



**BT3006**

**Working Out?  
Placement &  
Career Skills**

**Course Handbook  
2019-20**

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Cover image:

**Confocal micrograph of fluorescently labelled HeLa cells.**

Nuclei are labelled in blue, tubulin in green and actin fibres in red.

Courtesy of:

Kevin Mackenzie

Microscopy and Histology Core Facility

Institute of Medical Sciences

University of Aberdeen

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ims/microscopy-histology>

## Course Summary

Welcome to 'Working Out! Placement & Career Skills' (BT3006). This course is intended to provide support and guidance in securing an industrial placement and to provide students with essential career information. This course is a prerequisite for all students wishing to undertake an industrial placement year i.e. if you do not take the course and pass the assessments (grade D1 or higher) you will not be able to go on a year-long placement.

This course covers the skills necessary to complete placement applications by exploring CV preparation, writing covering letters, completing application forms, identifying your skill sets and successful interview technique. It will prepare you for the workplace by making you aware of general employment skills and by helping you identify your own transferable skills.

You are not guaranteed a placement by completing the course but the material covered will assist you to prepare high quality placement applications and outline how to perform well at an interview in order to maximise your chances of success. The pre-placement workshops delivered as part of this course will also provide an excellent introduction to completing graduate job applications.

There are three key elements in the successful process of applying for an interesting, worthwhile placement year: the industrial placement co-ordinator, the careers service and you, the student.

The industrial placement co-ordinator holds primary responsibility in respect of guidance and support of the students and will liaise with potential employers to maximise the chances of obtaining suitable placements. Students on placement will also have the full support of the placement co-ordinator during their year in industry.

The careers service plays a major role in the process by providing vital assistance and information on recruitment and selection and should be consulted regularly throughout your search for a placement.

The efforts and guidance of these two crucial elements are worthless unless you grasp the opportunities and apply yourself fully to the process of finding a placement. It is hoped that by working together as a cohesive partnership we can maximise your chances of successfully gaining a worthwhile year in industry but ultimately it will be your efforts and eager participation in the process that will be the major factor in determining your success.

## Course Aims & Learning Outcomes

The overall aims of the course are to extol the benefits of work experience and enhance your job-search skills.

Following completion of the course students will have an appreciation of how to:

- identify their own portfolio of personal skills, competencies, values and interests and demonstrate how these relate to their placement and career choice.
- make effective written applications for employment.
- understand the key elements of good interview technique.

## Course Teaching Staff

### Course Co-ordinator:

Dr Ian Fleming ([i.n.fleming@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:i.n.fleming@abdn.ac.uk))

## Assessments & Examinations

This course is assessed on coursework only – THERE IS NO EXAM. Your coursework will be marked as follows:

Assessment One:      Completing an application form      60%

Assessment Two:      Writing a covering letter      40%

It is important that you attend all teaching sessions otherwise you will miss essential information regarding assessment criteria and deadlines. To achieve an overall pass for the course you MUST obtain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) score of D1 or above for the entire course.

### Timetable for handing in Coursework:

#### COURSEWORK:

#### DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:

Application form

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at 1700

Covering letter

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at 1700

All items of course work should be submitted online via MyAberdeen unless otherwise stated. Work submitted after the deadline will be deemed to be late and WILL incur penalties and may not be graded.

Work that is submitted late must be accompanied by a written explanation and/or a certificate from a medical practitioner. These should be securely attached to the relevant piece of work or handed to the course co-ordinator and should have your name clearly written on them.

NB: Without a medical certificate only, exceptional reasons will be accepted as cause for penalties not being incurred due to the late submission of work.

## **Class Representatives**

**We value students' opinions in regard to enhancing the quality of teaching and its delivery therefore, in conjunction with the Students' Association, we support the Class Representative system.**

In the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition we operate a system of course representatives who are elected from within each course. Any student registered for a course that wishes to represent a given group of students can stand for election as a class representative. You will be informed when the elections for class representative will take place.

### **What will it involve?**

It will involve speaking to your fellow students about the course you represent. This can include discussing/noting any comments that they may have. You will attend a Staff-Student Liaison Committee and you should represent the views and concerns of the students at this meeting. As a representative you will also be able to contribute to the agenda. You will then feed back to the students after this meeting with information regarding any actions that are being taken.

### **Training**

Training for class representatives will be run by the Students' Association. Training will take place each half-session. For more information about the class representative system visit [www.ausa.org.uk](http://www.ausa.org.uk) or email the VP Education & Employability [vped@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:vped@abdn.ac.uk). Class representatives are also eligible to undertake the STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award. Further information about this co-curricular award is available at: [www.abdn.ac.uk/careers](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers).

## **Problems with Coursework**

If students have difficulties with any part of the course that they cannot cope with alone they should notify the course coordinator immediately. If the problem relates to the subject matter general advice would be to contact the member of staff who is teaching that part of the course. Students with registered disabilities should contact Mrs Jenna Reynolds ([medsci@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:medsci@abdn.ac.uk)) in the Medical Sciences Office (based in the Polwarth Building,

Foresterhill) to ensure that the appropriate facilities have been made available. Otherwise, you are strongly encouraged to contact any of the following as you see appropriate:

- Course co-ordinator
- Course student representatives
- Convenor of the Medical Sciences Staff/Student Liaison Committee (Professor Gordon McEwan, [g.t.a.mcewan@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:g.t.a.mcewan@abdn.ac.uk))
- Personal tutor
- Medical Sciences Disabilities Co-ordinator (Dr Derryck Shewan, [d.shewan@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:d.shewan@abdn.ac.uk))

All staff are based at Foresterhill and we strongly encourage the use of email or telephoning the Medical Sciences Office (01224 437471) ([medsci@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:medsci@abdn.ac.uk)). You may have a wasted journey travelling to Foresterhill only to find staff unavailable.

