

How to write a CV: guidance for PhDs

A CV should not be a list of everything you have ever done. It is a document that a recruiter should be able to scan quickly and see how your skills and experiences make you the best person for the job.

Steps to building a great CV

1. Start with the job specification

The starting point for CV writing should always be the criteria for the opportunity.

Hopefully, you will find a clear on the list of requirements, perhaps listed as 'what we're looking for...', 'selection criteria' or 'person specification'.

If you are applying speculatively or there is no obvious list of criteria, reflect on which skills the opportunity is likely to require, and search for similar opportunities to inform a reasonable estimate.

The reader will be looking to your CV to provide evidence of relevant skills, knowledge and experience. They may use selection criteria as a mark scheme to fairly decide between candidates. For example, candidates might receive 1 if evidence is missing or only implied, 2 if evidence is present in some way, and 3 if it exceeds expectations (for example, giving quality, results or complexity). You can see why tailoring your CV is so important!

2. Choose active language

Use active language and avoid using passive terms. It's common on a CV to start sentences or bullet

Active	Passive
Achieved, contributed, created, delivered, designed, evaluated, improved, supported	Attended, 'had to', took part in, 'part of a team', used, 'was given', worked with.

points with active verbs, omitting 'I' pronouns. Where possible use verbs linked to the selection criteria (e.g., 'Communicated...' helps a marker searching for 'excellent communication skills').

3. Map your PhD (and broader) skills

Take the specification you identified in (1). For each criterion, list your examples. Draw from your PhD, and previous experiences.

Check this evidence is clear on your CV: if not, add these points to a relevant section. Make sure you show them how good you are: add results or outcomes if you can.

4. Use headings to suit

How you detail your PhD studies can change to suit the intended reader. For an academic audience, you might have headings such 'Research interests', 'Conferences', 'Research projects', 'Publications' alongside 'Education'. If you're trying to focus more on your transferable skills, you could add a profile summarising your current goals, or detail studentships or research projects as 'Relevant experience', or even use a skills-based CV format.

Length and format

Always follow any instructions. In general:

- Always format to full pages.
- For UK professional jobs the norm is two full pages. Exceptions are investment banking/management consultancy (1 page) and Academia (beyond 2 pages wholly acceptable).
- Use our GoinGlobal country guides to find other international norms.

Example job: Research Associate (Black British Children's Literature project)

Requirements:

- PhD in a relevant subject area.
- Research interests which align with designated research themes.
- Understanding of the wider significance of research on children's Black British literature.
- Excellent organisational, time management and prioritisation, working to deadlines
- Excellent communication skills to a wide range of audiences.
- Experience working in archives or with archival materials.
- Experience of contributing to applications for research funding.
- Experience of working with non-academic partners, commensurate with career stage.
- A track record of high-quality research publication commensurate with career stage
- Ability to work independently as well as part of a team.
- Willingness to engage with both academic and non-academic audiences.

Job posted on www.jobs.ac.uk May 2021
Abridged.

This is an Academic CV style. Elements relating to academic practice are expanded, specialist subheadings are used and the length isn't constrained to 2 pages.

The profile can set the narrative—explaining context, changes of direction or, as here, summarising research interests. This could equally have been listed under a 'Research Interests' subheading. The profile can also serve as an elevator pitch: a compelling summary of key selling points for the candidate. It's not always needed if the CV communicates many of those points on a scan-read.

This CV is for a research role, and so research has been prioritised, with teaching experience sections moved further down.

Relevance, recency and results may all play a part in determining which pieces of experience to emphasise. This candidate has chosen not to include her BA thesis.

Technacia Artigo

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Final year Techne-funded PhD student with a professional background in publishing. Founder of the London Black Studies Network. Research interests including Afrofuturism, SF and YA contemporary fiction, the role of literature in socio-political change, and the influence of social, commercial and political narratives on contemporary Black writing.

EDUCATION

PhD English Literature (Techne-funded, full time) 2018-21
University of Roehampton

Thesis title: Afrofuturism and activism 2016-18: the nature of the dialogue
Supervised by: Professor Sue Pervisor

MA Contemporary Literature, Culture and Theory (part time)- Merit 2016-18
King's College London

Managed my time to complete part time postgraduate study with part time study. Completed Advanced Research Skills workshops, and optional modules Writing Global Cities, Theorising Contemporary Violence and Genres of the Human.

