

Academic Applications

Before you apply

- Preparing a proper CV requires a complete assessment of yourself in an organized way. Anyone advertising a product must know that product, and the product here is “you”
- Before applying for a position, determine your fit to the area where the job vacancy occurs
- It would be helpful if you could do some preliminary research about the department and institution prior to sending your application so that you do not put emphasis in the wrong place: are teaching and research of equal importance? What other duties are expected?

Strengthening teaching experience

1. Make the head of your department aware of your desire to teach. Submit your CV to him or her and indicate what courses you would 1) be willing to teach and 2) be willing to develop. Some department heads like to know who is available to fill in for a course in the event of illness or an increased demand for a particular course
2. Complete the [Certificate in University Teaching \(CUT\)](#) or the [Fundamentals of University Teaching](#) programs. These programs are provided by the [Centre for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#) office. The CUT programs will help you to: become a more effective and reflective teacher and communicator; increase your knowledge of teaching and learning; have a forum in which to discuss teaching issues with others; and develop presentation and writing skills that prepare you to compete in today’s job market. Some department heads are nervous about considering graduate students for teaching positions because graduate students are viewed as inexperienced. However, showing that you have completed the CTE programs demonstrates that you have teaching experience and have reflected upon your teaching. This may give you an edge in getting additional teaching experience. You may learn more about these programs at UWaterloo, Centre for Teaching Excellence
3. Search out opportunities to give guest lectures. This is a great way to gain teaching experience, particularly when there is little opportunity to teach a full course. Giving guest lectures gives you teaching experience as well as exposes you to a variety of classroom settings. Following are some ways to get guest lecture opportunities:
 - a) Ask your supervisor if you can give a guest lecture in one of the courses he or she is teaching. Again, be specific and identify which topics you can teach in which courses
4. Be creative in your tutorials. Tutorials can be wonderful opportunities to improve your teaching and to try new teaching techniques. For example, you may wish to be a facilitator and have students be responsible for the discussion content, or decide to use a more formal lecture format. Gaining experience practicing in front of a group of people can help you overcome any nervousness you may have speaking in group settings as well as give you teaching experience in general. You can also ask the course professor to have the students evaluate your performance, resulting in data which you can use
5. Get involved with your department or faculty TA orientation sessions. Volunteer to organize the TA orientation session, get guest speakers, or facilitate the actual session. Helping to train your peers as teachers indicates that you are recognized as a model by your department or faculty. You may list this volunteer experience under the “Service” section of your CV, demonstrating to potential hiring committees that you are thinking about teaching and that you are involved outside of class time in building your teaching skills

Getting publications

1. Talk to your supervisor. He or she should know about the process of publishing and the appropriate publishing outlets for your work. Your supervisor can give you advice on your research and the best format for publishing it (e.g., book chapter, journal, monograph). It may be appropriate to ask your supervisor to co-author your first publication so that he or she can mentor you through the process
2. Find out what the journals are in your field. Go to any internet search engine and type in "journals list" to see if a list exists in your area. Also talk to your supervisor to see what journals are available. As well, find out more about the journals from which you collect articles. Do not just find out the titles of the journals, but also find out their mission statements, areas within your discipline that they focus on, preferred research methodologies, and submission guidelines (i.e., page length, reference style). For example, a journal focused on statistics would probably not publish research based on qualitative methods
3. Learn the process of publishing. The publication process (for a journal) can be summarized in four steps:
 - a) Select an appropriate journal—study other articles to identify style, and review the submission guidelines carefully
 - b) Prepare a manuscript and submit it to that journal—you can only submit the manuscript to one journal at a time
 - c) The editor of the journal sends the manuscript to anonymous reviewers to review and to provide comments on the manuscript. Recognize that this whole process can take months to complete
 - d) The editor of the journal then determines whether the manuscript should be published in that journal or not and returns the reviews and their decision to the author(s)
4. Write up your thesis as a series of articles. In some departments, you have the option to write a series of journal-ready articles rather than a full dissertation. In following this option, you will have developed articles that can be submitted for publication (or submitted during the writing process) rather than developing articles from your completed thesis. Investigate with your supervisor to see if your department offers this option
5. Do book reviews. This is a good way of getting a publication credit and getting your name in print. Many scholars look at book reviews before considering whether a book is worth reading. In addition, in most cases you get to keep the copy of the book that you reviewed. It is a great way to build your library!
6. Participate in conferences. Conferences are good arenas to share your ideas and receive feedback on them. While most conference presentations do not make it into published form, if you do prepare a publishable manuscript from your presentation, you have completed one round of reviews already. Also, at many universities (particularly in the United States) a conference presentation is considered the equivalent of a published paper. If you feel your presentation may warrant publication, conferences are also good places to meet journal editors and suggest your ideas to them
7. Always submit a very polished version of an article to journals or a conference abstract to conferences. An article or conference abstract that reads well will make a better impression on an editor or a conference committee than a poorly written one

Writing CVs

What is a curriculum vitae?

