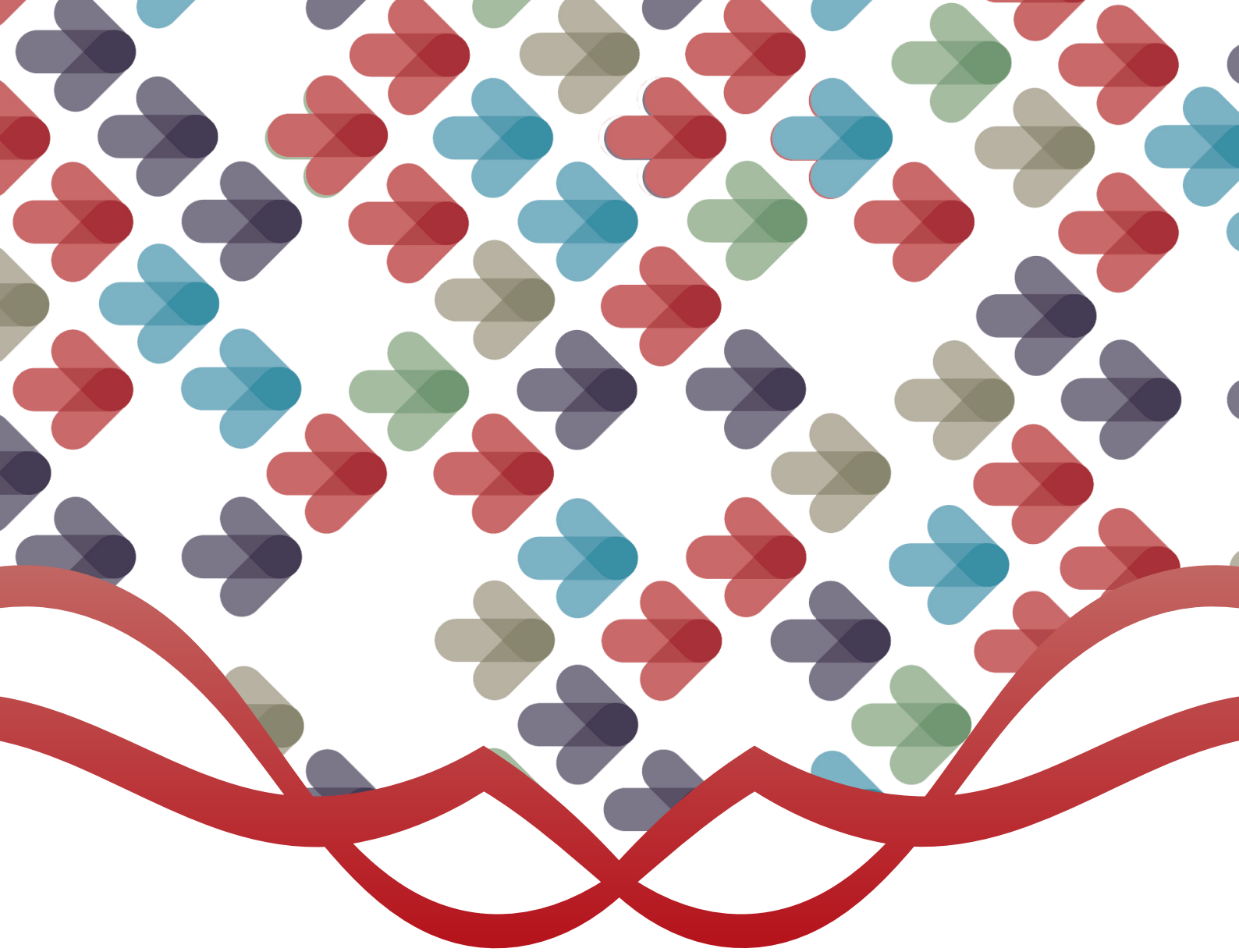




**FHASS Employability
Resource Hub:**

CV GUIDE



Introduction

Your CV is a powerful tool that highlights your skills, accomplishments, knowledge, and experience. It plays a crucial role in opening doors to new opportunities and experiences, making it essential to invest time and effort into crafting a strong and effective CV. After all, if you don't market yourself, who will?

Some consider it the most important document you will leave university with, but that is not entirely accurate. In reality, you'll likely create multiple versions of your CV, as one size doesn't fit all. Different roles require you to present yourself in unique ways, and tailoring your CV to match each opportunity is key.

