

CVs for PhD students and researchers

This leaflet gives advice on how to present your experience whether you are going for an academic role or something unrelated to your research.

the
Careers Group
University of London

For academic roles and research roles outside universities

Your research will be highly relevant and of interest to potential employers. You may want to start your CV with a section entitled 'Research Interests' and focus on your research to date, as well as what directions you see it going in the future.

In the 'Education and Qualifications' section, include a paragraph outlining your research and any particularly applicable areas. Don't forget to mention any technical skills you have developed, such as using particular software packages, as well as your research skills. If your Masters and Bachelors degrees were also in a relevant area, you may want to include an overview of their content and a summary of your major project or dissertation.

In terms of your work experience and career history, academic employers are usually interested in research, teaching and administrative experience. You can split your experience into these areas and perhaps include an additional section at the end for other work experience. Detail any funding you have attracted. When presenting your teaching experience, make sure you include class sizes, degree of responsibility, pastoral support and course design where possible. If you have been involved in college committees include this in the administrative section.

'Publications and Conferences' are commonly left to the end of the CV but are one of your most important selling points for academic jobs. Present them in reverse chronological order and list publications first followed by conference papers and poster presentations.

For roles unrelated to your research

Shift the emphasis away from your specialism and write about the transferable skills you have gained from your PhD study. You should be able to find details of the required skills and experience in the person specification that comes with the advertised position, or by researching the role and organisation. Outline your PhD topic using jargon-free language.

Try to address any concerns the employer might have about recruiting someone with a PhD. It is helpful to include anything that shows business and commercial awareness. Academic researchers can be seen by employers as having the luxury of flexible deadlines, so emphasise your ability to manage your time well, and meet strict deadlines. If you have collaborated with industry during your research then make this stand out.

Summarise and highlight the transferable skills you have gained from producing publications and presenting at conferences. These could include writing skills, making presentations, networking and collaborating with others in the field.

MORE

See our CV information sheet for more general information on CVs and an example layout.

Your CV contents

The order of these elements could change depending on what is most relevant to the job. If you had a paid PhD studentship and you are applying for non-academic jobs, you could consider putting your PhD under 'Work Experience' to highlight the transferable work skills you gained.

> Career Profile: Should be short and specific to you and your experience. Avoid generalisations such as 'dynamic team player'.

> Education and Qualifications: The amount of detail you provide on your PhD and other HE qualifications will depend on how relevant these are to the job. Present the information in reverse chronological order.

> Work Experience: Emphasise the skills acquired, backed up by evidence. Highlight key responsibilities and outline achievements. Generally present the information in reverse chronological order but you can divide your work experience into sub-sections to ensure the most relevant comes first.

> Other Information: You may want to include an additional skills section for languages, IT and any other skills-related courses you have attended, for example, presentations, report writing and project management. Also include information on membership of professional bodies and awards or prizes.

> Leisure Interests: Some employers have an interest in this section; academic employers traditionally have been less concerned about what you do in your spare time. It is a useful place to address any skills gaps such as teamwork and show an employer that you have interests outside your PhD. It works best if your interests show active participation and commitment, for example 'I regularly play for a Sunday League football team' or 'I have volunteered at a monthly social club for older people for the past year'.

> Referees: For most jobs two referees are the norm. Ideally one will be your supervisor as they have worked closely with you for at least three years. For academic jobs it is useful if your referee is well-known in the field and the more senior the better. If you already have your PhD your external examiner might be a good option or someone who examined you for your upgrade. If you are moving outside of academia you should have one reference available from an employer. However, on your CV you can simply state 'References available on request'.

General points

> Length: for non-academic jobs, no more than two pages. Academic CVs can be longer but aim to have your most important information on the first two pages.

> Style: make sure section headings stand out. Use bullet points to keep the text punchy and help the reader focus on the important parts.

> Tailor your CV to each job you apply for, giving greatest prominence to your most relevant skills and experience.