

# CVs and Cover Letters for Jobs Outside Academia

Catherine Reynolds

*Careers Consultant for*

*PhD Students and Research Staff*

January 2016



# Sample CVs

Name	Role	Organisation	Style of CV
Amelia Sharman	Principal Consultant	Amec Foster Wheeler	
Giulia Pastorella	Government Relations Manager	Hewlit Packard	
Carolina Lincoln	Research Analyst	NGO s	

## Task: Review CV samples

Prepare comments on:

- Style
- Section headings and order
- Writing style



# Outline

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



# Understanding the Job




Read job advert with care

Research the  
sector/company/organisation

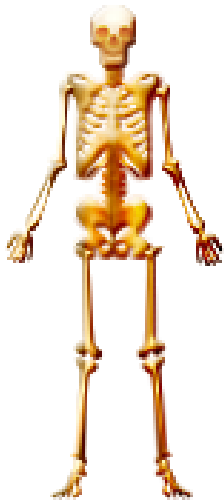
Use contacts



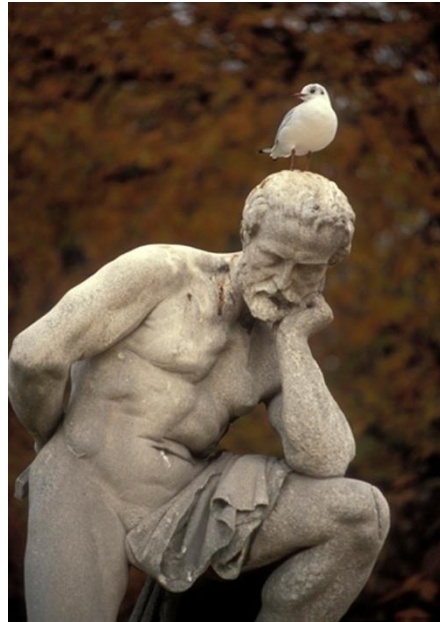
# Assessing a job advert

- 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?
- 

# Building a good application...



CV



Cover Letter



Interview



# What Goes Where?

## **CV**

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

## **Cover Letter**

- Definitely mention the employer
- Convey enthusiasm
- Motivation matters
- Prose – use whole sentences, flow

More information in the LSE Careers Guide



# 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!





*Recruiter's  
name and  
address*

*Date*

*Your name  
and address*

Dear *Title and name*,

Yours sincerely,

*Your name*



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

Dear **'name'**,

Yours sincerely,

Dear **Sir/Madam**,

Yours faithfully,



# 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>

# Content – A Guide:

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

# Common Covering Letter Mistakes



- Rehash of CV i.e. boring chronological account of your career so far
- Too general – could be used to apply anywhere

# 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**

# 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



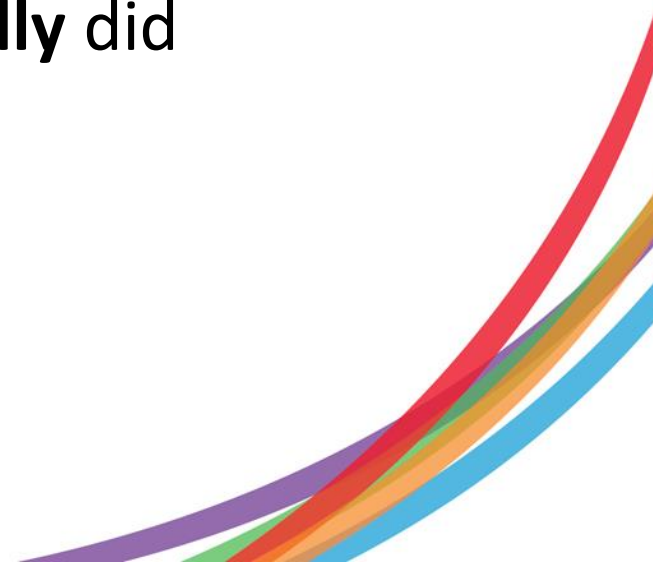
# Basic CV Sections

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



# Some CV Tips

- Reverse chronological – most recent first in a section
- Put most relevant items on first page
- Adapt 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