There is no single correct way to structure a CV. This flexibility allows you to be creative with both the content and the layout, considering the preferences of each employer and any industry-specific standards. When crafting your CV, the guiding question should be: "How can I present myself most effectively for the role I'm applying to?"

It is wise to start building a master CV document early in your university journey. This way, you can continuously update it as you gain new experiences, rather than scrambling to remember everything when you are under the pressure of a looming application deadline.

What is a CV used for?

A CV can be used for various purposes, including:

- Applying for advertised job vacancies.
- Sending a speculative application to inquire about unadvertised openings.
- Enhancing your online presence, such as using it as the foundation for your LinkedIn profile.
- Uploading to job listing websites—though keep in mind, you may only be able to upload one version, which might limit your ability to tailor it for specific roles.
- Sharing with employers at networking events, career fairs, or other professional connections.

What makes a good CV?

Your CV will be effective if it:

- Captures the employer's attention with strong visual impact.
- Reflects your unique personality and strengths.
- Aligns with the industry and organisation you are targeting.
- Clearly demonstrates that you have the specific skills needed for the job.
- Meets the criteria the employer is using to assess your application.
- Is concise, ideally two pages for a graduate CV (though some creative roles and roles in Finance and Consultancy may prefer a one-page CV).
- Is well-written, with a clear structure and consistent formatting (including appropriate font and font size).

How to target a CV

To ensure your CV is targeted, consider the following questions:

- What do you know about the organisation or industry you are writing for?
- What are the specific requirements of the role you are applying for?
- How do your skills and experience align with what the employer is looking for?
- Can you make relevant connections to the organisation and role throughout your CV?

Creating a Personal Profile

If you choose to include a profile in your CV, it should be a concise and positive statement at the beginning that highlights your key qualities most relevant to the employer. This brief introduction should entice them to read further. Alternatively, you might prefer to use your cover letter to elaborate on these details rather than squeezing everything into a two-page CV.

Who am I?

When crafting your profile, think about what makes you stand out. Consider framing it as a blend of your most relevant:

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Skills | • Personal attributes | • Unique selling points (USPs) |
| • Experiences | • Influences | |
| • Knowledge | • Ideas/creativity | • Suitability for the position |
| • Attitudes | • Aspirations | |
| • Motivations | • Goals (future plans) | |

To get started, focus on three key areas:

- Past: What experience do you have? What skills and knowledge will you bring to the role?
- Present: What is your current situation? What interests you most?
- Future: Where do you want to go? What role or industry are you aiming for?

Then, bring these elements together into a compelling statement (aim for 2-3 lines) that is supported by the rest of your CV. Put yourself in the employer's shoes: What would you want to see? What would catch your attention? Avoid clichés and generic phrases like:

- "Design graduate with good communication and organisation skills. Also, very much a team player who is self-motivated, ambitious, and has excellent time management."

This type of statement does not stand out—it could apply to almost any graduate. Instead, focus on what truly makes you unique.

A couple of better examples would be:

- *“Flexible Business Undergraduate with excellent analytical, project management, team working, and customer delivery skills gained through university studies, one-year industrial placement in the logistics industry and a variety of part time work in retail and hospitality.”*
- *“English Literature undergraduate with substantial events management experience and administrative skills, seeking events management position within the cultural and creative sector.”*

Types of CV

The **chronological CV**, often called the ‘traditional’ CV, is the most widely used format. It focuses on your experience, listing information in reverse chronological order within each section—meaning your most recent studies and jobs appear first. This format is especially effective if you have relevant experience, as it allows you to showcase this to employers right away.

The **skills-based CV**, on the other hand, emphasises your capabilities and skills rather than prioritising your work history, which might not be as directly relevant. This format is ideal if you have limited work experience and want to highlight transferable skills. It is particularly useful if your experience is varied or seems unrelated, yet still demonstrates your suitability or potential for a specific role. It can also be a good choice if you’re looking to change your career direction.

A **hybrid CV** combines elements of both approaches, featuring a chronological work history section followed by a skills section—typically in that order. This format may be preferable if you do not have enough work experience to fill two pages or if you want to emphasise your skills separately from your experience.

We have examples of the three CV types at the end of this document.