BA in English Literature - First 2008-11
University of Roehampton

Optional thesis: Angry Young Men and classism in 1950s British fiction.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

PhD Thesis: Afrofuturism and activism 2016-18: the nature of the dialogue 2018-21

Exploring the influence of Afrofuturism tropes in the BLM movement, and the influence of BLM on short stories, graphic novels, film and visual arts. I identify key (and developing) aspects: including tension with how the genre and movement are 'framed', concerns around 'co-opting' and purpose, increasing engagement and attendant commercial pressures, and finally the impacts attributed to visibility and reach of the genre.

'Black Lives Matter': mapping social and cultural impact' May - Jul 2021

Created interdisciplinary project with 3 colleagues in social sciences to connect our work. Bid for, and won, a £4,000 Interdisciplinary Research Project Grant. Forthcoming outputs include 3 conference papers and a dissemination seminar.

MA Thesis: Graphic novels: the relationship between reader and creator 2017-18

Identified contemporary dialogue mechanisms between audiences and creators, including direct (Twitter, live Q&As), indirect dialogue (spending, engagement) and shared sociolect.

The success of an academic department often relies on their funding income, which is why a section on Awards/Grants is common on Academic CVs. It's also specified in the selection criteria for the role.

You can include accepted papers, contributions to book chapters, book reviews, or inclusions in conference proceedings. If a little sparse, you could also list submissions to show your intention to publish.

If you've been invited to present make that clear.

Typical Academic CV section. Alternative subheadings include: Academic Administration, Department Support or Contribution, Administrative or Organisational Experience or similar. Here the subheading is in line with the emphasis of the job criteria.

Leading verbs here (liaised, communicated, organised) chosen to tailor to the criteria of the role. Details added wherever possible to show not just what was done, but how well it went.

FUNDING AND AWARDS

Interdisciplinary Research Project Grant, University of Roehampton 2021

Collaborated with three colleagues across social sciences to create bid to this fund. £4000 awarded, creating four £1000 stipends to support the work of this 3-month project.

Fick Shional Legacy Prize 2020

£1500 awarded for PhD studies with wider cultural significance.

Techne student-led event funding 2019

£1000 awarded to fund the inaugural conference of the London Black Studies Network.

OUP Culture and Research Fund 2019

£2000 awarded to fund the London Contemporary Fiction Forum.

PGR conference grant 2019

£500 awarded to support conference attendance.

PUBLICATIONS

'Writing for who? The influence of the contemporary SF reader on development of short speculative fiction from Africa' 2021

(Forthcoming) Book chapter in *Africanfuturism and the short story*, Routledge.

'Contemporary developments in Afrofuturism in the graphic novel' 2021

Paper accepted for publication in the conference proceedings of 'Contemporary Literature 2021'.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

'Contemporary developments in Afrofuturism in the graphic novel' 2021

Invited to present at 'Afrofuturism: For Who?' virtual seminar series, convened by TORCH: The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities.

'Afrofuturism / Africanfuturism': contemporary genre terminology and socio-political context 2020

Paper presented at Contemporary Literature 2020 conference.

'The representation of Black Lives Matter in contemporary graphic novels' 2019

Paper presented at 'London Black Studies Network' conference, June 2019.

ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

Founder and Co-Chair London Black Studies Network 2019-20

Founded LBSN to build a network of postgraduate and early-career researchers within the field from across London, following successful Techne student-led event funding bid.

Created a committee team of four to collaborate and shape the network project.

Liaised with committee and research groups to build a network of over 200 researchers.

Co-organised inaugural conference in Autumn 2019.

Communicated with non-academic organisations to create panel speaker sessions with both academic and non-academic speakers and representation.

Organised 4 'Researchers at Home' events through the pandemic (40+ at each).

Postgraduate representative for the London Contemporary Fiction Forum 2018-19

Took responsibility to serve on the committee as representative for Roehampton.

Led project to increase budget, including conducting prospect research on potential donors.

Won £2000 of support from a leading literary fiction publisher as a result of a compelling bid to their 'Culture and Research Fund'.

For a teaching-orientated opportunity, this section would be moved to a more prominent location (page 2 at least), with potentially more details given, including module evaluation, feedback, teaching methodologies and design.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lecturer and Tutor, 'Discovering Literature' 2019-20

University of Roehampton

Taught and designed original seminars with relevant materials on Academic Research and Writing (fortnightly basis) for this core undergraduate module.

