



## Introduction

The ELEMENT Career Toolkit is a step by step guide to finding the ideal job for you. In order to get the job, you will then need to think about a logical, systematic approach to job hunting.

Firstly, you will need to think about the degree course and what knowledge, skills, and experience you have gained. You will then to think about where your skills could be used, and in what sector or industry.

*Think,  
research,  
plan,  
succeed...*



This way, when you come to apply for a job, you will be equipped with the knowledge you need in order to apply. This will include knowing where to find information and advice about how to apply for a job successfully and any hints and tips that will enable you to create a good impression at the various stages of the selection process.

**HANDY TIP!** Throughout your job hunting process, make notes on your research and record any feedback you may receive. By recording and keeping things in one place you will become more efficient in the process!

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## Research



This section of the ELEMENT Toolkit will show you how to make sure that you are prepared before you apply for a job. This includes considering your options, researching companies and making the most out of careers/employment fairs.

### Consider your options:

Think about your degree course and which industry sectors require your skills. You will also need to consider what type of employer will recruit from your degree discipline.

What areas of industry appeal to you?

What can an employer offer you in their industry field?

The more you consider your options, the more you'll see what exactly is available for you!

**TOP TIP!** Broaden your horizons by being flexible in terms of location.

### Benefits of careers/employment fairs:

Attend careers/employment fairs as often as you can. By doing so you can find out about the type and culture of a potential employer. Recruiters at careers/employment fairs are always impressed by students who have already begun to research their company. Before you attend a fair you should be able to find out what companies will be present on the fair website, but if not you can always check this with your careers advisor or university. Prepare by making a list of who you want to see at the fair; this will keep you focused. You should also take a few copies of your current CV to hand to preferred companies. This will impress!

**HANDY HINT:** Dress smartly! First impressions count for a lot!

### Research companies:

Make a list of companies you are interested in. From your shortlist, make sure you find out as much as you can about the company, especially in relation to the area of work you are interested in. Some examples to get you started: what is their principle activity? Where are they located? What are their key current projects? What do they do for their local community?

**HINT!** The more you research, the more you will be able to impress your potential employer with your knowledge!

## Applying

**You have researched, made a decision on what sectors interest you, decided which employers you would like to work for, and identified the opportunities you would like to apply for. Now, you need to apply for the job!**

### Quality not quantity:

Many employers receive a lot of applications as a lot of students tend to apply for anything and everything. This means that your application can potentially get lost in the endless piles of applications. In order to avoid this, you will need to write a good covering letter. In your covering letter, make it clear what you know about the company and highlight the evidence you have relating to the employer's key requirements.

**TOP TIP!** See if your career service/development centre or university will help you with your application and cover letter and CV. They will often check for any grammatical or spelling errors, and presentation.

### How to write your cover letter:

Clearly state the position you are applying for, including any reference numbers. You will need to explain why you are interested in the role, as well as the company. In addition to this, you will also need to show what skills and competencies you have in relation to the role you are applying for. Also mention any modules, work experience, volunteering projects etc. that you have completed or are completing to show your relevance in the area of work you are applying for. Keep the letter under 500 words and you may want to keep the same style and formatting as your CV.





## Applying

### How to write your CV:

Limit the length of your CV to no more than two sides of typed A4. You need to include the following information on your CV:

- \* Contact details (add this at the top of your page). Ensure your email address is professional
- \* Names of schools, colleges and universities you have attended (you can add modules too if they are relevant!), along with your courses and grades
- \* List any work experience, holiday work, internships, or volunteering you have done (keep it relevant to the job you are applying for if you have a lot of experience). If you do not have relevant experience, include information about projects you have worked on during your studies
- \* Mention your hobbies, interests, memberships of any groups/ societies (highlight any roles of responsibility you have had!)
- \* List any additional information such as your driving licence, any languages you can speak, IT proficiency and musical instruments you can play.
- \* Name two referees (one academic and one work related, if you can) Provide their full name, job title, relationship to you, contact details (phone, email and address), and always ask for their permission first!
- \* Make sure the presentation of your CV is professional. Use a clear font and use different font styles for headings, but do not go too mad!

