

Guide to Medical CVs and Cover Letters

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

A CV provides a short summary of your employment history, qualifications, skills and experience, with a strong emphasis on specific skills relating to the position applied for.

Although applications for specialty training posts in the UK are completed through *Oriel* (www.oriel.nhs.uk) and applications for consultant posts through the NHS jobs portal, many posts still require a CV.

When may I need a CV?

- ✓ Applications for General Practice posts (locum, salaried or partner levels);
- ✓ Academic Foundation Training;
- ✓ Non-training posts, such as LAS (Locum for Service), SAS (Staff and Associate Specialist), RMO (Resident Medical Officer) or Clinical Fellow;
- ✓ Applications for entry onto the Specialist or GP Register with a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) or GP Registration (CEGPR);
- ✓ Academic clinical positions;
- ✓ Research positions (e.g. PhD, postdoctoral researcher, lecturer);
- ✓ Locum work at any level, grade or specialty;
- ✓ Applications for committee positions;
- ✓ Applications for “out of training experiences”, such as Leadership Fellowship and other non-clinical roles;
- ✓ Applications to work abroad;
- ✓ Applications to work for a private healthcare organisation (e.g. BUPA);
- ✓ Appraisals and revalidation;
- ✓ Applications for clinical attachments (observerships) or electives.

The above list is not exhaustive, and it is always good practice to update your CV regularly at least every six months to a year. A logical, concise and clearly presented CV helps assessors understand quickly whether and how you are suitable for the role.

The person who is shortlisting candidates for interview will have on average only two minutes to review your CV in the first instance to determine whether your application should be considered further.

How should I structure my CV?

On average, your recruiter will have less than a minute to skim-read your CV. You can stand out from the crowd if you can make their task of cross-referencing your information with the person specification easier. You can do this by presenting information in a logical manner while highlighting skills and experience relevant for the role you wish to be considered for.

Split your CV into different section headings

Any role you are applying for, check for any available guidelines on the content, order of sections, and length. For example, the GMC have strict criteria for CVs for CESR:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_applications/cesr_academic_cv.asp

http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_applications/cesr_cegpr_cv.asp

The following sections are typical for a medical CV:

1) Personal details

- ✓ Full name
- ✓ Correspondence address (preferably your home address rather than departmental address)
- ✓ Contact telephone numbers
- ✓ Professional email address (e.g. nhs.net, doctors.org.uk)
- ✓ General Medical Council registration number and National Training Number (if available)
- ✓ If you have the right to work in the UK, you can include this information here.

UK employers are forbidden by the Equality Act from making decision based on potentially discriminating factors, so there is no need to include the following on your medical CV in the UK:

- × Marital status
- × Date of birth
- × Gender
- × Photo

2) Profile

A profile is a paragraph of 4-5 lines summarising your background and highlighting 3-4 **specific** skills and experiences **most relevant** to the role you are applying for. The aim of this *optional* section is to grab a recruiter's attention, so that they will want to read through the rest of your CV. If there is space, you can include a brief overview of your short and long-term goals here.

- × Avoid generic statements like *"A hard-working team player with excellent communication skills."*

3) Education and qualifications

List your qualifications in reverse chronological order with your most recent first. Include dates, institution(s) and location(s).

- ✓ Postgraduate qualifications, such as membership exams;
- ✓ Medical degree(s) and any other previous degrees;
- ✓ You can also include here information about Professional Linguistic Assessment Board test and any relevant qualifications, for example an up-to-date ALS certificate (if you have additional provider status ensure that this is included);

- ✓ For senior posts (over 10 years of postgraduate experience), there is usually no need to include pre-university qualifications.

4) Employment

- ✓ When listing previous jobs, use reverse chronological order (most recent first) and include a full name of the institution, the dates, grade and specialty.
- ✓ If applying for senior positions (over 10 years of postgraduate experience), there is usually no need to list every 3-6 months junior doctor rotation you had done. You can aggregate those rotations together and present them as a variety of experiences within one hospital or as a part of “Foundation Year 1”.

5) Prizes and Awards

- ✓ Highlight the most pertinent that relate to the position you are applying for;
- ✓ If you have many prizes, introduce subheadings “Local”, “Regional”, “National”, “International” (for details of what counts as “Local” vs “Regional” vs. “National” vs. “International”, see “Commitment to Specialty” guide);
- ✓ Quantify your achievements by indicating level of competition (e.g. “First Poster Prize winner, out of 20 posters presented”). You can find out the competition ratios from the conference organisers.

6) Training courses

- ✓ Aim to include the most recent and relevant courses, especially if you attended non-mandatory courses to demonstrate your commitment to specialty and to professional development in general.

