

Career Essentials Group Work: Writing Applications for Unadvertised Opportunities



The session will begin at 1pm



If you have a device with you, please download the example CV for the session. Scroll down to the additional handout under ‘Career Essentials Group Work: Writing Applications for Unadvertised Opportunities’:

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

Career Essentials Group Work: Writing Applications for Unadvertised Opportunities

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Career Essentials Programme

- 12 title talks
- **Small Group Work sessions each week (e.g., CVs, cover letters, STAR, writing applications for unadvertised opportunities)**
- 2 workshops covering LinkedIn and Mock Assessment Centres
- 6 module e-learning course

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/resources/elearning>

Slides, recordings and eLearning

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

Search 'UCL Career Essentials'

The screenshot shows the UCL Career Essentials website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'UCL CAREERS' on the left and the 'UCL' logo on the right. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'FIND your FUTURE' and a photo of students. The main content area has a left sidebar with a list of navigation options: Home, Explore your options, Find opportunities, Prepare to apply, Information for employers, About us, Resources, and myUCLCareers. The main content area is titled 'Career Essentials' and contains a paragraph about the program's goal to provide lecture recordings and PDFs. Below this are three blue buttons: 'Career Essentials Online: Find out more', 'myUCLCareers: View events listing', and 'myUCLCareers: Register for event updates'. There are also sections for 'Recent events and archived resources' and 'Understanding the graduate job and postgraduate study market'.

The screenshot shows the 'Welcome to Careers Essentials Online' page. It features a header with 'UCL CAREERS' and the 'UCL' logo. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'FIND your FUTURE' and a photo of students. The main content area is titled 'Welcome to Careers Essentials Online' and contains a paragraph about the course's purpose. Below this is a yellow banner with the text 'Hover over the titles in the grid below to find out more about what we cover in each section.' There are two sections: 'Announcements' with a 'Hidden from students' button, and 'Internships and Vacancies' with a paragraph about logging in and using search filters. Below these are two sections: 'LinkedIn Workshop 18 March 2020' with a 'Hidden from students' button, and a grid of six video thumbnails with titles like 'Your future and how to work towards it', 'Understanding the graduate job market', 'Sourcing jobs and work experience', 'Effective CV, cover letters and applications', 'Interview success', and 'Planning for success - managing your job hunt'.

What we'll cover in this session

- Opportunities and challenges around writing applications for unadvertised opportunities
- Key components of a well-constructed speculative cover email.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a speculative application from perspective of the recruiter.
- How to research an organisation that you are interested in applying to.
- Feel confident in identifying the relevant skills you have to offer the organisation, as well as articulating what you hope to get out of an opportunity.

1. Why have you come along to the session today? What do you hope to get out of it?
2. Do you have any previous experience of directly contacting employers to enquire about unadvertised opportunities?

Speculative Applications: Potential Benefits & Opportunities?

Benefits & Opportunities

- Jobs market "iceberg" – invisible opportunities
- Formal advertising is expensive and many organizations rely on speculative applications.
- Less competition.
- Demonstrate attributes: proactive self-starter
- Short-cut formal recruitment process.

Speculative Applications: Challenges?

Challenges

- Confidence
- Practical considerations & knowledge
- Lack of structure & uncertainty
- Application fatigue

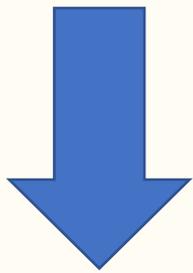
Practical Considerations

- Cover email (with the message in the email text rather than attached as a separate document)

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- Attach CV

Mock Cover Email (1)



Download the example CV from here, under 'Career Essentials Group Work: Writing Applications for Unadvertised Opportunities':

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

Mock Cover Email (2)

Put yourself in the recruiter's shoes:

- How would you feel about this person if they emailed you this?
- Is the email effective – what is good about it? What have they done to try to persuade the employer?
- Any improvements? Be specific – tailor CV to the vacancy and make it easy for the recruiter

Cover Email Tips (1)

- Research to find the right person/department to send the email to.
- Clearly articulate who you are and what you are asking for.
- Make your availability clear.
- Show knowledge and interest in the sector/organisation/department.
- Highlight any contact you've had with the organisation.