Facilitated individual tutorials with students to work on developing skills (30 students).

Designed and presented hour-long lecture on Feminist Literary Criticism (35 students).

University Guest Lecturer, Roehampton Exchange Programme Jan - Jul 2020

Designed original teaching materials on 'Multicultural London' and 'Black British and American Writing', presenting to a class of 25 international undergraduate humanities and social science students.

Adapted teaching to online in March 2020, providing materials for students of all abilities and led two online seminars for students in the US and Australia.

Module Teaching Assistant, 'Multicultural London' Jan - Mar 2019

University of Roehampton

Teaching assistant (weekly) on optional undergraduate module (22 students).

Supported a range of students from a wide range of home countries with this highly localised module.

PUBLISHING AND MARKETING EXPERIENCE

Marketing Executive, Pan Macmillan - Picador 2014-18

Organised marketing campaigns for the flagship literary paperback imprint.

Supported engagement with YA work, including works by Tomi Adeyemi, China Miéville and Hafsah Faizal, as the lead on marketing for YA speculative fiction.

Marketing Project Officer, Oxford University Press 2013-14

Marketing Assistant, Oxford University Press 2012-13

Promoted within role after six months, delivered marketing for EAL schools' resources.

Researched competitors and designed marketing testing and evaluation methodology.

Successfully created three new marketing channels using digital tools, increasing engagement.

Marketing and Communications Assistant, Tower Hamlets Youth Action 2011-12

Supported a team of 4 in marketing and communications, including proofing copy, recording reach statistics and liaising with print and design teams on invoicing and project progression.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND TRAINING

Teaching: Completed 'New to Undergraduate Teaching' training programme (2019-20).

Achieved Associate Fellow status (AFHEA) 2020

REFEREES

Professor Sue Pervisor (Supervisor), Reader, email@...

Dr Ann Other (Module convenor for the modules I taught), Senior Lecturer, email@...

Dr N.E. Other, (Bid lead for the departmental grant I supported), Postdoctoral Research Fellow, email@...

Different titles could be used to detail employment: Employment History, Professional Experience, Previous Work, Additional Experience...

Here the candidate uses the heading to emphasise the relevant industry sector.

On an academic CV, it is typical to include 2/3 referees, one of whom should be your supervisor. Usually full contact details are given – telephone, address and email, as well as their full title and position, and how they relate to you.

Example job: Artist in Residence, Woldingham School

Essential:

- Honours degree or equivalent in Art or related discipline
- Portfolio evidence of high-quality artistic work
- Secure technical knowledge in artistic practice, plus Adobe Creative Cloud, MS Office and Teams
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- A passion for Art and working with children in an education setting
- Ability to plan and organise workload efficiently and effectively
- Independent and a team player, able to create and implement ideas
- Committed to operating as a school community and valuing our model

- Committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

Desirable:

- Masters degree or higher in Art or related discipline
- Ability to contribute to the school's co-curricular programme

Job posted June 2021 Abridged.

This is professional CV style, with a creative lean.

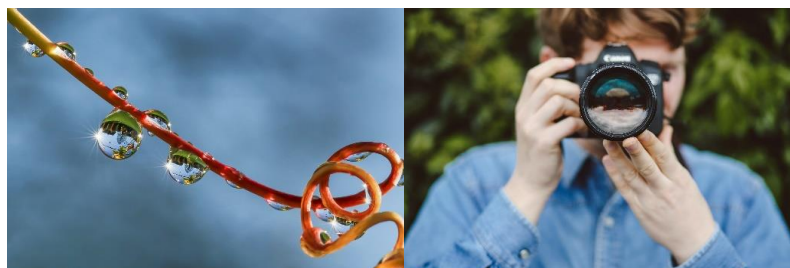
Elements relating to creative practice are expanded and there are some design/visual elements, however the format remains simple and clear, keeping to 2 pages maximum. Details are added to experiences to communicate relevant transferable skills.

A 'tag line' has been added here to set an instant first impression...

...which is then expanded on in a profile/summary paragraph, including key selling points for this role.

This role is about creative practice and teaching skills, and so the doctoral research project isn't detailed more than this. Adding a submission or viva date is a good idea when you have them, so that reader has an instant sense of your availability.

