

# FUF's tips – checklist for a good application

## Checklist:

1. Have you written about the most important things first and/or used reverse chronological order?
2. Is your application adapted to the person who will read it?
3. Are your most important experiences and qualities highlighted?
4. Is a clear and uniform layout used, i.e. same font, headings, dating?
5. Are there contact details on all pages? Preferably in a header/footer.
6. Is your CV on one page? (two is only relevant if you have more experiences)
7. Is there a section for references?
8. Do you have a picture? If so, does it make a serious impression?
9. Is your application in PDF format?
10. Ask someone else to give feedback on your application before submitting.

## Common mistakes...

- Too long applications. Show that you can be concise!
- No examples are given, instead only statements or long lists of characteristics or roles are given. Always back up your claims with real examples and explain.
- Be truthful. Don't write that you have a degree if you don't have one, then instead write an ongoing bachelor's degree in...
- Do your research! International IDEA is not Sida, Sida is not a unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Sida is also not an organization that you "join".
- Using high-flown language usually just sounds silly if you don't get it right. Rather, write "normally" and with a pleasant and interested tone.
- To stretch the margins so much that not everything is included when the application is printed. This is often done because you want to squeeze in more than there is actually room for.

*Do you want to delve even more and learn a lot about how to write a good CV and what to think about when answering selection questions? Continue reading the following pages.*



First of all, is there the perfectly written resume? No, we don't think so anyway. All recruiters are individuals and therefore have individual preferences regarding what application documents should contain. However, your CV and selection questions are your door opener to an interview, and there are some general guidelines and tips that will work in most cases. Our tips are based on our experience of working both with recruitment for internships and helping students/new graduates enter the labor market. We have also asked a number of different recruiters what they value in an application. Below we have divided our tips into four simple steps.

### **Layout**

1. Before you start writing
2. Start writing
3. Answering selection questions
4. Before submitting your application

### **Step 1: Before you start writing**

*What is the goal of the internship?*

The internship is a learning opportunity for you, so think carefully about what you want out of the internship and which of the internships that could offer you that. FUF always strives for a win-win situation where the intern and the workplace get as much positive out of each other as possible. Successful matches usually happen when both intern and workplace are clear about what they want to get out of the collaboration.

*Think from the receiving end!*

Why do you think the workplace wants to accept an intern? What type of profile are they interested in? Whoever receives your application is, just like everyone else, inside their own personal bubble and you need to get into that bubble! Therefore, think about who you think the person who will read your CV is and what they want to know about you. Do your research! Read up on the different organizations you are interested in doing an internship at and carefully read through their internship advertisements. Also read many different types of internship ads. Similar types of experience and knowledge are often requested.

### **The top three most requested experiences/knowledge for FUF's internships are:**

- Relevant education
- Interest in development issues, preferably reflected in non-profit involvement or similar
- Analytical ability

Analyze and identify what is relevant information to include in your CV. You need to have insight and knowledge about yourself to be able to convey this! Think about:

- Why should they choose you?
- What are your strengths and what can you contribute with?

### **Step 2: Start writing**

Now is the time to write down your best arguments! But what is relevant to include? The education is what is most interesting when applying for an internship, as the internship must be part of your education. Keep in mind that not everyone knows what exactly your university program contains, so feel free to give examples of courses, methods and other things that are included. Practical experience is of course also often requested by employers. Preferably in the relevant sector, but you may not have gotten there yet. We have noticed that many people think that it is not relevant to highlight "unqualified" work experience, but it is! Employers often value all types of work experience, especially when you are applying for an internship or your first job after graduation and may not have much work experience otherwise. Have you been a cashier in an ice cream stand? Then you have had responsibility! Have you been a supervisor at McDonalds? Then you have managed others! Maybe you have been working extra in an office? Then you probably have experience in administration! Remember, the important thing here is to talk about how you have developed skills from the tasks you had and why it is relevant to the internship you are applying for.

Remember that competence means the ability to apply knowledge, so always **give examples** when you state a competence and talk about how you have used your knowledge so that it has become a competence. Always be specific by giving examples and proof of your competence. For example, if you want to say that you are analytical, then back up your claim by describing occasions when you used your analytical ability. You can e.g. give examples of how you worked with essays or similar that required analytical deep dives and why this is relevant for the internship position.

Remember that **non-profit engagements** are often very rewarding in this sector! It shows that you are genuinely interested in the issues and that you have practical and concrete experience. Also keep in mind that ordinary leisure interests can turn out to give so much more than you might think at first glance. Perhaps you have been a scout leader, sat on the board of your sports association or coached a soccer team? If so, you have real leadership/association/training experience!

