Writing an Impactful CV

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the related video modules. They have been based on three years' experience helping HEC MBA candidates deal with the challenges of writing strong CVs and many more years as a recruiter.

1. The HEC MBA Focus CV MBA

You are requested to submit a CV suitable for inclusion on the MBA Focus platform, which is accessible by potential recruiters. This HEC CV is also used by the career team to organise treks, respond to company requests, and organise on-campus company visits. HEC requires a consistent presentation of all CVs on the MBA Focus Platform – see the template provided. Remember that for other targeted CVs that you will send directly to organisations you may choose the most appropriate format (one or two pages, layout etc.) and you are not obliged to use the HEC format.

Since you are at the start of your MBA programme, you will no doubt want to modify and update your MBA Focus CV at a later date. This is possible, but do not let it become a time-trap. However, do check your HEC CV occasionally. Ask yourself if it is still presenting you in the best way, given your shifting career objectives and any achievements attained during your time at HEC.

2. The Master CV

Your Master CV is a full database resource for any CVs, online profiles or bios you may need to write at any point in your career. It is your starting point for creating targeted CVs, online profiles etc..

The Master CV is your personal reference document and as such should include as many details as possible. Even several years into your post-MBA career you may be required to complete job applications that require full dates of all your employment history, plus start and end salary, so it is important to have an efficient way of tracking this information.

Whenever you have a new element to include in your CV, or when you identify a different way of presenting an existing element, you should always ensure that your Master CV is updated. Since it is a working document and only for your own reference, it is acceptable to include the same piece of experience represented in more than one way – either with a different skill emphasis, or using different vocabulary. When you have a tight deadline to submit an application you will not have time to sort through different versions of your targeted CV, in order to find a particular formulation which you remember using previously. Your Master CV may also contain more than one version of your profile summary.

When creating a targeted CV, consider the requirements of the target role and organisation. Then, review your Master CV with these requirements in mind, and select and paste the relevant elements to create a targeted CV. This will ensure that you do not overlook an element which would be of interest to the target organisation and that you carefully consider which aspects of your experience will market you at your best.

The Master CV is also a useful tool for interview preparation. It may prompt your memory of specific examples from your experience, especially in competency-based interviews. It should include any

figures from your previous roles which may be of use at some time in the future. For confidential or sensitive data, consider whether you can present them as percentages.

Since the Master CV is for your own personal reference, you do not need to worry too much about layout, as long at is clear and simple to use. However, see the comments below regarding layout and style of a targeted CV.

3. Professional experience

When you are determining the layout and presentation of a targeted CV, consider whether you will start with your professional experience or your education. You may wish to place your education first, so that there is no obvious gap in the dates. However, the reader may well be particularly interested in your professional experience.

a. Previous employers and job titles

If you held positions of significant responsibility, consider whether you wish to present your job title before your employer. If the name of your former employers is easily recognizable, you may wish to place that first.

Job titles should be meaningful to readers and help their understanding of your role. If your employment contract stated simply "Manager" or "Associate" for example, you may need to expand on that in your CV to clarify what you did;

> e.g.   IT Project Manager
>
> or
> Human Resources Associate

Remember that your future employer is likely to contact previous employers for references and as a minimum will be checking the accuracy of factual information, so do not modify your job title significantly or exaggerate. If you need to translate job titles into English, remain faithful to the original, while still conveying the sense of what you did.

It is essential that the company names are spelt correctly, including accents (e.g. L'Oréal). Give the formal company name, and if necessary, the name by which it is known.

If you worked in or managed your family's business, think about how to present that as you would any other role. There is no obligation to specify that it was a family business unless you feel that this adds to the reader's understanding.

If a company changed names during your employment, or subsequently, this needs to be presented simply and clearly. There are two options. Either use the name of the company on your employment contract and provide the new name next to it in brackets, or use the new name followed by a comment. Whatever your approach, remember that you must be consistent.

> e.g.   ABC Ltd. (now part of XYZ Ltd.)
>
> or
> XYZ Ltd. (formerly ABC Ltd.)

You may decide to provide a brief explanation of the employer's activities, or your role. This should be no more than one line. Information may include the organisation's turnover and headcount. Be consistent – provide this information for all employers or none.

