

The background of the entire page features a large, light gray watermark of the Lehigh University logo, which consists of a stylized 'V' shape with radiating lines, resembling a sunburst or a mountain peak.

Graduate Student Resume and Cover Letter Handbook

Lehigh University
Career Services Department

Rauch Business Center, Suite 484

Phone - 610-758-3710

www.lehigh.edu/careerservices

Monday - Friday 8:15 – 4:45

Graduate Student Resumes

Resumes for those with graduate degrees are really no different in style than any other resume. The difference lies mostly in the **content** and **order of information**. More than anything else, a graduate student's resume needs to project, as best as possible, results, accomplishments/achievements, and leadership capabilities. Special skills should be plainly stated and a summary of qualifications should appear as the very first heading.

A resume is your **personal marketing instrument**. Employers will not make assumptions about you based on your major or GPA alone. It is up to you to demonstrate how your background will bring value to the position and organization, by first understanding the organization's needs. Use job notices, company web site information and feedback from networking sources as your guides to relevance for each position to which you apply.

Style

- Overall look should be clean and easy to read with adequate white space and conservative use of boldface, italics, and underlining. Avoid boxes, shading, and tables.
- Use consistent spacing, fonts, font size, and use of bold and italics among similar items.
- Font Style should be Times New Roman or similar with a font size between 10 and 12 point.
- Margin size can be ½ to 1 inch, depending on your space needs.
- Make it easy to read. 20 seconds is all the time you have to make a positive first impression.

Content

- Use language that is concise, unambiguous, and focused on the information that **will sell you best**.
- Use the summary of qualifications section as a key area for self-promotion.
- Graduate students applying for industry positions in research and development will include headings such as PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, and CONFERENCES.
- Focus on results/achievements/accomplishments and leadership.
- Quantify accomplishments when possible.
- Subtle repetition is a good strategy. Incorporate the skills listed in your SKILLS section, into the descriptions of your experiences.
- Include related class projects when you have limited professional experience.

Length

- A graduate student's resume can be up to two pages in length. Do not sacrifice important information to keep your resume to one page.
- MBA's applying to Wall Street firms should limit the resume to one page – no exceptions.

Order of Information

- Order of information depends on your most important asset, relative to the position. Information most important to the employer should be placed toward the top of the resume. If you have relevant experience, lead with experience. If not, lead with education. If you are making a transition in your career plan to an area more related to your degree than your past experiences, list education first.

Relevance

- Avoid using one "multi-purpose" resume and instead tailor each resume to each individual employer.
- Include industry and job-specific **Key Words**

Resume Section Guidelines

CONTACT INFORMATION:

- Include your name, residential address (not office address), only one phone number (the one you use most), and only one email address.
- PhD students may include an office address, in addition to a residential address, if desired.
- Do not include any personal information such as a photo, marital status, date of birth, or religion.
- Spell out the words Street, Avenue, Road and Boulevard
- Avoid long telephone comments (e.g., After 5:00 PM)
- If you choose to include a website address, ensure that everything on your web site is professional.
- Include your LinkedIn URL if you have a LinkedIn account.

SUMMARY:

- A good summary conveys your professional niche while highlighting your most important and relevant skills.
- Serves as a roadmap for the rest of your resume. Ensure the rest of your resume supports the summary.
- Begin with a personal positioning statement which defines who you are.
- Length should be no more than 1/5 of the page.
- If the reader read no further than your summary, he or she should have a good idea of what you can do.
- An objective statement can be incorporated into the summary as the last sentence, if desired.
- Beware of generic statements, such as "I am well organized and detail oriented." Employers want to hear your **unique** voice and get a sense of your communication skills while reading the summary portion of your resume.

Sample Summary Template

_____(who you are, i.e. "Mechanical Engineer at the Master's (PhD) level") with thorough understanding of _____, _____, _____, and _____. Advanced training, education and research focused on the development (advancement) of _____(technology) and its application to _____ (industry, population, product, result, etc.) Strong _____ and _____skills (soft skills) honed through leadership roles involving _____ and _____.

