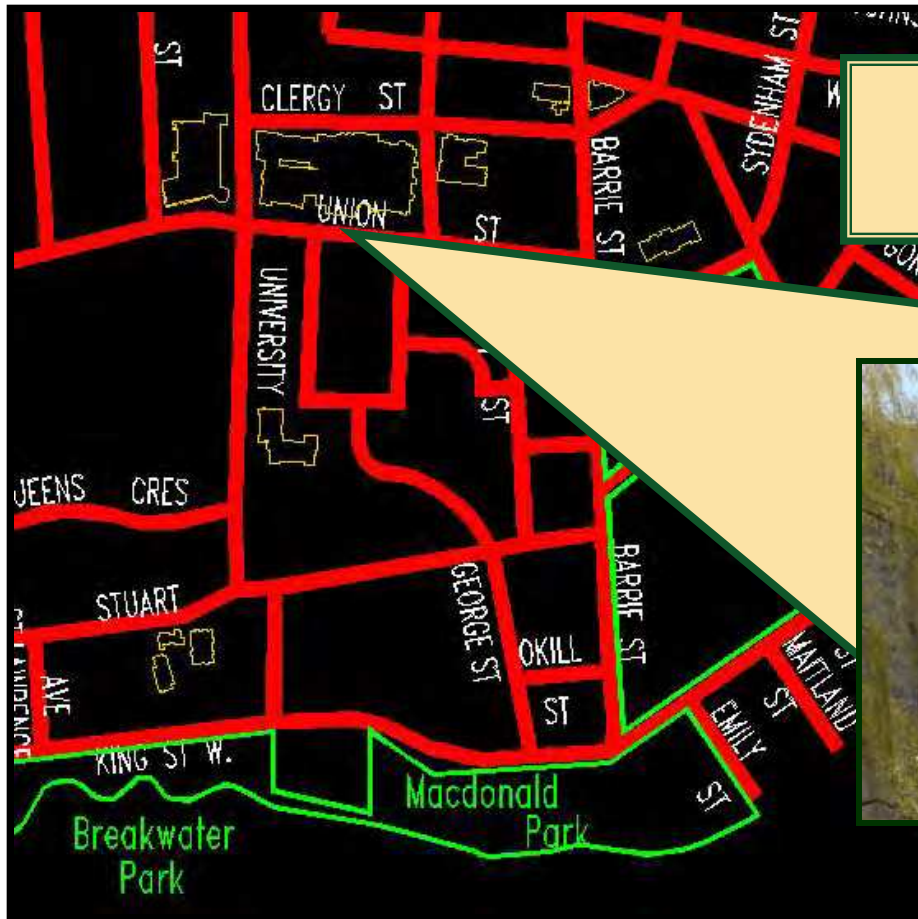


# CVs and Cover Letters for Academia

**Christine Fader**  
**Career Counsellor**



# We Can Help



**Gordon Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**

**74 Union Street**



[www.careers.queensu.ca](http://www.careers.queensu.ca)

What brings you  
to this session today?

# Agenda



- Important elements for your CVs and letters
- Review some strategies
- Examples
- Reflecting on key experiences or moments
- Some writing/thinking together

# Résumé or CV?



	Résumé	Curriculum Vitae
<b>Targeted work</b>	Corporate, government and non-profit sectors	Academia, research sectors
<b>Length</b>	1-2 pages	Can be several pages
<b>Special headings</b>	"Summary of Strengths", "Extra-curricular Activities", "Interests"	"Conferences Attended", "Publications", "Committee Work", "Patents and Inventions"
<b>Educational Background</b>	All	Often post-graduate or professional education such as: M.Sc., M.A., Ph.D., M.D.

# What do Employers Want?

## The Ideal:

- Candidates who want THIS job at THIS institution
- Candidates who are likely to turn into high-functioning faculty members
- Candidates who will contribute to and succeed in the day-to-day work, and hopefully later, the field
- Candidates who will not be a problem
- Research, Teaching, Administration



Google yourself:  
others might!