> e.g. Online greeting card company. Turnover: USD1M, 20 employees.

Some candidates choose to include the URL of previous employers' on their CVs, so that the reader can find out more. If you do this, monitor the website to ensure it remains professional and of excellent quality.

Some roles, such as those in the professional services, may involve a mix of client-based work and internal work. These elements should be clearly presented on your CV. For example:

Ernst & Young, Moscow, Russia
Recruitment & Selection Consultant
Secured USD1M in client contracts by designing targeted search strategies for senior roles.

> ***Project Manager at Coca-Cola – St. Petersburg, Russia***
> o Recruited team of 5 senior managers one month ahead of target.

> ***Onboarding Consultant at Red October (leading Russian confectionary producer) – Ekaterinburg, Russia***
> o Devised onboarding process for start-up operations of Greenfield site, reducing training times by 30% with no negative impact on output quality.

b. Achievements

As described in the video modules, your international CV should present your professional experience as achievements. Consider how you can show the result or impact of what you did. Ask yourself how can you demonstrate that you made a difference. Provide the appropriate level of information so that the reader can understand your contribution, and ensure that every word in your CV works to market you and present you in the best possible light, without exaggerating.

The example below shows how a responsibility can be transformed into an achievement

> Responsible for training senior staff for a start-up operation

becomes

> Devised innovative online induction process for 10 senior marketing and sales managers, reducing time required for training new hires by 30%.

Consider which elements of each part of your experience are most relevant to the target organisation. The phrase "start-up operation" from the first version above has been removed in the reformulated achievement. This is because the writer has identified that the start-up aspect of the context is not the most relevant piece of information for a specific target reader. The phrase can be removed with no negative impact. If the writer applies for another role, but this time in a start-up company, then that piece of information could be key and should perhaps be incorporated into the achievement.

Your HEC CV for the MBA Focus platform should focus on achievements. However for other CVs, consider the cultural context of the target organisation. In some cultures, a heavy focus on achievements may be perceived as being too arrogant and a responsibilities-based CV is preferable. You should also take into consideration the weight of the organizational culture. For example, if you are applying to work for Amazon in China, it is may be that the Amazon corporate culture will take precedence in influencing the tone and style of your application.

c. Style

Remember that your achievements should be presented in bullet points, using a headline journalistic style. Minimize the use of prepositions and articles (in, of, the, a) and avoiding personal pronouns (I, my, we, our, you, your etc.) entirely.

Numbers up to ten should be written out in full in words, and those from 11 upwards presented as digits.

Check percentages and wording carefully. If you had a target to sell 1000 units and you sold 1100 units, you exceeded your target by 10%, OR you achieved 110% of the target. You did not "exceed the target by 110%".

All monetary sums in the CV should be converted to the same currency, which should be appropriate to the geographical region to which you are applying. For the HEC MBA CV, use Euros or USD.

d. Selecting and organizing information

To keep your targeted CV to a reasonable length, you may decide to select only certain parts of your experience, and present it under the heading "Relevant Experience" for example. You may indicate in a footnote that a full CV is available on request, and/or direct readers to your LinkedIn or other online profile.

If you held roles early on in your career, for which you do not wish to give details, consider using a sub-heading such as 'Early career', and then provide simply employer name, job title, location and dates.

Internships can be presented either as a separate category or with your professional experience. Think about what makes sense and test different versions.

Tip: Try to ensure a sensible balance between the length of time spent in a role, the level of responsibility, and the amount of information provided on the CV. For example, if you spent three months in a junior role, and three years in another more senior role, the amount of information provided for each should reflect the time and level of responsibility.

4. Profile summary

The profile summary is a short introductory paragraph, which is becoming a standard element in international CVs. If it is well-written, it is a quick and easy way for the reader to make an immediate link between you and the vacancy to be filled. Generally, a profile statement is preferable to a career objective. The latter, by its very nature, should be the job you are applying for, and is therefore somewhat redundant. An objective transmits the message "This is what I want to do". A profile summary should transmit the message "This is who I am and what I have done, and I could do the same for you."