If a course has been completed and students are no longer on campus (e.g. work from second semester during the summer vacation) their coursework will be kept until the end of Freshers' Week during the new academic year. After that point, unclaimed student work will be securely destroyed.

## **Course Reading List**

Cottrell S. (2010) Skills for Success: Personal development and employability (Palgrave Study Skills), Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan

Rook S. (2013) The Graduate Career Guidebook (Palgrave Study Skills), Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan

## University Policies

Students are asked to make themselves familiar with the information on key institutional policies which have been made available within MyAberdeen (<https://abdn.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/Policies>). These policies are relevant to all students and will be useful to you throughout your studies. They contain important information and address issues such as what to do if you are absent, how to raise an appeal or a complaint and indicate how seriously the University takes your feedback.

These institutional policies should be read in conjunction with this programme and/or course handbook, in which School and College specific policies are detailed. Further information can be found on the [University's Infohub webpage](#) or by visiting the Infohub.

The information included in the institutional area for 2019/20 includes the following:

- Absence
- Appeals & Complaints
- Student Discipline
- Class Certificates
- MyAberdeen
- Originality Checking
- Feedback
- Communication
- Graduate Attributes
- The Co-Curriculum

## Medical Sciences Common Grading Scale

Grade	Grade Point	Category	Honours Class	Description
A1	22	Excellent	First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outstanding ability and critical thought</li> <li>Evidence of extensive reading</li> <li>Superior understanding</li> <li>The best performance that can be expected from a student at this level</li> </ul>
A2	21			
A3	20			
A4	19			
A5	18			
B1	17	Very Good	Upper Second	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to argue logically and organise answers well</li> <li>Shows a thorough grasp of concepts</li> <li>Good use of examples to illustrate points and justify arguments</li> <li>Evidence of reading and wide appreciation of subject</li> </ul>
B2	16			
B3	15			
C1	14	Good	Lower Second	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repetition of lecture notes without evidence of further appreciation of subject</li> <li>Lacking illustrative examples and originality</li> <li>Basic level of understanding</li> </ul>
C2	13			
C3	12			
D1	11	Pass	Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited ability to argue logically and organise answers</li> <li>Failure to develop or illustrate points</li> <li>The minimum level of performance required for a student to be awarded a pass</li> </ul>
D2	10			
D3	9			
E1	8	Fail	Fail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weak presentation</li> <li>Tendency to irrelevance</li> <li>Some attempt at an answer but seriously lacking in content and/or ability to organise thoughts</li> </ul>
E2	7			
E3	6			
F1	5	Clear Fail	Not used for Honours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contains major errors or misconceptions</li> <li>Poor presentation</li> </ul>
F2	4			
F3	3			
G1	2	Clear Fail/ Abysmal	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Token or no submission</li> </ul>
G2	1			
G3	0			

## Course Timetable BT3006: 2019-2020

Date	Time	Place	Subject	Session	Staff
<b>Week 7</b>					
Mon 9 Sep	13:00-14:00	G3	Course Introduction and Administration	Lecture	IF
Tue 10 Sep					
Wed 11 Sep					
Thu 12 Sep					
Fri 13 Sep					
<b>Week 8</b>					
Mon 16 Sep	13:00-14:00	G3	Successful CVs – One size does not fit all!!	Lecture	ST/IF
Tue 17 Sep					
Wed 18 Sep					
Thu 19 Sep					
Fri 20 Sep					
<b>Week 9</b>					
Mon 23 Sep	13:00-14:00	G3	Overview of different types of placement	Lecture	IF
Tue 24 Sep					
Wed 25 Sep					
Thu 26 Sep					
Fri 27 Sep					
<b>Week 10</b>					
Mon 30 Sep	13:00-14:00	G3	Application forms vs covering letters	Lecture	ST/IF
			Deadline for preparing copy of CV		
Tue 1 Oct					
Wed 2 Oct					
Thu 3 Oct					
Fri 4 Oct					
<b>Week 11</b>					
Mon 7 Oct	13:00-14:00	G3	Guide on how to find speculative placements	Lecture	IF
			Deadline for assignment 1		
Tue 8 Oct					
Wed 9 Oct					
Thu 10 Oct					
Fri 11 Oct					
<b>Week 12</b>					
Mon 14 Oct	13:00-14:00	G3	Inspiring Interview Techniques	Lecture	ST/IF
Tue 15 Oct					
Wed 16 Oct					
Thu 17 Oct					
Fri 18 Oct					
<b>Week 13</b>					
Mon 21 Oct	13:00-14:00	G3	The low-down on placements – previous placement students' experiences	Lecture	IF
Tue 22 Oct					

Wed 23 Oct					
Thu 24 Oct					
Fri 25 Oct					
<b>Week 14</b>					
Mon 28 Oct	13:00-14:00	G3	Workshop on placements	Lecture	IF
			Deadline for assignment 2		
			Setting Group Task – In the shoes of a recruiter		
Tue 29 Oct					
Wed 30 Oct					
Thu 31 Oct					
Fri 1 Nov					
<b>Week 15</b>					
Mon 4 Nov	13:00-14:00	G3	Group Task Debrief – To hire or not to hire?	Lecture	IF
Tue 5 Nov					
Wed 6 Nov					
Thu 7 Nov					
Fri 8 Nov					
<b>Week 16</b>					
Mon 11 Nov	13:00-14:00	G3	Guest speaker: Prof Andy Porter, Director of Scottish Biologics Facility	Lecture	AP/IF
Tue 12 Nov					
Wed 13 Nov					
Thu 14 Nov					
Fri 15 Nov					
<b>Week 17</b>					
Mon 18 Nov	13:00-14:00	G3	Communication – saying what you mean and meaning what you say	Lecture	IF
Tue 19 Nov					
Wed 20 Nov					
Thu 21 Nov					
Fri 22 Nov					
<b>Week 18 - No teaching during this week REVISION WEEK</b>					
Mon 25 Nov	13:00-14:00	G3	Successful Assignments – Getting the best out of your placement	Revision	IF
Tue 26 Nov					
Wed 27 Nov					
Thu 28 Nov					
Fri 29 Nov					

### Staff

IF – Ian Fleming
ST – Sandra Thomson - Careers Service

**Venue – G3 St Marys, OA**

## **The Industrial Placement Scheme Summarised**

Degree programmes with an integral industrial placement offer you the opportunity to spend the fourth year of your degree in paid employment. Placements vary considerably. In general terms, placements are in an industrial, commercial, research or business environment where you will obtain a breadth of practical experience to complement your degree. Ideally, not only will some of the skills that have been acquired during the first three years of your degree be used and enhanced, but also your knowledge of the subject will be developed. If you are successful and obtain a placement during level III you will complete a year-long, paid industrial placement during level IV before returning for the fifth and final part of your degree – your Honours year. On successful completion of both your placement and your honours year you will graduate with an MSci.

