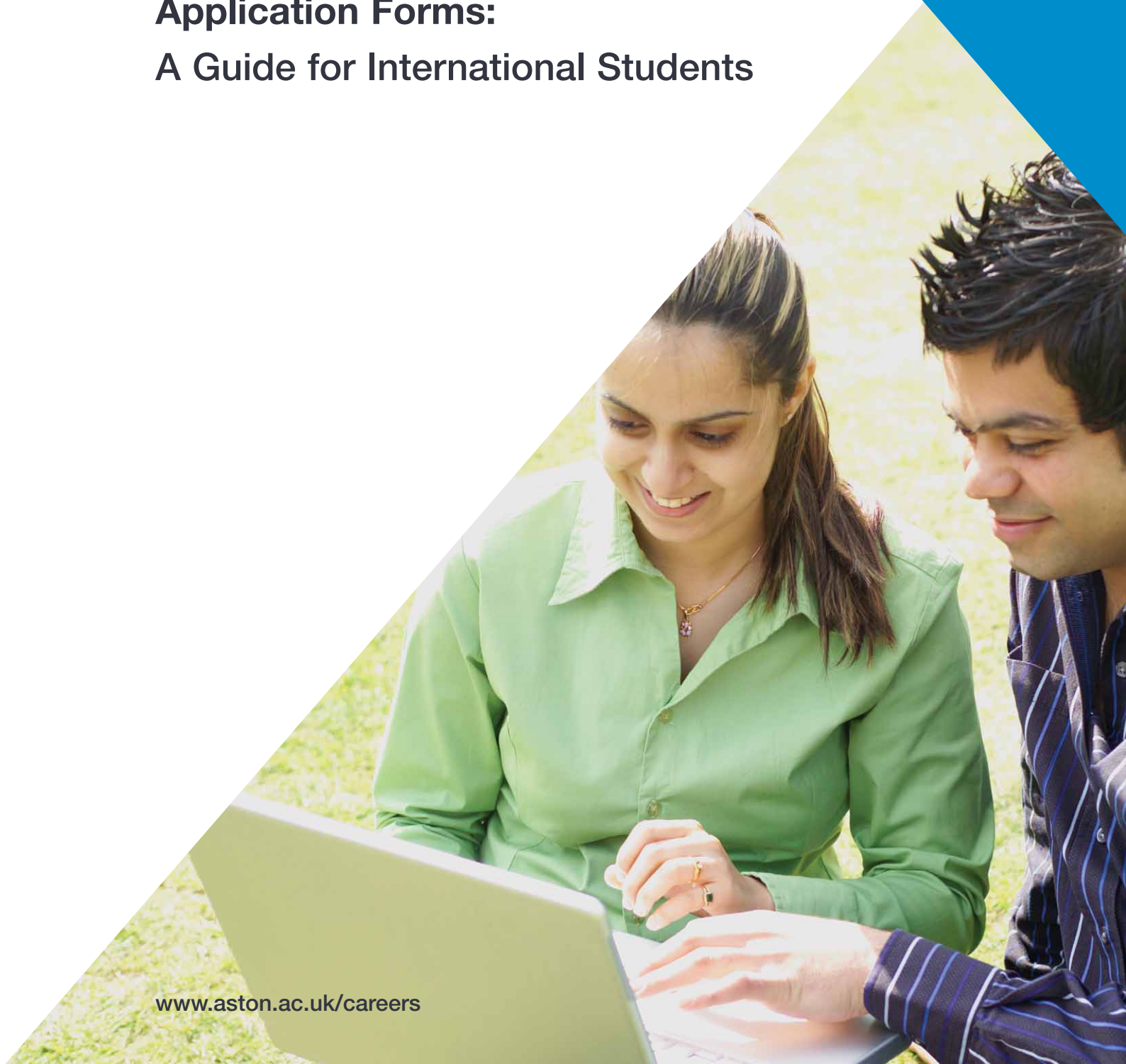
Aston University
Birmingham

Aston University Careers & Employability Centre

CVs, Covering Letters and Application Forms:

A Guide for International Students



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Contents

1 Getting started 4

2 What do employers look for? 5

3 Preparing your CV 6

3.1 Format and presentation 6
3.2 Organise the content 7
3.3 Overseas qualifications 7
3.4 Tackling work permit issues 8
3.5 Demonstrate relevant skills, competencies and experience 10
3.6 Example CVs 11
3.7 Further help with CVs 23

4 Writing covering letters 25

4.1 Content and layout 25
4.2 Cover letter checklist 26
4.3 Example covering letters 26
4.4 Further help with covering letters 31

5 Completing application forms 33

5.1 Analysing job adverts 33
5.2 Answering competency questions: CARS structure 34
5.3 Example answers 35
5.4 Application form checklist 37
5.5 Further help with application forms 38

1 Getting started

Purpose of this Guide

This guide is intended to help you, as an international student at Aston University, to:

- Design an effective and professional CV.
- Create persuasive covering letters.
- Complete application forms with interesting and convincing answers.

All through this booklet you will find useful tips and techniques to guide you through the process of developing self-marketing skills. There are multiple examples of CVs, covering letters and application form answers – use them to stimulate ideas for your own CV.

Guidelines, not templates

There are no rules to creating a great CV, just a set of guidelines to help you design a professional yet unique document. There are certain conventions used in the UK 'approach' to CV design that this document will help you to understand.

The CV and covering letter examples illustrate the techniques that will help you to highlight what you have to offer.

None of these CVs or covering letter examples will be perfect for you, because you have a unique set of skills and experience to offer an employer. You should design your own unique CV so that you stand out from the crowd.

TOP TIP 1: CUSTOMISE YOUR CV

Don't just copy the example CVs – build your own unique CV tailored to your own skills and experience, customized to appeal to a specific employer – this will be much more impressive and successful.

Employers will quickly recognise when you have based your CV or covering letter on a standardised template – and they will not be impressed!

In addition, students at different stages will need to describe their skills in slightly different ways; for instance, if you are:

- An undergraduate or recent postgraduate hoping to gain experience, you will need to emphasise the *transferable skills* you have gained from your education.

- An MBA or experienced postgraduate hoping to change direction, you will need to highlight the *relevance of your experience* to your new careers goal.

So, look for good ideas in the examples to use in your own CV and remember to **customise your CV to each job or company** – they are all looking for something different, so your CV should change every time you send it out.

2 What do employers look for?

Attributes that employers seek in their ideal candidate are listed below:

Teamwork skills	Flexibility
Communication skills (oral)	Initiative
Communication skills (written)	Ability to summarise key issues
Commitment	Logical argument
Dependability	Numerical ability
Self-motivation	Commercial awareness
Co-operation	Time management
Drive / Energy	Self-confidence
Self-management	Ability to influence others
Desire to achieve	Creative thinking
Problem-solving ability	Willingness to learn
Analytical ability	

Different employers and occupations will require different combinations of these skills and abilities. In order to ensure that your CV is tailored to meeting the needs of the employer, the first thing you need to do is research:

- What does the company do?
- What does the job involve?
- What skills / competencies / experience are needed?

