Mini-series: Own your CV

Episode 1
General Overview, Layout,
Format and Language

CAREERS SERVICE
OWN YOUR FUTURE

What will you learn about CVs?

Why is writing a CV good for you?

So what is a CV anyway?

How to write a great CV to get you shortlisted

Layout, format and language

Working on a CV is good for you because…

You think about what you have done

You develop a base document to work from

It helps with confidence but can also highlight gaps (this is good!)

CURRICULUM VITAE

What is a CV?

- Curriculum vitae
- Path of life
- Resume = CV in SA context
- Both **are short targeted documents highlighting relevant activities** and **skills**

An application package =

A CV

+

Cover letter

+

Application form

+

Any requested documentation

What is a CV?

Your very own advert

Does not feature your bad parts

Skills
Proficient in English language but gets nervous therefore poor at public speaking

It is not a bragging document

Skills
My track record in research speaks for itself
I have great communication skills
Excellent IT skills

Support claims with evidence (see skills episode)

The selection process is done by a selection committee

- All job and bursary adverts have requirements
- Selection committees match CVs to requirements
- Some employers use software to match CVs to requirements (see “Beat the Bots” episode)
- Usually there are more applicants than a committee has time to interview, so applicants are shortlisted

Will your CV stand out enough to get you shortlisted?

Your CV may be viewed only after 100s of others

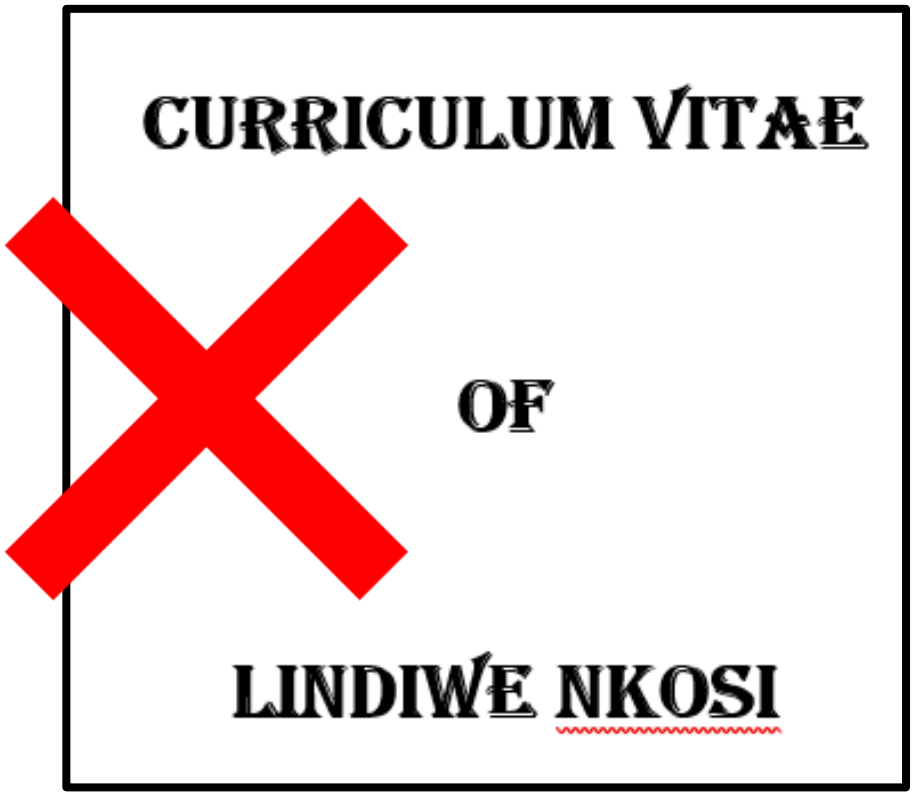
You may be a great applicant but if your CV does not show this, you may not get an interview

Develop a CV that increases your chances (keep watching this mini-series)

LAYOUT

Layout

- One size does not fit all regarding CV templates and layout
- No cover page needed
- Do not use the words “Curriculum Vitae”
- Be careful of templates as they may not be fit for purpose or allow headings to be edited



What about adding a photograph?

- Only include a photograph if requested
- If you choose to add one, use a professional head and shoulder picture
- A photograph may create unconscious biases
- Rather let your content convince the selection committee

Length of a CV

- Typically 2 pages
- Academic CVs usually do not have length constraints
- Comply with the requirements of the application process
- Try adjusting your margins if your CV is just over 2 pages

FORMAT

Format

- Be consistent for all aspects of your CV:

  - same font
  - same size headings
  - headings can be in CAPS
  - no CAPS for body text
  - spacing between sections

- Reverse chronological order for all activities
- Do not go smaller than font size 11
- Use an uncluttered font
- Use bold **selectively** to make something stand out
- Do not overcrowd information

Headings

- Choose suitable headings for each section

- Common headings are:
  - Education
  -Work experience
  - Skills

- Other headings must be eye-catching and describe your experiences e.g. community work and leadership are better than extra-curricular activities

LANGUANGE

Language

Use professional and appropriate language e.g. rather use “university” than “varsity”

Do not use “I” or the third person e.g. “Siya was on the house committee at Glen residence”

Do not use paragraphs and full sentences, rather use note form language e.g. Glen residence house committee member

Language

Only use bullets for subpoints, not for headings

Start with action words e.g. organised, initiated, developed and designed

Use present tense for current activities and past tense for past activities

Language

- Use acronyms to save space
- Write out acronyms in full first, then follow by acronym

2019	**Honours in Economics**	University of Cape Town (UCT)
2016 - 2018	**Bachelor of Commerce**	UCT
2015	**Grade 12**	Newtown College, Cape Tow

- Use spell check, but remember it may not pick up ambiguities
- Ask someone to read over your CV
- You may not pick up mistakes yourself

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