



IS20100
Personal and Professional Development Planning

Week 4:
 Effective Applications

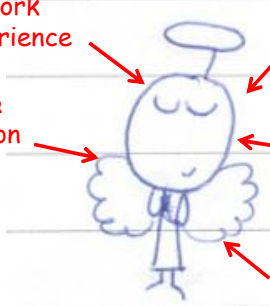
 **UCD Career Development Centre**
 An tScoil Forbartha Gaímeachta

Overview

- What employers are looking for
- Analysing job adverts
- Marketing yourself on paper
- CV structure & format
- Writing an effective cover letter
- Online applications – competency based questions
- Assignment 3 Briefing

What are employers looking for in an applicant?

The 'perfect' graduate applicant




- Work experience
- Transferrable skills
- Academic achievement
- Understands the role & organisation
- Drive & motivation

Transferable Skills

- Skills developed in one context that can be applied in another
- Developed via:
 - Academic studies
 - Work experience – paid/voluntary
 - Other activities/interests

Some examples



- IT/web
- Communication
- Interpersonal
- Problem-solving
- Analytical thinking
- Time management
- Research
- Planning & organising
- Conceptual thinking
- Teamwork

Analysing Job Adverts



Matchmaking

- What is the employer looking for?
 - Qualifications
 - Experience
 - Knowledge
 - Skills/competencies
- How do you match up – (evidence-based)
- Read between the lines – what do they *really* need?

Marketing yourself on paper

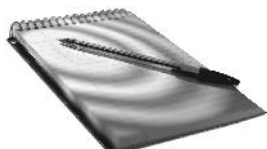
Your CV is....

- Your sales brochure
- Often your first contact with prospective employer
- **YOU** until the employer meets you



Marketing yourself on paper

- Don't make assumptions – spell it out!
- Do the recruiter's work for them
- A statement of fact is not boastful/arrogant
- Accentuate the positive
- Put yourself in the recruiters shoes



Why do I want this role?
What's required to do it well?
(explicit & implicit)
What do I have to offer?
What evidence can I provide?



What makes you stand out from the crowd?



CV Structure & Format

Characteristics of a good CV

- Good structure & presentation
- Tailored
- Complete yet concise
- Factual
- Positive

30 seconds to make a good impression





- Assisted with.....
- Involved in.....
- Helped to.....
- Part of a team that looked at.....

Strong, clear, active verbs

- Planned
- Organised
- Designed
- Analysed
- Presented
- Delivered
- Developed

Format Guidelines

- Font size 11 or 12, 1-2 pages
- *Avoid funny fonts*
- Avoid abbreviations
- Consistency – spacing, indentation etc.
- Avoid large blocks of text
- **Bold** for emphasis but don't overdo
- PDF

Example format for a chronological CV

1. Personal details
2. Education
3. Employment History
4. Skills Profile
5. Achievements / Interests
6. References

Personal Details

- Keep it brief
- Contact details
- Name across the top
- Professional email address

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Career Aim/Personal Profile

- Can be difficult to get this right
- Ask yourself what it adds
- May be appropriate in some situations but not others

Education

- Reverse Chronological order– most recent first
- Include:
 - Dates
 - Programme & institution
 - Grades (GPA and equivalent in degree class e.g. 1:1 honours, 2:1 honours etc.)
 - Relevant subjects/modules
 - Projects, dissertations etc. if relevant

Education

University College Dublin 2009-2012

- BA (Hons.) Psychology
- GPA: 3.6/4.2
- Expecting to graduate with a 2:1 honours degree
- Relevant subjects include Cognitive Psychology and Lifespan Psychology

Newtown Community College 2004-2009

Leaving certificate:

- **Higher level:** Geography (A1), Maths (B2), Chemistry (B2), English (A2), Economics (C1)
- **Ordinary level:** Irish (B2), French (A2)

Employment History

- Reverse chronological order
- Include:
 - Name and location of employer
 - Job title
 - From/to dates
 - Concise description responsibilities
 - Key achievements – metrics/tangible results where possible

Employment History

Prism Occupational Psychologists, Intern June-Sept 2011

- Attended client meetings
- Worked on proposals for new pieces of work
- Re-organised filing system
- Conducted research
- Set up Twitter account

Employment History

Prism, Knowledge Management Intern June-Sept 2010

- Conducted research on leadership practices in the Oil & Gas sector using multiple sources and presented my findings to the senior management team.
- Re-organised the firm's online filing system, significantly enhancing consultants' ability to find the information they required quickly and efficiently.
- Initiated, set up and managed a Twitter account for the firm to promote new thought leadership papers to clients.
- Commended by the MD for the valuable contribution I made in a short space of time.

Skills Profile

- Highlight transferable & technical skills
- Strong, clear, concise language
- Tailor to each application
- Supporting evidence is essential

- My track record in research speaks for itself
- I am very organised with excellent attention to detail
- I have great communication skills
- Excellent IT skills
- I can think on my feet and am flexible in the face of change.
- Team player
- I have outstanding language skills (A2 in Leaving Certificate French)

Key Skills

- Ability to identify, analyse and evaluate the information needs of different groups and determine how best to meet those needs.
- Confident presenter with experience of speaking in front a range of audiences, from class-mates to senior managers.
- Strong IT capability – proficient in the use of MS Office, MS FrontPage, Access and web design using HTML.
- Excellent research skills developed through work on undergraduate and postgraduate dissertation projects
- Contributed successfully as a team member and engaged effectively with colleagues in academic, voluntary and professional contexts.

