



The University of Edinburgh

Careers Service

Effective Applications

CVs, covering letters & application forms

Semester & Vacation Jobs



expanding horizons

www.ed.ac.uk/careers

In line with the equal opportunities policies of the Careers Service and the University of Edinburgh, we are keen to ensure that all students can benefit from our services.

This booklet can be made available in alternative formats. Please contact your Careers Consultant or Careers Service Infodesk for more information.

When finished with this publication, please return this booklet to: -

**Careers Service
The University of Edinburgh
Third Floor, Main Library Building
George Square
or
Weir Building (KB)**

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Apart from a useful source of income, working during the semester and/or vacations gives you valuable work experience and enhances the employability skills required by graduate employers. There is a huge variety of work on offer including administration, care work, retail, bar work and catering, so you will be able to develop skills such as communication, team work, leadership, problem solving, planning and organising.

Good time management skills are required to combine academic study with a part time job. The University of Edinburgh, therefore, recommends that full-time students do not work more than 15 hours per week during semester. Some students may prefer to reduce their hours or work on a casual basis prior to exams or academic deadlines.

This booklet will provide you with the information you need to make effective applications for a variety of semester and vacation jobs.

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Employers will expect you to match your application to their particular vacancy rather than using the same CV or application form answers for different types of jobs and employers. It is important, therefore, to analyse the job description and person specification so that you know what the employer is looking for each time you apply for a job.

Follow these 4 steps to maximise your chance of being selected for interview.

1. Make a list of what you have achieved so far.
 - Include your education, previous work experience, interests, leisure activities, positions of responsibility and any other achievements.
 - Check your start/finish dates for education and work.
2. Consider what you can offer employers.
 - Analyse your strengths, skills and personal qualities.
 - Think of relevant examples you can use as evidence.
3. Research the employer and the vacancy.
 - What qualifications and experience is the employer looking for?
 - Which skills and competencies are required?
 - What do you know about the employment sector?
 - What makes this organisation different from its competitors?
4. Match your achievements and skills to the vacancy.
 - Choose relevant examples to demonstrate your suitability for the vacancy.
 - You are now ready to write your CV or complete your application form.

Employers will state which method of application they want you to use.

- Telephone
- Email
- In person
- Application form – paper or online
- CV and covering letter



Telephone

If you make a good impression during an initial telephone call, you may then be asked to apply in writing or attend a face-to-face interview.

- Introduce yourself clearly.
- Say which job you are applying for and where you saw it advertised.
- Answer questions about your suitability for the job.
- Know when you are available to attend an interview and start work.
- Ask questions that relate to the job or place of work.
- Sound friendly and enthusiastic.



Email

Employers will expect the same standard of English in an email as they would in a formal business letter.

- Use an appropriate email address for a job application.
- Introduce yourself and state clearly which vacancy you are applying for.
- Show why you are a suitable applicant for the job.
- Explain why you would like to work for that employer in particular.
- Make sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.
- Attach your CV unless specifically asked not to.



Applying in Person

If you are asked to apply for a job by calling in to meet the employer, behave as you would at a formal interview.

- Make a good first impression by dressing appropriately.
- Shake the employer's hand firmly and smile.
- Show that you have researched the job and the company.
- Give examples which demonstrate your relevant experience and skills.
- Ask questions about the job to show your interest in the vacancy.
- Leave a copy of your CV with the employer.

Application forms (online or paper) vary considerably and range from one page asking you to list your personal and biographical details to several pages which require you to answer competency based questions or write a personal statement. Make sure you give yourself enough time to complete the form to a high standard so that you make a good first impression with the employer.

Factual questions

These questions relate to your personal details, education and work experience.

- Check all the dates you include are correct so the employer can follow your education and work history.
- Make sure all the information you include is accurate as you may be asked to supply evidence, such as exam certificates, at an interview.

Competency based questions

These questions ask you to provide evidence of skills and qualities needed for the job you are applying for. You may find it helpful to use the **CARL** mnemonic when drafting your answers.

- **Context** - describe a specific situation or task to demonstrate the skill.
- **Action** - explain your individual contribution.
- **Result** - give evidence of a successful outcome.
- **Learning** - show what you have learnt about yourself and your abilities.