- A presentation of credentials for a research/teaching position in a university, a research institute, or company with R&D requirements. A résumé (two pages maximum) is prepared for employers outside the academic and research environment. To prepare a CV for graduate school or a professional program read [CV/résumé overview](#)
- An indispensable job hunting tool that represents an objective, factual, personal history of you - an advertisement designed to market you by highlighting your abilities and future potential

- A summary of your career aspirations, educational background, employment experience, achievements, and interests

Major sections of a curriculum vitae

Curriculum vitae (optional)

Optional to include this heading at the top of the page.

Name

This should be the largest font size on the document.

Address and telephone

Include addresses such as current and permanent, e-mail, website, and your LinkedIn URL. You do not need to give this section a heading if you are only listing one address.

Citizenship (if beneficial)

List your citizenship if it's beneficial.

Research and/or professional interests

- Provide a brief summary of your research/teaching interests and areas of expertise from both inside and outside your institution that could be called upon
- List in point form, beginning with a general or broad spectrum and ending with the more specific areas. More details can be included in your letter

Summary of qualifications (optional)

This section provides a concise overview of your qualifications, showing the employer how you will offer a competitive advantage. Qualifications may be drawn from any area of your life (e.g., work i.e., research, teaching, industry, and/or service, education, or other activities i.e., professional/community activities). Typically, include four to six points outlining your relevant strengths, beginning with the most relevant to the job. Points may begin with nouns or adjectives. Describe your competitive advantage/the value you offer. For example:

- **Three years' process engineering experience with key responsibilities in product design and implementation**

All points in your Summary of Qualifications should be targeted to your potential employer, elaborated on throughout your CV, and be accurate. Employers indicate that job applicants often falsely claim to possess skills and that such misrepresentation is perceived negatively. Precision and accurate wording will help you obtain a job to which you are well-suited and in which you can excel.

Your summary points must reflect the work you have done. Consider including key words commonly used in the field to which you are applying.

Include:

- As a first bullet (if applicable), your work experience (paid or unpaid) relevant to the position (e.g., "7+ years research and teaching experience in material science engineering")
- Your relevant knowledge/expertise (e.g., in-depth knowledge of artificial intelligence application in construction management; experience in construction project management)
- Your relevant skills (e.g., computer proficiency, report writing, program planning, public speaking, problem-solving)
- If applicable, technical, computer, and/or laboratory skills (e.g., GIS, SPSS, SAS)

- A general reference to where you developed the skill (e.g., “proven leadership skills developed through team lead experiences”). Include this level of detail only once or twice so that points do not become too lengthy
- Specialized training/education (e.g., “Certificate in Project Management”)
- Fluency in a language other than English, specifically noting your level of verbal and/or written competency if required

Education/professional training/certifications

- Include all information on Bachelor, Master, Ph.D., postdoctoral or other relevant studies, in reverse chronological order, i.e., most recent first
- Include degree awarded or anticipated, name of institution, location, date
- In the U.S. you might encounter the ABD (all but dissertation) abbreviation which is not widely accepted in Canada
- Show areas of specialty by topic, with thesis/dissertation titles and advisors’ names, and courses of special interest, if helpful
- List a qualifying year for a program of studies as a separate entry, in the same format as your other degrees, e.g., Master of Arts (Qualifying Year), 20xx
- List certification or license status, with dates issued (if relevant) (e.g., “P.Eng. (ON) license, Professional Engineers Ontario (20xx)”
- Create 3 separate sections (i.e., Education, Professional Training, Certifications) to highlight details if beneficial

Employment

- Describe your professional and/or work experience relating to the job you are seeking, e.g., graduate research, internships, assistantships, teaching, field placements, consulting, administration, management in both the public and private sectors
- Create separate sections to highlight details:
 - a) **Research:** activities and contracts, with the dollar value optional
 - b) **Teaching:** class size, undergrad/grad levels, course preparation, marking
 - c) **Industry/government/not-for-profit experiences:** job title, company name, location, dates
 - d) **Service:**
 - i. **University:** department, faculty, and university responsibilities, including committee work (such as thesis examination or hiring committees)
 - ii. **Professional:** referee or reviewing/editing functions for journals, granting agencies
 - iii. **Academic Community Outreach:** significant volunteer activities showing leadership or service
- Create an “Academic Experience” section to include both research and teaching experiences if you do not have enough experience for separate sections
- Organize jobs in reverse chronological order within each section, i.e., most recent first. Include beginning and terminating dates, job title, name of company or organization, and location
- Start points with action verbs; do not write in complete sentences or paragraphs
- List accomplishments, including benefits to organization; show your skills and abilities
- Do not forget to add supervisory experience (if applicable) within the appropriate sections of research, teaching, industry, and service