7) Attendance at conferences and meetings

- ✓ If you attended as a delegate, see notes under “Training courses”. If you presented at a conference, describe your involvement under “Presentations”.
- ✓ Do not include local governance and audit meetings in this section.

8) Presentations

- ✓ These may arise from original research, clinical audit, and teaching experience.
- ✓ If you have done many presentations, introduce subheadings “Local”, “Regional”, “National”, “International”;
- ✓ Quantify your presenting achievements by indicating level of competition, even if you did not receive a prize (e.g. “Selected for oral presentation out of 70 submitted abstracts”). You can find out the competition ratios from the conference organisers.
- ✓ Quote your publications and presentations in Vancouver style (<http://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-vancouver>)

9) Publications

- ✓ These may arise from original research, clinical audit, and teaching experience, and can include papers, conference abstracts, case reports, letters, review articles, book chapters, articles in e-Journals or specialty Newsletters and blogs;
- ✓ Even if you do not have publications in peer-reviewed journals, list all types of publications you do have in reverse chronological order;
- ✓ Quote your publications and presentations in Vancouver style (<http://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-vancouver>);
- ✓ Check the accuracy of the reference on Medline;
- ✓ You can sub-divide this section into published work and pending publications.

10) Research experience

- ✓ The importance you place on this relating to your career progression will depend on your chosen specialty.
- ✓ Present your experience as the topic of research, dates, location, supervisor and source/amount of funding, your role and final outcome (e.g. if completed, when and where presented or published);
- ✓ If you have not completed any research projects, mention any courses in research methodology, critical appraisal skills, and attendance at journal clubs.

11) Management and leadership experience

- ✓ List the most recent and relevant experiences. These could include committee responsibilities, guidelines or protocol development, organising events, trainee representation, committee involvement, rota management and supervision of junior colleagues.
- ✓ Use action verbs to convey your active involvement (e.g. *“Took initiative to review and update <...> departmental protocol”* instead of *“Was involved in updating departmental protocols”*)

12) Clinical audit / Quality improvement project

- ✓ Present your experience as month and year completed, the topic, institution, gold standard for evaluation of current practice, key results (including any changes in practice) and whether the audit cycle was closed, as well as when/where it was presented.
- ✓ Include key audits (relevant to the role or where you had a significant contribution). Describe your role either in design, implementation and leading the audit.
- ✓ If you re-audited, state whether this showed sustained improvement.

13) Teaching experience

- ✓ Detail the settings and the audiences you have taught (undergraduate or postgraduate, multidisciplinary, specialist or general), and what teaching methods you used;
- ✓ If you attended specific “Train the trainer” courses, include them here (name of course, organiser, location and dates) and include a couple of bullet points of what you gained for your professional development.

Professional memberships

- ✓ List all professional memberships, eg. British Association of Dermatology. Also include any specialist societies that represent any sub-speciality interests eg. Melanoma Focus Group.

Other skills (list only those relevant to the role you are applying for)

- ✓ Languages (state level of proficiency)
- ✓ Information technology skills (e.g. statistical analysis packages, Radiology reporting tools)
- ✓ Full clean UK driving license

Interests

- ✓ Including these is not mandatory but can show that you are a well-balanced individual.
- ✓ Highlight qualities that are relevant to work such as leadership skills through volunteering and involvement in sports and societies.
- ✓ Avoid general statements such as “I enjoy music” or “I enjoy walks in the park”, as these are unlikely to be relevant to the role you are applying for.

References

- ✓ Unless specifically asked to provide names and contact details of 2-3 referees, it is usually acceptable to write “Available on request”.

How should I format my CV?

1) Avoid solid blocks of text

- ✓ The aim of a good CV is to make your experience and achievements jump off the page.
- ✓ Use bullet points instead of full sentences grouped into paragraphs.

2) Consistency

- ✓ Keep the layout, spacing and structure consistent throughout.

3) Font

- ✓ Typical fonts used are Times New Roman or Arial, size 11-12 for text and 14 for headings.
- ✓ Avoid fancy fonts, all CAPITALS and underlining.

4) Balanced use of space

- ✓ Do not leave too much or too little white space.
- ✓ Make sure that the most important information is included on the first page of your CV, preferably in the upper half of the page.

5) Alignment

- ✓ Ensure alignment of tables and bullet point lists.
- ✓ Neatly line up dates.
- ✓ Consider using a table with hidden grid lines (there should be no visible tables within your CV)

What else should I pay attention to when writing a CV?

Tailor your CV to each role

A person specification and a job description set criteria that will determine who is shortlisted for interview. Your CV is a stepping stone to being invited for interview, where you will have the opportunity to elaborate in more detail on your career to date.

Before submitting your CV, carefully cross reference your information with the person specification. For example, if the job specification focuses on strong leadership and management experience, ensure this section appears early on in your CV.