Tip: If you are a career switcher, the profile summary in your MBA Focus CV may need to include a suitable form of career objective. When potential employers are reading your CV on the platform it is helpful for them to have an indication of the types of sector and function you are interested in. Imagine yourself as the reader – what information is needed to make an informed decision on whether to contact you?

5. Targeted CV : Layout and style

The number of years' experience you have and the culture of the country to which you are applying will influence whether you must provide a one-page CV, or whether it is acceptable to use two pages. Whatever the length, there are some common elements to consider. The format for the HEC CV is based on a standard template, but for other CVs that you send to organisations you are free to choose the layout and presentation. As you have seen in the video modules, it is important that the CV is visually appealing to make the reader *want* to read it.

a. Balance between text and white space

There must be a reasonable balance between the amount of text and white space on the page. What is "reasonable" is naturally somewhat subjective, but use the HEC template as a guide. Do not cram a two-page CV onto one page, but do not leave excessive amounts of empty space, making it look as though you have little experience.

Tip: Save your CV as a PDF and then zoom out to view it on your computer screen. This helps to give an overall view of the balance between text and white space.

b. Font

Select a traditional font that is easy to read, such as Times New Roman, Arial, Garamond or Calibri, and avoid any unusual fonts which may seem unfamiliar to the reader.

c. Use of colour and shading

It is not advisable to rely on colour and shading when designing your CV. What appears as a sober colour on your screen may look quite different to someone else on a different computer. If the target organisation prints out your CV for review it is likely to be printed in black and white. So an attractive colour difference on the screen may become strangely paler to the reader when it is on paper and that element no longer stands out as you intended. Shading can become patchy and grainy when printed on a poor-quality printer.

d. Title

The title of your CV should usually be simply your name, rather than the heading "Curriculum Vitae" or " Resumé". If you use different forms of your name, ensure that the name on your CV matches the name in your email address. If you prefer to be known by a different name, then provide your given name in brackets.
> e.g. Joanne (Shu Yu) Jung

You may choose to follow your name by a qualification or a profession;
> e.g. Jane Smith, Human Resources Business Partner

It is important that any title or profession which you provide after your name is the reality, and not a career target or objective. If, in the example above, Jane Smith is simply *targeting* HR Business Partner roles but does not already have substantial experience in those positions, then the reader will feel that they have been misled when the truth comes to light.

e. Design elements

Ensure that your use of bold, italics, underlining etc. is coherent, and kept to a minimum. These elements will help guide the reader's eye through your CV, but do not over-complicate the design. The positioning of elements on the page and the use of white space is equally important to ensure that readers can find what they are looking for.

f. Use of logos

It is not unusual for recruiters to see CVs with logos to indicate the names of previous employers. This is particularly common when a candidate has worked for well-known brands, with easily-identifiable logos. However, if you are submitting your application through an online process, then your CV is likely to be reviewed firstly by a computer. The computer will not be able to "read" the logo and so the names of your previous employers cannot be identified. You may be rejected at the first round.

g. Positioning of dates

Consider positioning your employment and education dates down the right side of the page. If the reader only skim-reads your English-language CV, they are likely to concentrate on the left side of the page. So it makes sense to put more eye-catching information here, such as your job title and names of employers. Placing the dates to the right of the page also avoids wasting a lot of space on the left.

6. Targeted CV: Contact details

Use an address at which you can be contacted even after you leave HEC. Your CV may be kept on file by organisations that wish to contact you about a possible role some time after graduation. Whenever possible, provide an address and telephone number in the target country, as "local" candidates may have an advantage. However, do not provide misleading information in your CV.

Provide only one email address on your targeted CVs. The email address should simply be your name (matching the name on your CV, cover letter, and any other documentation provided), and should be free of connotations (e.g. crazydancer@email.com).

Telephone numbers should be presented as an international number

> e.g.   +33 (0)6 12 34 56 78
>
> or
> 			+336 12 34 56 78

Again, provide only one telephone number to keep it simple for the recruiter. Ensure that any outgoing voice-mail or answer-phone messages give your name (spoken very clearly and not too fast) and a professional sounding message.