Publications/inventions/patents

- Include all, most recent first, in correct bibliographic format so that the reader can check details. Include relevant information such as author(s), title, publisher, place of publication, name of periodical, volume, issue number, date, page(s)
- Show both independent and collaborative work (if applicable)
- Create separate sections with headings for a lengthy publications list, placing sections in appropriate order:
 - a) authored or co-authored books, book chapters, monographs

- b) refereed, peer reviewed: journals, full papers or letters
- c) conference papers, abstracts or posters
- d) invited, non-refereed
- e) book reviews
- f) work in press, work submitted, work in preparation (separate headings)
- g) creative writing outside of one's professional field (if relevant).
- List inventions and patents; when listing a patent it is mandatory to include the country and year of issue

Presentations/conferences

List conference seminars, professional workshops, and presentations

Awards, scholarships, fellowships, prizes, grants

- Include both academic and professional
- State name of honour, granting institution or agency, and date (value optional)
- Explain acronyms; the meaning of the recognition may not be clear, especially those awarded by international universities/organizations

Professional affiliations

- Include current memberships, with dates
- Mention offices held, significant appointments, with dates

Volunteer experience

Format volunteer experience according to the message you wish to convey.

- If you wish to highlight two or more volunteer activities, create a separate heading (e.g., Volunteer Activities, Volunteer Experience, or Community Service)
- In this section, either list the organizations for which you volunteered or add detail about your contributions, beginning each point with an action verb

Languages spoken, read, written (if relevant)

List languages you can speak, read, or write if its relevant.

Hobbies, interests, leisure activities, travel

Show those with relevance to academic life (e.g., photographer with expertise to use as a teaching tool), or, if you wish, include a broader range of activities, such as athletic, social, intellectual, cultural, if applicants in your field traditionally include this information

References

- Supply the name, title, address, and contact information of 3 (or more) individuals who can comment on your fit to the institution where you are applying
- Choose your referees wisely, i.e., persons who know you and your work well, referees with high external visibility
- Be sure to ask their permission before submitting their names
- Whenever you provide reference information to an institution, advise your referees that they may be getting a request and keep them up-to-date on your professional activities
- Select individuals who can speak well on your behalf from various perspectives: one may be able to give a general overview while others may speak to the specific aspects required by the position
- Of special interest will be your referees' comments about your unique experiences (from personal, academic, or work experience), your strengths, and your weaknesses (with any extenuating circumstances explained)
- Tell your referees what particular topics they need to discuss so that their reference letter can be tailored to the positions you are seeking. Provide them with a copy of the job ad. It might also be useful to give them a copy of your cover letter

- If the advertisement requests that reference letters be sent immediately, provide sufficient information to your referees and tactfully follow up to ensure that the letters have been mailed well before the deadline

Notes on writing a curriculum vitae

- Place sections in the order of importance to correspond to the academic posting, particularly the employment section. It is important to determine the order of importance of research, teaching, other work experience, and service and reflect that in your CV. If you are not sure about the traditional formatting for CVs in your field, check with your supervisor or department chair. Also, include specific sections that are relevant to your field, e.g., computer proficiency, scientific instrumentation, etc.
- Include sufficient, well-written details about yourself to enable a good assessment of your qualifications for the position:
 - 2 to 4 pages for a young professional
 - 4 to 7 pages or more for a person with more experience
- If applying in North America omit reference to marital status, children, health, spouse's work, religious affiliation
- Do not include as headings, words such as "Personal Information," "Name," "Address"
- Omit negative words or information. Ensure that you use correct spelling and grammar. Take care to produce an excellent physical product with appropriate font sizes, paper stock, and good laser printing

Writing effective bullet points for a CV

Use bulleted statements throughout your CV. Each bullet point should strongly communicate your qualifications and accomplishments that are relevant to the position. If you have only one bullet point in a section, find a way to incorporate it into another section.

Review the "Summary of Qualifications" section on the [Major sections of a curriculum vitae](#) page of a for advice on writing bulleted statements if you are including this section.