# Format at a glance



Your Names

Street Address

Town, Province, Postal Code

613-555-1111

Email: [student@queensu.ca](mailto:student@queensu.ca)

## Education

**2024-Present PhD, History (candidate)**

**Queen's University, Kingston, ON**

**2020-2022 Master of Arts,**

**University of Guelph, Guelph, ON**

- thesis topic

**2014-2019 Bachelor of Arts (Classics),**

**University of Guelph, Guelph, ON**

- Dean's scholar for all 3 years

## Work Experience

**Summer 2019 – Server, Kelsey's, Mississauga, ON**

- dealt with customers

- trained new servers

## Your Names

Street Address ♦ Town, Province, Postal Code

613-555-1111 ♦ Email: [student@queensu.ca](mailto:student@queensu.ca)

## Education

**PhD, History (candidate)** 2024-Present

Queen's University, Kingston, ON

♦ Thesis/topic: XXX

**Master of Arts (Anthropology)** completed 2022

University of Guelph, Guelph, ON

♦ Thesis: XXX

♦ Supervisor: XXX

**Bachelor of Arts, Honours (Classics)** completed 2019

University of Guelph, Guelph, ON

## Research Experience

**Research Assistant** 2022-July 2024

Toronto Jail Museum, Toronto, ON

♦ contributed to project studying XXX

♦ Co-organized an annual conference (Title)



# Common Headings



Education

Awards

Research Experience

Funding

Teaching Experience

Publications

Abstracts

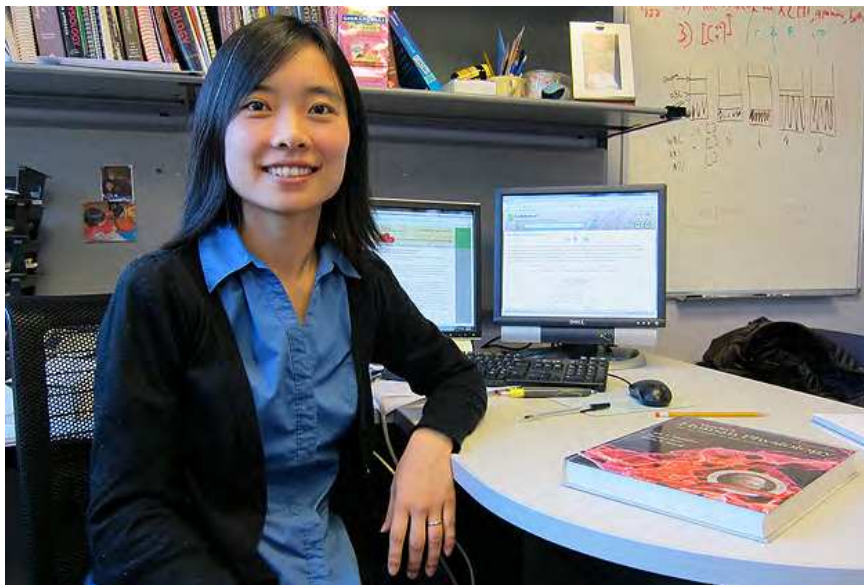
Clinical Experience

Conferences/Presentations

Community Activities

Work Experience

Extra-curricular/Volunteer



Chemistry:

[http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/samples/CV\\_PhD\\_OrgoChem2009.pdf](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/samples/CV_PhD_OrgoChem2009.pdf)

Political Studies:

[http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/samples/CV\\_PhD\\_PoliSci2010.pdf](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/samples/CV_PhD_PoliSci2010.pdf)



Make the 30-second cut



FACT: Most people initially *skim*, rather than read CVs

- PhD Economics candidate, Queen's University, 2007
- Economic development, sustainability and finance research interests and expertise
- Teaching award (voted by 4<sup>th</sup> year Econ students)
- Canadian citizen/Permanent Resident

If  
advantageous

## Education

*Do NOT include high school  
(unless requested or  
you're a child prodigy and  
high school was last year)*



PhD (candidate), Mechanical Engineering

2009-Present

Queen's University, Kingston ON

- ◆ Thesis: "Measuring Friction in Compression and Ring Testing".
- ◆ Specialization: Advanced topics in manufacturing engineering, CAD, experimental stress analysis, plasticity.
- ◆ Compiled a technical report on "Friction Models in Metal Forming" and presented to the Manufacturing Group.

