

## McGill University

### Academic C.V. & Job Cover Letter Preparation

*Dr. Lise Winer, Graduate Program Director,  
Dept. of Integrated Studies in Education  
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## Application Components

A typical academic job application includes:

- a cover letter to the potential employer
- A curriculum vitae (c.v., vita) or resume (or résumé) [no real difference in names!]
- a list of references (or referees)

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## Other materials are often requested or accepted, e.g.

- Portfolios
- Publications
- Academic transcripts
- Copies of degrees, certifications, diplomas

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## Documents, Transcripts

- Transcripts are usually sent directly from the granting institution; this can take a while.
- You can send a photocopy and say that you can request (or have requested) an official copy.
- You can get an officially certified copy of your transcripts or other documents.

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## Part A: C.V.

- Follow advice for academic—not business—professionals.
- Some information is better in the cover letter or interview, e.g. what kind of position you want
- Follow specific length limits, but an academic cv can be long.
- Be sure that there are NO ERRORS.
- Ensure easy readability; give section headings.
- Use plain type font and plain white bond paper. Fancy styles look pretentious and do not email / photocopy well.
- Give full form of an abbreviation, e.g. for name of organization, the first time you use it.

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## Order of Component Parts

Depending on what kind of institution you are applying to, the order of component parts may differ.

- 1. Teaching-Primary Position
- 2. Research-Primary Position

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### 1. Applications to teach in a liberal-arts college where teaching is considered primary could list sub-sections like this:

- contact information
- education
- teaching experience
- courses prepared to teach (in general or specific to the institution)
- courses interested in teaching/developing
- research experience
- grants received
- scholarly awards received
- publications
- presentations
- list of referees and contact information
- teaching portfolio

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### 2. Applications to research/teaching positions could arrange components like this:

- contact information
- education
- research experience
- grants
- scholarly awards
- publications
- presentations
- teaching experience
- courses prepared to teach (in general or specific to the institution)
- courses interested in teaching/developing
- list of referees and contact information
- a sample publication

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## 1. TITLE

Put Resume or Résumé or Curriculum vitae and your name at the top, e.g.

**Curriculum vitae: Mr. Tobi LeBec**

Note that "Mr." or "Ms." indicates gender, "Dr." does not.

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## 2. PERSONAL DATA

### Do include:

- Name(s)
  - distinguish clearly first and family names
  - if you have used several names, legally or professionally, include all, with indication of preference
- Address and phone number (current to what date, and permanent)
- Email (better to use an academic address, rather than e.g. Hotmail)

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### Personal Data

#### Do not include:

- Age, sex, religion, race, marital status, number of children, health status, or photos.
- Note: any of these may be requested of a job candidate in some countries outside North America.

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## 3. EDUCATION

### Do include:

- All degrees, certificates and diplomas at the post-secondary level
- Title and supervisor's name for thesis/dissertation; date awarded or expected
- Academic honors: list granting institution, date awarded, amount if applicable, criteria
- Academic scholarships and fellowships: include amounts and brief criteria
- Training courses relevant to this area which did not result in a degree
- Professional certifications
- Student teaching, internships, etc.

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## Incomplete Degrees

- You should indicate any degrees for which you registered but did not complete. You can put something like "transferred to XXX program, XXX university, see below"
- If you feel an explanation is helpful, put one line in the cover letter, e.g. "In order to pursue a better focus...", "my supervisor was unable to continue..."

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### Education

#### Do *not* include:

- Anything from secondary school and, eventually, anything from CEGEP.
- Titles of regular class term papers.
- Attendance at lectures, workshops, conferences, conventions, etc.
- Student loans.

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## Format for Education Items

- Most recent first; indent after first line
- Order of information.

#### Style 1

May 2011    M.A. in Education & Society, McGill University, Montreal

#### Style 2

M.A. in Education & Society, McGill University, Montreal, May 2011

- Try both ways and see which you prefer.

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## 4. EMPLOYMENT

#### Do include:

- Both paid and volunteer experience
- Teaching or other professional work in same or other fields
- Research work on projects or for professors
- Materials and curriculum development
- Administration, supervision and training
- Positions of leadership

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### Employment

#### Do *not* include:

- Work in offices, restaurants or business, unless it shows you have had responsibility, experience in management, international experience, etc.
- Student teaching and internship experience – put under Education.
- If included in work experience, make it clear they were program requirements.

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## Format for Work Experience

- Most recent first
- Title of position at left, followed by place, dates, and description of duties
  - Do not include activities such as "greeting customers" or "motivating students"
- Make work experience descriptions parallel, e.g.  
teaching... supervising...  
taught.... supervised....
- If you have several of the same activity – e.g. TA, RA – consider grouping them for each institution.

