

CVs and Cover Letters for Jobs Outside Academia

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Outline of Content

- Understanding the job
- Cover Letters
- CVs
- PhD – specific issues



Understanding the Job



Read job advert with care

Research the
sector/company/organisation

Use contacts



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Assessing a job advert

- Why does the job appeal to me?
- What do I offer that they are asking for?
- How can I prove that I have these skills?
- What is special/attractive about this organisation?
- Why do I want to work in this sector?
- What experience do I have that shows my commitment?
- What potential is there for me in this job to enhance and develop my career?
- What hidden demands and requirements might there be once I am doing the job?



TASK:

Read through the job advert for Research Officer at ODI and pick out the top 5 elements to highlight in an application.

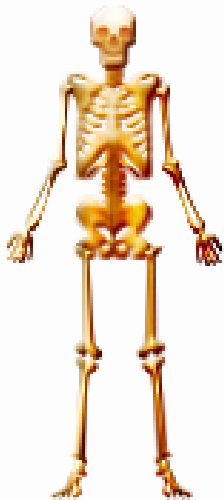
1. Relevant postgrad degree
2. Experience with impact evaluation
3. International development experience
4. Publications related to policy research
5. Time-management and ability to write for different audiences



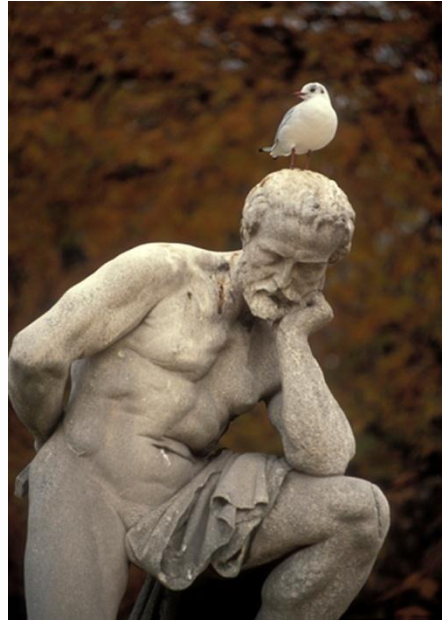
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Building a good application...



CV



Cover Letter



Interview

What Goes Where?

CV

- Don't mention them
- Scannable – read quickly
- Bullet points
- Not whole sentences
- Factual statements only

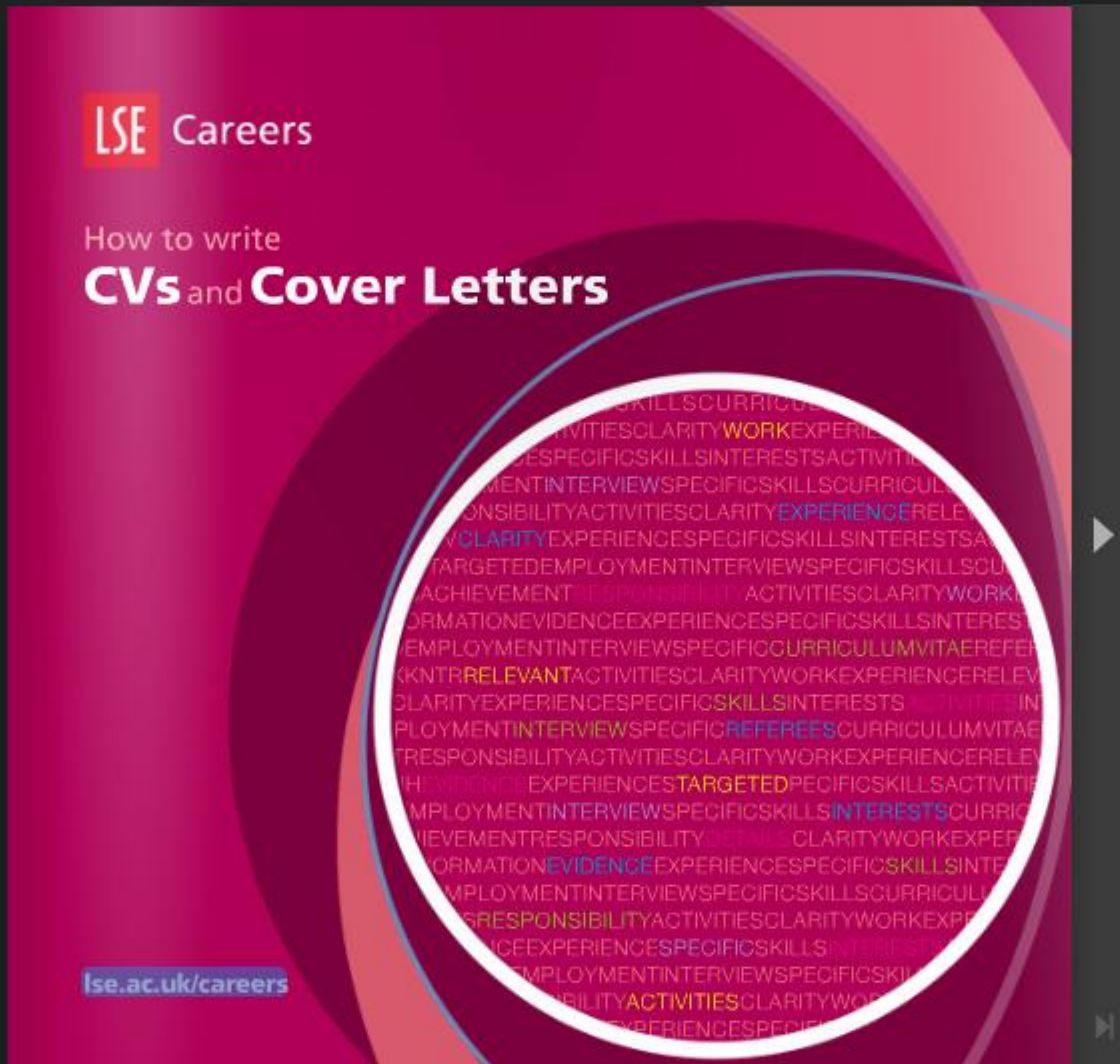
Cover Letter

- Can mention them
- Prose – use whole sentences, flow
- Can talk about motivation
- Convey enthusiasm



Electronic copy online at:

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/CVCoverApps/CoverLetters/Home.aspx>



Basic Cover Letters

- Get the format right – looks professional
- Grammatically correct and check spelling
- One side of A4 maximum
- Best to address it to a real person if possible
– get their title right though!