B.Eng., Mechanical Engineering

completed, 2006

NED University of Engineering & Technology, Karachi, Pakistan

- ◆ Achieved 80% in thesis, 2<sup>nd</sup> highest out of a group of 185 students
- ◆ Involved in heat exchanger design, piping design, pump selection, turbine selection and pond sizing.

## Awards and Scholarships

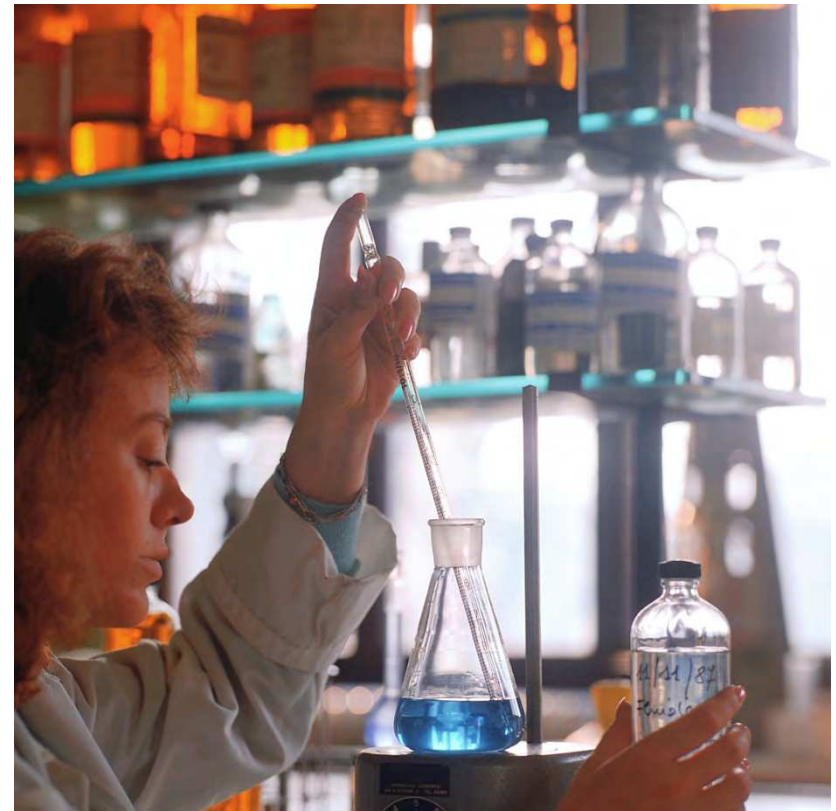


- Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Best Poster Award by a Student, 2012
- Bloorview Summer Medical Student Scholarship Program, 2011
- Dr. Susan Bradley Summer Scholarship for medical students, 2010
- John Jacob Jingleheimer Award - for snazziest pants, 2007



# Research Experience

- Might include:
  - summer work
  - observerships
  - volunteer work
  - academic work
- Name of supervisor(s), institution, location, date
- Topic or title
- Significant findings or goals
- Publications, abstracts, conferences



## Research Experience



### **Research Elective, Pediatric Neurology**

Apr 2025-Present

Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON

Retrospective study characterizing the placebo effect of Hello Kitty dolls in childhood neurological diseases to evaluate its range of utility in diagnostics and follow-up care in this population. (Dr. Sheza Whiz, MD)

### **Honours Thesis, Neuroscience**

Sep 2022-Aug 2023

Toronto Western Research Institute, Toronto, ON

Investigated the “Kraft Dinner Effect” on children with aversion to the colour orange. Oral presentation of results at the Super Keener Annual Summer Student Research Day was ranked in the top 3. (Dr. Heza Grump, PhD)



# Publications

- Where?
  - If short, within education or small section close to the beginning.
  - If long, at the end
- Only academic refereed articles?
- ONLY academic publications?
- Can include: “in progress” or “submitted for publication”
- Majority of entries should be already published



# Teaching Experience

If asked to submit a dossier...