## **The Benefits of Undertaking a Placement Year**

Recent research shows that an average of 70% of work experience placements lead to a graduate job. Research also confirms that placements or periods of work experience are increasingly being used as a tool by employers for pre-selecting the best students for graduate roles. Your industrial placement year may therefore become a passport to employment where employers consider a work placement as a central part of their graduate recruitment processes. Other advantages of work experience include:

- Real life experience of working for 12 months in a field directly related to your degree.
- A good reference from your placement employer (this is immensely useful, whether applying for a job or for a PhD studentship after graduation).
- A chance to develop and apply your knowledge in a practical setting and see how your academic work relates to the real world.
- An opportunity to take a break from academic study and earn money.
- A more confident start to your research project in the Honours year.
- An excellent selling point for your graduate CV.
- An increased salary expectation on graduation.
- A more mature outlook on life.

## What Are Employers Looking For?

When you start to investigate what employers are looking for in their graduate recruits you will discover that they request an impressive list of skills, knowledge and experience. It is important that during your industrial placement year you keep a record of experiences that contribute to your development. Reflecting on your placement learning and achievements should help contribute to your future career development.

Completing an industrial placement allows you to experience workplace culture and makes you a more effective employee following graduation. Graduate employers welcome 'transferable skills' acquired during a work placement such as communication, numeracy, use of IT, group work and time management. They are also keen to see that graduates can draw together aspects from the many courses that they have studied and relate them to the issues that will face them in 'real' employment.

## How to Apply For Placement Opportunities

An Industrial Placement is an invaluable experience for many students. The application process can be very demanding and you should try to remain positive and committed. During the application process you will learn a great deal about job-hunting and your own strengths and abilities. Throughout the process you can count on the support and encouragement of the industrial placement co-ordinator and the careers service.

Students wishing to take a placement year must register at the start of term for the placement course, BT3006. If you are not enrolled on a degree 'with Industrial Placement' don't panic, we can enrol you on one if you find a placement.

Students must have prepared an electronic copy of their CV by the date shown in the timetable. This is so that you are prepared to apply for any interesting placement opportunities that arise. Students should get general advice from the careers service in the first instance on whether their CV is in a suitable format to make competitive placement applications. They can also ask the placement coordinator for advice on their CV from a scientific perspective. CV's can be updated at any time by the student when required.

The application process for placements starts in **September** and takes the following format:

- Links to many companies offering placements are on the course MyAberdeen site. Students should check these regularly as companies advertise opportunities at different times of the year and have different application deadlines.
- Additional placement opportunities, detailing the job description and financial arrangements, will be emailed to the class when they arise.
- To apply for a specific job follow the application procedure given in the job description (see Submitting Placement Applications).
- Record all placements for which you apply in the 'Record of Placements Applied For' at the end of this manual.
- You are encouraged to write brief notes on each placement for which you apply, picking out the aspects of the placement position that particularly interest you. The information you record will be extremely useful reference material if you are selected for an interview.
- Be sure to inform the placement co-ordinator of all placements for which you apply.
- Be sure to inform the placement co-ordinator if you are seeking your own placement. These must be discussed with the placement coordinator **before** you accept a placement.

## Submitting Applications

There are different types of application procedure:

- CV only
- CV and covering letter
- Electronic applications

### CV Only

These placements are usually advertised through the placement coordinator. Interested students should inform the placement co-ordinator who will collate all the appropriate CVs and forward them to the prospective employer.

### **CV and covering letter**

Address your letter of application to the person indicated in the job description. Remember to sign your letter appropriately. Submit your letter of application according to the procedure required for the placement and remember to also attach or enclose your CV. If your letter is to be submitted to the placement co-ordinator they will collate the letters and CVs and forward them to the company on your behalf.

### **Electronic applications**

Electronic applications are submitted directly to the company through the Internet. Make sure that you inform the placement co-ordinator if you submit a direct application to any company.

If you require any assistance in completing applications please contact the placement co-ordinator or the careers service **well in advance of the closing date**. Draft placement applications should be submitted, via e-mail, to the placement co-ordinator and/or the Careers Service for checking.

The course teaching staff are happy to provide application advice at the end of each weekly teaching session. The careers service is also available, free of charge, to students who require assistance. Please see the Careers Service Web Site for information on booking appointments to have applications checked.

**NB. Placement applications received after the relevant closing date will not be considered.**

### **Self-Generated Placements**

If you plan to write to prospective employers yourself you **must** make an appointment with the industrial placement co-ordinator to discuss your ideas. This will avoid duplication of effort – we may have placement arrangements with these prospective employers already. Although you may initiate contact with a potential placement employer all placements must be vetted and approved by the placement co-ordinator. If you are offered a placement by one of your own contacts you must check with the placement co-ordinator that the work programme meets your degree requirements and ensure that the placement provider is fully

aware of his role and responsibilities when taking on a placement student, including issues such as placement year assessment and health & safety.