CV Language and Tone

Employers often sift through numerous applications, many of which can seem indistinguishable and unremarkable. Make it easier for them to identify what they are looking for by using direct, positive, and appropriate language. Start each bullet point with an active verb like ‘organised’ or ‘delivered,’ and strike the right balance between providing enough detail and avoiding too much.

For example:

- **Instead of:** “I have excellent written skills...”
- **Try:** “Consistently produce clear, well-structured, and accurate reports, even under pressure to meet strict deadlines.”
- **Or:** “Consistently produce high-quality written work across a range of formats: reports, essays, action plans, and social media blogs.”

When writing in the first person, be assertive and confident. Avoid phrases like “I feel that I am a good communicator” or “I believe in diversity and equal opportunities.” Instead, say “I am a good

communicator” or “I am committed to diversity and equal opportunities,” and then back up these statements with evidence. Do not give the employer a reason to doubt the strength of your skills.

Start your sentences with these sorts of power words and phrases:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Demonstrated skills in... | • Expert at... |
| • Extensive academic... | • Working knowledge of... |
| • Practical background in... | • Coordinated... |
| • Experience in all aspects of... | • Organised... |
| • Knowledge of / experienced as... | • Promoted to... |
| • Established / created / designed... | • Succeeded in... |
| • Provided technical assistance... | • Experience involved / included... |
| • Proficient in / competent at... | • Instrumental in... |
| • Analysed / evaluated... | • Familiar with... |
| • Formulated... | • Evaluated... |
| • Initiated... | • Achieved... |
| • Orchestrated... | • Contributed... |
| • Presented... | • Implemented... |
| • Assigned to... | • In charge of... |
| • Project managed... | • Actively sought... |
| • Trained in... | • Supervised / delegated... |
| • Initially employed to... | • Devised... |
| | • Planned... |

Word Bank

There are particular skills that you are likely to discuss on most applications, to avoid repetition you may find this useful:

Communication-Related Words

- **Verbal Communication:** Called, Lectured, Presented, Conferred, Discussed, Showed
- **Written Communication:** Wrote, Edited, Corresponded, Distributed, Circulated, Publicised, Promoted
- **Instruction and Guidance:** Coached, Tutored, Instructed, Oriented, Informed
- **Promotion and Advocacy:** Advertised, Emphasised, Promoted, Recommended, Publicised

- **Representation and Relaying Information:** Represented, Redirected, Translated, Transmitted, Displayed

Leadership-Related Words

- **Decision-Making and Authority:** Approved, Authorised, Disapproved, Directed, Controlled, Enforced
- **Management and Oversight:** Administered, Managed, Supervised, Delegated, Oversaw, Presided
- **Encouragement and Support:** Encouraged, Sponsored, Stipulated, Awarded
- **Planning and Execution:** Conducted, Executed, Evaluated, Regulated, Specified
- **Selection and Assignment:** Allocated, Assigned, Appointed, Designated, Selected

Initiative-Related Words

- **Implementation and Execution:** Implemented, Performed, Delivered, Engineered, Executed, Operated, Automated
- **Participation and Contribution:** Participated, Engaged, Attended, Contributed, Recruited
- **Organisation and Monitoring:** Compiled, Collected, Monitored, Examined, Maintained, Verified
- **Creation and Innovation:** Founded, Established, Solicited
- **Processing and Handling:** Processed, Submitted, Systematised, Sorted, Trained, Utilised

Organisation-Related Words

- **Planning and Coordination:** Organised, Coordinated, Scheduled, Arranged, Prepared, Planned
- **Financial and Analytical:** Budgeted, Calculated, Analysed, Recorded, Reported
- **Reorganisation and Improvement:** Reorganised, Assembled, Purchased

Interpersonal Skills-Related Words

- **Advising and Consulting:** Advised, Consulted, Counselling, Facilitated, Guided
- **Negotiation and Mediation:** Negotiated, Mediated, Reconciled, Persuaded
- **Assistance and Support:** Assisted, Accommodated, Contributed, Provided, Assisted, Arranged
- **Influence and Motivation:** Motivated, Influenced, Harmonised, Adjusted, Modified

Describing yourself

You can include personal qualities and attributes in your CV, cover letter, and application form, as long as they are relevant to the position you're applying for. For example, if the role calls for an 'enthusiastic self-starter,' it wouldn't be suitable to describe yourself as 'calm and follows

instructions well,' although that might be ideal for other roles. To ensure you choose the right descriptors, consider asking someone who knows you well to help identify the words that best describe you.

