

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.

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THE HEC MBA CV

You are requested to submit a **CV suitable for inclusion** on the Handshake platform, which is accessible by potential recruiters.

This **HEC CV is also used by the HEC Talents team** to organise treks, respond to company requests, and organise on-campus company visits. HEC requires a consistent presentation of all CVs on the Handshake 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 program, you will no doubt want to modify and update your Handshake CV at a later date. This is possible, but do not let it become a timetrapp. 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.



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 as it is clear and simple to use. However, see the comments below regarding layout and style of a targeted CV.

THE MASTER CV



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.

Previous employers & 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:

For example: 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:

For example: 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:

For example: 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 USD 1M in client contracts by designing targeted search strategies for senior roles.

Project Manager at Coca-Cola – St. Petersburg, Russia

- Recruited team of 5 senior managers one month ahead of target.

Onboarding Consultant at Red October (leading Russian confectionary producer) – Ekaterinburg, Russia

- Devised onboarding process for start-up operations of Greenfield site, reducing training times by 30% with no negative impact on output quality.



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 Handshake 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.

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.

Selecting & 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.



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?

TARGETED CV: LAYOUT & 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.

Balance between text & 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.

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.

Use of colors & 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.

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:

For example: Joanne (Shu Yu) Jung

You may choose to follow your name by a qualification or a profession:

For example: 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

For example: +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.



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.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

HOBBIES & 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.

ASSOCIATIVE ACTIVITIES & 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

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.

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.

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, you 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: 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	Troubleshoot	Tutored
Uncovered	Undertook	Unified	United	Updated
Upgraded	Used	Utilized	Validated	Verified
Vitalized	Volunteered	Widened	Won	

List created by Margaret Navarro--Jones with additions from two websites:
<http://www.cvtips.com/resumes--and--cv/resume--action--verbs.html>
<http://www.writeexpress.com/action--verbs.html>

This guide was written by Margaret Navarro--Jones, with some elements inspired by the HEC MBA CV Template Class of 2015, and by an original guide written by Michelle Botha, with contributions from Margaret Navarro--Jones, Victoria Marshall and Barbara Diggs.