## **Interview Arrangements**

If you are selected for interview the company/placement co-ordinator will contact you by e-mail or telephone to inform you of the interview date, time and location. Before you go for an interview the placement co-ordinator will discuss the arrangements with you to make sure that you know how to get there and have some idea of what you are going to say. Please keep the placement co-ordinator well informed if an organisation contacts you directly and arranges an interview or rejects you.

**You are strongly advised to arrange a mock interview with the Careers Service before you attend your first placement interview.**

If you decide to withdraw your application for a placement you must let the placement co-ordinator know. If you are unsure of what to do, you **must** see the placement co-ordinator to discuss the problem.

If you are offered a placement either the company or the placement co-ordinator will contact you by e-mail or telephone. Sometimes the result of an interview will be released the day of the interview, or you may have to wait several weeks before you hear the outcome – please be patient. Some placement positions may also have second interviews so pace yourselves! If the organisation contacts you directly and offers you the job please inform the placement co-ordinator **immediately**.

If you are offered a placement you will not normally be able to change your mind once you have made a decision whether to accept it.

## **What To Do If You Are Unsuccessful**

Remember, if you get to the interview stage the company thinks you can do the job. However, the interview process is highly competitive, with students perhaps coming from all over

Europe to apply for these placements. If you are unsuccessful it may be that there was little wrong with your performance at interview, just that someone else performed better on the day or was more suited to the position. Ultimately there can only be one person selected for each placement.

You need to see this as a learning process. Reflect on your performance at interview so, if necessary, you can put any disappointments to positive use. Remember this is a marathon not a sprint, placements are gained throughout the academic year from October to August. The whole process sometimes takes months from first applying, to short listing until interview arrangements are made.

If you would like to discuss an unsuccessful interview performance you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Careers Service.

## **Accepting Your Placement**

As part of accepting a placement position you may be required to send a letter of acceptance. If you are offered the placement verbally, face-to-face or over the phone then you should accept it the same way. However, you should back this up by a letter of acceptance as this allows you to acknowledge that you are aware of what you have accepted. If your offer was made via email it is acceptable to send your acceptance letter via email – it is still a written document.

Guidelines on writing acceptance letters are given later in this manual.

## **Things To Do After You Have Secured A Placement**

Immediately prior to the Level III examination period there will be a placement briefing session to cover placement year assessment and industrial placement health & safety. Meeting arrangements will be circulated during the second semester. You will not be able to commence your placement if you do not attend this session – a register will be taken.

**NB. Normally students who have not passed all Level III courses will not be allowed to take an industrial placement. Where a student has not passed all Level III courses and wishes to undertake a placement he or she should consult the Placement Co-ordinator.**

## **Support From The University During Your Placement Year**

The industrial placement co-ordinator will be available to discuss any problems or queries during your year in industry. You can contact the co-ordinator by phone, fax or e-mail. Please refer to the list of university contact details below.

At the start of your industrial placement year you will receive an industrial placement manual (BT5007). The manual contains detailed information about placement year assessments and deadlines. In order to pass your placement year and qualify for an MSci degree you are required to complete a number of assignments and receive satisfactory marks from both your employer and academic staff (overall D1 or above).

## Industrial Placement Coordinator Role And Contact Information

The industrial placement co-ordinator is responsible for the University administration, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of the industrial placement.

Contact may be made by e-mail, fax or directly to the address below, or via the Secretaries in the School office.

The industrial placement co-ordinator is also responsible for:

- development of contacts with companies willing to take placements;
- acting as first point of contact for industrial supervisors;
- co-ordination of student applications for industrial placements;
- the preparation and distribution of this manual;
- maintenance of regular contact with students during their placements;
- collation of students' and supervisors' reports during the placements;
- organisation of academic assessment for final reports; and
- distribution and collation of the student course evaluation form.

### Contact Information

Dr Ian Fleming  
Industrial Placement Co-ordinator  
School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition  
E-mail: [i.n.fleming@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:i.n.fleming@abdn.ac.uk)  
Institute of Medical Sciences  
University of Aberdeen  
Foresterhill  
Aberdeen AB25 2ZD

Direct Tel: +44 (0) 1224 438357  
Departmental Fax: +44 (0) 1224 437465

Room No: IMS 6:16

School Office: +44 (0) 1224 437469  
School Secretary: [j.reynolds@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:j.reynolds@abdn.ac.uk)

The **Careers Service** also provides valuable information regarding recruitment and selection. This service is free and you are encouraged to make full use of it throughout your placement application process.

Careers Service  
University of Aberdeen  
48 College Bounds  
Aberdeen  
AB24 3UX

Departmental Tel: +44 (0) 1224 273601  
Departmental Fax: +44 (0) 1224 272109  
E-mail: [careers@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:careers@abdn.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.abdn.ac.uk/careers](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers)

Mrs Sandra Thomson (Careers Service)

Tel: +44 (0) 1224 273601

E-mail: [s.m.thomson@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:s.m.thomson@abdn.ac.uk)

Appointment booking system:- [www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/about/advice-guidance-235.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/about/advice-guidance-235.php)

## Compiling Your CV

Your CV is a marketing tool and is used to advertise yourself to potential employers. As you only get one chance to make a first impression with your CV it is vital that you get it right! Even if you are not considering applying for a placement you should already be thinking about your CV for when you graduate. You will need to update your CV every 6 months or on completion of a new course or work project in order that it contains the latest information. A CV is not a static thing but should evolve with you throughout your career.

Every time you apply for a new job you must also alter your CV as it should be tailor-made for each position. It is not enough just to alter the covering letter. Since each job will have specific requirements one general CV cannot match all jobs. When a CV does not highlight the requirements of a particular post it may be summarily rejected without further consideration.

When it comes to designing your CV the general rule of thumb is – keep it simple and no longer than two pages of A4. If you cannot convince a company to offer you an interview in two pages then you are not right for the job. (As your career progresses you may find that your CV will lengthen slightly, but certainly not by much.) When you print your CV do so on one side of the paper only – never print it back-to-back – and when printing your own applications print your CV on the same type of paper as you print your covering letter or other accompanying documents.