Then, **match your skills / competencies and experience to those required** and **provide evidence** – give examples of when you have demonstrated the required skills / competencies or gained the required experience.

TOP TIP 2: PROVIDE EVIDENCE

Employers want you to demonstrate that you have the skills, qualities and attributes they are looking for – provide evidence through examples from education, employment, activities, voluntary work and travel.

You need to think about how you meet these criteria at every stage of the job-hunting process and demonstrate it in your CV, your covering letters, your application forms and your interview answers.

More information about competencies and employability skills can be found on the Careers website www.aston.ac.uk/careers – in the A to Z search for:

- Competencies Unravelled (pdf)
- Employability Checklist (pdf)
- **Career planning**: use our “Career Management Online programme to identify your current skill set and understand the skills you need to develop whilst at Aston.

3 Preparing your CV

3.1 Format and presentation

The purpose of the CV is to obtain an interview. Therefore, employers expect you to give careful thought to presentation – your CV must present an image of professionalism and clarity.

Length: One page or two?

You will find examples of both one and two page CVs in this document. There is no set rule in the UK – if a single page cannot do justice to your experience, then try using two pages, but ensure the most relevant and important information on the first page.

When recruiting **recent graduates**, employers often expect to see examples of what you have achieved, so the typical length for CVs at this level is two full sides of A4. The challenge is to communicate a strong profile of relevant, well-evidenced capabilities in a CV that can still be scanned quickly. Many **investment banks** though prefer to receive a one page CV.

Some **MBA students and experienced professionals** prefer to try to meet the challenge of creating a one page US-style résumé which both manages to tell its story in one page and provides strong evidence of abilities and achievements.

If you have **very significant experience** or are applying for an **academic or research post**, aim to create a two to four page CV and make use of appendices (e.g. research outline, summary of publications and conference presentations).

Font

- Be clear: try to use a relatively standard font (e.g. Arial, Times New Roman, Tahoma) that will print clearly, photocopy well and be read by different computer systems and software packages.
- Experiment with different looks, but try to use font size 11 or 12 – if it is too small the employer may not be able to read it properly. Size 10 font is acceptable if you are using Arial and space is tight.
- Avoid the use of colour – you have no guarantee of how it will look when it is printed out.
- Be consistent: use the same font for your CV and covering letter.

TOP TIP 3: NO MISTAKES!

Spelling and grammatical errors are absolutely unacceptable in CVs, covering letters and application forms. Check everything twice then ask someone else to check it again.

Language, spelling and grammar

- Mistakes are unacceptable.
- Ensure UK not US English – do not rely on your word processing package to spot errors.
- Proofread it twice and get someone else to check it too.

Layout

- Make sure it looks attractive, orderly and well-structured.
- If printing: A4 white paper, 90g-100g is preferable.
- Print out two page CVs on two separate sheets and staple them together.
- Number your pages: the ‘Page 1 of 2’ format is helpful.

3.2 Organise the content

Look at the example CVs – although they all look different, they share certain elements:

- **Use your name as the heading** – do not use 'Curriculum Vitae'; it's old-fashioned.
- **Keep your personal details simple** – your address, telephone and mobile numbers and email address at a minimum.
- As a matter of courtesy, if your **gender** is not immediately apparent from your name, you may wish to indicate this after your signature on your covering letter (e.g. Ms Robin Smith).
- You may wish to include your **nationality**, particularly if the job requires thorough knowledge of a particular culture or language.
- In the education and employment sections, **start with the most recent first and work backwards**. Therefore, if the employer reads only one thing, they have read the most relevant information.
- If your most relevant employment experience (e.g. a placement or an internship) is not the most recent, you may wish to split your experience into two sections, "Relevant Employment Experience" and "Other Employment Experience" so that the most relevant experience is the one which the employer reads first
- Describe your employment experience as **Employment** or **Professional Experience** – in the UK 'work experience' refers to short periods of usually unpaid work carried out to gain initial experience.

TOP TIP 4: REVERSE CHRONOLOGY

Make sure the most relevant and important information is read first.

In the education and employment sections, start with your most recent qualification / job and work backwards.

3.3 Overseas qualifications

Multinational employers often understand different education systems from around the world. However, to help UK employers understand your overseas qualifications; you may need to describe your achievements as 'equivalent to ...' those in the UK.

Information about the equivalence of qualifications is available from www.naric.org.uk

Briefly describe your education – include only the main subjects you have studied (especially if they are relevant to the job application) and an indication of the result in percentage terms:

Figure 1:

Degree in Economics, Jiao Tong University, Shanghai
Strong knowledge of Macro and Micro Economics, plus International Trade and International Finance. Average result above 80%.

Figure 2:

Guangzhou High School, Shanghai
Studied 10 major subjects including Mathematics and English. Equivalent to A Grades at A Level.

3.4 Tackling work permit issues

You might waste a lot of time applying for jobs unless you find out about your work permit position and how this affects the way in which you present your application.

Become an expert on your own eligibility to seek work by making use of the following websites:

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA): www.ukcisa.org.uk
Home Office, UK Border Agency: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk

The current legislation comprises;
A. Tier 1 of the points based immigration system for Highly Skilled Migrants. Under Tier 1 you do not need to have found a job and neither do you need to have a licensed sponsor.

Tier 1 Post Study Work. **All international graduates from Aston University are entitled to work in the UK for two years following completion of their studies provided you can obtain 95 points. During the two years you may switch into either Tier 1 General or into Tier 2 as soon as you have sufficient points.**

Tier 1 General. Graduates with a Master's or a Phd can apply for Tier 1 General as soon as they have 95 points. Unless you are a young PhD student you are likely to find you need to first apply for Tier 1 Post Study Work and then switch into Tier 1 General, provided you have earned in excess of £24,000 gross in a 12 month period.

B. Tier 2 of the points based immigration system for Skilled Migrants. Some employers, depending on the jobs you are applying for, might be prepared to act as your Tier 2 sponsor. This means you can apply for a Tier 2 work permit providing you can obtain 70 points. You should be clear that achieving this difficult goal typically means both competing successfully for highly sought-after work and finding an employer willing to sponsor you. Sponsorship, in this connection, means that the employer has a Tier 2 licence to be your sponsor. They will be responsible for reporting any transgressions (such as unauthorised absence from work) to the UK Border Agency.

Never assume that the employers you approach will be well informed about work permit issues. Aston University Careers Service has produced a guide for employers "Employing International Students". If you would like a copy of this guide to show or send to a prospective employer, please ask at the Careers Centre or see the Careers Service website for an electronic copy.

