

CVs and Applications for non-academic jobs

technē ‘Whatever Next?’ Careers Programme

with Dr Jay Willink Wilde



Aims of our session

- Understand the core principles of what makes a CV stand out for recruiters beyond academia;
- Learn how to communicate both your technical skills and your 'soft' skills in a way that aligns with job descriptions;
- Get peer feedback on your CV;
- Examine strategies to answer common types of questions found on job application forms;
- Learn about the key elements required for a cover letter;
- Be 'signposted' to additional resources and personal support relating to job applications in the UK and globally.

What this boils down to is ...

- 1) Understanding what is being asked for from the employer. (Preparing your 'brief');
- 2) Gathering your evidence to prove you meet **this** brief;
- 3) Making your material look attractive and easy to read on the page.

1) Preparing the CV 'Brief'

- This could often come in the form of a job description/person specification in a formal job advert;
- There are often times when you need to create your own brief (e.g. making a speculative application);
- Any other examples?

1) Preparing the CV 'Brief' (cont.)

- Make a checklist of everything (education/work experience/skills) which the employer is looking for;
- Don't 'ignore' any items which you feel you would struggle (at first glance) to provide evidence for;
- Research the context within which you would be working;
- Do your homework on the employer and job so that you can 'act into' the role.

Job Details

Projects Grant Administrator

Department of Engineering Science, Parks Road, Oxford

Grade 6: £27,629 - £32,958 p.a.

We are seeking a permanent Project Grant Administrator to join the research administration team in the Department of Engineering Science (central Oxford). The role is full-time, but part-time would be considered.

The role has four key aspects: manage the award set-up process for new grants/projects, provide advice/support on the administration of current grants, manage the set up of the department's industry service projects and monitor/edit departmental data. The person appointed will require well-developed problem solving skills to identify solutions to operational and financial problems. He/she will be required to gain in-depth knowledge of University and funders(s) policies and procedures.

You should possess a university degree or equivalent experience of project management in a research, public sector environment or large organization environment. You will have excellent oral, written communication skills and inter-personal skills, a proven financial aptitude with attention to detail and good working knowledge of word processing, spreadsheet, email and database software.

Informal enquiries may be addressed to Louise Bristow (email: louise.bristow@eng.ox.ac.uk).

You will be required to upload a covering letter/supporting statement (describing how past experience fit with the advertised position), CV and the details of two referees as part of your online application.

Only applications received before 12.00 midday on 22 May 2017 can be considered. Interviews are expected to take place during the week beginning 5 June 2017.

Contact Person : Louise Bristow

Vacancy ID : 128353

Contact Phone :

Closing Date : 22-May-2017

Contact Email : Louise.Bristow@eng.ox.ac.uk

2) Gathering your evidence

- Evidence can come from any area of your life (e.g. PhD, earlier education, work – employed or freelance, voluntary roles, other interests);
- Pay particular attention to the ‘soft’ skills – don’t ignore them because you find them harder to describe. (We’re coming on to that ...);
- Gathering all your evidence in tabular form enables you to spot any gaps;
- Reality check: Am I suitable for this role?
- P.S. Keeping this document (and any background notes) is also very helpful to prepare you for interview!

Soft/transferable skills e.g. team work

Behaviours associated with team work

- Explaining concepts clearly to other team members
- Demonstrating tolerance of others
- Performing reliably
- Listening and questioning others
- Being flexible and meeting agreed team objectives

Results of team work

- Stronger group motivation
misunderstandings avoided
- Targets exceeded
- Discontent dealt with
- Talents used efficiently
- People enjoy working together

Exercise: Identifying your own competencies/skills

- Think of a time when you did something that gave you a sense of achievement / enjoyment (in a work context)
- Think how you would describe this scenario in 3 minutes
- Which 'competency' from the list is illustrated best by your scenario?