- Check for conventions within your field
- Might include:
  - Cover Letter
  - Curriculum Vita
  - Letters of Recommendation
  - Teaching Philosophy



## Additional Experience



- Presentations given
- Relevant or professional work experience
- Conferences presented
- Student leadership activities
- Community service
- Interests

# Experience Descriptions



Summary line outlining focus and scope of work

- *Initiated new club at university to meet the needs of ...*

Describe impact of results within role

- *Increased membership 200% (the largest for a new club) since...*

Show how closely you exceeded expectations

- *Exceeded targets for membership and sponsorship in first year*

Include information that relates to new role

- *Helped team meet goals by initiating discussion about roles/priorities*

Establish links with desired role/industry

- *Gained insight into leadership strategies through mentorship from...*

**Help predict how you would approach the new role**

# How do I describe my experience?

verb + task + result



**Focus on your accomplishments**

## Where do I start?



1. Reflect on a teaching or research experience
2. Jot down some notes
3. Find a partner
4. Take turns describing your **best result or outcome**
5. Debrief as a group

**Find a key message**

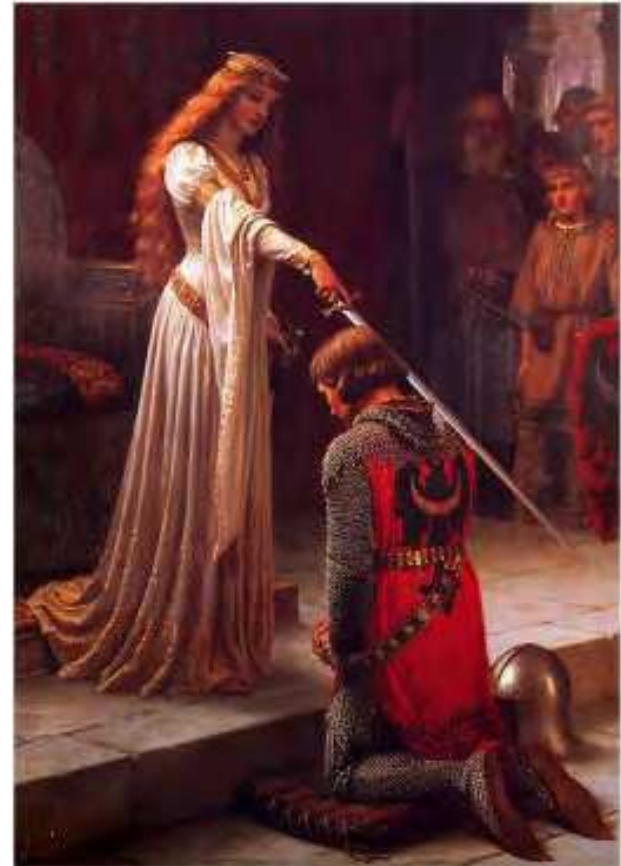


# Letters of Recommendation

- Difference: reference vs. recommendation
- Consider relevance, enthusiasm
- Help them to help you
- How many is too many?

Your referee may be able to write a more effective letter if you provide:

- CV, transcript, description of the position, recent written work (article), timeline for degree completion



References for:

**Johann Singh**

*Current: 612B McEwen Drive, Kingston, Ontario 613-545-8875*

*Permanent: 16 Greggia Lane, Barrie, Ontario, M7G 1T4 tel/fax 905-557-9845*

**Dr. Henry Zendwara**

Director (Retired) Altera Consulting

18 Cover Road, North Bay, ON P3E 27B

705-462-1152

Email: zendw@tec.com

**Dr. Susan Smith**

Research Chair, Geography Innovators

4457 Westway, # 52 Barrie, Ontario M8D V5S

905-998-7221

Watch the clerical details...

