

CV Wednesday Pack

T: 023 9284 2684
E: careersandrecruitment@port.ac.uk
purpledoor.recruitment@port.ac.uk
W: www.port.ac.uk/careersandrecruitment



Purple Door
Careers and
Recruitment

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Guidelines

A good CV promotes the skills, knowledge and experience an applicant can bring to a job. Follow these guidelines to sell your attributes to recruiters effectively.

Get it all covered

There are no hard and fast rules, but most CVs are made up of the following sections (not necessarily in this order):

- personal details
- education
- work experience
- specific skills (this might include languages or IT)
- interests and extra-curricular activities
- referees

Get the length right

Two pages is the norm for the UK job market although CVs for the academic job market can be longer to include additional information such as publications etc.

Prioritise relevant information

Busy employers may not make it to the second page of a CV if there's nothing relevant on the first. So cover the most relevant things you have to offer (your degree and work experience) early in your CV. Present your information in reverse chronological order (most recent first).

Go into detail

If you worked in a team on a project, how big was the team? If you were responsible for a student society budget, how much money was involved?

Draw attention to your skills

Transferable skills, such as organisation, teamwork, and time-management, are important, but always use evidence to back up your claims, rather than simply listing lots of skills. Use proactive words, such as negotiated and organised, to explain your role in different activities. (*See CV information sheet **Action Verbs** to get ideas*).

Appearance matters!

The information in your CV should be consistent and presented in clear, distinct sections. Check and double check for spelling and grammatical errors (don't rely on a computer spell checker). Use good-quality white or off-white paper and present each page on a different sheet of paper, not back to back.

Leave it out

You can safely omit:

- every GCSE subject and degree module (instead these can be summarized)
- outdated/irrelevant awards and achievements
- marital status, gender and age
- 'Curriculum Vitae' at the top of the page – you could replace this with your name.

'Apart from your basic details and qualifications, we are most interested in what motivates you. Tell us why you're interested in this career and include examples of how you've developed and pursued that interest'

Jon Rennie, Development and Recruitment Manager, WesternGeco Training
(Schlumberger)

Text taken from the Hobsons Graduate Employment & Training Website

www.get.hobsons.co.uk

Amanda is a second-year student at the University of Portsmouth studying history. Interested in a career in journalism, which means applying for competitive internships and work experience at newspapers, magazines and publishers. To maximise her chances of landing some work experience Amanda needs to focus her CV and highlight skills learned, along with re-doing the layout. At the moment its difficult for an employer to see why Amanda has chosen to apply for the work let alone their company. Make sure you tailor your CV to the role that you are applying for. Our careers adviser has made some suggestions to improve this CV.

CV Before...

Amanda Mason

Sex: Female	Home address:	Term address:
Date of Birth: 29/11/1987	148 Common Rd	31 Waterford Street
Phone (Home): 02392728431	Hertford	Southsea
Mobile: 0757620210	Hertfordshire	Hants
E-Mail: mason@yahoo.com	SG15 7BK	PO1 6AH

Education:

2006-2009 Studying for BA (Hons) Degree in History at the University of Portsmouth
Results for First year modules: 1st, 1st, 2-1, 2-1, 2-1

1999-2006 Attended Hertford Collegiate School, Hertford

A-levels - Art (A). English Lit. (A), History (A),
AS level - French (A)
GCSE's - 10 GCSE's; 5 A*'s and 5 A's.

Work Experience:

2007 Bar steward at the University of Portsmouth Student's Union
Have worked a maximum of three nights a week since February 2007, at a very busy venue.

2006 – 2007 Casual worker at Hertford School Enterprises Ltd
Performed a range of jobs such as:
- Setting up a bookings database for Sports Centre;
- Silver service and bar work for weddings and large events hosted by Hertford Collegiate School Enterprises;
- Changing linen for International Students attending Our World Summer school - Moving equipment and furniture along with a team

Positions of Authority:

2007 President and founder of the Comic Strip at the University of Portsmouth. First issue is yet to be released, but plenty of material has been gathered and interest among the student body has been found. The project is essentially an alternative student newspaper, with some writing alongside the predominantly humorous illustrated content.