If you are going to need a work permit in order to work in the UK (or elsewhere), it is important to make this clear on your CV from the start, but to do so in a way that emphasises your eligibility:

Figure 3: Eligible to seek work

MONIKA NAGY
Flat A Dalton Tower, Aston University, Birmingham B4 7ET

Telephone: 0121 123 4567
Email: nagym@aston.ac.uk

Nationality: Hungarian
Work eligibility: Fully eligible to seek work in UK.

Figure 4: Requires a work permit

HENRIQUE COURY
106 Acacia Road, Birmingham B55 1AB
Email: couryhl@aston.ac.uk
Telephone: 0121 123 4567
Nationality: Brazilian
Work eligibility: Eligible to work in the UK for a year after completion of my studies and fully mobile internationally.

Getting advice

In seeking advice on issues about applying for work in the UK, you should be aware that the people you approach within Aston University can only give you advice within certain boundaries. This is because there are laws which govern immigration and rules which are designed to ensure that individuals do not advise outside their competence. At Aston University, some advisers will only be able to ‘sign post’ (i.e. point you in the direction of relevant information). Others are able to give you basic immigration advice.

3.5 Demonstrate relevant skills, competencies and experience

The aim of your CV is to represent what you have achieved in the most persuasive way possible, so that you are invited to interview. You need to demonstrate clearly how your skills, competencies and experience meet the employer's requirements.

When explaining your previous employment experience, keep it brief. There is no need to describe in detail what the company does. Using bullet points can be a powerful way to communicate this information clearly. However, many people simply describe what they did:

Figure 5: Weak bullet point

Jan – Sep 2008 ACE Market Research, London

- Conducting market research analysis with key account holders

Instead, more compelling and relevant information should be presented:

Figure 6: Persuasive bullet points

Jan – Sep 2008 ACE Market Research, London

- Responsible for a team of twenty business analysts
- Conducted a strategic review of business processes
- Led the company through the demands of application for ISO9000
- Initiated a review of internal procedures and reduced costs by 15%

The following techniques will help you write persuasive bullets:

1. **Briefly describe what you were employed to do (your key responsibility):** Describe the size of your contribution (see the first bullet in Fig.6) – this helps the recruiter to assess your seniority.
2. **Use the first person and past tense to emphasise a completed achievement or contribution:** There is no need to write a full grammatically correct sentence – it is as if there is a hidden 'I' at the beginning of the sentence (look at the second bullet).
3. **Use active verbs which emphasise your initiative to open the bullet point:**

Achieved	Implemented	Devised	Improved
Prepared	Organised	Co-ordinated	Analysed
Provided	Investigated	Evaluated	Managed
Negotiated	Demonstrated	Developed	Lead
Succeeded in ...	Arranged	Presented	Persuaded

4. **Use indicators of success to highlight your achievement against relevant performance measures:** Where possible, quantify sales targets, cost reductions, profit levels; or, use indicators like 'on time' and 'on budget'.
5. **Use evidence from all parts of your life:** Describe relevant achievements and skills from your interests and activities outside of work and study.

3.6 Example CVs

CV 1: Chronological CV for MSc Student or Recent Graduate with Experience

NAME

Term Address:
Home Address:
Telephone: Mobile: Email:
Nationality: Work Eligibility:

Education and Qualifications

Links educational knowledge to work potential

2008 – 2009 **MSc Finance & Investments**
Aston University, Birmingham

- The course provided an understanding of the main decision-making areas in finance and investments including: knowledge of market structures; an understanding of research tools and the dealing-room environment; competence in relevant mathematical and statistical techniques.
- Would be able to function as a trader in the markets or to work in fund and portfolio management.
- Completion of 20,000 word thesis resulted in detailed knowledge of the foreign exchange and international money markets, the investment industry and the principles of risk management.

2004- 2008 **BSc Economics with French – 2.1**
Named University, Barcelona, Spain

- Focused on Microeconomics, Macroeconomics and Econometrics, in addition to modules from a wide range of subjects including International Economics, Economic Development and Monetary Policy.
- Final year included an extended essay requiring individual research, interpretation and presentation. Worked effectively on own, set deadlines and managed time under pressure. Gained experience in organising work with other students researching similar topics.

2006 – 2007 **The Sorbonne, Paris, France**
Year abroad, studying Economics at the Licence level.

- Through living and studying in Paris, gained personal experience of the ideas, customs and arts of the French. As a result, became increasingly independent, self-confidence grew and developed strong communication skills.

1997 – 2004 **Bachillerato de Ciencias Sociales**
Named School, Barcelona, Spain

- 11 subjects studied including Economics, Mathematics, English, French.
- Achieved 72% - Equivalent to A Levels.

Explains qualifications in relation to UK system

Employment

Sep – Dec 2008 **Administrator**
Acacia Accountants Ltd, Birmingham, UK

- Worked part-time in the Corporate Client team, responsibilities included directing client queries to the relevant executive and updating client records on the proprietary database. Developed excellent telephone and communication skills.

Month and year only of employment dates required – no need to specify the day

Use an abbreviated address – city and country only

Summer 2008 **Administrator**
Top Shop plc, Birmingham, UK

- Responsible for providing central administrative support to senior management team. Role included organising meetings, itineraries and travel and accommodation arrangements. Personally responsible for variety of tasks and small projects (e.g. Christmas party for 120 staff), demanding flexibility and the competence to focus on a number of duties at the same time.

A clear job title is very important

Summer 2006 **Counsellor**
Camp America, New England, USA

- Camp Counsellor to 11-16 year olds during summer vacation, primarily responsible for the overall activity programme and care of a small group of children. Travelled independently across the US for four weeks.

Skills

IT Highly competent using MS Excel, SPSS and other statistical packages.

Good working knowledge of Microsoft Windows and Mac OSX environments, including Microsoft Office (Word, Access, PowerPoint), various email applications, data entry using proprietary databases, and using the Internet for research.

Languages Spanish: Native speaker

French: Fluent

Italian: Working knowledge

Clear description of degree of competence with each language

Interests and Activities

- Exercising. Attend aerobics classes and have recently participated in a Yoga course.
- Enjoy music, dance, film and the theatre, as well as reading 19th Century novels.
- During Summer 2004, travelled extensively around Europe via 'inter-rail', visiting France, Italy, Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

References

Academic and employment references can be made available upon request.

Or

References available on request.

CV2: MSc Student or Undergraduate with Substantial Experience

NAME

Term Address:

Mobile:
Email:

Nationality:

Work Eligibility:

Mention modules relevant to the job applying for

Education

2008 – 2009 **Aston University, Birmingham**
MSc Business Management

Modules: included Project Management and Management Consultancy.