*“I am applying to Dalhousie in part because of your department’s reputation in the field of sustainable urban design, but also because I loved my time spent living in Alberta as a child.”*

When spell check is not enough...

*“Certified in Pubic Accounting Examinations”*

## Cover letter - Introduction



- Not more than 1 3/4 pages
- Address chair of search committee by name
- In first sentence, identify the position sought by name and how you learned of it
- Highlight 2 or 3 dimensions of your application that will persuade them to read on
- If you are ABD, state when you will finish

- Speak to non specialists in your discipline
- Indicate what is new or significant about your work
- Provide evidence of the importance of your work
- Indicate future research interests – connect to the department
- Publication agenda – past and future

- Shape your letter to whether university is research or teaching intensive
- Demonstrate strong commitment/interest in teaching
- Demonstrate ability to teach broadly if there are few faculty in the department
- Demonstrate ability to teach core courses (research the program)
- Provide detailed evidence of teaching strength (e.g. quote evaluations, explain course design)
- Arrange consultation with Center of teaching and Learning



## Cover Letter - Closing



- Short and snappy
- Provide list of enclosed material (research statement, teaching dossier, etc.)
- If you have travel plans, provide contact details and dates
- Include writing sample unless discipline bars additional material
- Thank committee for their consideration

# Sample content



- I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor in [ ]. I was alerted to the availability of this position through the [ ] website, and my supervisor, [ ], encouraged me to apply. This position would enable me to further my research interest in [ ], and its wider linkages to [ ].
- Currently, I am finishing my PhD dissertation at the University of [ ], which I plan to submit by [ ]. My thesis, which is entitled [ ] provides an [provide concise abstract and explain the significance]
- Alongside my PhD research, I have taken an active role in different XXX research groups here at [ ], including XXX. During my tenure as convener, I have led the group to engage in global debates and issues .... I helped co-organize a one-day interdisciplinary graduate symposium on [ ]. I was also the convener of a panel entitled [ ]. As the convener, I not only developed the theme of this panel, but was also responsible for selecting additional papers, and presenting my own work as well.
- I have take an active interest in teaching and have sought out all available opportunities to expand my teaching experience. [details emphasizing writing help, assistance in refining analytical abilities - be specific]
- In sum, [x]'s emphasis on smaller-sized group teaching and the value it places on active interaction between students and faculty is particularly appealing to my own teaching interests and experience. Please find enclosed my CV and teaching dossier. Letters of reference will be sent by my referees [identify].

# Sample Cover Letter



<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/samples/CoverLetter Faculty ArtHistory 2010.pdf>

Avoid:  
Vague, clichéd  
statements

*“My work responds to  
key debates in my  
field.”*

## What's In It For Them?



I look forward to continue contributing my strong teaching interests to the Gender Studies program at Memorial. I have experience working extensively with first-year students and was fortunate to have been part of the committee that developed queer-inclusive curriculum through my part-time role in the Centre for Teaching & Learning. I have an interest in social media and “alternative” teaching methods and have begun using clicker technology and Twitter successfully in one course.

## Why Their Institution?



Much of my research experience has been at the University of British Columbia and I am fortunate to have had these opportunities. Both of my summer research positions and my elective with Dr. Someone Special were extremely positive experiences. This was in large part due to the outstanding mentorship and teaching that I received from the faculty, graduate students and fellows. These people have played a large role in my choice of career. The opportunity to learn from, be part of, and contribute to the group of people affiliated with your program is one of the primary reasons that I would like to begin my academic career at UBC.



## Where do I start?



1. Reflect on a teaching or research experience
2. Jot down some notes
3. Find a partner
4. Take turns describing your **best moment**
5. Debrief as a group

**Find a key message**

## What are some next steps?



- Identify other key messages
- Research into jobs and requirements
- Research the location/institution
- Counselling appointment (to find direction)
- CV or letter review (choose “Career Consultation” appt)
- Books in Career Information Area
- Queen’s Best Resumes

**W h a t   a r e   y o u r   n e x t   s t e p s ?**