7. Targeted CV: Personal information

It is generally advisable to leave out personal information such as age, marital status and numbers of children, as organisations *should* understand that this information does not have a bearing on a candidate's ability to do the job. However, cultural norms in some target countries may require that this information is included. Regrettably, judgments based on marital and parental status are likely to have a greater negative impact on female candidates. Do your research and consider whether the inclusion or absence of this personal information is likely to work for or against you. One source of research may be the organisation's diversity statement.

Stating your nationality on your CV may work against you, unless you indicate that you have a work permit for the target country. Be aware that even if you leave off your nationality, a recruiter may still draw conclusions based on your native language, where you did your initial studies, your countries of employment and even your name. Organisations are often concerned about nationality simply because of the administrative burden or time delays involved in obtaining a work permit.

Some countries and organisations prefer that CVs do not include a photograph, to minimize the risk of discrimination claims. If you are specifically requested to include a photograph ensure that you are wearing appropriate business attire and the image is of high-quality. The photograph should be taken specifically for your CV. Do consider how the image will look if printed in black and white.

8. Additional information

This section is the place to present language and IT skills, relevant interests, clubs and activities, awards and other relevant information.

a. Hobbies and interests

Ensure that any information presented is meaningful and up-to-date. For example, sports activities should be recent and/or practiced to a level worth mentioning. If you are training for a marathon then you may want to mention it. If you run two or three kilometres three times a week, then probably not. You should also ensure that you have something meaningful to say if you are questioned on your hobby at an interview.

Be careful about including hobbies or interests that may, *in any way*, be considered to be controversial by a reader or not in keeping with the reader's own beliefs and values, such as political or religious activity.

b. Associative activities and clubs

As with your professional experience, demonstrate your specific contribution to clubs, volunteer work etc. Avoid bland statements such as:

Active member of HEC Consulting Club

Treasurer of College Sports Club

These do not tell the reader what you did or what skills you have developed which may be of interest in the role. Instead, demonstrate your impact. For example,

> Member of HEC Consulting Club: Organised visit to London offices of McKinsey & Company for 15 students.

c. Languages

Your languages should be listed in decreasing level of proficiency. Describe your fluency using standard terms (Native, Fluent, Intermediate, Conversational or Basic) or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Follow the template instructions for the HEC CV.

d. IT skills

As for the other sections, only include IT skills if you have something meaningful to say. If you have a "standard'" level of competency in the MS Office tools (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), which is not exceptional when compared to your peers, then this is probably not worth mentioning on your CV, unless specifically requested in the application guidelines. If you are skilled in using other IT packages then include them if they are relevant to the post to which you are applying.

Tip: If you are a career switcher coming from an IT background be careful not to include a long list of software, languages etc. that risks positioning you firmly (in the mind of the reader) as "an IT person". Only include specific IT terminology when it is of relevance to the target organisation and role.

9. Electronic version

You are likely to be sending your targeted CV as an electronic file – either uploaded to an online application system or by email. Your CV should be saved under your name, and not the name of the company. Follow the conventions of the target country and save it as either Firstname_Lastname.pdf or Lastname_Firstname.pdf. Unless the organisation specifically requests otherwise, you should always send your CV as a PDF file, to avoid formatting problems if your CV document is opened under a different operating system. If you are sending a cover letter with your CV, then save them as one PDF file, with the cover letter first (unless, of course, the application instructions state otherwise).

Tip: If you are working with executive search agencies to help you in your career search, they are likely to request that your CV is submitted as a Word document so that they can edit it to meet their client needs, and add their watermark or header. If this is the case, your are advised to request that the agency send you the final version of your modified CV before submitting it to their client, to ensure that the modified information remains accurate.