Industry project: Analysed data from the Customer Services department of a large retail outlet; devised a more cost-effective process, complete with an enquiry tracking facility; investigated replacement software to implement new process; trialled two potential programmes and after discussions with senior management, subsequently chose one; advised on change management required for successful installation of new system.

2004- 2007 **Foshan University, China**
BSc (Hons) Business Information Technology (equivalent to UK 2.1)

Dissertation: Evaluated benefits of implementing recommended information system into a charity dealing with environmental projects. Developed excellent planning, project management and analytical skills, together with good time management to ensure the report was produced on time.

2002 – 2004 **Lao Ning International School, Shanghai, China**
International Baccalaureate 67.5%
Equivalent to A Level standard.

Employment Experience

2007 – 2008 **Arkis Department Store, China**
Customer Relations Adviser

- Advised customers on the selection of store cards.
- Achieved individual sales targets and contributed to 25% increase in customer store cards issued.
- Managed customer satisfaction survey and delivered presentation of findings to management resulting in introduction of automated store information points for customers.

2008 – 2009 **Student Volunteering Unit, Aston University**

Participated in an Age Concern project; provided relief support for local carers; organised several themed days at a local residential home; undertook small practical tasks such as form filling for individual residents within sheltered accommodation.

Include unpaid and voluntary work and describe in same way as paid work

Page 1 of 2

Good to include family business experience, as long as you state relevant skills developed

Summers 2001 - 2006 **International Shipping, China**
Administrative Assistant

- Provided accounting and office management support for family warehousing and shipping business.
- Demonstrated attention to detail, initiative, customer care and good technological skills.
- Devised series of interlinked Access databases and Excel spreadsheets to dramatically improve efficiency, record keeping and auditing.

Prizes / Awards Received

2007 Scholarship of £500 (equivalent) for the best performance on the first year of BSc course at Foshan University for 2002.

Languages

Fluent in both written and spoken Mandarin and English.
Basic understanding of Cantonese and Japanese.

IT Skills

Extensive experience using MS Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) in both Windows and OS environments; project management software and tools (MS Project, PERT and GANTT charts); and using SQL and Access to devise databases.

Interests and Activities

Committee Member of Aston International Students' Association – helped to organise and publicise the annual International Day.

World Cinema and books – participate in a reading group at Lake Arts Centre and organised several cinema visits for University friends to Chapter Arts Centre.

Enjoy swimming on a weekly basis and occasionally attend concerts at Birmingham Symphony Hall and shows in London theatres.

References

Available on request.

Don't just list these – indicate your level of involvement

Page 2 of 2

CV 3: MSc Student or Undergraduate with Substantial Experience

NAME

Term Address: Mobile:
Email:
Nationality: Work Eligibility:

Education

2007 - 2008 **Aston Business School, Birmingham** (AACSB and Equis accredited), **UK**
MSc Marketing Management – Exchange program with Rouen School of Management

- In-depth understanding of the various fields of marketing: strategy, research, consumer behaviour, communication, international marketing.
- Developed analytical skills through learning strategy concepts and application to case studies.
- Currently conducting dissertation research on strategies for successful global new product launch.

2004 - 2007 **Rouen School of Management** (Equis accredited), **France**
MSc in Management and BSc in Management
Equivalent overall academic score: 80%

- Detailed study of all business fields: marketing strategy, B2B marketing, marketing research, statistics, corporate finance, financial and management accounting, HR, organisational behaviour, corporate strategy, international finance, European law.
- Second year specialisation in communication strategy and tools.
- Special 'International Track' program throughout the second year where all courses were taught in English and with an international dimension.

2002 - 2004 **Preparatory School** for entrance into French management schools
Lavoisier School, Paris, France

- Subjects: mathematics, economic history, French, English, German and philosophy.
- Double objective of these schools: selecting the best candidates to enter business schools and developing capabilities required for future managers, which involved analysis, synthesis, rigorousness, time and work load management, communication and adaptability.

1999 - 2002 **Francisque Sarcey School, Dourdan, France**
Baccalaureate with Grade A
Equivalent to A Levels in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, French literature, philosophy, English and German.

Commercial Experience

2007 - 2008 **Matthew Boulton College, Birmingham, UK**
French AS-Level Visiting Teacher

- New course offered to students: defined course objectives, structure, content; devised appropriate learning materials and teaching methods.
- Improved communication and time management skills; developed motivation and enthusiasm of students.

2005 **Rumeur Publique, Paris France**
PR agency consultant internship – four months

- Contributed to the definition and implementation of press relations strategies for image development and product launch.
- Clients included: Unisys, BASF IT Services, BMC software and Ineum Consulting, part of the Deloitte & Touche group.
- Planned media strategies; organised press conferences; briefed clients; liaised with journalists and editorial staff; wrote and translated press releases, articles, press packs, seminar reports, speeches and conference invitations.
- Improved written and oral communication, organisation skills and team work.

2005 - 2007 **Voluntary work in a humanitarian association: Ass'Hum**
Communication Officer, Blood Donation Department

- Organised blood donation drives within the Rouen School of Management.
- Designed and implemented information campaigns directed at students.
- Initiated the organisation of a major city-wide event for platelets donation, in co-operation a major radio station.

2000 - 2002 **Voluntary work for Francisque Sarcey School**
Second-hand book sales

- Welcomed customers; provided guidance and information; co-ordinated book ordering and distribution; simple bookkeeping.

Specific Skills

Languages

- French: mother tongue
- English: fluent
  language certificate: TOEIC 980/990
- German: good working knowledge
  language certificate: ZMP 95.5/120
- Arabic: good oral knowledge

Computer skills

- Proficiency in MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint; using the Internet for research; email applications.
- Basic knowledge of HTML

Interests

- Discovery of new countries and cultures: one year exchange in England, numerous long stays in the United States and Egypt, trips to Spain, Italy, Germany and Brazil.
- Tennis and table tennis player for eight years.
- Member of an amateur choir.

References available on request.

CV4: Undergraduate with Considerable Experience

NAME
Address
Mobile Email
Nationality Work Eligibility

Professional Qualifications

Aston Business School, Birmingham, UK **Oct 05 – Jun 09**
BSc (Hons) Logistics: 2.1

- In-depth acquisition of both theoretical and practical knowledge across transport, supply chain and general business subjects.
- Strong emphasis on emerging IT capabilities.
- **Diploma in Logistics: The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport**
  Giving full membership and accreditation as Senior European Logistician.

