

# CURRICULUM VITAE GUIDE

Tips for Crafting a Compelling and Effective CV

## Purpose

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) outlines all of your credentials, accomplishments, and experience in both academic and professional capacities. In contrast to a resume, a CV is most commonly used to for academic opportunities, such as acquiring a faculty position or competing for fellowships, grants, and other research awards. Although there is basic information that should always appear in your CV, you select the “message” of accomplishments that will show you are a strong candidate for a particular job, department, and institution. Just as a resume should be tailored to a specific job, a CV should be crafted to fit the institution to which you are applying.

CVs vary slightly from discipline to discipline, so make sure to look at examples of others in your field. Consult with fellow students in your program, postdoctorates, faculty in your department, and your advisor(s) for advice based on their experience and knowledge.

## Elements

When determining what to include in your CV, first begin by reviewing your qualifications. Reflect on all of your academic or scholarly pursuits and list them in one master document before attempting your first CV draft. Creating an inclusive ‘master file’ ensures that you do not overlook any past experience and helps distill the most relevant elements for the opportunity to which you are applying.

Every CV should include information about your education and relevant professional experience. Standard CV categories include, but are not limited to, the following:

- + Name and contact information
- + Education, honors, and awards
- + Experience, with a heavy focus on teaching and research
- + Publications, presentations, and/or conferences attended
- + Scholarly and professional organization memberships or affiliations
- + Research interests and pursuits
- + Teaching expertise, including subject matter, audience, and/or setting (large class versus discussion groups)

Other sections may be added. Examples include: professional experience outside of academia; licenses, registrations, and certifications; grants or other awards; community service; extracurricular activities; language proficiency; computer and research skills; references; and additional relevant information.

Within standard and optional categories, showcase your strengths in relation to the job that interests you. If you are applying for positions in different types of institutions or departments, creating multiple versions of your CV is ideal and can greatly strengthen each individual application. A good rule of thumb to follow when determining the content of a particular CV: **what is most important to the position warrants the most space.**

To determine importance, study the job or opportunity announcement thoroughly and carefully note the requirements of the position. Additionally, conduct diligent research on the employer and solicit information from your advisor or those in your field to craft a CV that clearly demonstrates your relevant qualifications and experience.

## Categories: The Anatomy of a CV

### Contact information

Your name, address, phone number and email should always be included in the header of a CV. List only phone numbers that will be answered professionally with an appropriately professional voicemail. If you have a website, digital portfolio, and/or LinkedIn profile, you should list the URLs here as well.

### Education

Most Ph.D. or Master's candidates will want to have the education section listed first. In reverse chronological order, list the names of the institutions you have attended along with the dates degrees were awarded, including the date you expect to receive the degree for the program you are currently in; i.e., "Ph.D. Community and Regional Planning, expected May 2017". If you are a doctoral student who will not complete your degree for a number of years, list the dates when major milestones were completed, such as passing qualifying exams. You may include supplemental academic information in this section, such as special areas of concentration, additional research projects, title of a dissertation or thesis, and/or names of committee members and advisors.

### Honors and Awards

These categories can be combined with "Education" or given separate sections, depending upon how significant or numerous they are. Grants and dissertation funding can be included in this section. For lesser-known awards or honors obtained from an institution in another country, clearly articulate how the award was competitive. For example, "One of five graduating architecture students selected from over 4,000 applicants nationally."

### Experience

In this section, you should emphasize material in proportion to its likely interest to an employer. Sometimes one general heading called "Experience" is satisfactory, but you will likely want to subdivide this section into categories. Include all relevant positions you have held, regardless of whether you did it as an employee, an intern, a volunteer, or a member of a team or organization. If you are applying for a faculty position, a common subdivision strategy is "Teaching Experience" and "Research Experience". When describing a position, give an overview of your tasks and emphasize goals you accomplished or skills you mastered. If you are describing a research project, include a short statement on what you aimed to accomplish followed by your results.

### Research Interests

This section is a brief answer to the question, "what's next?" It must be credible, and you should be prepared to elaborate on this during an interview. Additionally, if you have acquired proficiency in research techniques, computer skills, or other specialized skills that are pertinent to your field, a separate "skills" section can be added in the form of a simple list with the most relevant skills listed first.

## Academic or Scholarly Leadership

List memberships in societies in your discipline. If you have been very active in university work or your scholarly community, you might include that information here, or create a separate section. Moderating a panel would be a good example of something that might fit under this heading.

## Publications, Presentations, and Peer Reviews

Publications and presentations can warrant their own section if you have a long list. If applicable, you may subdivide by topics (peer reviewed papers, reviews or posters, invited talks). If you are currently working on articles that will likely be published, you may list them here as well.

## Additional Activities

Volunteer or civic work, student or alumni groups, and other associations can be of interest to particular employers. However, **be sure to be selective with additional activities**, narrowing down your list to experience that you were significantly involved in and can elaborate on with ease. Listing too many activities, especially if you were loosely involved in them, may end up watering down your accomplishments.

## Additional Information

This is the place to put interesting information that does not fit elsewhere. You may include additional languages, unrelated employment, travel, and interests that show other accomplishments.

## References

Listing references on a CV is optional; however, having strong letters of recommendation from faculty who know your work well is crucial to a successful job search. Be sure to ask your advisors or professional contacts to serve as references before listing them on your CV, and be sure give them plenty of time to write letters.

## Additional Tips

- + While content is critical, the layout of your CV determines how well your content is conveyed. Typically, the simpler the layout, the easier it is for a reader to digest and process information. For CVs especially, using a standard font that is easy to read, in 10-12 point size, is crucial. Opt for one or two fonts max, relying on bolding or italicizing for emphasis and visual consistency.
- + To determine your CV's "first impression" or initial effectiveness, show your document to as many objective observers as possible. A good test is to have a friend or colleague review it for 30-45 seconds and ask them which points they remember or what items they saw first. If there is some discrepancy between what others notice and what you are striving to communicate, revising your layout or content may be necessary before you submit your CV to a potential employer.
- + Like resumes, be sure to utilize powerful and effective action verbs when describing your experiences. Avoid redundant phrasing and use each line to your advantage. For a list of action verbs applicable to the design and planning fields, please see the **Resume Action Words** guide on the UTSOA Career Services website.
- + There is no standard page limit for CVs. However, aim for conciseness whenever possible. Avoid filler content and extraneous information that is not directly applicable to the position you are seeking.
- + If some of your activities or experiences relate heavily to a religious or political entity, err on the cautious side with more general statements if said affiliation may cause a potential conflict of interest. For example, if you worked for a politician, instead of identifying the specific candidate, you may say "Texas State Representative."
- + When uploading or emailing your document, be sure to title it with information indicative to you. For example, a good strategy is using your name and date, such as "A.SmithCV2016.pdf" instead of simply "CV.pdf". Leaving out your name may result in a hiring manager retitling your document on their end, which can be a small (yet memorable!) annoyance.

## Advice to Remember

- + According to Inside Higher Ed, the most fundamental rule for CVs is **leave no mysteries!** Be sure to completely avoid unexplained gaps, unnecessary or confusing details, and inconsistencies in information. Some questions to ask: do all of your dates match up in your experiences? Is the title of your thesis exactly the same as on your CV? These may seem obvious, but it can be easier than you may think to slip up on details - especially if a specific activity occurred years ago!
- + The very best way to learn the conventions of CVs in your field is to read as many as possible. While online examples are certainly helpful, seek examples from personal contacts, as their professional documents - as well as their advice - can be better tailored to you.
- + Your CV is a reflection of all you've accomplished, so proofread and proofread again, and finally - **be proud!**