2006 Writer and cartoonist for a student magazine at Hertford Collegiate School, entitled '*The Hertfordian*'

2006 Campaign co-ordinator and poster designer for the Hertford Collegiate School Mock Election, for the mock GREEN party.

2004 – 2005 Co-founder and writer/editor for a history magazine at Hertford School

1998 – 2005 Art Scholar at Hertford Collegiate School
This title afforded me a 25% discount from school fees and special access to the Art Department's resources.

Amanda's name would have greater impact if highlighted in bold and put in a larger font. The same can be said for section headings.

There is too much space given to contact details. One address is enough. Also, date of birth and gender are irrelevant.

Amanda could consider putting a brief personal statement here. It is not essential, but given that she is applying to a specific sector, it will give her CV greater focus, clearly demonstrating a commitment to the sector.

Bold text can be used to highlight job titles and core facts, to mark them out from further details. This will make the CV easier to read at a glance, which is what employers will do.

If you are targeting a specific job-type, as Amanda is, there has to be a main focus on relevant work experience. One way of achieving this would be to split the work experience section into two headings: "Relevant experience" and "other experience". In Amanda's case, most of what is in the "positions of authority" section can be put into "relevant experience", given that her main career aspiration is in journalism and publishing. More routine or casual work, while still valuable, should be relegated to an "other experience" section

There should be a focus here on core skills taken from the job, and a mention of any important roles assumed, The same goes for all the work experience on Amanda's CV.

Dates could be stated more precisely i.e. include month where possible

This information is fairly irrelevant. Changing linen and carrying furniture are not valuable experiences in this instance. It takes up valuable space where more relevant experiences could be mentioned.

The experience in this section is great for an application for journalism and publishing. Much more can be made of it. Figures and statistics relating to the magazines Amanda set up should be mentioned where they can to provide hard evidence of any success. Once again, action words should be used to convince the employer of dynamism.

Much more information should be given for this, especially as it is so relevant to Amanda's career aspirations

CV Before Page 2...

This section is far too long, taking up almost a quarter of the CV. Having a creating and sporting hobby is great on a CV, just don't let it overshadow experience in other relevant areas". There is no doubt that a CV should focus on education and employment. Furthermore, this section, like the others, should consist of bullet points and short, snappy sentences rather than waffly prose

The word 'I' should be kept to a minimum on your CV. Aim for shorter, snappier language and perhaps use bullet points to outline what you have done. And the stated interest in philosophy and literature is unnecessary", it is already apparent by Amanda's choice of degree.

The CV is unbalanced – Amanda needs to aim for 2 sides of A4 of equal length, page 2 is much shorter than page 1

Achievements:

Received an award for outstanding GCSEs and A-levels.

Hobbies and Interests:

Drawing and Painting

My passion for Fine Art has persisted throughout my life. I am currently a member of the University of Portsmouth Art Society (Art soc.) The main activity run by the society has been a regular life-drawing class, which I attend.

History and Literature

Due to my great interest in history, I pursued it to a degree level. I have always enjoyed reading fiction also, my favourite author at the moment being Milan Kundera.

Rock Climbing

I began rock-climbing in my first year of university, and am a member of the UoP Mountaineering Club. I make frequent use of the indoor climbing wall on campus and have been on an outdoor climbing trip to the Peak District.

Cycling and Swimming

I swim frequently, and I cycle as a mode of transport, primarily. It is an easy and healthy way to get around Portsmouth, often quicker than travelling by bus or car.

References available on request.

CV After...

AMANDA MASON

148 Rough Common Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG15 7BK
mason@yahoo.com
02392728431/0706543210

Second year undergraduate with experience in editing and writing for publications, seeking a journalism work placement.

EDUCATION

2006 - 09

BA (Hons) History - Anticipated degree classification 2:1
University of Portsmouth

Degree focussed on modern European and American history and included subjects such as: Politics and Culture of 19th Century Russia; The Rise of the United States since 1880; The Concept and Art of Warfare in Europe and North America 1800 – 2000; Empire in crisis – the Soviet Union and its collapse; The Legacy of the Second World War – reconstruction and reconciliation since 1945.

