

Introducing the tools for individuals entering the labour market



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Employability and transition to the labour market for adult educators: Tools for entering the labour market

1. How to write a CV

The CV is a fundamental tool for a job application, it is like a personal business card that should capture recruiters' attention. The purpose of the CV is to be invited to a job interview.

Please be aware that there is no perfect CV. It is important to tell your personal story. Emphasise your strengths and make sure to adapt the document to individual job requirements. The contents of the ideal CV are determined by the job position and the person who is applying.

To successfully capture the recruiter's attention, it is essential to better understand how recruiters work. Please keep in mind that they don't have much time for analysing each CV and usually take a very short look at your CV. Therefore, it has to be interesting enough for them to continue reading. Time is crucial for recruiters; in fact, if they had to read each CV from the beginning to the end, they would fail to achieve their goals.

Some advice:

1. Help the recruiter to easily identify your skills and your results by using the right keywords, which make it clear that you have read the job opening carefully.
2. Use key words.
3. Try to summarise everything on one to two pages.
4. Insert a summary, a very short paragraph in which you state who you are, what you do today, which skills you have, what makes you unique, what you would like to do in your future (max 50 words).
5. Customise the CV to align it with the selection criteria.

Be aware that requirements may vary from country to country and remember to always check the requirements to be included in the CV when you are applying abroad!

For example, CVs in the United Kingdom and the United States usually do not include the following information:

- date of birth,
- gender,
- photo.

Before you start writing your CV, you have to decide on the format and the structure that you want to use.

Here are our general recommendations for making your CV well structured and clear:

1. White margins help readers focus on the content.
2. Short paragraphs contribute towards better readability.
3. Use a clear font such as Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial and a font size not smaller than 12 pt and no larger than 18 pt. Don't use different font styles.
4. Adjust your CV to the job profile and make sure that it is easy to read.

Formats

Often-used CV formats are the Europass and the resume.

Europass is a standard format valid for most professions, which allows you to further detail your experiences, dividing them into thematic sections.

When filling out this type of format, pay attention to length, because remember that recruiters don't spend more than ten seconds on your CV.

A *resume* is a more creative format and suitable for the professional fields of innovation, finance, industry, marketing, and communication.

It can include colours, photos and infographics and other elements that make it more customisable. Be careful to make it clean and clear and easy to read.

Now let's look at the structure of the Europass-style CV format in order to understand the contents to better fill in each part.

Personal data

In this section, you have to include contact information. The criterion must be maximum availability; for this reason, it is necessary to write down all your contact details.

The information you need to include:

- name,
- surname,
- address,
- telephone, including country code,
- e-mail,
- Skype,
- LinkedIn,
- nationality, including if dual nationality, if applicable,
- gender,
- date of birth.

Photo

The photo is required in both Europass and resume formats.

The image must be frontal, with good lighting and a neutral background. The dress code is usually formal. And remember to smile!

Photos showing you playing sports or vacationing with friends are not suitable.

Professional summary

The summary is a short paragraph, just two or three sentences, no longer than five lines at the beginning of the CV, describing your professional profile and highlighting your characteristics and your skills.

It can be an effective introduction to your resume to capture the recruiter's attention.

It is a statement about:

- your professional identity,
- your professional activities,
- your professional goals.

The summary section is highly customisable in relation to who you are, the job position, and the company to which you are applying.

Work experience

The work experience section is the first part that recruiters read, so it is important to clearly state the results you have achieved. List your experiences, beginning with the most recent.

Don't worry if you don't have any professional experience in your sector. You can create a new section, called "vocational experience", where you will include internship experiences, volunteer civilian service, babysitting, children's entertainer, and the like.

Those experiences say something about you and your skills and therefore allow the recruiter to know you better.

Any experience that you report on your CV must include:

- start and end date of each employment relationship,
- the starting year and the phrase "in progress" or "present" for work experiences or internships still in progress,
- company name and a description line,
- name of the position held – it is essential to use clear and widely used definitions, which are understandable even for those who do not work in your sector,
- activities carried out and skills acquired by them, in a synthetic but descriptive manner. You can also choose to use bulleted lists.

Education and training

Describe your education and training experiences, starting with the most recent. Add a field for each course, reporting the following data for each:

- year of graduation,
- name of the course, qualification obtained,
- name and location of the university,
- final grade,
- thesis title,
- course exams: you will have to select only a few (no more than three), which you consider having been decisive for the development of your professional identity.