Cover Email Tips (2)

- Have understanding of key skills for the role/sector/organisation and clearly display how these skills are met through your experiences.
- Refer to the fact that your CV is attached.
- End politely – “Thank you for your time...”
- Be concise 300-400 words.

Managing Responses

- Ideal outcome – offered internship. Great!
- No response – frustrating but almost inevitable that you'll experience this. Follow up, then move on.
- Something in between a “yes” and “no” – e.g., they can't offer you an internship but are happy to have a chat with you. **Building contacts and networking is invaluable part of making speculative applications.**

Three Practical steps for Researching & Preparing Applications for maximising your chances

1. Identify Employers of Interest

- Search sector-specific employer directories, trade magazines and journals
- Ask current contacts including tutors, family and friends
- Look up advertised roles online to see who is recruiting – even if this role isn't right for you, the company may have other more suitable positions that you can ask about.

2. Research Employers of Interest

- Learn about what they do, what makes them different from competitors, sector news etc. Include some aspects of this in your cover email.
- Connect with current employees at the organisation.
- Find most relevant person with the organisation to contact about opportunities – e.g. search on the website, LinkedIn or call the switchboard.

3. Identify Relevant Skills & Link to your Experience

- Identify relevant skills by looking at similar roles advertised by other organisations or by browsing job profiles on prospects.ac.uk.
- Brainstorm how you can link these skills to the experiences you have – e.g. your studies, volunteer roles, extracurriculars, work experience.

Summary (1)

- Do your research and prepare your application to help maximize your chances of putting together effective speculative applications.
- Feel confident that speculative applications are a completely normal recruitment process – 70 percent of jobs are never advertised.
- Be prepared for a range of responses and be open to opportunities and different outcomes. Accept that rejection or not hearing back is part of the process.

Summary (2)

Can you share one key takeaway from the session today?

UCL Careers 1 to 1 Support

- Applications advice (20 minutes).
- Short guidance (20 minutes).
- Practice Interview (60 minutes, on condition of real employer interview).
- Teams or in person meetings available this term
- Book online in advance using [myUCLCareers](#).



Additional Resources

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/resources/information>

Login to the online UCL
Careers Library
(Career Discovery) and
search for
“speculative applications”

How to write a CV

A CV should not be a list of everything you have ever done, but a marketing document that should promote your skills and experience. In a 20 second scan the recruiter should be able to see evidence of your ability to do the job.

Steps to a great CV

- 1. Start with the job specification**
The starting point for CV writing should always be the skills and experience the recruiter is seeking. You will find this on the list of job requirements in the job advert, job description or person specification.
Your task is to clearly evidence each of these requirements on your CV using examples to convince the reader of your ability to do the job. If you are applying speculatively and there is no job description, search for similar roles to find out the relevant transferable skills.
- 2. Active language**
Use action words in your CV and covering letter to convey achievement and impact. Consider starting sentences with a verb rather than using pronouns (such as "I") too much. Avoid passive terms such as "I had to" "I was involved in" "I was required to".
- 3. Brainstorm your skills**
Think of examples of the skills you have gained and how you acquired them. Draw examples from your work, internships, volunteering, study, and interests. Match your skills to the job you are applying for to create a CV that clearly demonstrates you possess the skills they require.
- 4. Attention to detail**
One spelling or grammar error can be all it takes for a CV to be rejected, so many employers regard it as an indication of carelessness and poor motivation for the job. Triple check all spelling and grammar and ask someone else to proofread the final draft. Reading it out loud to yourself is a useful technique that can help you identify any errors.

Examples of active words

achieved	analysed	coordinated
created	demonstrated	designed
developed	evaluated	improved
increased	initiated	liaised
managed	negotiated	planned
persuaded	prioritised	researched
supervised		

Guidelines on CV length

There is no one rule about CV length, but in general two pages is the norm for a UK graduate CV. Exceptions are in investment banking where a one page CV is generally preferred (see the second example in this guide) and academic CVs tend to be longer (see the title CVs for PhDs for guidelines). Always follow the recruiter's instructions on length.



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Blogs.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-careers
<https://bit.ly/3r6vCH6>



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Find us: In person or virtually

- **Location:** 3rd Floor, 40 Bernard Street, London, WC1N 1LE
- **Website:** www.ucl.ac.uk/careers
- **Email:** Through AskUCL



Questions? askUCL



Any Questions?



Please fill in your brief feedback form for this session.

Thank you!