Here are some strong adjectives you might use to describe yourself:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| • Accomplished | • Curious | • Intelligent |
| • Active | • Demonstrative | • Intellectual |
| • Accurate | • Determined | • Judicious |
| • Adaptable | • Decisive | • Knowledgeable |
| • Adventurous | • Diplomatic | • Level-headed |
| • Analytical | • Discreet | • Lively |
| • Approachable | • Easy-going | • Logical |
| • Artistic | • Efficient | • Loyal |
| • Astute | • Empathetic | • Mature |
| • Attentive | • Energetic | • Methodical |
| • Broadminded | • Enthusiastic | • Motivated |
| • Business-like | • Even-tempered | • Non-judgemental |
| • Calm | • Friendly | • Objective |
| • Careful | • Generous | • Open |
| • Cheerful | • Happy | • Optimistic |
| • Committed | • Hardworking | • Outgoing |
| • Competent | • Helpful | • Passionate |
| • Confident | • Honest | • Patient |
| • Conscientious | • Humorous | • Perceptive |
| • Consistent | • Imaginative | • Persistent |
| • Co-operative | • Impartial | • Persuasive |
| • Creative | • Industrious | • Positive |
| • Credible | • Innovative | • Practical |

CV Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you reflect on your draft CV and provide ideas for further development, based on criteria that most employers are likely to expect (though it is not an exhaustive list!).

To start, consider whether you can confidently answer ‘yes’ to the following questions:

1. Have you identified the skills and qualities needed for the role and provided clear evidence of these?
2. Are the sections of your CV arranged to highlight the most important information early on? Does the length of each section reflect its importance?
3. Have you used a clear and simple font type and size (e.g., Arial 11)?
4. Have you experimented with capitals, bold, italics, or colour for headings and subheadings to create a consistent and clear layout? Is your alignment consistent throughout, and have you made effective use of white space?
5. Have you organised each section in reverse chronological order?
6. Is your CV concise, ideally no longer than two pages? Have you avoided long paragraphs and instead used short, dynamic phrases, without jargon or abbreviations that might confuse the reader?
7. Have you researched the most typical CV format for the industry? Is the style and language appropriate for the role, employer, and sector?
8. Have you asked someone to proofread your CV for spelling and grammatical errors? Do not rely solely on your computer's spellchecker!
9. Does your CV demonstrate a broad set of commonly sought graduate skills and attributes, such as commercial awareness, communication, teamwork, negotiation and persuasion, leadership, organisation, perseverance and motivation, problem-solving, the ability to work under pressure, and confidence?
10. Is your CV attention-grabbing without being distracting? Would it stand out from a stack of applications for the right reasons?

Secondly, assess whether your CV meets these essential requirements:

Contact Details: Ensure your phone number and email address are current and not overly prominent—ideally, they should not occupy more than a small portion of the first page. Include relevant web links, such as your LinkedIn profile.

Personal Profile: This section is optional. If included, it should be a concise two-to-three-line summary highlighting your most relevant skills, qualities, and experience tailored to the specific role you are applying for.

Education: List the full title of your degree and highlight relevant modules, projects, achievements, and skills. Ensure that any pre-university qualifications are mentioned briefly and do not take up too much space.

Skills: Make sure the skills listed align with those required by the employer. If you have a separate skills section, use headings that are pertinent, and ensure the language is positive and focused on achievements.

Work Experience: Provide clear descriptions of your tasks, duties, and responsibilities, along with the skills you used or developed. Emphasise any specific knowledge gained and other positive outcomes from your roles.

Interests: Include interests that demonstrate additional skills and abilities relevant to the employer and the role.

Example CV's

On the following pages you will find an example of each type of CV, which might also help you to decide what would be most appropriate for you at this time. It might be that you choose a unique style CV for different roles (depending on your level of relevant skills and experience for the post).

Remember: these are just example CVs, and we encourage you to use these as inspiration and adapt to suit you, your experience and style.



If you would like further support from the FHASS Employability Team you can visit our Blog, book an appointment through Careers Connect or email us at fhassemployability@lancaster.ac.uk

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this resource guide is accurate but we recommend that you check all details carefully.

