

Master's Degree CV Writing Guide

Practical guidance for presenting specialist capability, research depth and professional contribution

Main principle

A strong Master's degree CV positions you as an emerging specialist by linking advanced study, research, professional experience, technical methods and leadership to the needs of an employer, research group or institution.

1. Understand the purpose

Your CV is a targeted argument for your fit. Show both depth and application: what you understand at an advanced level, how you investigate or solve problems, and what changed because of your work. The balance will differ for professional, research, consulting and doctoral opportunities.

2. Build your evidence base

- Identify whether the opportunity values professional impact, specialist knowledge, research potential, or a combination.
- Create a master CV containing your complete evidence base, including methods, projects, outputs and results.
- Copy the master CV and tailor the copy for each application.
- Ask a subject specialist or trusted professional to review it, then submit it in the requested format.

3. Decide what to include

Experience source	Evidence it can provide	Examples
Master's study	Specialist knowledge and advanced analysis	Dissertation, methods, modules, laboratory or studio work
Research	Question design, evidence, methods and outputs	Thesis, assistantship, conference paper or policy brief
Professional work	Judgement, delivery, stakeholder value and results	Employment, internship, consultancy or placement
Applied projects	Problem-solving, tools, collaboration and outputs	Client capstone, simulation, prototype or field study

Leadership	Influence, ownership and professional contribution	Teaching, mentoring, committee, event or professional body
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4. Choose the right CV architecture

A professional CV may lead with experience and impact; a research or doctoral CV may lead with education, research interests, methods, outputs and presentations. Rename sections when a precise disciplinary label helps.

5. Tailor the CV

- Highlight the skills, qualifications and evidence requested in the vacancy or programme description.
- Move the most relevant sections and strongest examples nearer the top.
- Repeat important, accurate keywords naturally, especially names of tools, methods, subject areas and qualifications.
- Remove details that take space but do not strengthen your case.

6. Section-by-section guidance

Contact details

Include your name, general location, phone number, professional email and relevant LinkedIn or portfolio link. Avoid unnecessary personal information unless specifically required.

Profile

Use three or four lines tailored to the opportunity. Identify your specialism, strongest relevant evidence, methods or sector experience, and intended contribution.

Education

List the Master's degree first. Include expected or achieved results, advanced modules when relevant, dissertation title, research question, methods, significant findings, funding and academic awards. Keep undergraduate detail selective.

Experience

Use reverse chronological order and prioritise outcomes, judgement, stakeholder value, technical contribution and scale. Earlier unrelated work can be compressed.

Research and projects

State the question or problem, your individual contribution, methods, data or tools, and output. Distinguish your work from the team's work.

Outputs and presentations

Use a consistent citation style for publications, working papers, posters, exhibitions, datasets or conference contributions. Clearly label work that is submitted, under review or in preparation.

Leadership and engagement

Show influence, ownership, mentoring, teaching, service, professional membership or knowledge exchange. Describe your contribution.

Skills and methods

Organise skills into useful groups such as Data and Analysis, Research Methods, Laboratory Techniques, Software, Languages or Professional Practice.

Certifications and interests

Include current, relevant credentials and memberships with awarding bodies and dates. Interests are optional and should add credible evidence.

References

Follow application instructions. Otherwise, Available on request is sufficient, or omit the section to save space.

7. ATS-friendly formatting

- Use standard headings and a simple, single-column layout when possible.
- Choose a common font such as Arial, Calibri, Aptos or Times New Roman.
- Keep body text approximately 10.5–12 points; 12-point is recommended.
- Avoid text boxes, icons, skill-rating bars, charts, graphics and complicated tables in the submitted CV.
- Keep essential information in the main document, not only in headers or footers.
- Include relevant keywords naturally and truthfully; do not hide keywords or copy the vacancy description.
- Use .docx when requested; otherwise, a text-based PDF is usually suitable.
- Use a professional filename such as Firstname_Lastname_CV.pdf.

Recommended length

Two pages is a strong default for most Master's-level professional applications. Academic CVs may be longer when publications, teaching, grants and conferences justify the length.