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*Recruiter's
name and
address*

Date

*Your name
and address*

Dear *Title and name*,

Yours sincerely,

Your name



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In the UK we have strange rules.....

Dear **'name'**,

Yours sincerely,

Dear **Sir/Madam**,

Yours faithfully,



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Applying in different countries



Going Global

Resource available free through Careers Service – see website

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/InternationalCareers/InternationalResources.aspx>



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Content – A Guide:

Paragraph	Content
1	Position you're applying to and where you saw it advertised
2 or 3	What you can bring to them in skills and experience, with evidence
2 or 3	Motivation, why them
4	Polite close, mentioning dates available/unavailable for interview



Common Mistakes



- Rehash of CV i.e. boring chronological account of your career so far
- “Cut and paste job” – could be used to apply anywhere

TASK:

For the ODI Research Officer job, what would you write in the two middle paragraphs of your letter?



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Basic CV



Will not be read in isolation –
reader will be comparing to a job spec



MUST BE TAILORED



Will be read really quickly –
approx 1 minute



**MUST BE EASY TO SCAN
NO MORE THAN 2 SIDES A4**

Basic Layout and formatting

- Simple layout – not too much variety in formatting
- Keep formatting same throughout
- 2 sides A4 max
- Bullet points, not paragraphs
- Don't need whole sentences
- 11pt or above

Basic CV Sections

- Name (centred, large so reader remembers it)
- Contact Details (small, uses less space)
- Profile (optional)
- Education (PhD, Masters, First Degree)
- Employment / work experience
- Awards (optional)
- Other skills
- Interests/Activities/Achievements
- Referees (can be 'Available on Request')



CV Tips

- Reverse chronological – most recent first in a section
- Put most relevant items on first page
- Use relevant section headings e.g. ‘Consultancy Experience’
- Use the same language they use in the job advert
- Weighting – more space to more important and recent experience
- Make sure it’s clear what you **actually** did



Great CVs



Active language



Outcomes and achievements



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Good words

Achieved
Organised
Guided
Edited
Liaised
Initiated
Wrote
Secured
Negotiated
Presented
Produced
Planned
Launched
Managed
Drove
Delivered
Headed



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Match your competences, know their fears

PhD Competences

- Analytical skills
- Research skills
- Writing skills
- Dealing with information effectively
- Capacity for self-direction
- Ability to accept supervision
- Project management
- Communication skills
- Presentation skills
- Teaching/mentoring skills
- Networking
- Organisational awareness/political sense
- Perseverance
- Subject specific knowledge

Recruiter Perceptions of PhDs

- + Maturity
- + Research ability
- + Analysis and critical thinking
- + Initiative, self-reliance, independence
- + Project management
- + Alternative perspective
- Too narrow in interest and outlook
- Lacking commercial awareness
- Lone worker not team player
- Unsophisticated social skills
- Speak a 'different language'
- Would find it hard to integrate into any non-academic culture
- May have unrealistic expectations

http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Recruiting_researchers_employer_survey_2009.pdf



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TASK:

For the ODI Research Officer job, how relevant would research experience be?



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How relevant is your research experience?

Research Heavy

- Detail under PhD of what research you've done
- Include achievements/outcomes of research
- Details of publications and conferences are relevant
- Provide publication list

Research Light

- Detail under PhD of transferable skills e.g. managing others, organisational, completing project to time
- Summarise publication as outcome but avoid lists



Translating Academic Language to Employer Language

You understand:

- Surveys, Fieldwork
- Multi-disciplinary
- Thesis, articles
- Supervising

Employer understands:

- Project management, problem-solving
- Flexibility, versatility,
- Reports, publications
- Instructing, training, communication skills



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Translating Academic Language to Employer Language

You understand:

- Scholarship
- Academic Rigour
- Lecturing/tutoring
- Examining

Employer understands:

- Planning, research ability, creativity, analysis, fieldwork
- Continual scrutiny, quality control, quality assurance
- Giving seminars: presenting, motivation, monitoring
- Appraising, assessing



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Forthcoming PhD seminars:

Mon 18 Feb, 1-2pm	Applying for Postdoctoral Research Funding – Finding Funding and Writing Research Proposals
Wed 27 Feb 12.30-2pm	Interview Skills for Jobs Outside Academia
Wed 20 Mar 12-1.30pm	Academic Job Interviews – Coping with Difficult Interview Questions

ANNOUNCING!

13 March: Panel Event on Research Jobs Outside Academia, for PhDs



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PhD Careers Service

- Book one-to-one appointments and find out about PhD careers seminars through Career Hub: <http://careers.lse.ac.uk/>
- PhD section on Careers website <http://tinyurl.com/LSECareersPhD>
- Keep up to date with PhD Careers Blog <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/careers/>



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Any Questions?

- Madelaine Chapman, PhD Careers Consultant,
m.a.chapman@lse.ac.uk
- 30 minute appointments on Monday and
Wednesday afternoons, booked via Career
Hub <http://careers.lse.ac.uk>



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