Institute for Statistical Research, Named University, Ghana **Sep 03 – Jun 04**

Certificate in Data Management and Analysis
Certificate in Stores Management
Diploma in Stores Management and Inventory Control

International School, Ghana **Sep 98 – Jul 00**

- **A Levels:** Economics (B), Mathematics (B), French (C), General Paper (B)
- **GCSE O Levels:** 7 subjects, including English Language (B) and Mathematics (A)

IT Skills

- Advanced knowledge of Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Access, Outlook, Map-point, Project, Net Meeting and Data Analyser.
- Knowledge of Management Information Systems / databases includes: Microstrategy, Gemini/Cockpit, Showbiz, SUN Business, ACCpac, Opera Pegasus, SAP and Paragon.

Professional Experience

ABC Logistics, Birmingham, UK **Aug 08 – Present**
Warehouse Operations & Merchandise Processing (PT) **& Dec 06 – Jul 07**

- Ensuring accurate receipt, put away and picking of merchandising through use of Warehouse Management System. This role was combined with study at University.

Johnson Logistics, Leeds, UK **Jul 07 – Sep 08**
Key roles in Supplier Management: Operations Support; European Transportation Delivery; Transportation Analysis
Integrated industrial placement, one year, full-time

Supplier Management

- Managed finished goods and proof of delivery, latency performance and other co-ordinated systems for issue resolution on behalf of all contracted carriers.
- Developed automated supplier performance score templates; carrier claims tracking database; logistics issue follow-up tool; closure reports (supply chain quality tool).

- Collated, analysed, reported and drove improvement in supplier performance; created a holistic measure of customer service, quality and 'on-time' delivery.
- Provided analytical support for mail room bidding project.

Operations Support (Brussels)

- Managed storage overnight reports. Monitored inventory at cross dock daily to ensure smooth cross flow and improved throughput.
- Provided analytical support to a large forecasting project.
- Managed business indicators for the customer service team.

European Transportation Team

- Instrumental in the roll-out of a new delivery performance management process across five key accounts.
- Weekly interface with corporate carriers, supplier managers and regional analysts.
- Production and presentation of management review material for quarterly business update meeting.

Transportation Analyst Group

- Key analytical support to senior management.
- Devised quarterly disruption analyses to influence customer inventory holdings.
- Key support analyst for production of Group freight budget circa $60m.
- Content expert for supplier management processes.

ACME Mineral Supplies, Ghana **Aug 02 – Sep 05**
Logistics Officer

- Aligned warehouse and purchasing processes with accounts procedures, resulting in significant efficiency improvement.
- Responsible for inventory control and process improvement projects:
  - variance analysis and reduction project
  - key customer inventory systems integration project.
- Key member of Accounts Package Implementation Project Team.

Other positions held for initial experience and to support my development:

Merchandise Control Administrator, Smith Ltd, Birmingham	**Sep – Oct 03**
Sales Assistant, Named Retail Co., Birmingham	**May – Sep 03**
Teaching Assistant (National Service), Primary School, Ghana	**Mar – Dec 99**
Supervisor, Named Bar & Restaurant, Ghana	**Jul 97 – Mar 99**

Achievements

Final Year Student Representative on Staff-Student Consultative Committee	2008 – 2009
Secretary to ACME Mineral Supplies Staff Association, Ghana	2004 – 2005
Awarded Academic Scholarships in 1st, 2nd and Final Year worth £4,500	2005 – 2009

Interests

Football, walking, gym training three times a week.

References available on request.

CV5: MSc Student with Emphasis on Skill Development

NAME

Term address
Home address
Mobile

Email
Nationality
Work Eligibility

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Hard working and motivated with a strong commitment to work in Investment. I plan to take Level 1 of the Certificate in Financial Analysis (CFA) in December 2005.

EDUCATION

Oct 08 – Jul 09: MSc Finance & Investment, Aston Business School, Birmingham, UK
This postgraduate course is known for its strengths within finance: the valuation of investments and investment regulation at corporate level. It has a practical and team focus and includes case studies to give understanding of financial exchange markets and to develop cross-cultural team-working.

Sep 05 – Jul 08: BA Finance & Accounting, Beijing University, China
A strong grounding in the functional areas of business; the development of presentation and management skills; specific topic within accounting such as financial accounting and management accounting; business law including contract and company law. This course provided extensive knowledge of the financial field by developing both financial management and market knowledge. Achieved 2.1

Sep 04 – Jun 05: Higher Education Foundation, Beijing, China
Modules included: Business Studies (Accounting, Marketing, Business Law), Economics, Mathematics, Sociology. Average grade: 75%

Sep 96 – Jul 03: Junior / High School, Beijing, China (Ranked in top 5 in China)
General studies at equivalent to GCSE and A Levels in UK.
Subjects: Mathematics, English, Chinese Literature, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography and Information Technology. Average grade: 68%

EMPLOYMENT

Jul 08– Sep 08: ABC Trading & Investment Management Ltd, Birmingham
Summer internship with company operating a wide-ranging trading and investment business.
Skill development:

- Led the team that developed a new investment product ahead of competition.
- Planned a strategy for product launch.
- Developed initiative and skills in independent thinking, leadership and team-working.

EMPLOYMENT CONTINUED...

Oct 07 – Oct 08: Financial Service Company, Beijing, China (part-time)
This company provides financial services for major technology providers.
Skill development:

- Gained experience of co-ordinating focus groups for customer services.
- Developed administrative abilities and customer-responsive phone skills.

Oct 06 – Jun 07: First Look eBusiness Services, Beijing, China (part-time)
An expanding eBusiness company which has recently merged with XYZ Services to become the market leading mail delivery company.
Skill development:

- Improved analytical skills and ability to organise multiple projects simultaneously.
- Became highly proficient in use of Excel.

Sep 03 – Jul 04: Mayflower Property Group, Beijing, China
Skill development:

- Developed bookkeeping and accounting skills.
- Learned administrative and time management skills.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Microsoft Office: Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint
- Extensive Internet usage for research
- Sage Line and E-Views (econometrics)
- Sage 50 (payroll)

LANGUAGES

- Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin): native speaker
- English: Fluent
- French: Fluent
- Japanese: Basic conversational level

INTERESTS

Tennis: Beijing University Club President, 2006-2007
Fashion: As a member of the Charitable Fundraising Committee, helped to successfully host a high-profile fashion careers fair with £2,000 sponsorship from national firms.
Orienteering: Regularly participate in weekend orienteering in Shropshire; recently won a competition by more than 30 minutes.
School Board Representative: Elected as postgraduate member at Aston Business School and contributed regularly to scheduled meetings, representing fellow students.

REFERENCES

Available on request.

CV 6: Skills-based CV for Recent Graduate with Limited Experience

Unfortunately, the skills are rather general and she fails to give evidence of specific achievements … Although the layout is good, this CV would be significantly improved with more evidence and more tailoring to a specific job or role.

N A M E

Address

Telephone | Email | Nationality

Communication

- Good communication skills gained from giving presentations at seminars, issuing clear and concise instructions to suppliers, chairing meetings and dealing with customers tactfully and diplomatically.
- Advised and instructed customers at Sports Retail and counselling teenagers at summer camp.
- Worked on team projects during degree course and was involved in different roles which have developed negotiation and persuasion skills.