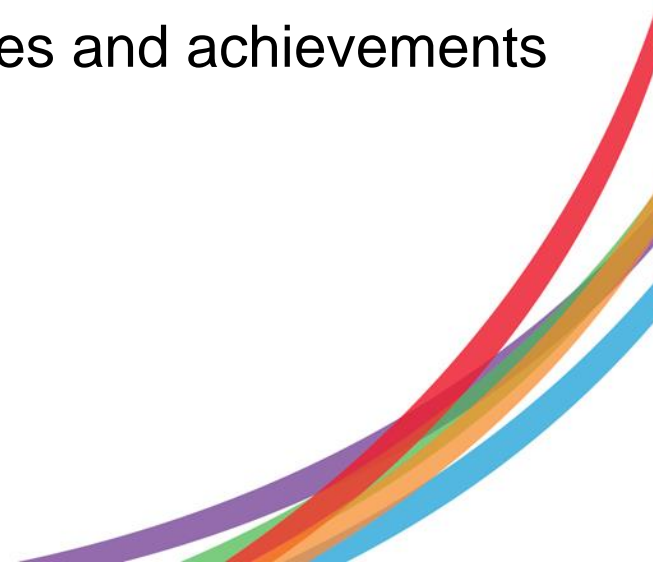
# Great CVs



Active language

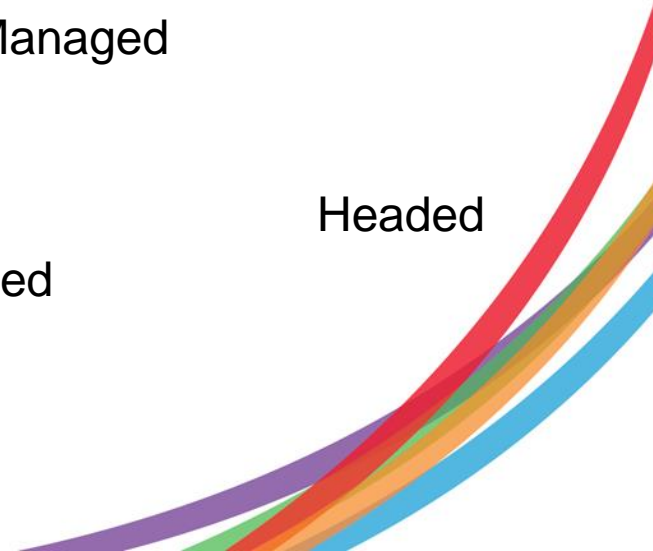


Outcomes and achievements



# Good words

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



# 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](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Recruiting_researchers_employer_survey_2009.pdf)



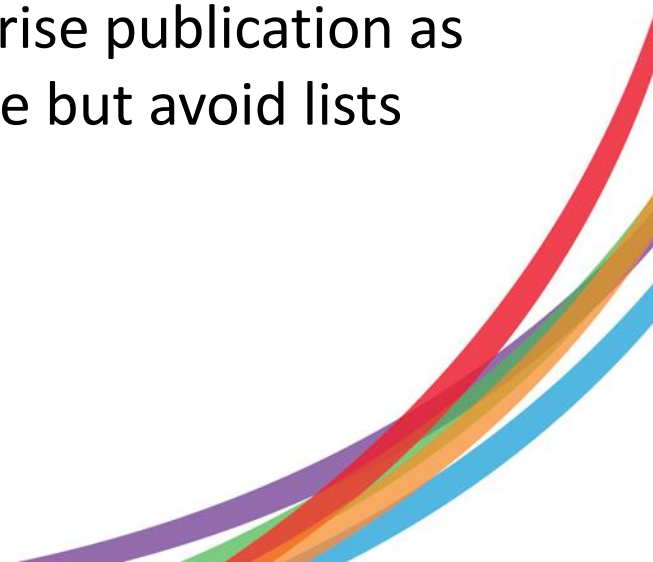
# How relevant is your research experience?

## Research Heavy

- Detail under PhD of the research you've done
- Include methods, 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



# Translating Academic Language to Employer Language

## **You say:**

- Scholarship
- Academic Rigour
- Lecturing/tutoring
- Examining

## **Employer say:**

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



# PhD Careers Service

- Book one-to-one appointments and find out about PhD careers seminars through Career Hub
- PhD section on Careers website
- Keep up to date with PhD Careers Blog





# PhD seminars this term

- **Outside academia**

Panels of alumni; gaining additional experience along side PhD; interview skills outside academia; planning your career development

- **In Academia**

CVs and applications; interviews; research fellowships



# Any Questions?

Catherine Reynolds, PhD Careers Consultant

[c.reynolds1@lse.ac.uk](mailto:c.reynolds1@lse.ac.uk)

30 minute appointments, booked via Career Hub

<http://careers.lse.ac.uk>