Any bullet point in the Research/Teaching/Industry/Service Experience, Volunteer Experience, and Hobbies/Interests/Leisure Activities/Travel sections should begin with an action verb that will create a vivid image of your accomplishment. Be concise and avoid repeating verbs. Please refer to the list of [Action verbs](#) provided. Remember that all action verbs are not created equal! Verbs like "helped," "assisted," "participated," and "worked," although technically in the active voice, fail to provide a specific picture of what you have done, so avoid them wherever possible.

If you intend to use such words to show that your role was to participate in but not to lead a project, consider using other strategies. If you were one member of a two-person team, consider using "co-" as the prefix to the action verb describing your role (e.g., "Co-edited user's manual"); if you were part of a team with 2+ members, explain your role and end by indicating that others were involved (e.g., "Edited user's manual for XYZ software, as member of communications team," or "Edited user's manual for XYZ software, in collaboration with supervisor"). If, on the other hand, your goal is to hide the fact that your role was minimal, omit the statement.

You may find it helpful to think of the following four components as you begin to write bulleted statements:

1. **Skill:** what action you took — action verb (e.g., "designed")
2. **Task:** ways in which you applied skills — using descriptors, adjectives, and nouns (e.g., "client database")

3. **Tools:** how you performed the task — attitude conveyed, hardware/software, or process used (e.g., “MS Access”)
4. **Result:** what outcome you achieved — quantified wherever possible (e.g., “doubled speed of information retrieval”)

Complete statement

- **Designed client database using MS Access; doubled speed of information retrieval**

Note: Although each bullet point should include skill and task components, always adding tools and results may be too lengthy. Try to include points that use three or all four components several times throughout your CV, especially when demonstrating key achievements.

Curriculum vitae templates

Note: The way in which files open on your machine will depend on the web browser you are using, and the type(s) of software (e.g., Microsoft Word) installed on your device. For example, files may open up in a new window, download to your machine, etc.

- CV template (.doc)
- Cover letter template (.doc)

Cover letters

1. How can you differentiate yourself from the many good applicants applying for the position? What points will draw attention to you as a worthwhile candidate to interview? There is a fine line between projecting yourself positively and too aggressively, however, resulting in overkill and a concern about your ability to fit into the department
2. Personalize your letter by addressing it to the Chair of the Department or Chair of Search Committee, with the person’s name correctly spelled. A form letter is less well received, and you may therefore need to make a decision on the quantity vs. the quality of your letters
3. Ensure the highest quality of information possible in the letter accompanying your CV. Include a summary statement about your qualifications in clear, unambiguous points. Discuss your strengths and area of specialization. Observe the rules of good writing to help the reader ascertain your credentials quickly. Write short paragraphs with a clear opening sentence to define the topic of the paragraph and highlight relevant, important information. Use correct spelling and grammar
4. In addition to talking about your current research, include a one-paragraph or one-page, personalized (not vague or generic), concise, coherent statement about your future research interests or long-term goals so that your potential can be determined. It is especially important to make that connection when you are applying for a job that is somewhat different from what you are currently doing
5. It could also be to your advantage to mention the courses/general areas you would like to teach. Elaborate on your experience in seminars, lectures, and talks. Include details such as course name (and description if necessary) and number of students
6. Add information on what you feel are other strengths, such as enjoyment in working with groups, obtaining funding for projects, action-oriented research
7. Your potential for service (the third part of the triumvirate of research, teaching and service) and your collegiality can more easily be evaluated by including details of your work with committees, organizations, and clubs, e.g., organizing graduate student seminars or research presentations
8. The individuals reviewing your application are interested in continuity. If you have unexplained gaps in your CV, discuss them in your letter, e.g., the ten years it took to finish your Ph.D. after completing your Master’s degree. If you prefer, you could ask one of your referees to explain the situation in his/her letter of recommendation. However, patch up the holes as well as you can to make a good presentation
9. If currently employed and want to apply confidentially for another position, it is not necessary to tell your supervisor initially. The three referees you select can include trusted colleagues from your organization or individuals from other institutions who know you and your work well. In your letter,

- you could include a note that when the institution is serious about you and wishes to obtain a reference from your supervisor, you would then be prepared to supply the information
10. It may be to your advantage, if you are female, to indicate that fact if your first name cannot easily be identified by the reader. You could add Miss, Mrs. or Ms. in brackets before your name is typed at the end of your letter
 11. Have your application package reviewed by others to check for relevance and quality of presentation
 12. If you discover a potential job opening prepare a broadcast letter to send with your CV. Details about broadcast letters are available in the [Cover Letters](#) section.
 13. In addition to submitting a cover letter and CV you might need to prepare a research statement, research plan and budget, and teaching philosophy statement and/or teaching dossier