Teamwork

- Successful course work was dependent upon participation and motivation of syndicated project groups.
- Experience of working in a team-based culture involved planning, organisation, co-ordination and commitment.

Problem Solving

- Development of strong analytic and diagnostic skills as part of degree course.
- Running the office at Sports Retail developed ability to find solutions to customer problems in a calm and efficient manner.

Languages

- Swedish – native speaker
- Fluent French
- Fluent German developed through one year's study at University Name, Germany.

Computing

- Good working knowledge of Microsoft Office including Word, Excel and PowerPoint, and the use of the Internet for research.

2006 – 2009 *Aston University, Birmingham*	**BA (Hons) French with German (2.i)** Included one year study in Germany
1997 – 2006 *Name & location of School*	**International Baccalaureate** 10 subjects studied including French, English, European History Equivalent to 4 'A' grades at A Level
2007 – 2008 *Sports Retail, Birmingham*	**Shop Assistant and Acting Shop Manager** during summer vacations.
July – Sept 2006 *Camp America, Washington*	**Camp Counsellor** to 11-19 year-olds during summer vacation.

References available on request.

CV7: MBA Student

Note: Including a Career Summary is more appropriate for someone with substantial work experience.

NAME

CAREER SUMMARY

A successful senior manager and director with a proven record of business achievement in both public and private organisations. Profit oriented and customer-focused with strong business development, communication and team building skills.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ABC Textiles
Delhi, India
Managing Director
2003 – 2008

- Full profit and loss responsibility for the £8 million business.
- Restructured this family textiles business, improved gross profit margins by 12%, reduced costs by 5% and significantly reduced pre-tax losses.
- Introduced basic business disciplines including strategy formulation, budgeting and management reporting.
- Prepared the business for sale to a trade competitor.

XYZ Distribution
Bangalore, India
Managing Director
2000 – 2003

- Part of the XXXX Group. Appointed MD shortly after the company was acquired by the Group.
- Successfully integrated the business into the Group within six months.
- Full profit and loss responsibility as one of a team of five Directors.
- Responsible for strategic planning and business development in line with Group objectives.
- Achieved pre-tax profit levels ahead of Group expectations.

Number One Distribution
Bangalore, India
Sales Director
1998 – 2000

- Responsible for the sales and marketing of this multi-site £30 million business which was part of XXXX Corporation.
- Formulated and implemented sales policies, sales force management and new product development.
- Developed strong relationships up to and including Board level with key customers and suppliers.
- Worked closely with a team of senior managers in a highly competitive and developing market.

EDUCATION

2008 – 2009 **Masters in Business Administration**, Aston Business School, Birmingham, UK

1999 – 2000 **Management Account for Executives**, Bangalore University, India

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Address
Mobile
Email
Interests: Swimming, hockey

3.7 Further help with CVs

Aston University Careers Centre offers an extensive programme of W**orkshops and Presentations** throughout the year designed to help you prepare a fantastic CV. Full details are available in the **Events** section our website www.aston.ac.uk/careers.

Information leaflets:

- CVs outlines the essential steps to preparing your CV
- CV Checklist will help you to confirm that all the main elements are in place before you see a Careers Adviser for a final check.
- Making Applications contains valuable tips and examples of chronological, skills-based, targeted and academic CVs.

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Books:

The Information Room contains both reference and lending books designed to help you craft a professional, effective CV. The list below is for guidance only - new books are added all the time, so visit the Information Room for the latest additions:

Lending Library	Reference Books
The Ultimate CV Book	Brilliant CV
The Perfect CV	CVs for High Flyers
How To Write A Great CV	High Impact CVs
Perfect CV	High Powered CVs
Brilliant CV	Readymade CVs
High Impact CVs	The Perfect CV
	The Right Way To Write Your Own CV
	The Ultimate CV Book
	Vault Guide to Resumes, Cover Letters & Interviewing
	Write a Great CV

Videos:

Looking Good on Paper is a 21 minute video that shows two undergraduates making written applications. It covers researching jobs and employers, matching what they can offer to what employers seek, writing appropriately and convincingly, and compiling interesting, attractive covering letters. To view this video, talk to a member of the Information Team in the Careers Centre.

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Notes

4 Writing covering letters

4.1 Content and layout

In the UK it is traditional to send a covering letter with your CV. The purpose of the covering letter is to introduce your CV, personalise your approach and encourage the employer to want to interview you. A covering letter can also explain why you are sending a speculative application.

Your covering letters should always be targeted at a specific employer and position – they should never read as a standard letter.

Your covering letters should:

- ✓ Look like a business letter.
- ✓ Be only one side of A4 in length.
- ✓ Contain a maximum of four or possibly five paragraphs.

The language you use should be positive and enthusiastic, professional and business-like. Use action verbs and focus on the skills you have to do the job.

Research both the role and the company before you write your covering letter. Use the Occupations files in the Careers Centre to find out what will be expected of you in the job. Explore the company's website; find out what new contracts they have secured or new initiatives they are undertaking. Read their recent press releases. Do a brief search of recent newspaper articles that mention them.

1. Job title or reference number

Any job title or reference number contained in the job advert should appear as a heading to the letter after Dear ... and before the main body of the letter.

2. Opening paragraph

The opening paragraph refers to the specific job you are applying for and where you saw it advertised.

3. Middle paragraphs

The middle paragraphs should introduce you and make the case for employing you. To do this, you should highlight your relevant experience, skills and educational background. Put the points which are most important to this job first.

DO NOT:

- ✗ Repeat the content of your CV.
- ✗ Write bland statements that could apply to any employer.
- ✗ Make very obvious statements such as informing them of the number of offices or employees they have worldwide.

Ensure that your middle paragraphs answer these two questions:

- Why are you the ideal candidate for this job?
- Why are you interested in this job and this employer?

4. Closing paragraphs

End your letter in an enthusiastic way and be clear about how you can be contacted. Make sure you sign your letter.

Email applications

In theory, a CV always requires a covering letter. However, if you are applying by email, your covering letter may become separated from your CV, or it may not be regarded as relevant, so the recruiter may rely on the CV alone.

Therefore, design your CV so that it can be used with or without the associated covering letter. This means putting less information in the covering letter and ensuring that your CV communicates your motivation for the specific job and the expertise you have in a very direct way.

When applying by email, you can either treat the email message itself as your covering letter and attach your CV, or attach both your covering letter and CV to the email message.