(Objective Statement): Seeking a position as a _____ in the _____industry.

SUMMARY CONT:

- Please visit the career library in the Career Services office to view resume books with resumes containing summary statements, for additional examples.

OBJECTIVE STATEMENT:

- An objective statement on your resume is optional. If you decide to include one, list it as the last sentence of your summary.
- Your objective is a brief functional statement of your immediate job search. It should be REALISTIC, CONCISE, and TARGETED.
- Avoid vague and general clichés such as: "opportunity for advancement"; "a challenging position"; "a progressive company." These terms may sound appealing but have little meaning to the person selecting candidates.
- Your objective can describe the position you are seeking, the industry in which you wish to work, or both. Using both criteria narrows your objective to a very specific area. For example:
 1. To obtain a position as (type of position) utilizing (skills) in (type of industry).
 2. A position in a management training program in the (type of industry or company).
- You may also want to include 1-2 relevant skills as they relate to the position for which you are applying.
- Make sure that the statement is work-centered rather than self-centered. You want to bring across what you will bring the position/company, not what it will do for you.

EDUCATION:

- Include the name and location of Lehigh and other colleges attended in reverse chronological order.
- List degree (Master of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Engineering, PhD, etc.), major, and graduation date with the month and year.
- G.P.A. is optional, but sometimes desired. You can include major GPA, but don't overdo it with listing several GPAs.
- Courses are generally not included on a graduate student resume unless you have taken a course that is unique or outside of your discipline and supportive of your objective. If applicable, do not list course numbers, only course titles.
- Academic Honors can be included in the education section. Scholarships and honor societies need to be spelled out and include the date inducted.
- Study abroad experiences may be placed here, or you can include them in another completely separate section, possibly titled "international experience," or "study abroad" experience.

SKILLS:

- Computer competencies (list applications in order of importance), procedures/techniques utilized in your field, equipment you can operate (scientific, etc.), foreign languages.
- Include all skills relevant to the position.
- Include Microsoft Office programs since these may be among the key words by which resumes are searched (especially Excel).
- Provide the level of competence (i.e. proficient in, intermediate skills in, knowledge of, fluent, etc.)

EXPERIENCE:

- Experiences can be listed under multiple, specific headings such as “PROJECT MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE” or “MARKET RESEARCH EXPERIENCE”. Experiences under each heading should be listed in reverse chronological order and include full-time/part-time work, internships, co-ops, externships, class projects, research, or volunteerism that directly relates to the heading.
- Alternatively, experiences can be listed under two general headings: “RELATED EXPERIENCE” and “ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE.”
- Related Experience includes full-time/part-time work, internships, co-ops, externships, class projects, research, or volunteerism that directly relates to the position you are targeting.
- Additional Experience includes any other employment or experience that does not directly relate to the target position but demonstrates important skills like time-management, consistency, etc.
- Include your title, organization name and location, and dates. Use action words to describe responsibilities and achievements. Please see addendum 1 for a list of action words.
- In all experience entries, be sure to include: position titles, company names, city, state, and dates employed.
- Include major responsibilities and outstanding achievements and/or recognitions.
- Avoid acronyms except for those that are well known in your field.
- Quantify where ever possible. For example, if you, increased membership in your organization, state that increase in a percentage (Increased membership by 45%).
- Major class projects, thesis, and dissertation all can be included in the related experience section.
- Refer to your thesis or dissertation as a “project” on your resume for industry, as the words “thesis” and “dissertation” sound too academic for the business world.
- Keep descriptions action-oriented using strong action words: organized, designed, supervised, created, initiated. Don't use "I" to start description lines.
- Avoid redundancy and choose words carefully. Keep descriptions concise.
- Most employers prefer descriptions of experiences listed in bullet point format.

LEADERSHIP:

- Leadership is any activity you were involved in where you had responsibilities above and beyond membership.
- Describe the experience as if it was a job. Provide a title (if applicable), the organization name, and dates of involvement. Use the same format as you would in your experience sections to maintain consistency. Use action words to start your description lines.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

- List your memberships in professional associations, such as “American Institute of Chemical Engineers” or “Association of Fundraising Professionals,” etc.