In this section, you can also report study experiences abroad, such as Erasmus. You will have to report the information related to the university where you worked, indicating the duration and the activities in which you took part.

Otherwise, based on the number of experiences abroad, you can decide to create a special section in which to summarise them.

Personal skills

Language skills

Indicate your level of writing, reading, and speaking literacy. Also, include any language course attended, language exams and the marks obtained, significant stays abroad attesting to your command of the language.

If you have a certificate, indicate the date on which you obtained it.

Soft skills

“Soft skills represent a dynamic combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive abilities, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills alongside ethical values.”

(Haselberger, Oberhuemer, Perez, Cinque, & Capasso, 2012, p. 82)

Soft skills are life skills, because they can be exercised in all areas of life.

For each competence that you report, specify in which context it was acquired. We need to be able to exemplify episodes where transversal skills have been implemented.

Digital skills

In this section, you will have to indicate your digital skills, specifying your level of proficiency and any IT certificates you may have earned.

Professional skills (or other skills)

Indicate any job-related competence not mentioned elsewhere and specify the value it adds to your candidacy. Specify in which context it was acquired.

Driving license

In this section, you have to indicate if you have a driving license, specifying which type.

Additional information

The additional information section gives you the possibility to tell the recruiter a little more about who you are and your personal background.

In this section, you have to specify all those activities that allowed you to develop the skills useful for performing the job for which you are applying (training programmes, interests, hobbies, etc.). Enter only relevant profile information.

In this section, you can report:

- participation in workshops or international conferences,
- publications: if you have written articles published in scientific journals, you will need to provide the data in the following order:
 - author: indicate the full surname and the initial of the name,
 - title (in italics),
 - name of the magazine (in italics),
 - year of the journal (for example: Vol.1),
 - issue number (for example: n.1),

- page numbers.

Example: Harish J., *Society and Social Power*, in *Cadmus*, 2014, Vol. 2, n. 3, pp. 584-590.

- involvement in projects, boards, reviews,
- membership in associations,
- affiliations.

Consent to processing personal data (personal data)

Privacy laws mandate that companies must have your authorisation to process your personal data. Remember that you have the possibility to create new sections in your CV, based on your experiences and what you believe to be important in relation to the position you are applying for.

Place, date of compilation, and signature

At the end of your CV, remember to insert the place and the date of compilation. Update your CV frequently and change the date each time.

Remember to add a legible signature to your CV.

2. How to write a cover letter

After reading your CV and being interested in you, the recruiter will read your cover letter.

It is important to write it correctly and effectively, because it can make the difference and help you get a job interview.

There are some important points you need to keep in mind before writing a cover letter:

- The cover letter must be written ad hoc for every occasion; it has to be specific to each job.
- When you write it, you must focus only on the most significant experiences and on the skills learned related to the position you are applying for.
- The cover letter shouldn't talk about you but about the possibility of a match between you, the organisation, and the job position.
- Your cover letter is a supplement to add to your CV, not a repetition of it. It shouldn't re-state your CV information but should focus more on your motivation, on how you would match the organisation and the position. It is an opportunity for you to connect with the employer on a more personal and direct level.

Next, you collect information from the job description. It could be useful to answer the following questions:

1. What does the job require?
2. What skills are required and how do they fit with the organisation?
3. What motivates me to apply for this position?
4. Why am I the best person to get this job?

Once you have thought about the answers and have them clear in your mind, you can start writing a cover letter.

The cover letter should have an uncluttered look and contain plenty of white space, which makes for quick and pleasant reading. It should not be longer than one page. Remember that the recruiter cannot devote much time to it.

The cover letter must follow the same visual structure as your CV:

- simple,
- clear,
- white margins,
- small blocks of text,
- the same font and size used in the CV,
- some words in bold.

You have to convince the reader that:

- you know the organisation well and value its philosophy – that this is why you want to apply,
- you share the same fundamental values and beliefs as the organisation,
- you have the right skills and the right experiences.

Now let's look at the parts that make up a cover letter.

Here you can find an example of a cover letter. Next, we will go through this example to introduce you to the information that should be placed in each section.