4.2 Cover letter checklist

1. Read the advert or job description and person specification.
2. Highlight the key requirements.
3. Construct some sentences to use.
4. Type a rough draft.
5. Re-draft the letter until it sounds right. Try reading it out loud to check the flow of words and the language you have used.
6. Avoid using “I am ...” or “I ...” too often. Start sentences in different ways, e.g. “My people skills were developed by ...”
7. Look closely at what you have written and try to say it in fewer words.
8. Check for consistency with your CV – for style and positive words.
9. Ask an English native speaker or a Careers Adviser to check it.
10. Explain any gaps in time periods carefully using positive language. If you want to mention any particular circumstances, such as disability, take advice from a Careers Adviser or from websites such as prospects.ac.uk or skill.org.uk

4.3 Example covering letters

The following pages contain examples of covering letters. **Do not simply copy them** – take inspiration from different letters and learn how to put together your own letters. Remember, each letter should be tailored to a specific job and/or employer in exactly the same way your CV should be customised to each application.

Covering Letter 1: Applying for a Placement

Flat X Floor Y Lakeside
Aston University
Birmingham
B4 7ET

20th November 2009

Mrs P. Jones
Placement Student Manager
ACME Engineering
Birmingham

Dear Mrs Jones

Re: One Year Placement Scheme

I am pleased to enclose an application for the one-year placement opportunity that you advertised with my University Department: The School of Engineering and Applied Science, Aston University.

I am currently studying for the BEng / MEng in Chemical Engineering with Management Studies, a four / five year sandwich course with an integrated placement year. Following my year in industry, I intend to continue to complete the Masters year at Aston.

I was born in Malaysia and have come to the UK for my University education with the hope of developing a strong foundation for my future career in engineering. On completing my first degree and Masters, I intend to gain some research experience and a PhD through Universiti PUTRA Malaysia.

My specific area of interest is Process Control. Through my education and my work experience at the palm oil factory outside Kuala Lumpur, I have learnt to pay careful attention to detail and to work collaboratively with others. In that position, I was able to complete an additional, voluntary project on safety protocols which significantly improved procedures and was adopted by the company.

I can be contacted via my email address at any time.

I very much hope to hear from you.

Yours sincerely

Your Signature

Your Name

Enc: CV

Covering Letter 2: Applying for a Graduate Position

Flat X Floor Y Dalton Tower
Aston University
Birmingham
B4 7ET

1st December 2009

Mr S. Reagan
Graduate Recruitment Manager
Goldman Sachs
Fleet Street
London

Dear Mr Reagan

State what you are applying for and where you saw the advert

Re: Graduate Analyst Programme

I am writing to apply for your Graduate Analyst Programme as advertised in the Prospects Directory 2007 and I enclose my CV for your consideration.

I have been interested in investment banking for some years and this was confirmed during my work experience at both the FSA and Morgan Stanley. I feel that investment banking would offer an ideal opportunity to combine my skills and interests in finance, project management, team working, leadership and interest in business. I am particularly interested in financial modeling and working with clients towards solutions to their financial needs but also very interested in the range of asset management and capital markets services.

Detail your skills and abilities

I have excellent numerical and analytical skills combined with strong team-working skills, including leadership and motivating others as well as myself to succeed. The range of projects I worked on at university, at the FSA and at Morgan Stanley significantly enhanced my project management skills as well as my awareness of financial services. My commercial experience and my experience managing societies demonstrate that I excel in leadership in demanding situations. I have a strong commercial focus and have developed new services and fundraising events that have made a substantial impact.

Goldman Sachs in London attracts me because it offers so many opportunities as your regional European headquarters. Through my project supervisor's contact at Goldman Sachs, I was able to meet her and two of her recent graduate analyst colleagues last month. They all spoke highly of the early responsibility and the training opportunities from which they had benefited. In addition, your business principles, commitment to client service, focus on continuing professional development and corporate social responsibility all greatly attract me.

I hope that when you consider my CV, you will realize that I have the skills, experience and evidence of potential to excel as a trainee graduate analyst. I am available for interview at any time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

End with a positive tone

Yours sincerely

Your Signature

Your Name

Enc: CV

Covering Letter 3: Applying for a Graduate Position

Flat X Floor Y Dalton Tower
Aston University
Birmingham
B4 7ET

22nd October 2008

Recruitment Manager
HSBC UK Headquarters
Acacia Street
London
WC1 1AB

Use Dear Sir or Madam if you do not know the name of the person to whom the letter is addressed

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: Management Trainee

I would like to apply for the position of Management Trainee with HSBC. I was born in Beijing and am currently studying for an Honours degree in Mathematics at Aston University in Birmingham.

You will see from the enclosed CV that I have a strong record of achievement in both academic work and extra-curricular activities. In addition, I have recently been able to take advantage of valuable opportunities to learn about financial markets. In my second year, I applied training in the use of mathematical models to a financial case study and in my third year I took part in a trading simulation run by the ISMA Centre at Reading University. In this exercise, I took charge of monitoring market activity and my team complimented me on my 'cool head'!

I believe I meet the essential requirements for a position at your Global Service Centre in China. As a native speaker of Chinese with excellent skills in English, I have bicultural communication capabilities and would be extremely capable of working in an English speaking environment. In my role as Restaurant Supervisor, I have demonstrated that I work well under pressure and in an active team situation. By coming to the UK to study, I have challenged my abilities, developed strong analytical skills and shown that I can adapt quickly to change. I believe I can make a considerable contribution to your team.

I appreciate your attention and look forward to the opportunity to discuss this opportunity in more detail.

Yours faithfully

Use the correct sign off:

Dear Sir or Madam = Yours faithfully
Dear Mr. Smith = Yours sincerely

Your Signature

Your Name

Enc: CV

Covering Letter 4: Applicant with Considerable Experience

10 Primrose Way
Warley
West Midlands
B67 1AB

26th May 2009

Ms J Robinson
Head of Recruitment
ACME plc
Acacia Street
London
WC1 1AB

Dear Ms Robinson

Further to your advertisement on the website planetrecruit.com and in today's Telegraph, I wish to apply for the post of Product Development Manager.

I am a Dutch national currently studying for a Masters in Business Administration at Aston University in Birmingham, UK. You will see from the attached CV that I have ten years' commercial experience. This included five years as Sales Manager for Bluechip Software NV, during which period I expanded the sales for eight out of ten top accounts by at least 20% year on year.

My managerial responsibilities in this recent role included the recruitment and performance management of a sales team of twenty. I was able to significantly develop my skills as a hands-on manager.

My recent move to achieve the MBA qualification reflects my growing interest in strategic marketing and the desire to develop my skills relevant to other industry sectors. This role in your company appeals to me because it provides the opportunity to apply my business development experience to the automotive sector which, being characterized by longer lead-in times and intense global competition, will test my ability to re-position Car Brand X within key European markets.