Personal statement

You may be asked to write a personal statement in support of your application.

- Explain why you are applying for this particular job.
- Give reasons why you would like to work for this organisation.
- Prove your suitability by matching your most relevant qualifications, experience and skills to the job description and person specification.

<h3>Application form checklist</h3>
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- Follow all instructions and answer every question.
- Photocopy a paper application form for your initial draft.
- Save your online application answers, then go back and check them before submitting the application.
- Use a formal writing style.
- Make sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.
- Ask referees' permission before including their names and contact details.
- Keep a copy to refer to when preparing for interview.

A CV is a marketing tool which should provide evidence that your education, work experience, skills and interests match an employer's requirements for a particular job. It is important to update your CV regularly and adapt it to suit each vacancy you apply for.

Layout

Employers will not spend much time reading your CV, so it is important to make a good first impression.

- One page may be long enough but, if not, never exceed two pages.
- Choose an appropriate font and font size.
- Use clear informative headings to separate the information.
- Be consistent in your use of bold, italics and underlining.

Content

If the layout and general appearance of your CV makes a good first impression, the employer is more likely to read the content.

Personal Details

- Include your name, address, phone number and appropriate email address.
- Other information such as date of birth and nationality is optional.
- Non EU students should explain their UK right to work status.

Education

- Use reverse chronological order, starting with your current course.
- Include university and school names, qualifications and dates.
- List only the relevant modules and skills from your degree course.

Work Experience

- Use reverse chronological order, starting with your current or most recent job.
- Include employer's name and location, job title and dates of employment.
- Describe your duties and achievements.

Skills

- Relate your education and work experience to the skills required for the job.
- Give specific examples to illustrate your suitability for the vacancy.
- Include relevant general skills such as IT and languages.

Interests and Achievements

- Explain your level of involvement rather than just making a list.
- Relate your interests and achievements to skills valued by employers.
- This section allows the employer to see you as an individual.

References

- It is acceptable to state 'References available on request'.
- Ask your referees' permission before including their names and contact details.
- Let your referees know which jobs you are applying for.

CV checklist

- Tailor your CV to match each vacancy you apply for.
- Read the job description and person specification before writing your CV.
- Your CV should not exceed two pages.
- Make a good first impression with a clear layout.
- Avoid a cluttered appearance / too much white space.
- Make sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.
- Avoid time gaps as these can arouse suspicion.
- Do not include any irrelevant information.
- Proofread your CV before sending to an employer.
- Remember to update your CV regularly.

A covering letter is an important part of your application and should always be sent with a CV and application form unless you are specifically asked not to send one. A well written letter tailored to a specific vacancy will create a good impression and encourage the employer to read your CV. Make it clear to the employer, therefore, that you have written the letter specifically for their vacancy and you have researched the company.

Layout

- Covering letters should follow a formal business layout (see example on page 10).
- The letter should be one page in length and written in short paragraphs.
- Address the letter to a named person if possible and end with 'Yours sincerely'.
- Type your name under your signature.

Content

- Introduce yourself and explain which job you are applying for and where you saw it advertised. If you are applying speculatively, state clearly what type of job you wish to be considered for, the hours you could work and when you would be available to start.
- Say why you are interested in this job and, if appropriate, how it would fit in with your future career plans.
- Explain why you think you are a strong candidate for the vacancy.
- Refer to the most relevant information on your CV but without repeating phrases or sentences word for word.
- Give reasons why you would like to work for this company in particular.
- End on a positive note and say when you would be available for interview.

Covering letter checklist

- If asked to apply electronically, send the covering letter as an email message and attach your CV.
- Your covering letter should enhance your CV rather than repeating it.
- If you have to start with 'Dear Sir/Madam', end with 'Yours faithfully'.
- Make sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.
- Proofread your covering letter before sending it to an employer.

21 Holyrood Street
Edinburgh
EH16 5AY

12th September 2011

Addressed to a **named person**.

Try and avoid Dear Sir or Madam. Telephone the company for a name if you do not have one.