Heading

Your contact details must be placed at the top left. The top right corner reports the data of the person/company to whom you are addressing the letter. Indicate the name and surname of the human resources manager. If you don't know it, search on the web or call the company. If you can't find it, use a generic phrase such as "Dear Human Resources Manager".

Object of the letter

It is important to specify which job opening you are responding to. If you submit an unsolicited application, it is especially important to specify your objective.

References

This section of the cover letter must be a paragraph in which you introduce yourself to the organisation, referring to the job position for which you are applying.

Be sure to mention the names of the people you met in your personal and professional life who come from that particular organisation (if you remember them).

Show that you know the organisation. This is a good opportunity to connect with the employer at a higher level.

Tell a strong story that impresses the employer, help him/her visualise yourself, and try to connect you to the organisation and its work environment.

My possible contribution

The second part of the cover letter concerns you, the candidate. Therefore, it reports what you can offer to the organisation in terms of knowledge, skills, experience, and personal characteristics. Rather than repeating what is already in the CV, you should give some specific examples to show

how your skills are in line with the position you are applying for. Give examples of how and why you developed the required skills and emphasise their transferability in relation to previous experiences and the role you are aspiring to.

You can also point out university-related experiences (specific fields of study or internships). Don't forget to include any results obtained from your actions.

Highlight your transversal skills, from team work to communicational skills.

The aim is to try to match your profile with that of the position and focus the recruiter's attention on what you can offer and your real strengths, such as:

- demonstrated knowledge of one or more foreign languages or ICT,
- written work on a topic of interest to the organisation or on the company business,
- participation in master's programmes or courses consistent with the business activity,
- experience (internships included) in the company's area of competence,
- a demonstrable "passion" for the facts related to that business segment,
- personal characteristics particularly suited to the business context.

It is always a good idea to give information on availability and flexibility (travel, internships, shift work, holidays, various types of contracts, comfortable with stressful environments).

Personal motivation

In the last paragraph of the cover letter, you can specify why you want to enter into that specific organisational context. You can deepen your motivation on multiple levels. You can explain why you are attracted by the organisation, by that sector, and by that specific position.

Formal ending and thanks

Thank the recipient of the letter for his or her consideration/attention and express the desire in being contacted as soon as possible.

In summary, in this video we have explained how to write an effective cover letter.

Always remember:

- Write a new cover letter for each occasion.
- Address it to a natural person.
- Do not write more than one page.
- Don't use too formal language but don't be too enthusiastic either. It is important to study the language of the company and use a similar style.
- Don't repeat what you have already said in your CV.
- Only focus on the most relevant experiences and skills for the position you apply for.
- Don't focus too much on your studies.
- Double check for spelling and grammatical errors.

3. How to prepare yourself for a job interview

When preparing yourself for a job interview, you should:

- carefully read the job application, your cover letter, and your CV,
- critically analyse your CV, identifying the situations or former jobs in which you developed your knowledge and skills,

- deeply analyse the job you apply for, relating the job description to your knowledge and skills,
- be on time for the job interview.

You may also think about answers to possible questions that may be asked during a job interview, such as:

- What do you know about this company/organisation?
- Why do you want to work in this company/organisation?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses for the job you are applying for?
- How much do you expect to earn?
- Where do you see yourself in five years from now?
- Why do you think you should be selected?
- How will the company/organisation benefit from hiring you?

4. How to introduce yourself on social media such as LinkedIn

When introducing yourself on social media such as LinkedIn, take into account the following aspects:

- Choose a professional picture of yourself.
- Prepare a short but effective introduction about yourself and indicate webpages where other people may find professional activities you were or are involved in.
- Describe the educational, training, and professional experiences you had over the course of your career to show your learning and expertise.
- Mention any volunteer, cultural, or sports projects/activities you are/have been involved in.
- Carefully search and choose persons, organisations, and projects related to your professional domain and ask them to join your network.
- Be selective when accepting new contacts to join your network.
- Identify your most relevant skills and ask key people to endorse you.

Exercises

To test your learning progress on the topic “Understanding the labour market and professional profiles for adult educators”, we have prepared some exercises for you.

At OpenWueCampus, you will find some exercise to get started with working on your personal tools to enter the labour market.

The exercises invite you to build your CV, write your cover letter, introduce yourself on LinkedIn, and update your LinkedIn profile.

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