I can be contacted for interview at any time using my mobile phone number and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Your Signature

Your Name

Enc: CV

4.4 Further help with covering letters

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Notes

5 Completing application forms

5.1 Analysing job adverts

To ensure that you are submitting the best possible application, the first thing you need to do is to analyse the job advert, job description and/or person specification. Use the following format to help you:

Job Title		Do I meet these criteria? ✓ or ✗	Evidence I can use to support this
Top five attributes required for this job	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Other essential attributes			
Other desirable attributes			
Am I a suitable applicant? **YES**			**NO**

TOP TIP 5: WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

Re-read Section 2 "What Do Employers Look For?" on page 5 to help you work out what the employer is looking for in excellent candidates

5.2 Answering competency questions

There is a recommended formula for answering competency questions – it will help you to provide strong evidence of your talents.

Follow this structure to give a full and focused answer:

CONTEXT	THE SITUATION What was your objective?	Allow yourself only one line.
ACTIONS	YOUR CONTRIBUTION What did **you** do that helped?	Write three or four lines for your first attempt to help you decide what is important. Then cut it to one or two.
RESULTS	OUTCOME What happened? Were you successful?	Write one to two lines. Then cut your text down to bullets.
SKILLS	SKILLS and LEARNING What did you learn? Which skills were you using?	Write one to two lines. Then cut your text down to bullets.

This **C A R S** structure is a useful technique for presenting evidence about your skills in your CV as well as in application forms.

Take Note:

- Employers often provide a small space or set a word limit on your answer, so you may need to be concise.
- Sometimes the question will ask for an example of you using a specific skill – in this situation it may be appropriate to use only **C A R** in your response.

Figure 7: Creating and refining evidence

Describe a time when you faced a difficult challenge.

My situation: Coming to the UK to study

C I wanted to come to the UK to study marketing, but funds were limited.
A I investigated courses on the Internet. It looked impossible, but then my family said they would match what I could save. I took a job after High School for two years.
R I gained some very good experience and my company agreed to pay my air fare to reward my contribution.
S I learnt to set myself a hard objective and to maintain my motivation over a long period of time despite lots of obstacles.

Then, remove excess text until you have a concise answer:

C To raise the funds to study in the UK I ...
A ... took a job after High School and persuaded my family to match what I could save.
R As a result:
- I gained excellent experience
- the company paid my air fare as reward

S - I learnt to challenge myself and maintain motivation.

5.3 Example answers

Figure 8: Self-management, Problem-solving, Analytical Ability

Describe how your personal planning and organization resulted in the successful achievement of a personal or group task.

C At Weaver Bros. last summer, I was given the task of rationalising the stock control system.

A I looked at factors such as when the stock was last ordered, what it was used for and how often it was used. I worked out a method of streamlining the paperwork involved in this process and redesigned the relevant forms, which I then submitted to my manager.

R My ideas were accepted and implemented. A 15% reduction in stock levels was achieved, saving the company approximately £25,000.

S I learnt to seek the views of all the people involved to ensure that my proposed solution was quickly accepted by other staff.

Figure 9: Communication Skills (Oral), Ability to Summarise Key Issues, Logical Argument

Describe a situation where you were successful in putting your ideas across.

C At Freshlands Accountants, I took the initiative and volunteered to provide some IT training to my administration colleagues. There was a wide range of age groups and backgrounds and some were reluctant to work with the new software being implemented, and to be trained by a young, temporary employee.

A I organised a series of three practical workshops, which took everyone step by step through the new software, showing them how it was relevant to their jobs and how it could make their jobs easier in the long-term. These sessions also gave my colleagues the opportunity to voice their concerns and raise any questions. I dealt with the majority of the questions myself and persuaded them of the effectiveness of the software whilst adapting to their needs where possible.

R At the end of the workshops, all my colleagues were ready to start using the new software, acknowledged its usefulness and were happy to come to me with further questions.

S I learnt how to communicate to large groups and how to remain calm and confident in the face of opposition.

Figure 10: Influencing, Communication, Teamwork

Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others. What were the circumstances? What did you do to make a difference? How do you know the result was satisfactory?

C I was elected to the Staff-Student Liaison Committee in the second year. At several meetings, the final year rep voiced dissatisfaction at the lack of time available for students to complete their final year projects successfully, given their other commitments.

A I persuaded the final year rep to meet with some of the other final year students to explain the problem in more detail to me. I put forward the idea that if the department could allow us to choose projects and supervisors in the final term of the second year, that could allow us time over the summer in which to make a start on the project. My peers agreed and I raised the issue at the next Staff-Student Liaison Committee. Despite initial misgivings by academic staff, I managed to persuade them to move the initial dissertation workshops forward.

R Most of this year's final year students who made the most of the opportunity to begin in the summer months are much happier with their dissertation this year, as their time management has been made easier.

Figure 11: Analysis, Problem-solving, Creative Thinking

Describe a difficult problem that you have solved. State how you decided which were the critical issues. Say what you did and what your solution was. What other approaches could you have taken?

C As part of my study exchange trip to Germany, I had to undertake a piece of research into how a German company might exploit the EU single market through their marketing strategy. I was assigned to a senior manager of Volkswagen, which I chose as a case study. My manager was fluent in both German and English, which was vital as he helped me to liaise with the company's customers throughout the EU. Unfortunately, after one week he fell seriously ill and I was left to contact companies myself.

A I quickly realised that my German was not of a sufficient standard for me to gain all the information I required in the time available. I asked others in VW for help, but no one had time. Therefore, I managed to persuade one of my German classmates to carry out the telephone research for me by offering to word process her project.

R This resulted in the successful completion of the project. With hindsight, I could have tried to improve my German, but this would have taken too much time. I also could have relied more heavily on secondary research, but this could have devalued my results.

5.4 Application form checklist

1. Analyse the job advertisement / job description / person specification – what is this employer looking for?

2. Identify what you can offer and match your evidence to the required attributes.

3. Research the organisation – identify relevant information you can use to customise your application.

4. Detail all education and employment in reverse chronological order – start with the most recent and go backwards.

5. If your qualifications do not translate into UCAS points and there is no room for explanations, contact the employer to confirm how to proceed.

6. Plan ahead: read through all the questions first – work out which example you are going to use for each question.

7. Remember to use a wide range of examples from your educational experience, employment, volunteer work, interests and activities.

8. Read each question carefully – identify what the question is looking for.

9. Obey any instructions – especially word limits.

10. Structure your responses – use the **C A R S** formula.

11. Provide evidence and avoid bland generalities.

12. Take your time.

13. Do not simply cut and paste answers from previous applications – employers often notice and are rarely impressed.

14. Read through each response – have you answered the question?

15. Use keywords and action words.

16. Check spelling, punctuation and grammar carefully. Ensure you are using UK and not US English e.g. organise vs organize

17. Print out a copy to keep before submitting – this will help you prepare for your interview.

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