### What To Include In Your CV - The Basics

#### Your Details

Include your name, address where you can be contacted (home or term-time address or both), telephone number(s) and email address (give the email address you use the most). There is no need to give your age, date of birth, sex or marital status. Your nationality may be required if applying for work overseas.

It is a good idea to write your name in a larger font than the rest of your CV to make it stand out. If applying for a job from an existing one use your home address (unless you want your current employer to know you are job hunting) and use a personal email address. If you have a 'joke' email name create a new account for the purposes of job-hunting – you do not want prospective employers to know you as 'sexybabe101@hotmail.co.uk'. It is a good idea to include a mobile telephone number if you have one but only if you use your mobile telephone. It is permissible to give times when it is best to contact you so you are not interrupted in lectures (or work).

If you are going to be required to drive for any particular job it is worth mentioning that you have a full, clean driving licence (assuming you do).

### **Personal Statement**

This should be one short paragraph to catch the attention of your reader and entice them to find out more about you. Use this to highlight your main skills and relate them to the job for which you are applying.

### **Skills**

This is, arguably the most important section of your CV and before you rush off to compile a list of all the things that you are capable of doing you should take some time to understand which skills are important for the specific job for which you are applying. If you are unclear about which skills the job requires because the job advert gives little information search similar job titles on the internet and note what those positions are looking for. Once you have done that, create a list of your matching skills and competencies. Also include generic skills such as the ability to speak any foreign languages (including at what level i.e. basic or fluent).

Skills which are particularly popular with employers include Communication (both oral and written), Teamwork, Initiative, Problem Solving, Flexibility, Computer Skills and Technical Skills. Some of these speak for themselves e.g. technical skills such as competency in real-time PCR and Western blot analysis, but some such as initiative or teamwork may require to be backed up with specific examples.

## **Education**

List your education in reverse chronological order detailing the grades you received. Do not go further back than secondary school. Include any special awards or diplomas you have received e.g. 'Awarded class merit certificate in pipetting'.

## **Work Experience**

Again this should be in reverse chronological order. Do not go into too much detail here unless the skills used/learned are directly relevant to the job for which you are applying. If you worked as a barman at the weekends you will not need to explain what your duties included. Do include dates during which you were employed in each post.

## **Hobbies And Interests**

These are optional but are a good way of showing the reader that you are a rounded individual with broader interests than your studies alone. In the example below I have listed these under the heading 'positions of responsibility and extracurricular activities' but this is a personal choice and the final layout of your CV is up to you.

## **References**

You will be asked to provide the name and contact details of two referees on your CV when applying for an industrial placement. These are generally your personal tutor and one referee not connected with the University e.g. your current employer if you have a part-time job. This is not a hard and fast rule however but you should select people who you are confident will provide you with a favourable reference. Always ask a referee if they are willing to provide a reference before giving his/her details. It is best not to use personal referees unless requested to do so as these will always give favourable references and are not looked upon with such high regard as work or academic references. Later in your career you may not want to include contact details of your referees on your CV as you may not want your current employer being informed that you are seeking alternative employment. If this is the case it is acceptable to state that references are available on request.

## **Things To Avoid - Recruiters' CV Pet Peeves**

### **Spelling Errors, Typos And Poor Grammar**

There is **No Excuse** for poor spelling or grammar. Do not simply rely on the spell check on the computer though. 'Skills' and 'Spills' are both correctly spelled but mean entirely different things. Make sure you carefully read through everything you have written and, if possible, ask a friend to double check your work for you. Potential employers are especially disappointed by applicants who describe themselves as 'an excellent communicator', but then go on to demonstrate bad spelling and grammar, which tells them something different.

### **Unqualified Candidates**

You may want the job, but if you do not have the skills and experience needed employers will feel you are wasting their time. However, as a general rule of thumb, if you have 75% of the skills or experience requested, apply!!

### **Inaccurate Or Missing Contact Information**

How can you be contacted if your phone number is missing a digit or your email address is incorrect?

### **Inaccurate Or Missing Dates**

Employers need to know 'when you worked where' to get a better understanding of your working history and to carry out any necessary background checks. Missing dates, especially for long periods of time, could result in your CV being discarded. If you have gaps explain them in your covering letter – not in your CV. (This may be more important later on in your career.)

### **Long CVs And/Or Long Paragraphs**

Most employers simply do not have the time to read them! Focus on the skills and accomplishments that directly apply to the job for which you are applying. Every word counts so do not dwell on the specifics of each job, but rather highlight the areas which were specific to you.

### **Personal Information Unrelated To The Job**

There is no need to include your age, date of birth, marital status, number of children etc. Anything personal that is not directly linked to the position takes away from the point of your CV and will be ignored by employers.

### **Poor Formatting**

Different typefaces and borders may look great on paper but if your CV needs to be scanned or emailed to a company these may not turn out as originally designed – keep things simple. If in doubt convert any electronic copies of CVs to pdf files to retain their original formatting. Also take care to ensure that you are consistent throughout – keep headings in the same font and general information in the same font. Take a good look at the overall appearance of your CV when it is printed out. Is it tidy? Does it look lopsided? You want it to look neat and organised and not as though you have tried to cram in as much information as possible in the limited space.

### **More Help And Information**

For more information on writing CVs you should visit:

[http://content.monster.co.uk/section328.asp?WT.srch=1&WT.mc\\_n=JS\\_UK\\_GOOG\\_CV](http://content.monster.co.uk/section328.asp?WT.srch=1&WT.mc_n=JS_UK_GOOG_CV)

This site gives excellent advice on all aspects of applying for jobs including writing CVs and covering letters and filling out application forms.