Developed ability to:

- present strong written arguments by selecting and communicating findings in a structured, coherent and persuasive manner
- conduct research using different tools and sources
- work independently, setting my own deadlines and managing my time when under pressure

1999 - 2006

Hertford Collegiate School, Portsmouth

- 3 A-levels including Art, English Literature, History and General Studies
- AS level in French
- 10 GCSEs including Maths, English and French
- Governor's prize for outstanding academic achievement

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

May 2007-present

President/founder of UoP's *Comic Strip* club
Publisher/Editor of *Strip Notes*

- Launched a project to produce a brand-new campus publication in the shape of an alternative student magazine/comic strip.
- Implemented new club, the Comic Strip, to support the project, raised over £400 to fund first and future editions
- Sourced and organised access to publishing facilities,
- Researched and arranged platform for publicity and distribution.
- Regularly commission articles and write editorial for the publication
- Illustrated material for initial launch publication and continue to illustrate subsequent editions

Amanda's name stands out a lot more, and her details take up a lot less space, allowing more space for her to demonstrate her worth. The CV looks professional and is easier to read, as the layout is clear and emphasises Amanda's experience and interest.

The personal statement identifies Amanda's interest in journalism and highlights relevant experience. It is both short and factual

Bold text can help split the CV into manageable chunks as well as highlighting essential information.

This section is far more effective now that Amanda has included information about her degree and has identified the skills that she has developed as a result of her studies

This fits much better in this section

Splitting 'Experience' into 'Relevant Experience' and 'Other Experience' has made the far more useful experience much more noticeable

This is much better. Amanda's initiative in setting up the project really shines through. The extra detail, such as including the name of the project and its budget, gives some concrete evidence of achievement.

CV After Page 2...

Feb-May 2006

Writer and cartoonist for student magazine,

- Wrote two articles for the first issue of a student magazine, *The Hertfordian*, whilst at school and illustrated various other sections.
- Assumed an active role in the production of the magazine, from its conception to its distribution; deciding on its tone and format, and designing posters for publicity.

Feb-Mar 2006

Campaign co-ordinator for Mock Election

- Took charge of campaigning for the mock GREEN party.
- Conceived and designed various posters, implemented a poster campaign, and arranged for publicity in a popular student magazine (above).

**Dec 2005
magazine**

Co-founder and writer for sixth form History

- Set up a magazine along with a team of 5 other students.
- Negotiated and received a budget of £200 to cover magazine overheads
- Injected creativity into the design process
- Wrote the front page article for the first issue and sought out various other contributors.
- Distributed the magazine, utilising various forms of publicity.

OTHER EXPERIENCE

**Feb 2007 - present
Union**

Bartender, University of Portsmouth Students'

- Exercising team-working skills in a busy work environment.
- Dealing with customers in a friendly and professional manner.
- Adept and responsible money-handler.

**May 2006 - present
Enterprises Ltd**

Casual worker, Hertford Collegiate School

- Set up a booking database for the school's community sports centre, rapidly learning unfamiliar software in a short space of time.
- Regularly set up and serve silver service for weddings, assuring good professional standards and impeccable personal presentation.

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Drawing and Painting.

- An active member of UKC's Art Society.

Sports

- An active member of UKC's Mountaineering Club, taking part in events and trips over the past year.
- Cycle as a means of transport around Portsmouth, and swim frequently.

References available on request

In the rest of this section, the detail really sells Amanda's skills, as do action words and phrases such as 'implemented', 'assumed and active role' and 'injected some creativity'.

Putting this towards the end of the CV is far better; as 'Relevant Experience' is given more priority.

Amanda is no longer simply stating basic facts about her jobs. There is a focus on skills gained and roles of responsibility, which is a vast improvement. Irrelevant material that adds nothing of value to the CV is scrapped, such as Amanda's experiences changing linen and

Shortening this section diminishes its importance, allowing more space and emphasis on, his really valuable experiences in setting up, editing and writing for student magazines. A 'hobbies' section is still useful as it "sells personality" but it must be kept to-the-point and should include some detail about the interest or activity

You have more skills than you think

A CV should not just list your experiences and achievements, it needs to show an employer what you have learnt and the skills you have developed.

