas relevant to the role
- Consistent and transparent selection - marking guidelines and scoring
- Often long and complicated
 - effective filter for competitive roles
 - deters unsuitable applicants
 - use of ‘killer questions’

Types of questions (1)

Biographical

- Detail previous work experience. For each question, describe your role and responsibilities, telling us specifically about any areas of leadership.

Career choice and motivation

- Why do you want to work for this organisation?
- Describe the specific reasons for applying to this business line.

Types of questions (2)

Competency

- Please give a recent example of a team in which you have been involved. What was your role? What challenges did you face?

Industry Specific

- Describe a recent development that has impacted on this sector. What implications might this development have for our future strategy?

Types of questions (3)

Personal statements

- In the space below, tell us about your motivation for applying to this positions and how your academic background and skills are relevant. Refer to the person specification throughout.

Selection activities competency grid

Candidate requirements	Application	Interview	Groupwork	Presentation
Teamwork	2		2	
Organisation		2		
Persuasion				3
Work under pressure	3	1		2
Oral communication	2		3	3
Motivation and drive		3	2	

Scoring competency or motivation questions

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.
- ability to negotiate and compromise where necessary.
- researching position and presenting with credibility.
- successful outcome/ reflection.

How to improve your **application forms**



Example opportunity

BrandsDirect are a well established but expanding advertising agency looking for trainee account managers to work with our exciting portfolio of clients.

Whilst no previous experience is required, we're 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.

What are they looking for?

What key competencies are they looking for?

Whilst no previous experience is required, we're 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**.

- Building relationships (interpersonal skills)
- Manage multiple projects (organisation, time management)
- Decision making
- Working under pressure

Example questions

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

Motivation question

2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team. (150 words)

Competency question

Q1: Candidate A's answer (motivation)

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. **(122 words)**

Analysis of motivation answer (1)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

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.

- Generic, easily accessible information.

Analysis of motivation answer (2)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

It's 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.

- Bland, candidate-centric interest

Analysis of motivation answer (3)

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

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. (122 words)

- Distinct lack of evidence to back-up claims

Q1: Candidate B's answer (motivation)

I have researched BrandDirect's client-base and am extremely excited by the thought of working for prestigious brands such as Continental and L'Oreal. Having spent an internship period with L'Oreal in the summer, I have been following the recent Garnier European campaign with a great deal of interest.

My skills are a good match for the position of account manager. I have recently been involved with the innovative re-branding strategy of the student union through a diverse 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 Skills presentation in September, I understand the value of good organisational skills to successfully manage client campaigns. My organisation skills greatly improved during my time at L'Oreal, where I reported to three demanding brand managers and worked to extremely tight production schedules.

Finally I have also been impressed by the honesty and enthusiasm of recently recruited BrandsDirect trainees I met at this year's UCL Careers Fair, especially Maurice Edwards who spoke very highly of the creative culture at BrandsDirect. This re-enforced the 'creative hot-house' reputation of the agency as described in *Campaign Magazine's* agency profile of 27 April. **(200 words)**

Motivation questions: Why the company? Why you?

- Think about:
- What does the company do? E.g. products, services, clients.
- What are their strengths? How do they differ from competitors?
- What have they done recently? E.g. projects, news items.
- What are their values and organisational culture?
- And how does all this relate to you?

Example questions

1. Why do you want to work as an account manager for our advertising agency? (200 words)

Motivation question

2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team. (150 words)

Competency question

Example competency question:

Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team.
(150 words)

Let's now see an example answer on the next slide.

Q2: Answer version 1 (competency)

At my internship at LHS Marketing, 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 of 8 who were developing the site. After doing a considerable amount of research of competitive sites, I had some ideas including incorporating a pop-up menu of up-and-coming events. Some of the team were sceptical of this idea due to the user backlash against pop-up advertising.

The general feeling was that pop-ups were no longer effective and could actually alienate visitors. This was discussed in several meetings, and I was convinced that this would be an effective strategy. 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. **(150 words)**

Analysis of competency answer (1)

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

At my internship at LHS Marketing, 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 of 8 who were developing the site.

- Reactive and uninspiring opening.

Analysis of competency answer (2)

After doing a considerable amount of research of competitive sites, I had some ideas including incorporating a pop-up menu of up-and-coming events. Some of the team were sceptical of this idea due to the user backlash against pop-up advertising.

The general feeling was that pop-ups were no longer effective and could actually alienate visitors. This was discussed in several meetings, and I was convinced that this would be an effective strategy.

- Lack of insight into process of persuasion.