The University Careers Service web site also has advice on CV writing and a number of useful interactive resources for you to utilise at:

[www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/cv-applications-interviews/cvs-138.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/cv-applications-interviews/cvs-138.php)

## CV Examples

# Susan Smith

99 Merkland Road, Aberdeen, AB24 3TU

Mobile: 07712 345678

[s.smith.0871@aberdeen.co.uk](mailto:s.smith.0871@aberdeen.co.uk)

## Education

**2011 – 2016** **University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen**  
**MSci. (Hons) Biochemistry with Industrial Placement**

The programme covers a broad based curriculum within the fields of biochemistry and molecular biology. Courses studied include:

**Level III:** Genetics, Molecular Microbiology and Core Molecular Technologies for Microbiologists

**Level II:** Genes & Evolution (16), Research Skills for Life Sciences (18), Microbes, Infection & Immunity (15), Energy for Life (19)

**Level I:** Introduction to Medical Sciences (16), Essentials of Chemistry (17), The Cell (16), Mandarin (18)

\* CAS Marking Scale: First Class Honours 18-20; Upper Second Class 15-17; Lower Second Class 12-14; Third Class 9-11; Fail 1-8.

**2005-2011** **Craigmount High School, Edinburgh**

**Higher:** Biology (A), Chemistry (A), Maths (B), Physics (B), English (B)

**Standard Grades:** Maths, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, English, Geography, German: all at credit passes.

## Work Related Skills

### Lab/Technical

My degree programme has allowed me to develop my ability in basic laboratory techniques such as microscopy, staining and colorimetry. In addition I have experience of the following molecular techniques from taught courses: DNA extraction, PCR, ELISA & Gel electrophoresis. I am confident learning new techniques and enjoy working within a laboratory environment.

### Communication

Excellent communication skills are essential in my role as sales assistant for Chanel products in Boots. This involves speaking to customers on a daily basis to provide the correct products for their needs. At University my confidence in speaking to large groups of people has been developed by delivering presentations to students and staff during a number of my courses.

### Teamwork

In my role as Secretary of the University of Aberdeen Debater it is essential to work as part of a team to deliver interesting meetings and events. I have developed my listening skills to ensure I take on board different viewpoints and work with others to run events.

### IT

I am a confident user of all Microsoft packages including Word, Excel and PowerPoint and regularly use IT as part of assessed course work assignments.

## **Work Experience**

**January 2013 – Present**  
**Boots, Aberdeen**

**Sales Assistant, Chanel Counter**

As part of a small team I work in a busy city centre store selling Chanel products. This role involves selling and marketing products to clients and recruiting new clients to achieve sales targets. One-to-one communication is essential when delivering make-overs to ensure these meet the needs of the client. I frequently handle customer queries and complaints and deal with these effectively.

**October 2011 – November 2012**  
**Morrison's, Aberdeen**

**Checkout Assistant**

My role frequently involved communicating with customers on a busy checkout to provide an efficient and friendly service. I was also responsible for assisting customers with product location and bag packing. I ensured I marketed the store 'Rewards' scheme and was successful in exceeding my allocated promotion targets.

**July 2011 – September 2011**  
**Thistle Hotel, Aberdeen**

**Waitress**

I worked in a busy restaurant team delivering excellent customer service and meals within an appropriate time scale. I was responsible for managing the food and drinks orders for several tables within a busy restaurant and was often allocated large parties at peak periods. Demonstrated attention to detail by ensuring the restaurant was prepared for customers and cleaned at the end of the night.

## **Interests & Achievements**

### **Societies/Clubs**

I have been a member of the University Hockey Club and University Debater since starting University in 2011. I have recently been elected to the role of Debater Secretary. This involves organising Society meetings with the Debater Committee, taking meeting minutes, emailing event details to society members, attending society events and working as part of a team to generate ideas for meetings and events.

### **Drama/Theatre**

I really enjoy amateur dramatics and was involved in a variety of school plays. In addition, I have performed in the Aberdeen University Students' Association Charities 'Student Show' production on two occasions which contributed to the Charity Campaign's £10,000 total for local Aberdeenshire charities.

## **References**

Dr A. Primer  
School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition  
Institute of Medical Sciences  
Foresterhill  
University of Aberdeen  
Aberdeen  
AB25 2ZD  
Tel: 01224 987 654  
Email: [a.primer@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:a.primer@abdn.ac.uk)

Mr. P. Alchemy  
Manager  
Boots  
Bon Accord Shopping Centre  
Aberdeen  
AB21 3CD  
Tel: 01224 123 456  
Email: [palchemy@boots.com](mailto:palchemy@boots.com)

# Susan Smith

99 Merkland Road, Aberdeen, AB24 3TU

Mobile: 07712 345678

[s.smith.0871@aberdeen.co.uk](mailto:s.smith.0871@aberdeen.co.uk)

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

Genetics (Hons) undergraduate with a special interest in stem cell research. Excellent communicator with a proven ability to manage my time effectively and work under pressure and to tight time limits. Competent in data analysis and enjoy working within a laboratory environment. Seeking to expand laboratory skills with a view to following a career in medical research.

## EDUCATION

**2011 – 2016** **University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen**  
**MSci. (Hons) Biochemistry with Industrial Placement**

The programme covers a broad-based curriculum within the fields of biochemistry and molecular biology. Courses studied:

- **Level III:** Genetics, Molecular Microbiology and Core Molecular Technologies for Microbiologists
- **Level II:** Genes & Evolution (16), Research for Life Sciences (18), Microbes, Infection & Immunity (15), Energy for Life (19)
- **Level I:** Introduction to Medical Sciences (16), Essentials of Chemistry (17), The Cell (16), Mandarin (18)  
(*Marking Scale: First Class Honours 18-20; Upper Second Class 15-17; Lower Second Class 12-14*)

**2005-2011** **Craigmount High School, Edinburgh**

- **Higher:** Biology (A), Chemistry (A), Maths (B), Physics (B), English (B)
- **Standard Grades:** Maths, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, English, Geography, German (all at credit passes).

## RELEVANT SKILLS

### Lab/Technical

- Confident in techniques such as microscopy, staining and colorimetry.
- From taught courses experience in DNA extraction, PCR, ELISA & Gel electrophoresis.