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## Gaps in the Timeline

- Gaps in the work record due to illness, parental/family responsibilities, finding yourself, finding someone else...
- These used to be very "suspicious" especially for women. They are not so suspicious now, especially in Canada.
- If you feel this is necessary to explain, one sentence in the cover letter is sufficient, e.g. "My studies were interrupted by a year of working to gain experience and support my family."

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## Example of Job Description

- Instructor and Curriculum Developer, St. Scholastica College, Mindanao, Philippines, Sept. 1987 - June 1988.
  - Taught intermediate and advanced English academic reading, writing, speaking and listening to students planning to study in English in North America.
  - Wrote and audio-recorded a series of practice lectures used throughout the college.
  - Developed curriculum and teaching materials for advanced oral skills classes.

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## Compare:

- ABCs of the PhD, student organizer for faculty lecture series, 2011-12.
- Organizer of "ABCs of the Ph.D.", a faculty series of workshops for helping PhD students. Sept. 2011-May 2012.
- Organizer of "ABCs of the Ph.D.", a faculty series of workshops for helping PhD students. Solicited and chose topics, found speakers, moderated sessions, reserved times and rooms, and publicized talks. Sept. 2011-May 2012.

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## Assistantship Descriptions

### Teaching Assistantship:

- course, title, instructor, dates
- description of responsibilities, e.g. grading student papers, giving tutorials

### Research Assistant:

- include project title, funding agency, supervisor, dates,
- description of responsibilities, e.g. finding library resources, conducting interviews.

### Field Assistantship:

- Course or project name, instructor or principal investigator, dates,
- Description of responsibilities, e.g. supervising undergraduates in fieldwork

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## 5. Publications

- Most recent first
- Indicate whether a publication is peer-reviewed (refereed) or not.
- If you have written for public (not professional) readership, include under a subheading (e.g. Writing for the Public)

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## Citing publications

- Use the bibliographic reference format common to your discipline
- Make sure it is correct and consistent
- Cite the publication exactly as it appears in the site, e.g. order of authors.
- If your name as co-author appears lost in a multiple-author article, leave it in the same order, but highlight in bold.

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## 6. Presentations

- Most recent first.
- Use bibliographic reference format common to your discipline.
- Make sure it is correct and consistent.
- Indicate whether a presentation acceptance is peer-reviewed (refereed) or not.
- Cite the presentation exactly as it appeared in the program, e.g. order of authors.

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## 7. Professional Organizations

### Do include:

- Current memberships in professionally related areas, including student organizations. (This holds even if you only pay for a membership and do nothing.)
- Offices held and for how long.
- Participation in an official capacity in conference or other professional activities.

### Do not include:

- Memberships no longer current, unless you held office in them at one time (specify).

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## 8. Language Skills

- Indicate for each language your level of competence (beginner, fair, good, excellent) for each skill.
- You can simply list only languages in which you have at least good competence.

### Example:

Japanese: speaking and listening-good,  
reading and writing-fair

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## 9. Other Information

### Do include:

- Professionally relevant skills, e.g., translation; computer expertise; content area experience
- Sports teams, especially if you held positions of responsibility

### Do not include:

- Travel, hobbies, interests (unless they are directly relevant to your application)

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## 10. REFERENCES

- Include a separate list of three or four referees and their contact information.
- Use different sets of referees for different applications as appropriate
- Always get permission beforehand from a referee.
- Choose people who have recent knowledge of various aspects of your academic, teaching, research or other professional work.
- Give referees time to write – don't make unnecessary emergencies!

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- If someone you ask is hesitant, or suggests you ask someone else, take the hint.
- It is better to have letters tailored to each job sent directly by the referee to the employer. Send referees each job/grant description so they can make changes appropriate changes to a letter.
- If you need to carry a letter around with you, make sure to ask the referee for a general letter of reference and to give you several signed copies in case you can't get in touch with them in a hurry.

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## Part B: COVER LETTER

- Addressed to the head of the search committee, principal, or director of the institution to which you are applying.
- It should emphasize your abilities to fulfill the specific requirements as advertised.
- The cover letter is normally limited to two pages.

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### Cover Letter

#### Do include:

- Reasons why you think you are particularly well qualified and ready to do this job, e.g. experience with relevant types of courses, students, programs and research. Use language from the advertisement as appropriate.
- Reasons why you want to do this job now – not financial!

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- A brief summary of your past research and publications; what they show and why they are important.
- What you are planning to do with your thesis/dissertation.
- Your proposed plan of research in the future: use a research program approach, not just next step.
- "Soft skills" such as ability to work both independently and in teams

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## Optional inclusions

- Any special reasons why you are interested in the nature of the job or the location
- When you would be ready to start.

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### Cover Letter

#### Do not include:

- "Boasting" (let your referees do that for you) or "flattery".
- Cultural styles vary greatly on this measure – get someone from the target country to read your letter over for "tone".
- Questions about working conditions, salary, benefits, etc.

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# GOOD LUCK!!