PRESENTATIONS:

- You may have significant presentations you would like to include on your resume. Make sure to include the name of the topic or paper presented. You may also include the conference, date, city, and state.

ACTIVITIES:

- List clubs, committees, and organizations in which you are (were) a member. Include: sports, clubs, Greek affiliations, etc.

***Remember to SPELL CHECK and PROOFREAD your resume several times.** The resume you submit to your prospective employer should be **ERROR FREE**. Have a career counselor check it for you too.

***Don't forget, a Career Counselor can work with you to develop your resume.** Call Career Services to make an appointment to meet with a counselor.

Cover Letters

Cover letters are the employer's first impression of you as a potential candidate, therefore it is quite important to spend time on this document. This letter allows you to expand on the skills and characteristics that you express in your resume. Cover letters provide a venue for you to discuss your technical and transferrable skills illustrated by solid examples. Follow the standard cover letter outline on the next page to assist you with your first draft.

You must sound confident in your letter, emphasizing your positive qualities and how you will be an excellent fit for the position.

Here are a few tips to consider when writing your cover letter:

- Write to a specific person, using his or her name and title. Never send a cover letter addressed “Dear Sir or Madam” or “To whom it may concern.” Usually you can get a specific name by calling the organization or looking in a business directory. If possible, address your letter to the “decision maker” (the person for whom you would be working), not the Human Resources Department.
- If your attempts to identify the decision maker are unsuccessful, use the salutation, “Dear Search Committee:”
- Use a colon (:) after the salutation instead of a comma (,).
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization. Do some research and briefly express what you know about the company.
- Target your skills and experiences. Present any relevant background that may be of interest to the person you are writing. The “selling” paragraph highlights specific results achieved by you in those areas known to be important to successful job performance.
- When appropriate, use the specific vocabulary of the industry. Every field has its own terminology (avoid overuse).
- Avoid frequent use of personal pronouns such as “I,” “me,” “my,” and “mine”; especially at the beginning of paragraphs. Vary your sentence structure by beginning sentences with prepositional phrases, connectors, and subordinate clauses.
- Define your next step. Don’t close your letter without clearly defining what you’ll do next.
- Express your appreciation. Include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer’s consideration of your employment candidacy.
- Proofread your typed letter and have someone else proofread it.
- Keep a copy for your file. After the application deadline passes, you will want to contact the employer about the status of your application.

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Your Name
Street Address
City, State ZIP

Month Day, Year

Employer Name
Title
Company
Street Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

First paragraph (Purpose)

State why you are writing and the type of position or field of work in which you are interested. Indicate how you learned of this position. If there is not a specific position available, indicate how your interest originated. Demonstrate briefly your knowledge of the company.

Second paragraph (Background and Qualifications)

Refer the employer to an enclosed resume. If you have had related experience or specialized training, elaborate on the details that would be of special interest to the employer. Be as specific as you can about your qualifications and skills. Provide examples on how you obtained/honed these skills. Your goal here is to match your skills to the employer's needs. Explain how you would fit into the position and the organization. This paragraph can get lengthy; break it into two paragraphs to make it more readable.

Third paragraph (Request for Action)

Close your letter by briefly restating how your qualifications match the position. Express your interest in further discussing your background and the position with the employer. Write when you will be contacting them to ensure your application materials were received. Finally, include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer's consideration.

Sincerely,

(signature)