The criteria for the role specified technical knowledge, so a list under a subheading like 'Technical Skills' helps the reader see quickly these relevant skills. It works for tangible skills, where it's all pretty objective. Avoid adding subjective skills (e.g., 'Great team player') – this needs more context to become evidenced.



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Naomi Van Osseltech

Final year PhD student and photographic artist

I am a writer and artist with a broad technical skills base in art and photography, and a passionate educationalist, with teaching experience and three years' voluntary work with schools.

Education

- 2018 – present PhD Candidate, University of Westminster
Localisation and island narratives of change in the photography of Isla Light.
Director of Studies: Dr Phota Grafi, Second Supervisor: Prof. Viz Uell
Techne (AHRC) Doctoral Studentship. Submission date: 10 June 2021
- 2015 – 2018 MA, Photography Studies and Practice (1.0 – highest grade)
Universität der Künste, Essen, Germany,
- 2012 – 2015 Bachelor of Arts, Fine Art, (2.1)
Central St Martins, University of the Arts, London, UK
- 2011 – 2012 Foundation Diploma, Art and Design
Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts, London, UK

Technical Skills

- Analogue photography: developing and hand printing from 35mm and 120mm film, setting up a darkroom, mixing chemicals.
- Digital photography, working with RAW files in Photoshop, preparing inkjet prints.
- Flexi-scanner, Kalotype and platinum processes, file preparation for digital slide reproduction.
- Painting in oils, watercolour, acrylic, and mixed media work in 2D and 3D.
- Digital image creation using Adobe Creative Cloud
- Video editing in Final Cut Pro
- Sculpture in clay and mixed media
- Confident user of Microsoft Office, Teams, VLE software (Moodle), Zoom.

Grouping together experience sections, can help the reader find evidence for different criteria easily. Using 'Relevant Experience' and 'Additional Experience' can also be a simple way of foregrounding the most relevant items for a given opportunity. Within each section, dates should go from most recent to oldest.

The first few words of each bullet point can help the reader find what they're looking for – teamwork is signified here by 'collaborated' and 'liaised'.

Add detail commensurate with the relevance to the opportunity, selection criteria and the imagined reader's level of understanding. Further details about university database processes are not required for this role.

On a professional CV it's perfectly acceptable to list references, state 'references available on request' or even just to not mention them. Most application forms now have a reference section to list them in full as required.

Education Experience

- 2018 – 2021 Outreach Ambassador, University of Westminster
- Communicated to prospective students and school groups on behalf of the department, delivering informal Q&A sessions, tours and informational presentations.
 - Received positive feedback from teaching staff present on effectiveness of delivery and approachability
- 2019 – 2020 Tutor for group crit, University of Westminster
- Provided ad hoc tutoring to cover sickness or absence, delivering 14 hours of tutoring over the academic year for BA Photography.
- 2011 - 2014 Volunteer EAL Support, South West London Comprehensive School
- Committed to weekly after school support for students struggling with English.
 - Delivered small group tutorial sessions as part of a team volunteers to give the students opportunities for language support with their homework.
 - Created new support models for tutoring to energise the session, increasing opportunities for group discussion as well as 1:1 support
 - Liaised with the team to enact these changes, leading to improved attendance.

Academic Experience

- 2020 Editor of Ellipsis Journal, Issue 4: Ecologies
- Collaborated with two co-editors to deliver this issue, including designing the open call, organising online colloquiums, article editing and selecting, promoting events and liaising with colleagues, artists and writers. Issue received highest engagement levels yet.
 - Formerly editorial board member for Issue 2: Identity.
- 2019 Paper presented 'Visual Art Studies in Scotland
Isla Light: reflections of identity and change in the Hebrides.

Administrative Experience

- 2018 – 2021 Programmer/volunteer, New Cross Community Cinema
- Organising programming for the cinema on an ongoing basis, including planning, film hire and performance scheduling.
 - Independently created cinema's online platform during the pandemic to screen short films made with local collaborators.
- 2018 – 2020 Programme Officer (part time), UCL Language Centre
- Providing organisational and administrative support to the language learning programme on a 10 hour a week employment contract.
 - Improved efficiency of booking processes through creating a new database registration process.

Additional skills and training

- 2019 University Certificate in Supporting Learning in Higher Education
2018 Health and Safety, First Aid for the Workplace (Community Cinema)
2011, 2013 Safeguarding I and II (South West London Comprehensive School)
Languages: English - native, German - full working competency, Gaelic - beginner.

References available on request.