Analysis of competency answer (3)

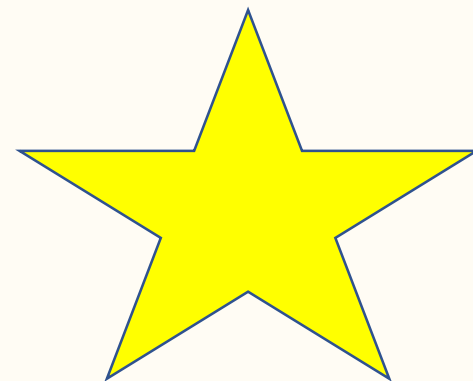
2. Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others in a team.

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. **(150 words)**

- Non-specific and underwhelming outcome

STAR: Competency answer structure

- **Situation:** what's the setting / background to the story
- **Task:** what was the task / objective?
- **Action:** What did you do?
- **Result:** What was the outcome?



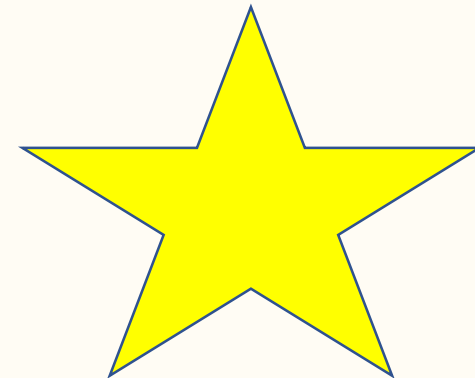
The two most important sections:

Action: What did you do?

- What did you have to think about?
- What was your approach / steps involved
- How did you overcome any problems?
- Use 'active' verbs such as 'planned', 'negotiated' 'listened'

Result: what was the outcome?

- Quantify if possible
- What learning did you acquire?



Q2: Answer version 2 (competency)

At LHS Marketing, 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 used the initial project briefing as an opportunity to find out exactly what others' objections might be. Based on this, I decided to answer those objections in detail, researched available data on the area, prepared visual design ideas and presented my case. Despite the team's initial concerns, I persuaded them to allocate funds for an initial trial period, after which we would review the success of the pilot programme. This compromise seemed to work.

The resulting click-through rates were encouraging and the pop-ups are now a permanent addition to the website promoting attendance at our events by 10%. (147 words)

Q2: Version 2 highlighted (competency)

At LHS Marketing, 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 used the initial project briefing as an opportunity to find out exactly what others' objections might be. Based on this, I **decided** to answer those objections in detail, **researched** available data on the area, **prepared** visual design ideas and **presented** my case. Despite the team's initial concerns, I **persuaded** them to allocate funds for an initial trial period, after which we would review the success of the pilot programme. This compromise seemed to work.

The resulting click-through rates were encouraging and the pop-ups are now a permanent addition to the website promoting attendance at our events by 10%. (147 words)

Competency questions: How might you prepare an answer?

The person specification asks for:

- report writing
- experience of IT
- time management
- relationship building
- adaptability
- communication



Where you might gain these experiences

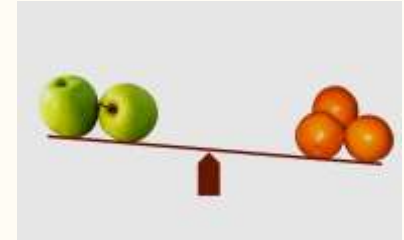
- report writing
- experience of IT
- time management
- relationship building
- adaptability
- communication
- your degree
- website redesign
- research projects
- UCL student bar work
- travelling / year abroad
- charring society meetings

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Applying online - tips

- 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, decide on most appropriate
- Draft, evaluate, edit. Keep to word count
- UCL Careers application appointment

Example Cover Letters: Compare and Contrast



Bain requirements

- Motivation for consulting
- Analytical and problem-solving ability
- Strong leadership skills
- Drive to deliver results

Cover letters

- Which do you prefer?
- Do the applicants meet the requirements?
- Who would you hire?

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/resources/slides/career-essentials>

Top tips for improving cover letters



Tip 1



- Good writing is concise writing - 1 page maximum

Tip 2

Indicate...

- why you're interested in the role
- what you have to offer
- why that organization
- **Make the links!**



Tip 3



Does your cover letter pass the 'blind' test'?

- Could this same letter be written for any other organisation?
- Invest time researching the organisation
- Refer to your sources, give specifics

Additional Resources

- Helpsheets
- Ultimate Careers Guide
- [Electronic](#) & paper copies



<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/applying/applications>

UCL Careers 1 to 1 Support

- Applications advice (20 minutes)
- Short guidance (20 minutes)
- Practice Interview (60 minutes, on condition of real employer interview)

Find us

4th Floor, Student Central Building, Malet Street

Mon-Thurs 9:30 - 17:00

Fri 11:00 -17:00

careers@ucl.ac.uk

020 7866 3600



Questions?

