



# University of Leicester

## Top tips for preparing your CV

Dr. Sarah Davies

Department of Geology Careers Tutor





**University of  
Leicester**

**If using slides or images from this presentation:  
please acknowledge  
Sarah Davies  
and the  
Department of Geology  
at the University of Leicester.**

**THE UNIVERSITY  
OF THE YEAR 2008/9**

# Logistics - *What types of CV are there?*

## 1. Chronological / Academic CV

emphasises knowledge and academic achievement

## 2. Skills-based CV

focus: demonstrating evidence of relevant skills  
(geological and transferable)

Always target your CV to the company and post

# Creating the right impression: Common Problems

- Poor spelling and typographic errors
- Providing no evidence for statements
- Including more on interests than on academic achievements or employability skills
- Not including language skills/fluency levels
- Lists .....

# Opening statements

*Who you are*

I am a second-year MGeol student at the University of Leicester and interested in work placements involving environmental protection and monitoring. In particular I would like to deal with contaminated land evaluation, contamination prevention and land remediation.

*Which University*

*Knowledge about job*

*What you are seeking*



# Education details

*Reverse chronological order is standard*

## Education

2003-present University of Leicester,  
BSc Geology with a one-year industrial placement.  
Graduating July 2007. Expected degree class: 2.1.  
Second-year results: 66%

2001-2003 Summer Lane College, Northampton  
A-Levels: Geology (B), Mathematics (B), Chemistry (C) &  
General Studies (C)

1996-2001 Tudor School, Corby  
10 GCSEs: achieved 2A\*, 5A, 2B, 1C grades including  
Mathematics (A), English (A\*) and Spanish (B)

# Using the right language

## 10 Best:

Achievement, active, developed, evidence, experience, impact, individual, involved, planning, transferable skills

## 10 Worst:

Always, awful, bad, fault, hate, mistake, never, nothing, panic, problems

Source: BBC Website

# Frequently Asked Questions:

*What font should I use?*

- A clear and unfussy font. *Don't use character fonts.*
- Never mix fonts.
- Do not be tempted to reduce the font size too much.



# Frequently Asked Questions

*Should I use a different font for email & hard copy?*

- **Emailing your CV?** Use a sans serif font, such as Arial or Helvetica.
- **Printing your CV?** On the printed page a serif font, such as Times or Times New Roman, is easier to read.

# Frequently Asked Questions

*My CV is longer than two pages - is that alright?*

- That depends....
- For most advertised posts requesting CV, a **2-page CV** is required.
- Use a covering letter to highlight your key selling points

# Frequently Asked Questions

*When is a >2-page CV acceptable?*

- For a PhD project applications, longer CVs will be tolerated but make sure all information is pertinent.
- Academics are most interested in grades, academic prizes, membership of learned societies - not your interests unless directly related to the PhD project

# What are Employability Skills?

## *Competencies*

- 1. Motivation and Enthusiasm**
- 2. Teamworking**
- 3. Communication**
- 4. Flexibility and adaptability**
- 5. Initiative and proactivity**

Sarah Caven, MGeol Geology, Western Canada

# 1. Motivation and Enthusiasm

*Ways to demonstrate this.*

- Care with covering letter and CV
- Evidence of research about the company, job or PhD topic
- In-depth knowledge of post or project
- Experience which demonstrates motivation

## Cautions: exaggeration

Do not be tempted to exaggerate on your CV

### *Common statement*

I regularly attend geological talks organised by the student society.

### *Potential question at interview*

Tell us about some of the key findings from a recent lecture you attended.

## 2. Teamworking

- Essential to demonstrate the ability to work with others
- Credentials will require reference to experience during joint projects at University, part-time jobs, work experience, sports or societies



## 2. Teamworking - a statement

“I am comfortable working in a team or independently.”





## 2. Teamworking - the evidence

### *Role*

As a committee member of the department's student geological society, I was responsible for organizing the social events, including the annual dinner, working closely with the president and publicity secretary.

### *Activity*

### *Team members*



### 3. Communication

- Can you give confident presentations?
- Can you write clearly and concisely?
- Have you had experience of designing other types of communication? e.g. web development, poster production
- Do you have the ability to network and make contacts?



## 4. Flexibility and Adaptability

- Can you cope with a role that alters from day to day?
- Can you respond positively to change?
- Can you be proactive: predict new developments and decide on a response?



**Mining  
geologist**



**Research  
Fellow**



**Sedimentary  
geologist**



**Exploration  
geologist**



**County Council  
Waste Management**

## 4. Flexibility & Adaptability



**“My job involves planning and organising offshore geotechnical investigation projects; supervising and coordinating geotechnical work on jackup pontoons and company drill ship.**

**I am also involved in data acquisition, project management, engineering analysis and final reporting.”**

**Elisa Davis, MGeol 2005**

**Geotechnical Engineer and Team Leader**

**Horizon Geotechnical Company, UAE**

## 5. Initiative and Proactivity

- Decide what needs doing and get on with it
- Act effectively without specific instructions from management
- Need examples of having taken action



# Applying for a Geoscience Job or Placement?

- 1. Do not forget geological skills.**
- 2. Don't list everything - select geological experiences or modules of most interest to a given employer.**
- 3. Make it easy for an employer to link you and your skills to the job they are offering.**

## When to use a skills-based CV.....

### *Placement students will be expected to have:*

- Ability to work as part of a team and on own initiative
- Good communication skills
- Basic level of computer competency; knowledge of Microsoft office an advantage
- Environmental awareness
- Some specific knowledge relevant to post

*Person specification*

## Nicola James, BSc Geology 2005



“I hadn’t realised how useful skills that I had learnt at university were.

At interviews, you are asked to give **specific examples** of when you have used certain computer programs, when you showed good organisational skills, how you worked in group situations etc.

It is good to think about tasks completed at university and how they can be related to a work place, as you will certainly be asked this at interview.”



## Academic CV - Research/Field-based Projects:

*Include a longer synopsis: maximum one page*

- provides prospective supervisors and selection panels with more information about your specific skills
- demonstrates that you can summarise your project
- proves that you understand the significance and wider context of your results

## All CVs - Additional Information

- Mention a full driving licence if you have one
- Relevant qualifications: up-to-date First Aid Certificates
- Don't forget academic prizes and awards
- Language skills with fluency levels
- **Short** list of interests

## Who should I use as my referees?

- An academic who knows your recent work and can comment on your strengths in detail, e.g. tutor, project supervisor, field-based project advisor.
- Use a recent employer to comment on extra-curricular responsibility
- For PhD applications 2 or 3 academic references may be required

# ALWAYS .....

- ask your referees before you include their contact details on your CV or application form.
- provide your referees with a full and up-to-date CV or a copy of the completed application form and the job ad.

## Covering letters: should always accompany a CV

*What information should I include?*

- What you are applying for and where you heard about the post.
- Who you are, where you are studying and what degree you are reading.
- Use as a 'highlighter' for your CV. Expand on some areas that are highly relevant to your application.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

# In Summary

1. Keep an extended CV and **up-date regularly**. Abstract information to create **tailored CVs or complete specific sections** on application forms.
2. Consider the **evidence** you can provide for your **experience** of all skills (transferable & geological).
3. Choose your **referees** with care and **keep them informed** of your applications and achievements.
4. Use the covering letter to **highlight** experience/skills and **demonstrate knowledge** of company.
5. **Ask a friend to read your CV** and letter for spelling errors and clarity of text.