**TOP TIP! Get someone to check it before you send it off. They can check for spelling, grammar and any factual errors. It is always good to get a second opinion!**

### Top 15 reasons for rejecting a candidate at the CV stage:

- \* Referring to a different company by mistake
- \* Poorly laid out CVs - too many fonts, no white space
- \* Spelling mistakes
- \* Incorrect contact information
- \* Unprofessional email address
- \* Outdated CV (content and layout)
- \* Listing non-relevant skills to the position
- \* Lack of substantial content
- \* Failure to include the degree title
- \* Too much description (you need to be succinct!)
- \* CVs longer than two pages
- \* Leaving out dates
- \* Failure to list extracurricular activities
- \* Leaving out standard information such as grades.
- \* CV that has clearly been cut and pasted



## Applying

### How to prepare for telephone interviews:

Understand the role you have applied for. The interviewer might arrange to call you at a certain time, or they may ask you to call them at a certain time. If you try to call at the time the interviewer requested and they do not answer, leave a message to show that you called at the right time. If you are not sure of when they will call, make sure you tell your family or friends that you are expecting the call if they pick up the phone before

you. Also make sure your answer phone message sounds professional. Speak clearly into the phone, do not eat, chew gum, smoke or drink.

**ELEMENT TIP!** Revisit your research into the company before your interview

### How to impress at an interview:

At an interview you will be assessed on key competencies. These include personal skills such as problem solving, team working and communication skills. You must also ensure you prepare questions that show your interest in the company. Check their website for any recent developments that are affecting the firm and what they do. Wear smart business dress, polish your shoes and iron your clothes. You must create a good first impression. Allow plenty of time for your journey to your interview, and if you have never travelled to the area before, do a test run so you know exactly where it is and how long it takes you. Listen to what the interviewer is saying and

take your time in order to collect your thoughts before answering a question. Ask the interviewer about your professional development; ask about training, courses and career progression. At the end of the interview, ask what the next step is, when you are likely to hear the outcome and remember to thank the interviewers for their time.

**HINTS!** Do not ask about holidays or benefits. Switch off your mobile phone. SMILE!

### How to prepare for assessment centres:

Arrive fresh and on time! Relax and be yourself, but remain professional. Assessment centres could include: presentations, a practical team task, psychometric tests, personality tests, interviews, analytical, verbal or numerical exercises. Do not dwell on any mistakes you might have made in a task; focus on the next task. During breaks, take this opportunity to socialise with others and find out more about the company. You can enjoy an assessment centre and a lot of students say how much fun they had.

**Remember - it is all good experience.**

## Personal Area

You have researched, you have applied for the job, and now you need to manage your job hunting and keep on track of your progress.

### Recording your key competencies

The majority of companies will have a list of key competencies that they look for when interviewing a candidate for an internship or graduate job. Listed below are a number of key competency example questions that are regularly used by a lot of organisations.

**PROBLEM SOLVING:** 'Can you tell me about a problem you have faced, either within a team or as an individual and how you solved the problem?'

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**LEADERSHIP:** 'Can you tell me about a time when you had to lead a team of people in order to achieve an objective?'

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**TEAMWORK:** 'Can you describe a time when you were a member of a team and tell me how you positively contributed to the team?'

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**DECISION MAKING:** 'What is the most difficult decision you have had to make?'

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**RESPONSIBILITY:** 'Can you give me an example of a position of responsibility you have held?'

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**COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** 'Can you tell me about a time when you had to teach or instruct someone else?'

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## *Personal Area*

### Checklist

Have you researched your preferred industry sector?

Have you shortlisted any employers?

Have you researched the employers that you have shortlisted?

Have you updated and check your CV?

Have you recorded your work experience?

Have you recorded you Key Competency answers?

Have you made a note of your applications in the Application Diary?

Are you getting the most out of your university's careers service?