### Communication

- Excellent communication skills gained through my role as sales assistant for Chanel products, Boots (involves liaising with customers on a daily basis to provide the correct products for their needs).
- Confidence in speaking to large groups of people has been developed by delivering presentations to students and staff members during courses at University.

### Teamwork

- Essential part of my role as Secretary of the University of Aberdeen Debater.
- Developed my listening skills to ensure I take on board different viewpoints and work with others to run events.

### IT

- Confident in use of all Microsoft packages including Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
- Regularly use IT as part of assessed coursework.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**January 2013 – Present**

**Boots, Aberdeen**

Sales Assistant, Chanel Counter

Responsibilities:

- Handling customer queries and complaints in a friendly manner.
- Advising customers about new products and promotions to achieve sales targets.
- Ensuring the till sales are processed and correct at the end of the day.

**October 2011 – November 2013 Morrison's, Aberdeen**

Checkout Assistant

Responsibilities:

- Worked in a team to deliver an efficient and friendly service.
- Frequently assisted customers with product location and bag packing.
- Effectively met store targets by promoting the 'rewards' scheme.

**July 2011 – September 2011**

**Thistle Hotel, Aberdeen**

Waitress

Responsibilities:

- Managed the food and drinks orders for several tables within a busy restaurant.
- Demonstrated attention to detail by preparing the restaurant for diners.
- Worked as an efficient member of the restaurant team to serve customers' meals within an appropriate time scale.

## INTERESTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

### Hockey & Debater

- Member of the University Hockey Club.
- Actively involved in the Debater Society since the start of my studies.
- Elected to the role of Debater Secretary. (Organising society meetings, taking minutes, emailing event details to society members, attending society events and working as part of a team to generate ideas for meetings and events.)

### Drama/Theatre

- Enjoy amateur dramatics and was involved in a variety of school plays.
- Twice performed in the Aberdeen University Students' Association Charities 'Student Show' production, contributing to the Charity Campaign's £10,000 total for local Aberdeenshire charities.

## REFERENCES

Dr A. Primer  
School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition  
Institute of Medical Sciences  
Foresterhill  
University of Aberdeen  
Aberdeen  
AB25 2ZD  
Tel: 01224 987 654  
Email: [a.primer@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:a.primer@abdn.ac.uk)

Mr. P. Alchemy  
Manager  
Boots  
Bon Accord Shopping Centre  
Aberdeen  
AB21 3CD  
Tel: 01224 123 456  
Email: [palchemy@boots.com](mailto:palchemy@boots.com)

## Writing a Covering Letter

A good covering letter introduces you to the reader and stimulates interest in your attached CV. It is an essential and often underrated part of your job application.

### Tips for Covering Letters

- Keep it brief – no more than one side of A4.
- Design your layout to use the full page of paper.
- The style is formal – these are business letters.
- Use simple, short sentences.
- If addressed ‘Dear Sir/Madam’ end ‘Yours faithfully’.
- If addressed to a named person end ‘Yours sincerely’.
- Type your name underneath your signature.

## Covering Letter - Layout

Employer's name  
and full postal address

Your full address  
including postcode

Date of application.

Dear Sir/Madam (or the name of the person to whom you are applying)

**Re: Post title (reference number)**

The opening paragraph explains where you saw the advertisement or how you learned of the vacancy and identifies the job you are applying for. You should also use this paragraph to introduce yourself to the prospective employer so that they can understand who you are. This paragraph should also very briefly state why you are interested in that particular job.

The second paragraph should explain why you are interested in applying to this particular organisation (ie why you are interested in them). This could include:

Its area of specialisation

Its size (large, medium, small)

The placement or training programme on offer

Anything else that you find interesting about them (e.g. look at their mission statement to gain some insight)

The third paragraph should explain why the organisation should be interested in you. This could include:

Your degree/courses that you have taken and how they are relevant to the placement on offer

Your work experience (make sure that you relate aspects of this to the placement on offer)

Skills that you can bring to the placement

Add any relevant information that was not included in your CV.

The final paragraph should very briefly sum up your suitability for the placement on offer. Mention when you are available for interview. Try to end on a positive note. But do not make it sound as if you ASSUME that you will get an interview (as that would put off most prospective employers).

Yours faithfully, (or sincerely)

}

} If possible leave 5 full lines

} here to sign your name

} (hit enter/return 6 times on the keyboard)

}

Type your name

## Covering Letter - Example

Dr F. Stein  
First Laboratory Services  
15 Testing Lane  
Cambridge  
CA34 9LP

A. Student  
First Floor Left  
4 Highrise Crescent  
Aberdeen  
AB53 5QA

20 May 2017

Dear Dr Stein,

**Re: Forensic Science placement student (Ref. No. FZY009AX)**

I read with great interest your advertisement in New Scientist for a Forensic Science placement student. I am a third year undergraduate student studying molecular biology at the University of Aberdeen, and am looking to secure a year-long placement for my university degree so that I can achieve an undergraduate MSci. I would like to further my skills and knowledge in a forensic environment which offers a varied workload and demands a high level of trust and responsibility.

First Laboratory Services are the market leader in the supply of forensic science services to police forces in England and Wales, as well as being a recognised source of forensic training. I believe that the advertised post would provide me with an excellent opportunity to learn about additional practical aspects of forensic science which would greatly enhance my future career prospects in the area. I am particularly enthused by your mission statement to leave no crime unsolved and believe that I would acclimatise very quickly into the professional work environment offered by your organisation.

During my degree I worked for 10 weeks in the laboratory of Prof. H. Smith, at Aberdeen University, where I examined the effects of diet on the development of bone. This complemented my studies, and together they provide me with an excellent understanding of molecular and cellular biological assays. I have also accrued knowledge of the broad range of tools available to researchers in these disciplines, including DNA extraction and real-time PCR. The necessity to manage my own time throughout my university career has developed my ability to work under pressure and to tight deadlines. In addition, my weekend job teaching horse riding at the local riding stable has helped enhance my interpersonal skills and ability to work together with people from all ages and backgrounds.

