

# IMPROVING YOUR CV

Dr Abby Evans  
Careers Adviser

# TODAY

- Understanding how recruiters see CVs
- Presenting your best, most relevant self via your CV
  - How it looks
  - How it is structured
  - The content
- A chance to ask questions



It's about THEM not YOU



THE  
CAREERS  
SERVICE



## Curriculum Vitae of Sian Magellan

Term time address:  
Balliol College  
Oxford  
OX1 3BJ  
Mobile: 07685 314529  
email: sian.magellan@balliol.ox.ac.uk

Home address:  
27 High Street  
Suburb  
Milton Keynes  
MK2 4UJ

Date of birth: 27 January 1997

### Education

St John's School, Milton Keynes (09/2008 to 07/2015)

#### GCSEs

English A\*  
Maths A\*  
Science A\*A\*  
Geography A\*  
French A  
German A  
Art A  
Business Studies B

#### A-levels

Maths A\*  
Physics A\*  
Chemistry A  
Geography A

Balliol College, University of Oxford (10/2015–2019)

MPhys Physics

### Work Experience

07/20017-09/2017 Organic Farm WWOOF Volunteer, Haute Vienne, France

01/2016-03/2016 Team Leader, The Student Consultancy, Oxford University

07/2016 Market Research Assistant, EGM Analysis

06/2014-09/2014 Customer Assistant, Pies-R-Us

06/2012-12/2015 Part-time Data Entry Clerk, Milton Keynes Hospital

### Skills:

Languages: French and German

### Interests:

Music: Lead clarinet in Milton Keynes Youth Band; member of National Youth Orchestra; Marketing Officer for Balliol College wind ensemble.

Sport: Balliol College football team; training twice a week; Captain of St John's School women's football team

Travel: Extensive travel throughout Europe, including organising work placement in France

## SIAN MAGELLAN

Balliol College, Oxford, OX1 3BJ

Mobile: 07685 314529 email: sian.magellan@balliol.ox.ac.uk

### EDUCATION

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**MPhys Physics, Balliol College, University of Oxford (2015–2019)**

- Expected First class
- Researched and delivered on time twelve 3,000 word essays on new topics in each eight-week term for discussion with peers and leading academics

**St John's School, Milton Keynes (2008–2015)**

- A levels: Maths A\*, Physics A\*, Chemistry A, Geography A
- GCSEs: 5A\*, 3A, 1B including A\* in English and Maths

### RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

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**Organic Farm WWOOF Volunteer, Haute Vienne, France (summer, 2017)**

- Independently planned and organised two months' work in France
- Improved to near-fluent French, while learning food production chain process
- Developed good working relationships with 22 colleagues from 12 countries

**Team Leader, The Student Consultancy, Oxford University (8 weeks, 2016)**

- Led a team of five students to develop marketing strategy for local start-up
- Designed and executed paper and phone surveys, engaging 250 participants
- Presented recommendations to client; all implemented within 3 months and delivering 20% increase in sales within 6 months

**Market Research Assistant, EGM Analysis (1-month internship, 2015)**

- Produced eight accurate data tables to summarise previous field activities using SPSS
- Presented daily key data summary to managers with a colleague
- Developed knowledge and interest in marketing and consumer goods

**Customer Assistant, Pies-R-Us (part-time summer work, 2014)**

- Communicated in a professional manner with up to 80 customers per day
- Maintained positivity in high-pressure service environment

**Data Entry Clerk, Milton Keynes Hospital (part-time holiday work, 2012-15)**

- Developed administrative skills, and understanding of organisational processes
- Ensured accurate classification of records and meticulous proofreading
- Liaised with six hospital departments to compile datasets to tight deadlines

### OTHER SKILLS AND INTERESTS

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**Languages:** English–native; French–near-fluent; German–conversational

**IT:** Proficient in Excel and SPSS, WordPress, InDesign and MSOffice

**Music:** Lead clarinet in Milton Keynes Youth Band; member of National Youth Orchestra; Marketing Officer for Balliol College wind ensemble. Promoted concerts and managed ticket sales, increasing audience numbers by 30% in the first year