IN PAIRS

Take it in turns to describe the situation

Try to use the following structure:

Circumstances / background

Actions

- what you did
- how you did it
- why you did it

Results/Reflection

Can your partner identify which competency is being illustrated?

e.g. Verbal communication

- Participated in weekly group meetings, explaining and updating the team on research findings, often suggesting new ideas and approaches. Have also presented my research at 6 conferences including a significant talk at XYZ in the US, attended by 1000 delegates.
- Delivered 3 lectures each week to undergraduate history students. Also host small group tutorials which involve an interactive style of teaching. Have taught a range of topics including Was awarded a prize for the best Humanities Lecturer at The University of Brighton in 2015.

e.g. Team work

- One of a team of 4 Postdoctoral Researchers organising a Postdoctoral Careers Day at RHUL. Duties included regular team meetings to agree on structure and content of the day. Organised team meetings, invited external speakers, prepared print advertising and signage and maintained a website for the event.
- Co-author of a £XK grant application to the AHRC. Organised weekly meetings with the three people involved in the application, negotiating and agreeing content. Also edited the proposal and wrote the impact statement in collaboration with Manager.

e.g. Organisational skills

- Manage 5 projects in the laboratory simultaneously, ensuring that both short term and long term objectives are met and that all stakeholders are informed of outcomes. These include collaborations with the Institute of Ophthalmology, London; University of Birmingham and San Raffaele Scientific Institute, Milan.
- In my role as Research Staff Representative for the Postdoc Committee, I have organised a series of events for Postdoctoral Researchers. These have included careers talks and presentations from research leaders. I have also sat on a number of panels and represented University X Research Staff at a number of conferences.

Some thoughts about describing transferable skills on CVs

- **Name the skill:** Use the same words from the JD – many recruiters use an automated tracking system (ATS) to search for key words.
- **Important skills, lots of air time:** The more important the skill, the more space and examples you should give. No more than 3 bullet points for each skill.
- **Quantify where possible:** Use numbers e.g. have given 6 presentations to a range of audiences from researchers to policy makers. Or express how proficient you are in words e.g. experienced user of databases.
- **Skills profile:** Have a skills section *or* list the skills within the appropriate employment or education section.
- **Address skills gaps:** If you do not have 1 year of experience in X then address this in the cover letter by stating the courses that you have attended, or illustrate your reading around the subject, for example.

3) Making your material look attractive and easy to read on the page

i.e. Constructing your non-academic CV (and two examples);

- Generally 2 pages long;
- Main sections:
 - Personal details
 - Work Experience, including skills
 - Education, including skills
 - Other Skills e.g. IT and languages
 - Interests and Activities
 - Referees
- Other: Career Aim/Personal Profile | Positions of Responsibility | Special Achievements | List of Publications

3) Making your material look attractive and easy to read on the page (cont.)

Other CV formats:

- **One Page CV 'Resumé'** – *common in financial sector*
- **Skills Based**
 - Skills from education / work and leisure group together;
 - Other sections then contain brief lists;
 - Often used if have complex work history or career change, where might not be obvious from education / work experience why applying for job.
- **Country Specific Formats**
 - See *GoinGlobal.com* > Country Career Guides

Exercise: Presenting your skills on a CV

CV Comparisons – 10 mins

- Briefly read the Consultancy person specification
- Examine the 2 example CVs
- Which do you think is more effective?

Your CV: Scoring – 20 mins

- In pairs – swap CVs
- Use analysis sheet – give feedback



CV Recap: You can follow these three steps ...

- 1) Understanding what is being asked for from the 'employer' (Preparing your brief);
- 2) Gathering your evidence to prove you meet *this* brief;
- 3) Making your material look attractive and easy to read on the page.

... to streamline, tailor and excel at any application process: CV, speculative CV or application form.

Application forms



Application forms:

Personal details

**Details of education and
employment**

Questions specific to the job:

- **Motivation questions**
- **Competency questions**

**Personal statement or
statement of interest**

Example:

UCL Standard Online form:

Statement in Support of Your Application

Essential criteria are those identified as necessary to undertake the duties of the position.

Please explain, using examples, how you meet each of the essential criteria in the Person Specification.

You should refer to relevant skills, experience, and achievements you have gained from paid work, unpaid / voluntary work, work at home, through your studies or through leisure activities.