I believe that my technical, time management and interpersonal skill make me well suited to the placement on offer. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application in person and am available for interview at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

A. Student

## Completing Application Forms

An application form is often your first chance to tell a potential employer about yourself. Sometimes it is your only chance. Producing a good application form requires a lot of time and thought. As with your CV, it needs to be well presented and needs to stand out from the others in order to get you that vital interview.

### Helpful tips when completing an application form

- Always make a copy of the blank application form and use this to complete a draft.
- Make sure you read through the form and follow any instructions, e.g. use black ink, block capitals etc. If there are no instructions always use black or dark blue ink. This is in case the form is to be scanned or photocopied.
- Always answer the questions honestly but tailor your responses to what the company is looking for.
- Make sure your answers are easy to read and interesting.
- Do not answer any of the questions with 'please refer to my CV'.
- Never leave any questions blank.
- Aim for quality not quantity but make full use of the space/word limit provided.

You are asked to complete an application form for a hypothetical position in assessment one. Please refer to the guidelines above and in the instructions for assessment one when completing the form.

### Monitoring Forms

Occasionally some companies operate an Equal Opportunity Policy and you may be required to complete your application form omitting your name, gender, marital status, age and religion. You will be asked to record these details on a separate Monitoring Form. This enables the Employer/Selector to look at application forms without knowing any of the applicants' personal details.

# Preparing For Interviews

## Before The Interview

- Ensure all travel arrangements are prepared and plan your route to allow for any delays.
- Aim to arrive half an hour before your interview so you have time to relax.
- Take a copy of your CV/application form and covering letter. This is what your interviewer will be basing your interview on and asking questions from.
- Ensure you are aware of the job profile.
- Do lots of background research on the company you are attending.
- Prepare two or three questions to ask the employer at the end of your interview.
- Dress smartly but ensure you will be comfortable.

## During The Interview

You only have one chance to give a good impression so:

- Be polite to everyone you meet.
- Speak clearly and firmly. Do not speak too quickly.
- Avoid distracting mannerisms such as folding your arms or touching your face.
- Do not fidget.
- Reply as precisely as possible and avoid answering simply with 'yes' or 'no'.
- Be positive about yourself and explain how your skills and qualities can be of benefit to the job in question.
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer. In panel interviews, concentrate on the questioner but also look at the other panel members from time to time.

## Possible Interview Questions They May Ask You

- Why did you choose this course/university?
- Which aspects of your course do you like the best/least?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
- Why are you interested in working for this company?
- What skills would you expect to gain during your placement year?

- What class of degree/grade do you expect to achieve?

### **Possible Interview Questions You May Wish To Ask**

- What will the work involve?
- Will I stay in one department or will I move around?
- Will I have a training programme?
- Will I have appraisals?
- What is the cost of living in the area? Is it easy to find accommodation?

## **Writing An Acceptance Letter**

As part of accepting a placement position you may be required to send a letter of acceptance. If you are offered the place verbally, face-to-face or over the phone then you should accept it the same way. However, you should back this up by a letter of acceptance as this allows you to acknowledge that you are aware of what you have accepted. If your offer was made via email it is acceptable to send your acceptance letter via email – it is still a written document.

The following points need to be addressed when accepting a placement: -

- Thank the person making you the offer.
- Refer to the letter date and position you have been offered.
- State that you wish to accept the offer.
- Indicate that you will look forward to joining their team.
- Confirm or request the start date.
- Remember to sign your letter.

Please refer to the sample acceptance letter overleaf.

## Acceptance Letter – Example

Dr F. Stein  
First Laboratory Services  
15 Testing Lane  
Cambridge  
CA34 9LP

A. Student  
First Floor Left  
4 Highrise Crescent  
Aberdeen  
AB53 5QA

30 November 2014

Dear Dr Stein,

**Re: Trainee Forensic Scientist (Ref. No. FZY009AX)**

Thank you for your letter dated 28 November 2014 offering me a 12 month placement with First Laboratory Services.

I would be delighted to accept and would be grateful if you could confirm my starting date. I look forward to working with you and your team during the forthcoming year.

If you require any further information please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Anne Student





## Interview Assessment Form

Complete this form as soon as possible after your interview (be honest!).

Company/organisation:	
Location of interview:	Date:
Name of interviewer(s):	

Was I on time?	Yes/ No	Was I confident?	Yes/ No
Were my answers clear?	Yes/ No	Was I relaxed?	Yes/ No
Was I enthusiastic?	Yes/ No	Was eye contact good	Yes/ No
Did I speak clearly	Yes/ No	Did I fidget?	Yes/ No
Was my posture good?	Yes/ No	Was I well mannered?	Yes/ No
Did I sound coherent?	Yes/ No		

What did I do well?
Tricky Questions.
Was my research good enough? If not, why?
Anything I could have done better?
Ideas for the next interview.
Overall.
Did I enjoy the interview?    Yes/ No                      Did I do my best?                      Yes/ No
What happens next?

## University Policies

*Students are asked to make themselves familiar with the information on key institutional policies which been made available within MyAberdeen*

*(<https://abdn.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/Policies>). These policies are relevant to all students and will be useful to you throughout your studies. They contain important information and address issues such as what to do if you are absent, how to raise an appeal or a complaint and indicate how seriously the University takes your feedback.*

*These institutional policies should be read in conjunction with this programme and/or course handbook, in which School and College specific policies are detailed. Further information can be found on the **University's Infohub webpage** or by visiting the Infohub.*

The information included in the institutional area for 2019/20 includes the following:

- Absence
- Appeals & Complaints
- Student Discipline
- Class Certificates
- MyAberdeen
- Originality Checking
- Feedback
- Communication
- Graduate Attributes
- The Co-Curriculum