Achievements/Interests

- Don't neglect this section!
- Keep it concise and relevant
- Avoid generalisations – “walking the dog”, “meeting new people”

Secretary of the UCD Hockey club

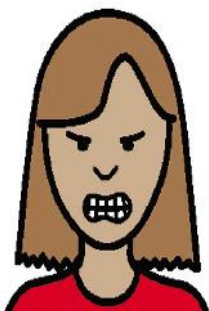
- Through promotional activities turned a declining membership into a 20% increase in 2010/2011.
- Organised social events to develop team spirit.
- Developed my understanding of teamwork and the importance of getting the right person for the right job: we had to reorganise player positions after a bad loss to maximise our strengths and minimise weaknesses.

References

- Don't necessarily have to include references unless requested
- If asked include two references
- **BE SURE** to get permission

Recruiter's Pet Hates

- Spelling mistakes/typos
- Clichés
- Txting lingo is nt gr8
- Busy format
- 'One size fits all' approach
- Irrelevant information



Remember that spell check can't do everything.....

- Extra Circular Activities
- At secondary school I was a prefix
- In my spare time I enjoy hiding my horse
- I am a conscious individual
- I have a desire to work with commuters
- Dear Madman
- My hobbits include



Cover Letters

Business layout

Structure: Introduction...

Why me...

Why you...

Conclusion...

Your cover letter should....

- Grab the readers attention
- Be clear and concise
- Free from typos/grammatical errors
- Contain relevant information
- Be targeted

Your cover letter should not....

- Be a note – “hi, here’s my CV, bye”
- Be an epic
- Contain your life story

Online Applications

Online Application Tips

- Allow enough time – don't leave until last minute
- Print a blank copy first
- Type answers in word & copy into form
- Save as you go
- Keep a copy

Interview Tips

What does the employer need to find out before they can give someone a job?

1. Can they do the job?



Do they have the.....

- Education
- Qualifications
- Experience
- Skills
- Abilities / aptitudes
- Knowledge

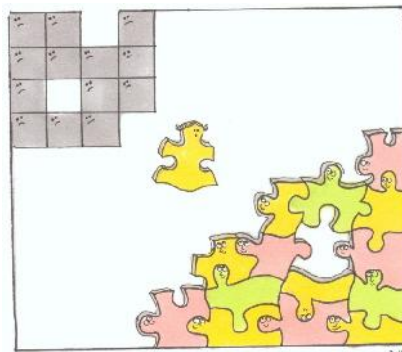
2. Will they do the job?



Do they demonstrate....

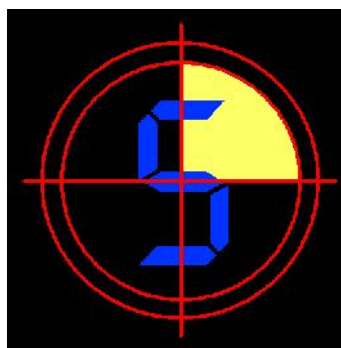
- Interest
- Motivation
- Enthusiasm
- Commitment
- Realistic expectations

3. Will they fit in?



Is there a good person-organisation fit?

- Personality
- Values
- Cultural fit
- Emotional intelligence / interpersonal skills



Before the interview

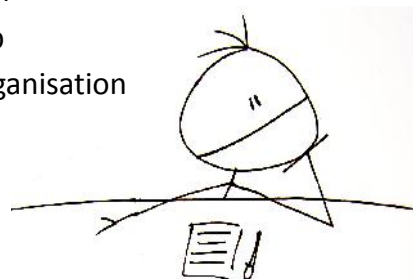
Interview Preparation Checklist

- ✓ Do your research
- ✓ Anticipate and prepare for key questions



Research

1. Yourself
2. The job
3. The organisation



1. Know yourself

- Why you want the job
- What motivates you
- Your skills, abilities and attributes relative to the role
- Your values
- Your key achievements
- Your strengths and development
- Your career goals and ambitions

Strengths & Development Areas

- **Evidence** – It's not enough to say "I am a great communicator"
- **Examples** – prepare a couple of examples to illustrate each of your key strengths
- **Keep it positive** "I'm rubbish with people, I lose my temper a lot and I find it hard to get up in the mornings"
- **Avoid clichés** – "I am a perfectionist", "I have too much empathy"

2. Know the job

- Job specification
- Profiles of current graduates on the company website
- Information from company presentations
- People you know who do similar jobs
- Online occupational profiles (e.g. Prospects websites)

3. Know the organisation

- Website, grad literature, annual reports etc.
- Mission statement, strategy documents, service plans
- Press articles
- Sector/ industry analyses
- Competitor websites

Job-hunting myth #312:

The most qualified person always gets the job.....



First impressions....

- On time
- Appropriate dress
- Grooming
- Demeanour



Body Language

- Confidence
- Eye Contact
- Handshake
- Smile
- Sit/stand tall
- Don't fidget

Competency-based Interviews:
Past performance is the best predictor of future performance

Tell me about a time when.....

- You achieved a goal
- You had to deal with a challenging situation
- You to meet a tight deadline
- You worked as part of a team
- You took the lead
- You had to take the initiative to get something done

Common graduate competencies

- Drive / Achievement Orientation
- Teamwork
- Commercial awareness
- Problem-solving ability
- Analytical thinking
- Initiative
- Flexibility
- Emotional intelligence

Competency Examples

- Clear, concise tangible examples
- From course, work experience, extra-curricular
- STAR
 - Situation
 - Task
 - Action
 - Result



Avoiding pitfalls

- Listen carefully
- Take cues from your interviewer
- Ask for clarification
- Take time to think
- Avoid defensiveness and/or negativity



Negotiation?



"OK, this is my final offer. You get an office with a window but you are not allowed to look outside."

Have you any questions for us?

- Not too many
- Pick with care
- Avoid being critical
- What happens next?



Dealing with rejection

- Ask yourself why
 - Things you can accept as fair
 - Things you can change