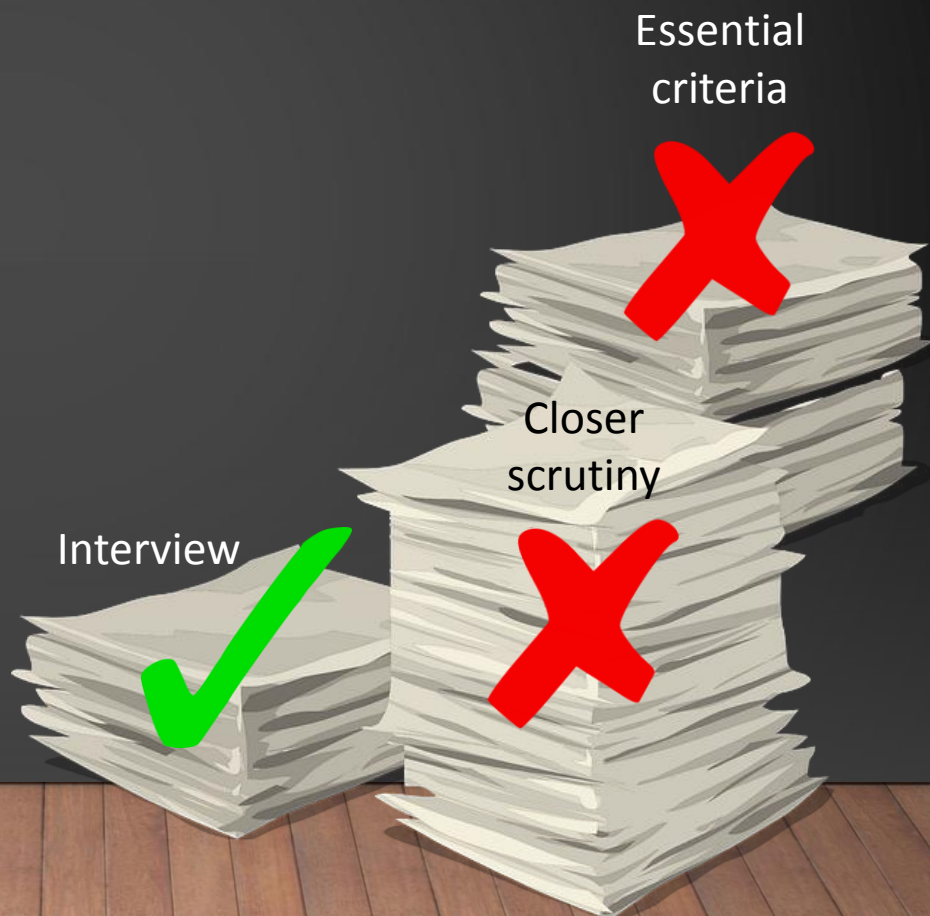
**Sport:** Balliol College football team; training twice a week; Captain of St John's School women's football team

**Travel:** Extensive travel throughout Europe, including organising work placement in France



# Shortlisting 101

	Smith	Kahn	Bloggs	Chen
Data analysis	5	3	5	2
Coding ability	4	4	5	2
Effective communicator	5	5	2	4
Teampayer	2	4	2	4
Time-management	3	3	3	3
Attention to detail	1	4	2	3



# Your CV displays the evidence of your suitability for a job

Their list of criteria:

- ----- ✓
- ----- ✓
- ----- ✓
- ----- ✓

## Your CV

Subheading  
Information

- Detail
- More stuff

Subheading

- Evidence
- Extra skills

# Before you start

- **Read** the job description
- **Research** the role, environment, organisation
- **Recall** scenarios that demonstrate relevant competencies



# 5 Top tips

For presenting the positive you on your CV

# Make it bespoke

## Trainee Patent Attorney

You should be able to communicate effectively both on paper and in person. Some knowledge and experience of electronics, software or telecommunications would be advantageous, as would an interest in scientific and technical developments.

You should be conscientious and capable of working to deadlines. You will also need to be organised.

A large number of professional exams are required to become a Patent Attorney. A significant time commitment is required.

A degree in

A consistent

and English

A PhD or in

advantage

German a

## Innovation Consultant

- strong understanding of fundamental principles of their discipline, and ability to apply them to unfamiliar problems. Wide curiosity/ interest as well as the ability to quickly learn about new areas of technology.
- ability to think in a clear and structured manner about complex topics and to take a creative approach to exploring new solutions.
- excellent communication skills in written and spoken English and an interest in the work of our clients. Consultants are expected to be able and willing to travel internationally.
- ability to engage well with a team and contribute to complex technical discussions. Consultants will take responsibility for their own work and time, and need to be proactive, show attention to detail, and work to deadlines.