You probably have more skills than you think – *the art is to spot them as they may not be immediately obvious to you*. When describing your experiences you need to explain what you did as well as how you did it. You should include an explanation of the skills used as well as details about the tasks or activities undertaken. The following examples demonstrate the kind of skills you might develop in an administrative role or as a restaurant worker by looking at the tasks carried out in the job role and the kind of skills that might have been developed as a result.

Working in an administrative role

Tasks (what you did)	Skills gained (how you went about the tasks)			
	Information skills	People skills	Practical skills	Ideas/concepts
Record keeping	Being accurate with words and figures			
Filing	Organising, planning and working to deadlines			
Dealing with clients	Recording information	Negotiating, dealing with queries, being courteous		
Using the telephone	Taking messages and conveying information	Being friendly and helpful, listening and understanding queries	Operating a switchboard	Problem solving
Using office systems	Prioritising information and being logical	Outlining and explaining office procedure, using initiative	Specialist IT skills	Being creative – thinking of new systems, making decisions
Liaising with other Departments		Co-operating and networking		Generating ideas

Working in a restaurant role

Tasks <i>(what you did)</i>	Skills gained <i>(how you went about the tasks)</i>			
	Information skills	People skills	Practical skills	Ideas/concepts
Setting and clearing tables			Handling items quickly	Thinking of new table layouts
Seating customers	Describing menu items	Welcoming customers		Providing creative solutions
Taking orders	Writing clearly	Listening, helping and advising		Providing creative solutions
Communication orders to kitchen	Organising information consistently	Clarifying information, maintaining relationships		Thinking of new systems
Serving food	Ability to retain information		Being adept	
Dealing with customers		Negotiating, promoting, dealing with complaints, being patient		
Calculating bills and handling money	Financial awareness, accuracy	Being courteous	Coping under pressure	

Action Verbs – by Skills Categories

You can use these verbs to describe your skills, accomplishments and abilities when writing your CV and cover letters; they may help to increase the strength of your writing and make potential employers take notice!

Creative Skills

acted	adapted	began	combined	Composed	conceptualised
condensed	created	customised	designed	developed	directed
displayed	drew	entertained	established	fashioned	formulated
founded	illustrated	instituted	integrated	introduced	invented
modelled	modified	originated	performed	photographed	planned
revised	revitalised	shaped	solved		

Data/Financial Skills

administered	adjusted	allocated	analysed	appraised	assessed
audited	balanced	budgeted	calculated	computed	conserved
corrected	determined	developed	estimated	forecasted	managed
marketed	Measured	netted	planned	prepared	programmed
projected	qualified	reconciled	reduced	researched	retrieved

Helping Skills

adapted	advocated	aided	answered	arranged	assessed
assisted	clarified	coached	collaborated	contributed	co-operated
counselled	demonstrated	diagnosed	educated	encouraged	ensured
expedited	facilitated	familiarised	furthered	guided	helped
insured	intervened	motivated	prevented	provided	Referred
rehabilitated	represented	resolved	simplified	supplied	Supported
volunteered					

Organisational Skills

approved	arranged	catalogued	categorised	charted	classified
coded	collected	compiled	corrected	corresponded	distributed
executed	filed	generated	incorporated	inspected	logged
maintained	monitored	obtained	operated	ordered	organised
prepared	processed	provided	purchased	recorded	registered
reserved	responded	reviewed	routed	scheduled	screened
submitted	supplied	standardised	systematised	updated	validated

Research Skills

analysed	clarified	collected	compared	conducted	
critiqued	detected	determined	diagnosed	evaluated	
examined	experimented	explored	extracted	formulated	
gathered	inspected	interviewed	invented	investigated	
located	measured	organised	researched	reviewed	
searched	solved	summarised	surveyed	systematised	tested

Teaching Skills

adapted	advised	clarified	coached	communicated	
conducted	co-ordinated	critiqued	developed	enabled	
encouraged	evaluated	explained	facilitated	focused	
guided	individualised	informed	instilled	instructed	
motivated	persuaded	simulated	stimulated	taught	
tested	trained	transmitted	tutored		