APPENDIX 1 - Verb list

Accelerated	Accomplished	Achieved	Acquired
Acted	Activated	Adapted	Addressed
Adjusted	Advanced	Advised	Advocated
Aided	Allocated	Analyzed	Answered
Applied	Appointed	Appraised	Approved
Arbitrated	Arranged	Ascertained	Assembled
Assessed	Assigned	Assisted	Attained
Audited	Augmented	Authorized	Awarded
Balanced	Began	Boosted	Briefed
Budgeted	Built	Centralized	Chaired
Championed	Charted	Clarified	Coached
Communicated	Compiled	Completed	Composed
Computed	Conceived	Conceptualized	Condensed
Conducted	Conferred	Conserved	Considered
Consolidated	Constructed	Consulted	Contacted
Continued	Contracted	Contributed	Controlled
Converted	Conveyed	Convinced	Cooperated
Coordinated	Corrected	Corresponded	Counseled
Created	Cultivated	Customized	Debated
Debugged	Decided	Defined	Delegated
Delivered	Demonstrated	Designated	Designed
Detected	Determined	Developed	Devised
Diagnosed	Directed	Discovered	Discussed
Dispensed	Displayed	Dissected	Distributed
Diversified	Diverted	Documented	Drafted
Drew	Drove	Earned	Edited
Educated	Effected	Elected	Elicited
Eliminated	Emphasized	Employed	Enabled
Enacted	Encouraged	Enforced	Engineered
Enhanced	Enlarged	Enlisted	Ensured
Entertained	Established	Estimated	Evaluated
Examined	Executed	Exhibited	Expanded
Expedited	Experimented	Explained	Explored
Expressed	Extended	Extracted	Fabricated
Facilitated	Familiarized	Fashioned	Filed
Finalized	Financed	Fixed	Focused
Forecasted	Forged	Formalized	Formed
Formulated	Fortified	Fostered	Found
Fulfilled	Furnished	Furthered	Gained
Gathered	Generated	Governed	Grossed
Guided	Halted	Handled	Headed
Heightened	Highlighted	Hired	Honed
Hosted	Hypothesized	Identified	Illustrated
Imagined	Implemented	Improved	Improvised
Incorporated	Increased	Indexed	Individualized
Influenced	Informed	Initiated	Innovated
Inspected	Inspired	Installed	Instilled
Instituted	Instructed	Insured	Integrated
Interacted	Interpreted	Intervened	Interviewed
Introduced	Invented	Inventoried	Investigated
Involved	Issued	Joined	Judged
Justified	Kept	Launched	Learned

Lectured	Led	Leveraged	Located
Maintained	Managed	Manipulated	Manufactured
Mapped	Marketed	Masterminded	Maximized
Measured	Mediated	Mentored	Merged
Mobilized	Modeled	Moderated	Modified
Monitored	Motivated	Navigated	Negotiated
Negotiated	Netted	Normalized	Observed
Obtained	Opened	Operated	Orchestrated
Ordered	Organized	Originated	Outlined
Outsourced	Overcame	Overhauled	Oversaw
Participated	Perceived	Performed	Persuaded
Persuaded	Piloted	Pinpointed	Pioneered
Placed	Planned	Played	Predicted
Prepared	Prescribed	Presented	Presided
Prevented	Prioritized	Processed	Procured
Produced	Programmed	Projected	Promoted
Propelled	Proposed	Proved	Provided
Publicized	Purchased	Qualified	Questioned
Raised	Ran	Rated	Reached
Realigned	Reasoned	Received	Recognized
Recommended	Reconciled	Recorded	Recruited
Rectified	Recycled	Reduced	Referred
Regained	Regulated	Rehabilitated	Reinforced
Related	Remodeled	Rendered	Renegotiated
Reorganized	Repaired	Replaced	Reported
Repositioned	Represented	Researched	Reserved
Reshaped	Resolved	Responded	Restored
Restructured	Retrieved	Revamped	Reviewed
Revised	Revitalized	Routed	Satisfied
Saved	Scheduled	Screened	Searched
Secured	Selected	Separated	Shaped
Shared	Simplified	Simulated	Solicited
Solved	Sorted	Spearheaded	Specialized
Specified	Sponsored	Standardized	Started
Stimulated	Streamlined	Strengthened	Structured
Studied	Suggested	Summarized	Supervised
Supplied	Supported	Surpassed	Surveyed
Sustained	Synthesized	Systematized	Tabulated
Tailored	Targeted	Targeted	Taught
Terminated	Tested	Tightened	Totaled
Tracked	Traded	Trained	Transcribed
Transferred	Transformed	Transitioned	Translated
Transmitted	Traveled	Troubleshot	Tutored
Uncovered	Undertook	Unified	United
Updated	Upgraded	Used	Utilized
Validated	Verified	Vitalized	Volunteered
Widened	Won		