# Think action, impact, achievement

Accomplished	Created	Ensured	Instructed	Prioritised
Achieved	Decided	Established	Interviewed	Promoted
Administered	Delivered	Evaluated	Invented	Raised
Advised	Demonstrated	Examined	Launched	Ran
Advocated	Designed	Expanded	Managed	Recognised
Analysed	Developed	Explained	Marketed	Recommended
Authorised	Devised	Facilitated	Maximised	Reconciled
Budgeted	Directed	Founded	Mediated	Recruited
Captained	Discovered	Gained	Negotiated	Represented
Chaired	Earned	Generated	Obtained	Responsible
Coached	Edited	Identified	Operated	Simplified
Communicated	Employed	Implemented	Organised	Supervised
Completed	Enabled	Improved	Oversaw	Targeted
Conducted	Edited	Increased	Planned	Transformed
Co-ordinated	Encouraged	Initiated	Prepared	Presented

# Think action, impact, achievement

Skills you developed

*“Gained deeper understanding of...”*

*“Effectively communicated...”*

Responsibilities you took on

*“Ensured that...”*

*“Represented the group at...”*

Achievements and results:

*“Exceeded my target, in raising...”*

*“Initiated new projects in...”*

# Think action, impact, achievement

Skills you developed

*“Gained deeper understanding of...”*

*“Effectively communicated...”*

Responsibilities you took on

*“Ensured that...”*

*“Represented the group at...”*

Achievements and results:

*“Exceeded my target, in raising...”*

*“Initiated new projects in...”*

# Think action, impact, achievement

Numbers add real power to a CV

*Submitting eight 3,000 word essays each term*

Accurate descriptions show your skills

*Part of a team – did you make the tea?  
Enjoy tennis – do you play?!*

Size, scale, scope – sets a credible scene

*Achieved weekly target (£150) in only two days  
Arranged attendance of three senior academics,  
coordinating complex and changing diaries*

# Demonstrate, don't commentate

~~"I am well versed in digital marketing."~~

"developed a new blog and promoted it via Instagram. The blog continues to attract 500+ hits per month."

~~"developed communication skills"~~

"produced a written report and gave a presentation of our findings and recommendations to managers. Had to present complicated technical information in an accessible way for those unfamiliar with the project"

# 4 Structure matters

Subheadings are a tool to:

- Put information in the order that you want
- Set a first impression for the reader
- Help the reader navigate to sections of interest
- **What subheadings could you pick from?**



# 4 Structure matters

## Education

Awards

Relevant experience

Employment

Additional  
experience

Positions of  
Responsibility

Volunteering

IT skills

Programming skills

Laboratory skills

Technical skills

Additional skills

Languages

Extra-curricular  
activities

Interests

Publications

Research interests

Research experience

Teaching experience

Funding awarded

Referees (?)

# Details matter too

## Check

- Tenses – past for anything... in the past
- Grammar  
– avoid full sentences beginning with I
- ‘Scannability’ – the 10 second test
- Proofreading – find a native speaker
- Links – do they work?
- format– will it print ok? PDF/Word?
- Appropriate email address, checked regularly
- Spelling, punctuation

# Exercise

A student wishes to apply for a job at a Management Consultancy; they have brought you their CV.

**What advice would you give them on the CV?**

## MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

### Essential criteria

Demonstrable ability of working in teams

High pressure, much travel, excellent performance needed

Tactful advice and liaison with clients at all level

Excellent numerical abilities

A modern foreign language a definite advantage

## Emma Gordon

11 Mandelbrote Road, Tiddington, OX9 6LA  
emma.gordon@gmail.co.uk 07968 286639

### Education

**MPhys Physics, University of Oxford (2015-2019)**

- Final year project: Graphene and carbon nanotube based PV electrodes

**St Mary's High School (2007-2014)**

A levels:

Maths A\*, Physics A\*, Chemistry A, French A

GCSEs: 7 at grade A\*, 3 at grade A

### Employment

**Student Recruitment Assistant, University of Oxford (Summer 2018)**

- Responsible for organising HE Fairs
- Deliver presentations to prospective students, parents and teachers
- Management of the team email inbox and diary, including liaison with colleagues in undergraduate admissions, colleges and departments