This section is limited to 2500 words

Behind The Skills Buzzwords

1. Team and interpersonal skills		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enthusing/encouraging explaining clearly performing reliably responding flexibly prioritising team goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrating patience and tolerance of others supporting others listening/questioning feeding back tactfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased co-operation and compromise stronger group motivation misunderstandings avoided targets exceeded discontent dealt with talents used efficiently people enjoy working together
2. Written and oral communication		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listening/ paying attention to others views simplifying/ making things easier to understand recommending/ advising on a course of action negotiating compromise/ agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> persuading/ influencing presenting ideas reporting: verbal or written account responding/ answering questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> alternative views taken into consideration exchange of knowledge and ideas confidence instilled complex information conveyed clearly appropriate language, style and methods used depending on audience increased co-operation and compromise misunderstanding avoided
3. Analytical skills, problem-solving and creativity		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> diagnosing problems researching determining/ prioritising in order of importance defining/ categorising assessing/ measuring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interpreting/ understanding meaning developing ideas decision-making testing/ trying something deciding/ making up mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying key components of problems and situation thinking of new ways to do things overcoming obstacles being able to place reliance on something continued momentum forming conclusions based on evidence
4. Planning, organisation and project management		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning/ anticipating problems prioritising in order of importance delegating/ assigning tasks reviewing performance scheduling times/ resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking decisions supervising/ overseeing assessing/ monitoring progress & performance copied/persevering in face of obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> efficient use of resources clarity of roles staff instilled with sense of responsibility talents used efficiently issues & tasks not overlooked misunderstandings avoided results achieved in timely, quality, cost-effective way
5. Staff management and leadership		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chairing/ managing group activities/ discussions allocating/ assigning tasks convincing/ persuading people recommending/advising on a course of action handling conflict sensitively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> solving problems/ finding answers/making decisions co-ordinating/ controlling situations encouraging/ instilling confidence coaching/ helping to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sense of purpose/ direction individual roles understood communication enhanced options weighed-up/ risks evaluated misunderstandings avoided obstacles overcome objectives met staff developed

6. Self motivation, initiative and drive		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> initiating/ originating something anticipating/ expecting something before it happens making decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> overcoming obstacles persisting/ persevering/ remaining constant to a purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> finding better ways of doing something taking responsibility for own time and effectiveness making things happen/ moving forward not being waylaid by setbacks reaching goals working to high standards/ producing high quality output
7. Commercial awareness		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> researching/ investigating measuring: finding size or quantity originating/ devising/ creating developing ideas/ making them reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> budgeting/ assigning financial resources advertising/ marketing promoting something/ persuading people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding problems/ issues finding new ways of doing something understanding business drivers increasing efficiency/ sales, reducing costs sound financial management
8. Research		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning: detailed scheme for doing something cataloguing/ categorising/ ordering information compiling/ gathering information observing: watching and recording 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interviewing/ questioning examining/ investigating consulting/ obtaining information publicising/ making known presenting/ putting before an audience recommending/ advising on a course of action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding problems/ issues increased understanding alternative views taken into consideration exchange of knowledge and ideas making decisions based on sound methodology complex information conveyed clearly
9. Customer Orientation		
Behaviours		Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listening/ questioning empathising/ understanding demonstrating patience/ tolerance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining clearly overcoming obstacles persuading/ convincing negotiating/ seeking agreement persisting/ persevering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> needs/ problems/ issues understood misunderstanding avoided managing conflict sensitively discontent dealt with confidence instilled results achieved in timely, quality, cost effective way customers feel valued

Typical competency questions

- Describe how you have achieved a goal through influencing the actions or opinions of others (perhaps in a team context). (110 words)

‘CAR’ method of answering competency questions



Context

[*Concise* description]

Action

[What did you actually DO?]

Result/reflection

[What was the end result?]

Answer 1

In my new role at AB1 in the summer of 2015 I was asked if I could assist in the development of the new website. I was asked for my opinion as a “fresh pair of eyes” and then joined the team developing the site. I had a number of ideas including incorporating a pop-up menu of up-and-coming events. Some of the team were sceptical of this idea due to a growing user backlash against “pop-ups”! I showed them some design ideas and eventually they agreed to give it a try in the “events” sections. I then designed the “pop-up” to promote various events and some of them have been used.

Answer 2

C At AB1 I assisted in the development of the new website.

A I took it upon myself to **conduct an audit** of similar sites and **presented my findings** to the development team **recommending the use of 'pop-ups'** to advertise forthcoming events. Mindful of industry scepticism regarding their use, I **researched available data** on the area, **prepared visual design ideas** and **presented my case**. Despite their initial concerns, I **persuaded them** to allocate funds for an initial trial period.

