

CVs and covering letters for Geography students

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Aims of the session

By the end of the workshop you will:

- understand the purpose of a CV
- know what a good CV should contain
- know how to 'sell' your Geography degree
- know about two different CV formats
(primarily for use in the UK)
- Be able to write a good covering letter

How & when to use your CV

- When asked to 'apply in writing'
- Making speculative applications
- For networking
- As an 'aide memoir' when completing application forms
- To hand out at recruitment fairs
- For use with recruitment agencies

General points

- Keep the design clear and simple
- Be accurate
- Be positive
- Check spelling / grammar
- Match the content to the job description
- Ideally 2 pages of A4 – not longer
- Get someone to proof read your CV

What are employers looking for?

- Easy to read
- Informative
- Logical
- Able to find the key messages quickly

TYPES OF CV

- Chronological
- Skills based

- Technical
- Academic
- On line

Chronological CV

- Personal details:
name, address, telephone, e mail, nationality
- Education:
 - *Reverse date order*
- Work experience / employment
 - *Reverse date order*
 - *Date, employer, location, job title*

Chronological CV

- Skills – IT, languages, “soft” skills
- Interests

Chronological: Optional content

- Personal statement
- Date of birth
- Exam grades ?
- Achievements
- References

Skills based CV

- Personal details
- Education
- Choose headings to cover skills for the job
 - Teamworking: eg involvement in clubs and societies
 - Problem solving: eg dissertation
 - Communication: eg voluntary work
 - Organising: eg holidays with friends, departmental events, sports
- References

Skills from your Geography degree

- Analyse and solve problems
- Critically interpret data and text
- Develop a reasoned argument
- Use scientific techniques (especially Geography BSc)
- Present data using statistics, text, images and maps
- Work in teams
- Plan and organise
- Present verbal and written arguments and information
- Research

Skills from your Geography degree

- IT
- Project management
- Communication
- Time management
- Decision making

Cover letter

- Use positive and active language
- Vary the start of sentences
- Match the letter to the nature of the work
- This is a 'sales pitch'
- No more than 1 or 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ side of A4
- Use normal business layout

Cover letter

- Who you are
- What you are applying for
- Why you want this job
 - Tasks, people, environment
- What you have to offer
 - Skills, qualities, experience
- Why that organisation
- Finishing paragraph

Tips

- Good quality paper, if posted
- Print back to back (say 'continued overleaf')
- Don't fold
- Send to a named individual
- No gimmicks
- Balance group vs solitary activities

Tips

- Simple fonts
- No underlining
- Email CV and letter as attachments
- Convert to PDF format

Further resources

- CV materials

www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/jobapplications/cvs/

- CVs for other countries: www.prospects.ac.uk
- CV check: Phone or visit careerzone to book an appointment (01392 724493)