Technical Skills

adapted	applied	assembled	built	calculated	
computed	conserved	constructed	converted	debugged	
designed	determined	developed	engineered	fabricated	
fortified	installed	maintained	operated	overhauled	
printed	programmed	rectified	regulated	remodelled	
repaired	replaced	restored	solved	specialised	
standardised	studied	upgraded	utilised		

Communication/People Skills

addressed	advertised	arbitrated	arranged	articulated	authored
clarified	collaborated	communicated	composed	condensed	conferred
consulted	contacted	conveyed	convinced	corresponded	debated
defined	developed	directed	discussed	drafted	edited
elicited	enlisted	explained	expressed	formulated	furnished
incorporated	influenced	interacted	interpreted	interviewed	involved
joined	judged	lectured	listened	marketed	mediated
moderated	negotiated	observed	outlined	participated	persuaded
presented	promoted	proposed	publicised	reconciled	recruited
referred	reinforced	reported	resolved	responded	solicited
specified	spoke	suggested	summarised	synthesised	translated
wrote					

Management/Leadership Skills

administered	analysed	appointed	approved	assigned	attained
authorised	chaired	considered	consolidated	contracted	controlled
converted	Co-ordinated	decided	delegated	developed	directed
eliminated	emphasised	enforced	enhanced	established	executed
generated	handled	headed	hired	hosted	improved
incorporated	increased	initiated	inspected	instituted	led
managed	merged	motivated	navigated	organised	originated
overhauled	oversaw	planned	presided	prioritised	Produced
recommended	re-organised	replaced	restored	reviewed	scheduled
secured	selected	streamlined	strengthened	supervised	terminated

Covering letters

Your first point of contact with your potential employer will probably be your covering letter, so it's important to include the right information.

- Who you are and what you're applying for
- What relevant skills, experience and education you have
- Why you want to work in this particular sector
- Why you are applying to this particular organisation

Your aim is to get the employer to read your CV and, hopefully, invite you for interview. It's important that you highlight the relevant points covered in your CV, without repeating them word-for-word. Try using the following guidelines and template.

Paragraph 1

- Why are you writing? 'I am writing in response to your advertisement in the Daily News for the position of trainee marketing assistant'.
- Who are you? 'I will be completing my business and management degree in June, and am very keen to establish a career in marketing'.
- Refer to your CV if it's enclosed. 'Accordingly, please find enclosed my CV for your consideration'

Paragraph 2

- Identify, by drawing the reader's attention back to your CV, why the company should be interested in you? 'As you can see from my CV, I
- Pick out several of the qualities the employer is asking for. What evidence can you give of these? But remember, you are only highlighting this information as it should all be included in your CV

Paragraph 3

- Why you want the job? What attracts you to this particular company? Demonstrate that you've researched their activities.
- What attracts you to this particular job? Look carefully at the job description and pick out what makes this job especially appealing to you.
- Why do you want to work in this sector? You could refer to relevant experience or study. Does the job make use of your strengths? Is it particularly varied or challenging?

Paragraph 4

- Final paragraph: conclusion. This section could also be used to disclose personal information such as a disability if relevant or appropriate.
- Be positive. Thank the company for considering your application and say you look forward to hearing from them.

- Finally, proof read your letter carefully and present it well. If you are sending your covering letter as an e-mail, a formal style is still important, although you can leave out the addresses at the top of the page. The template on the following page provides an example of how you might organise your letter.

TOP TIPS

- Address your letter to a named individual. If you're not sure who the best person to contact is, telephone the company and ask.
- Keep your letter to one side of A4.
- Use a formal business template, showing both your address and the name and address of the recipient.
- Use 'Yours sincerely' to sign off. Only use 'Yours faithfully' if you have addressed the letter 'Dear Sir/Madam'

James Young
20 Bow Road
London
E1 2JJ

27 June 2008

Ms K Sadler
Recruitment Partner
Morley & Layman
2-4 St John's Street
Liverpool
L21 2BT

Dear Ms Sadler

With reference to your advertisement in *Prospects Today* dated June 2008, I would like to apply for the position of (*job title*). This is my final year as a student at the University of Portsmouth and I expect to gain a 2.1 degree in XXXXXX.