Now you've hopefully written down a bunch of things you want to convey, but in what order should you write about them? Since space is limited, there is a good and simple rule of thumb: **always say the most important thing first!** You want to catch the recruiter at once and create interest. Don't risk the recruiter getting lost before even getting to your most important points.

As the education is what is most interesting when applying for an internship, you should present your education first. After that, you want to convey the most important/most relevant experiences and skills that you have. It is usually better to select fewer experiences and skills and be extra clear about why you chose them in particular, than to try to squeeze in many. Keep in mind that these must be relevant to the internship. Rank them according to what is most relevant and then present them in your chosen order. They do not have to come in chronological order. However, keep in mind that if you choose chronological order, you should use reverse chronological order because what you are doing now is more interesting than what you did before. Dare to remove things that you ultimately don't think are as relevant. Your CV should preferably be on one page, maximum two if you have a lot of relevant experiences, so only the most important should be included!

**Use uniform and easy-to-read formalities. Our proposal for CV layout is:**

- At the top: please have a brief profile text where you summarize who you are, what you can do and what you want. However, beware of sounding clichéd. Be genuine and make sure that what you write in the profile text is backed up by what you then write in your CV.
- After that, write about your education, then relevant experience (paid, non-profit, study-related, etc.) and finally, other qualifications. When applying for an internship, it can be an advantage to clearly display your non-profit involvements as it shows that you are genuinely interested in these issues.
- Don't forget to list all relevant other qualifications, e.g. languages, which computer programs you master, scholarships you have received, longer stays abroad, etc.
- When it comes to computer programs, it's good to be clear about which programs you know and at what level you master them. Simply writing "Masters the Office package" does not say much. Does that mean you're good at Excel? Has skills for producing stylistic Powerpoints? Or can you really just use Word? Be clear about what you can do and at what level!
- Use reverse chronological order. Again, the most important thing should always come first, and the most important thing in this situation is not where you went to high school, but what you study at university.

- Use uniform layout! It must be clear and easy to read.
- Have contact details on all pages, please use header/footer. Make it easy for the recruiter to find all the parts of your application in a potentially messy pile of printouts so they don't miss anything important.
- You're still new to the career, that's probably why you're applying for an internship! Your CV should therefore preferably be on one page. Better be clear, short and concise!
- References are often taken during a possible interview and therefore rarely need to be included in your CV. However, you must be clear that you have references and are happy to provide them on request!
- Should you use a picture or not? Optional we say, but if you choose to use an image, it should give a professional and serious impression. Don't use a party picture/picture where you have your friend's arm around your neck (but cut out the friend)/picture where you are sitting having dinner with a glass of wine/etc. No matter how charming, nice, good-looking you think you look in that particular picture, you run the risk of the picture leaving a non-serious impression. This is simply not the right forum for those types of pictures. If that is the case, better use no image at all.
- You want your CV to look as neat and professional as it does at home on your computer. There are previews and other programs that can mess the document up if you don't send it in PDF format. Therefore, always make a PDF and check that everything looks good. Check e.g. that there have been no strange line breaks, the image ended up wrong, that there is no extra blank page at the end of the document, that any hyperlinks work, etc.

### **Step 3: Answering selection questions**

As a step in creating a more inclusive and efficient recruitment process, we have chosen to replace the personal letter with selection questions. Our hope with this is to make it easier for you as an applicant, promote objectivity in our recruitment and guide candidates in which parts that are especially important to highlight in their application. Think through what is actually being asked for in each question. Be concise and make sure you really answer the question. Allowing this valuable space to be taken up by what is already on your CV is a waste of space. Instead, lift other things and exemplify!

### **Examples of content to cover when answering the selection questions:**

- Why you are looking for an internship - your motivation.
- What you wish to learn more about – your ambition.
- What are your areas of interest. Tell us about your driving forces, about the vision you believe in that drives you and about how this takes concrete expression in real situations.
- What you can contribute with in a workplace. Taking on an intern is a way for workplaces to take part of the latest academic discourse. Talk about what you bring in terms of new knowledge, which areas are your special interests, etc.
- What does this overall mean for them in a concrete way? Be clear!
- And of course the same applies here - say the most important thing first! Since you are only registering one application with FUF, your application should not be directed to a single internship workplace, as this limits which internship workplaces you can be recommended to. Keep in mind that FUF, after receiving your application, can bring in new internships that are relevant to you and we cannot forward your application if it is directed to another internship. You have the option to, in the application form, list which positions/types of internships you are most interested in.

### **Step 4: Before submitting your application**

When you're done, double check! And ask someone else to give feedback on your application, it's needed in 10 cases out of 10. Good luck!

### **Questions? Contact us!**

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