**Marketing Intern, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester (Summer 2017)**

- Responsible for proofreading copy for a new e-brochure
- Initiated a communications strategy
- Redesigned leaflets for prospective applicants

**Head Waitress, The White Hart, Manchester (Summer 2015)**

- Organised duty rota
- Ensured excellent response to customer enquiries

### Extra-curricular activities

**Marketing & Publicity Officer, College Ball Committee (2018-2019)**

- Planned and implemented publicity for the Ball
- Increased attendance from previous year

**Team Leader, The Student Consultancy, Oxford (Autumn 2016)**

- Managed a team and conducted market research
- Delivered recommendations to the client and gained excellent feedback
- Gained commercial awareness and knowledge of the retail sector

### Interests & Activities

- Music: Member of string quartet performing regularly at weddings and local venues
- Sport: Vice-Captain of local netball team, coordinate weekly training sessions and social activities for more than 20 people each month
- Travel: Organised a rock-climbing expedition across Europe during A-levels

# How do you prepare a CV?



study modules    lab work    work experience    travel  
extra-curricular activities    interests    awards  
positions of responsibility    temporary jobs    volunteering  
committee work    projects    dissertations  
self-taught skills    training courses

Let's look at an example....

# Pick a job!

## ATKINS Graduate Development Programme - Energy, Nuclear

- An inquisitive mind and enjoying being curious to find out what really matters
- Enjoy working collaboratively with others to overcome conflict and build towards a common goal
- Creative and come up with new ideas to move things forward
- Decisive and enjoy making quick, confident, and clear decisions
- Pay attention to detail and relish producing high quality output, no matter what the pressures

or

## Macmillan Science & Education Publishing (Physics)

- Editorial experience would be beneficial, but is not required.
- Commitment to providing gold-standard service to authors, EBMs, peer-reviewers and readers is a must.
- Excellent literary and interpersonal skills.
- Attention to detail in a fast-paced environment.
- A proactive and positive attitude.
- Top-notch time-management and prioritisation skills.

# What are the key skills that you need to provide evidence for?

## ATKINS Graduate Development Programme - Energy, Nuclear

- An inquisitive mind and enjoying being curious to find out what really matters
- Enjoy working collaboratively with others to overcome conflict and build towards a common goal
- Creative and come up with new ideas to move things forward
- Decisive and enjoy making quick, confident, and clear decisions
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- A proactive and positive attitude.
- Top-notch time-management and prioritisation skills.



Accomplished Co-ordinated Encouraged Improved Organised Responsible Achieved Counsellor  
 Engineered Increased Oversaw Saved Administered Created Enjoyed Initiated Performed Set up Advised  
 Decided Ensured Instituted Planned Simplified Advocated Delivered Established Instructed Prepared  
 Solved Analysed Demonstrated Evaluated Interviewed Presented Supervised Assembled Designed  
 Examined Invented Prioritised Targeted Awarded Determined Expanded Launched Produced  
 Transformed Authorised Developed Explained Led Promoted Budgeted Devised Facilitated Managed  
 Raised Captained Directed Founded Marketed Ran Chaired Discovered Gained Maximised Recognised  
 Coached Earned Generated Mediated Recommended Completed Edited Handled Negotiated Reconciled  
 Conducted Employed Identified Obtained Recruited Enabled Implemented Operated Represented

Check your key examples are:

- relevant
- reasonably recent
- detailed enough
- focus on evidence about **you**

**S** Situation

**T** Task/Context

**A** Action

**R** Result





# Enhancing your CV

- New roles in existing activities
- Take up new activities
- Volunteer
- Get creative
- Formalise your hobbies/interests

# To summarise...

- Focus on the recipient and what they want to know
- Allocate space according to importance
- Think about appearance/layout
- One or two full pages
- Send with covering letter
- Check for typos/consistent grammar/tenses
- Get someone else to read it

# And...

- Chronological order with most recent first
- In the UK, a photo is not required on your CV
- It is not necessary to include a personal / goal statement
- You can also remove referees from your CV
- Don't underestimate the importance of 'other' activities
- Stick to a simple style, avoid using logos, fancy fonts, wordart, etc
- Use bullet points, avoid large chunks of text

# Questions?



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