You will see from the enclosed CV that.....

I am particularly interested in working for your organisation or I am particularly interested in this post because

Thank you for considering my application and I look forward to hearing from you.....

Yours sincerely

James Young

Enc

Application Forms

Many employers ask graduates to apply by completing a company application form. Such an approach allows employers to compare applicants on a like-with-like basis. The use of an application form often indicates a more scientific and transparent approach to recruitment on the part of the employer. Very often there will be a person specification and notes provided that will assist with the completion of the form. It is worth bearing in mind that with application forms, you need to meet criteria that have been defined by the employer.

Application forms usually cover three distinct areas of information:

1. Education, employment/work experience

Remember to list employment/work experience in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent first), when describing responsibilities or achievements try to relate these to the requirements of the job you are applying for.

2. Competence/personal statement questions

What are competence questions? These are questions that require applicants to think about past experiences and analyse the role they played.

A typical example would be:

'Describe a time when you worked in a team to achieve a specific goal. What role did you play in achieving the goal? In retrospect, might have you done anything differently?'

This is a question about teamwork skills and when responding to such a question it is important to firstly, answer all parts of the question and secondly, **focus on the role you played** rather on what the whole team did. You may find the information sheet '**Dealing with competency questions – how to evidence your skills**' useful.

Personal statement questions

These questions tend to be less structured than competency questions but still require the same kind of information and analysis. Some examples include:

Provide evidence of your suitability for appointment by demonstrating how you meet the stated requirements, giving examples of how and where your knowledge, skills and experience were gained.

One approach to this type of question would be to go through the person specification highlighting the key requirements of the job and then identifying examples from your experience of how you can match against these requirements. You can draw on all areas of your life so long as you relate the experience to the requirements of the job. Your answer would need to be both descriptive yet analytical i.e. describe the event but also demonstrate the skill you developed.

'Briefly describe your reasons for wanting to apply for this course giving the relevance of your previous education and experience'

An effective response to such a question would include:

- Reasons for choosing the course
- Knowledge of and interest in the subject area
- Relevant work experience
- Particular aspects of your current studies that might be relevant
- Your careers aspirations/goals

As with the other questions it is important that all your statements should be supported with appropriate evidence – **declaring an interest in a subject does not demonstrate why you are interested in it.**

3. Administrative details such as contact details for references, medical questionnaires and ethnic monitoring information

Usually two references are required, one academic and one work-related or a character referee if allowed. Include the full contact details for your referees and always seek permission first. It is a good idea to keep your referees up-to-date with your career plans and aspirations – this will probably result in them being available to provide a more effective reference for you.

Tips for successful applications:

- **Take a photocopy of your completed form (very useful for interview preparation)**
- **Use Spell Check**
- **Check word counts, some questions will give limits that must not be exceeded**
- **Be positive with your responses**
- **Don't forget to sign it if requested to do so**

Dealing with competency questions - how to evidence your skills

Employers use competency questions to ensure that they recruit candidates with appropriate behaviours and skills for their organisation. The word competence has been defined by the British Retail Consortium as being ‘*a demonstrable and required set of behaviours which can be sustained and/or repeated consistently*’. As a result competence questions require candidates to think about past experiences and analyse the role they played. If a person specification has been provided use this to identify the skills you need for the job. Think about when you have used each of these skills; remember all your experiences count and these include work, academic and extra curricular experiences. You will need to be specific and give the employer real evidence by providing examples that you possess the skills they are asking for. The grid below demonstrates how skills are developed during work, education and extra-curricular activities.

Skill	Work Experience	Education	Interests
Communication	Call Centre – listening, customer service and telephone skills	Contributing to discussions during seminars	
Team work		University - working as part of a team to complete a group project	Sports team – interacting with other players
Problem solving / Initiative		Course Rep - resolving complex issues and negotiating between staff and students	Hobbies - organising fundraising events for a local charity
Leadership	Bar work - supervising team whilst working in a bar.	University – led a successful project team during my final year	