R The resulting click-through rates were encouraging and the pop-ups are now a permanent addition to the website having proved a successful way of promoting attendance at our events.

Typical competency question

Describe a time when you instigated change to solve a problem.

Answer 2

- C** Whilst tutoring undergraduates, I **identified the need** for a change in laboratory times since my year group were missing slots due to time-table clashes.
- A** I **put my case in writing** to the course organiser and administrator, **explaining the situation** and **suggesting more convenient times**, **using a short report compiled from a small focus group** I conducted with selected undergraduates. I followed this up in person and was invited to the next module planning meeting. After protracted negotiation, in which I **addressed fears of administrative time constraints**, a revised timetable was temporarily introduced.
- R** The project completion rate was substantially improved resulting in a permanent change to the module timetable

Typical motivational question

Why do you want to work as an account manager for our marketing agency?

Interest in the organisation

- What does the organisation do?
- What are their values?
- How they fit with the wider sector – challenges, opportunities?
- What research have you done? Who have you talked to?
- What have they done *recently*? What does the press say about them? What do they say about themselves? (annual reports/social media)
- How do they differ from similar organisations?

Interest in the role

- What do you know about the day to day work?
- What have you found out beyond the description?
 - From in-depth research e.g. careers libraries
 - From talking to people, seminars, fairs
 - From direct observation & participation – work experience, work shadowing, collaboration
- How can you ‘add value’ to the role & meet the needs of the organisation
- How does your research on the role confirm your choice ?
- Fit with your personal attributes, working style

Answer 1

Your organisation is a leader in its field. It has an international reputation and is also one of the most respected agencies in the UK. It is important for me to work for a successful organisation and I would welcome all the different opportunities available to me.

I would also like to work abroad at some point and so the global nature of your organisation appeals to me. Finally, I'd like to work for the organisation because the role matches my skills. I am interested in developing new skills and believe that your account management training scheme would help me to achieve my goals.

Answer 2

Firstly, I am familiar with the products of your client-base including Riva and Viva, and the pivotal importance of your 2009 campaign that increased both their sales figures by 15 and 28 % respectively.

Shows in-depth research & thus motivation.

I am also attracted to the 'creative hot-house' reputation of the agency as described in a recent 'Campaign' magazine agency profile, particularly the use of social networks to enhance brand awareness. As an experienced social researcher I have piloted the innovative use of online social networks to enhance the uptake of HIV testing amongst high risk groups in collaboration with Richmond Primary Care Trust.

Highlights how her core expertise matches that of company.

After examining your website, and attending your 2018 UCL presentation, I understand the value of good organisational skills in order to successfully manage client campaigns. This appeals since I have worked on simultaneous research projects whilst balancing departmental administrative commitments and part-time consultancy work (15 hours/week).

Understanding of required attributes & evidence these can be met.

I have also been impressed by the honesty and enthusiasm of recently recruited trainees of the organisation I met at this year's UCL Careers Service PhD Employers Forum on Social Research and Policy.

Proactivity in exploring the career – motivated.

Cover letters

Cover Letter Content

- **Opening paragraph**
 - State who you are and what you want.
- **Middle paragraph(s)**
 - Why you are interested in the organisation (provide evidence of research & **reflection**)
 - Why you want the job (again, evidence of research & **reflection**)
 - **Person specification, don't address every point – sell your key attributes e.g. two skills with evidence**
 - What you can do for them, not just what they can do for you
- **Final paragraph**
 - Polite but optimistic with practical information such as when you are available for interview

Look at the JD and cover letter

Score for:

- **Motivation for Consultancy? - 1 (weak) – 3 (strong)**
- **Understanding of Role? 1 (little) – 3 (great)**
- **Self Marketing? – 1 (not very effective) – 3 (very effective)**

Further information/support

- One-to-one appointments:
 - Face-to-face or Skype/phone;
 - 30 mins, dates advertised on the website;
 - Book at technē@rhul.ac.uk.
- Vitae.ac.uk;
- *The Professor Is In* (Part X). Karen Kelsky PhD;
- Online resources on 'Whatever next?' career pages www.technē.ac.uk;
- InkPath @ technē (professional development).