Mrs T. Appleton
Human Resources Manager
Scottish Supermarket plc.
Central Road
Edinburgh
EH1 1AZ

Include job title & where you saw the job advertised.

Job adverts often list skills required. A good covering letter will take the skills and / or experience required and **show how you match these** – examples of skills can be from work experience, social activities, voluntary work etc.

This letter uses a direct style which the applicant thinks sales people will appreciate.

Dear Mrs Appleton,

I would like to apply for the part time position of Customer Service Assistant at your Pollock Street store, as advertised on MyCareerHub on the University of Edinburgh Careers Service website. I enclose a copy of my CV as requested.

My experience as a Sales Assistant at your Stirling store gave me my first taste of retail sales. I learnt the importance of displaying products effectively and enjoyed the contact with the general public when working at the check-out. During the summer I worked in a busy bar at an Edinburgh Fringe venue. Here I enjoyed the variety of chatting with customers and maintaining a friendly and welcoming atmosphere whilst providing quick and efficient service.

I am a very sociable person, highly motivated and able to work on my own. Travelling alone around Eastern Europe last summer was a good test of my independence. I am well organised and, having worked on checkouts and at a busy bar, I know the importance of accuracy when dealing with figures and record keeping.

I believe I have the relevant skills and experience for this vacancy and would welcome the opportunity of an interview to discuss my application. I am available to start work from 3rd October and available for interview at any time. I look forward to hearing from you.

A confident, upbeat but not pushy end to the letter is best.

If you have to address the letter 'Dear Sir/Madam' end it 'Yours faithfully'.

Always SIGN the letter and type your name as your signature may not be easily read.

Yours sincerely

Ed Burgh

You can also mention when you are available to start work.

Only list and/or expand on courses that are relevant to the job applied for.

Ed Burgh
21 Holyrood Road
Edinburgh
EH16 5AY
Tel: (0131) 123 4567

EDUCATION

2010 – present The University of Edinburgh

MA Business Studies
Courses include Marketing and Finance

Mention the 'S' Grades or GCSEs you feel are relevant.

2004 - 2010 Stirling Academy
Highers: English (A), Geography (A), Mathematics (B), History (B), French (C)
9 Standard grades including Accounting (A)

EMPLOYMENT

Summer 2010 **Bar Assistant**
The Comedy Bar, Edinburgh
Temporary work in busy Fringe venue
Skills gained: • ability to work under pressure
 • excellent communication skills

List the skills gained from each job.

Bullet points make it easier to read.

2008-2010 **Part-Time Sales Assistant**
Scottish Supermarket plc, Stirling
Saturday/holiday work as a sales assistant and in cash office
Skills gained: • communicating with the public
 • accuracy and paying attention to detail
 • team work and initiative

OTHER SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

If you have little or no work experience, highlight what you have achieved in other activities.

Other skills
• Full, clean driving licence
• Conversational French and Russian
• Working knowledge of Microsoft Word
Cellist in school and university orchestra
• Performed to audiences of up to 300 people
• Time management required to practise and attend rehearsals

Indicate the skills acquired from any activities you have been involved in.

Travelled around Eastern Europe Aug – Sept 2010
• Travelled and stayed with people from different cultures
• Developed excellent planning and organising skills

You can also include sports and hobbies, especially if they are **RELEVANT** to the job for which you are applying.

Listing referees is **OPTIONAL**. Keep referees up to date with any applications you are making.

REFEREES

Mr W Wallace
Scottish Supermarket plc
Stirling
FK1 3AB
(Employer)

Dr V. Smart
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh
EH8 1AB
(Director of Studies)

Further Information and Resources

This booklet will get you started in making effective applications for Semester and Vacation jobs.

You may also find the other guides in this series useful:

Effective applications - Graduate Jobs and Internships

Effective applications - Postgraduate Courses and Academic Jobs (available online only)

Effective applications lead to interviews, so you will find our guides to **Successful Interviews** and **Telephone Interviews** extremely useful in helping you prepare beforehand and perform on the day.

Look out for our series of talks on preparing CVs and application forms held throughout the year.

If you would like help with your applications, you can also visit the Careers Service to speak to one of our team.

www.ed.ac.uk/careers

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