Top tips for an effective CV

- 1) Critically evaluate your CV before sending it off. Never submit generic CVs! For each item on the CV, ask yourself “How is this *relevant*? What value does this information add?”
- 2) Elements of your CV that match the job description / person specification should be prioritised to the top so that they are seen first.
- 3) Elements of your CV that are less important to the job should be moved further down or excluded.
- 4) Do not just provide a list of jobs and responsibilities. Focus on highlighting the skills and relevant experience you developed in each role, as well as any tangible outcomes.
- 5) Use reverse chronological order to list your experiences (most recent first).
- 6) Do not write “Curriculum Vitae” or “Personal details” on top of your CV. Start with your name making it stand out (bold + use larger font) and write your contact and professional details directly under your name.
- 7) The length of a medical CV will vary depending on your experience and employers rules. Follow the guidelines from the employer, as some positions require strictly a two-page CV.

- 8) Do not staple separate sheets together.
- 9) Use **action verbs** and **numbers** when presenting evidence for your skills, for example:

Role, Organisation, Dates

- Leadership: **initiated** a local quality improvement (QI) project to investigate root causes of <...> in order to decrease/increase <...>;
 - Verbal communication skills: **presented** results of QI project at a regional meeting to a multidisciplinary audience of **80 people**.
- 10) Clinical skills and experience can be either grouped together in a separate section or detailed under each post listed in the employment/work history section. Whichever way you do it, remember to address specific person specification requirements.
 - 11) Review your CV and put yourself in the role of the recruiter: *would you employ you?*

Should my CV be different when applying for Consultant posts?

Most of the above points on structuring and writing content for your CV will still apply when looking for Consultant posts. Some additional points to consider are:

1) Work history

You can divide your work history into 2 sections: “General Medical Training” and “Specialist Medical Training”.

Under Specialist Medical Training, highlight:

- ✓ Any sub-speciality interests and experience gained through out of programme training, overseas placements and research.
- ✓ If you have been involved in developing or delivering changes in services, include your contribution and evaluation of these service changes.

2) Administration & Management

- ✓ Highlight any experience of developing business plans, managing budgets and resources, or running a specialist service.
- ✓ If your management experience is limited, you can still include examples which highlight experience of team-working, leadership, organisation, initiative, resource and risk management.
- ✓ Highlight formal leadership and management training through courses attended, contributions to the departmental management meetings, regional or national trainee committees, coordinating (specialist registrar) rotas or the organisation of training courses.

3) Teaching

- ✓ Teaching experience can be divided into undergraduate and postgraduate or clinical and non-clinical teaching.
- ✓ Include any previous involvement in syllabus writing, course development, training courses, trainee representation, appraisal and assessments.
- ✓ Highlight any additional qualifications such as postgraduate certificates, or masters in clinical education.
- ✓ Include different teaching methods you have used and student feedback if positive.

Useful Resources for CV writing

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/information-doctors/medical-specialty-training/preparing-your-cv>

<http://www.bma.org.uk/developing-your-career/career-progression/medical-cv/medical-cv-tips>

Cover Letters

A cover letter is a marketing tool intended to generate interest in you and get the reader excited about reviewing your CV. The cover letter should succinctly articulate your interest and enthusiasm for both the organisation and specific role. It should also demonstrate how your unique background, skills and experiences make you an excellent fit.

While CVs enable you to present factual information about your education and work history, cover letters should convey **why** you are interested in a particular role and organisation (i.e. your motivation). A CV and a cover letter complement each other, and there is no need to repeat in your cover letter what you have already included in your CV. The purpose of a cover letter is to persuade a potential employer that it will be worthwhile to invite you for an interview.

Unless specifically asked not to include a cover letter, consider writing one whenever you are applying for a role that requires a CV.

Professional style and length

- ✓ A cover letter should be formatted like any other business letter.
- ✓ It should be formal and concise taking up no more than one page.

What is a typical structure of a Cover Letter?

Greeting: If possible, address your letter to a named person, as it sounds more personal than “Dear Sir/Madam”. If there is no name in the job advertisement, call the company and ask who the letter should be addressed to. Mention where you saw the position advertised.

Section 1: Introduce yourself briefly stating your background and current role and professional interests.

Section 2: Why would you like this role (motivation)? Demonstrate understanding of the role/job and how your interests relate to it.

Section 3: What aspects of your experiences would be valuable for this job? Highlight 3-4 skills (with evidence) that would be most relevant for this role (analyse the job advert to understand what skills and experience are prioritised)

Section 4: Specific examples of what you like about this particular organisation (but avoid flattery) and how you researched the organisation.

Ending: Restate your interest and suitability (e.g. “I would welcome an opportunity to discuss this position and my qualifications with you in person”).