Name

Addendum 1

Action Words

Abstracted	Converted	Gave	Prioritized
Achieved	Cooperated	Generated	Produced
Acquired	Coordinated	Guided	Programmed
Acted	Correlated	Handled	Projected
Adapted	Counseled	Helped	Promoted
Addressed	Created	Identified	Proposed
Administered	Critiqued	Illustrated	Proved
Advertised	Cultivated	Implemented	Provided
Advised	Dealt	Improved	Publicized
Advocated	Debated	Improvised	Published
Aided	Decided	Increased	Queried
Allocated	Defined	Influenced	Raised
Analyzed	Delegated	Initiated	Received
Answered	Delivered	Instituted	Redesigned
Anticipated	Designed	Integrated	Reduced
Applied	Detected	Interpreted	Referred
Approved	Determined	Interviewed	Related
Arranged	Developed	Introduced	Reported
Ascertained	Devised	Invented	Researched
Assembled	Diagnosed	Launched	Responded
Assessed	Directed	Learned	Restored
Assisted	Discovered	Lectured	Reviewed
Attained	Documented	Listened	Scheduled
Audited	Drafted	Located	Screened
Augmented	Edited	Maintained	Set goals
Authored	Eliminated	Managed	Shaped
Bolstered	Enforced	Mastered	Solicited
Briefed	Enlisted	Maximized	Solved
Brought	Ensured	Mediated	Specialized
Budgeted	Established	Mentored	Strategized
Built	Estimated	Met	Streamlined
Calculated	Evaluated	Minimized	Strengthened
Cared	Examined	Modeled	Studied
Charged	Exceeded	Modified	Succeeded
Chartered	Excelled	Monitored	Summarized
Coached	Expanded	Motivated	Supervised
Collaborated	Expedited	Negotiated	Supported
Collected	Explained	Observed	Surveyed
Communicated	Explored	Obtained	Sustained
Compared	Expressed	Offered	Synthesized
Compiled	Extracted	Operated	Taught
Completed	Facilitated	Organized	Theorized
Composed	Financed	Originated	Trained
Computed	Fixed	Overcame	Translated
Conceived	Followed	Oversaw	Upgraded
Conducted	Formulated	Participated	Used
Conserved	Fostered	Performed	Verified
Consulted	Founded	Planned	Visualized
Contracted	Gained	Prepared	
Contributed	Gathered	Presented	

Graduate Student / Experienced Candidate Resume Template

Name (Boldface in 14 or 16 pt. font)

Street Address, City, State, Zip Code, Phone Number, Email Address

(Header can be left justified, right justified, or centered. List your **residential** address)

SUMMARY

(Can use bullet points or small block of text)

2-4 brief, powerful statements that summarize your relevant experience, abilities, and education. Similar to a 15 second commercial about yourself. If the reader read no further, he/she should have a good idea of what you can do.

SKILLS

Computer skills, foreign languages, other specialized technical and other skills related to the position

- When writing about computer and foreign language skills, include proficiency level.
- **Proficient in** – means you can do just about anything with a particular computer application.
- **Fluent in** – means you can speak a foreign language with the highest level of competence.
- **Intermediate Skills in** – means you can use an application or speak a foreign language at an intermediate level.
- **Knowledge of** – Means you are a beginner on a particular application or foreign language.

RELATED EXPERIENCE (or be more specific: CONSULTATION EXPERIENCE, PROJECT MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE, ETC.)

(When you have experience, lead with experience.)

Name of Employer, City and State or Country

Your Title

(Dates)

- Describe your role /tasks and results, beginning each line with action words (see list of action words) .
- Be specific. A vague description of your duties will only make a vague impression.
- Incorporate your skills.
- ***Mention your accomplishments and results. Quantify when possible.***
- Distill. Keep bullet points as concise as possible.
- Can include relevant class projects – don't just describe the project, describe what you did.
- Research and use "keywords" or "buzzwords" important to the employer.
- Avoid acronyms. Use the full spelling.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Include if you are targeting a position in research and development. If your publications list is extensive, list only those most related to the position you seek and refer reader to your web site for a complete list.

EDUCATION

Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA

Ph.D. Mechanical Engineering, May 2011

M.S. Mechanical Engineering, 2009

(List most recent degree first. School name should come first)

(Courses are not typically included on a graduate student resume)

Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA

B.S. Mechanical Engineering, May 2007

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Experiences you have had that are not directly related to the type of position you are seeking.
- Think of the skills (soft or transferrable skills) you acquired and demonstrate them in your description lines.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Shows your commitment to continuing education

ACTIVITIES - Only list those that relate directly to your self-improvement efforts, e.g. continuing education, and the position you are seeking. Don't include hobbies.