

# Case Study: Implementing Active Self-Feedback

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## Course information

As an extracurricular activity, Duncan Hull, a Senior Lecturer in Computer Science (Teaching and Learning), coordinates a weekly employability club for undergraduate computer science students. One feature of this club includes implementing active self-feedback to improve each student's CV in the session, as well as build their long term CV writing skills.

## The task

Students bring their prepared CVs to this employability focussed extracurricular activity. Students compare their CV to a 19-point checklist (see below), as well as to their peers' CVs and some dummy CVs. Further questions are provided to facilitate comparison between their own CV and comparator CVs.

## Comparators

Both peer CVs and dummy CVs are the primary comparators for this activity. However, the checklist below also functions as a less direct, but no less useful, source for comparison.

## Reflections by teaching staff

One challenge is timing this activity at the correct time in students' academic careers. Evaluation of first year CVs is difficult since there is often not enough content, while second year can be too late, as students are already applying for internships or placements.

Students will not always be comfortable sharing their CV with their peers due to its personal nature and because the task cannot be effectively carried out anonymously. This can be helped by providing dummy CVs to allow students to participate in the exercise without sharing their own CV.

## Reflections by students

Participating students were asked to fill in a quick survey, which showed that students found the exercise valuable.

# Appendix

## Questions from the survey exercise

1. Does it fit comfortably on exactly one page (résumé) or two pages (CV)? Definitely not one-and-a-half pages or more than two? [See section 8.8.4]
2. Does the style look good? Is it easy on the eye? Is there adequate whitespace, not too much (g a p p y) or too little (cramped)? [See section 8.8.2]
3. Is your year of graduation, degree program, University and expected (and/or achieved) overall degree classification clear with GPA as a percentage? [See section 8.7.3]
4. Have you "eaten your own dogfood" by reading it out loud, [see section 4.6.1]? Is everything relevant e.g., no swimming certificates from ten years ago?
5. Have you spell-checked using both automatic and manual (proof-reading) techniques? See section 8.8.
6. Have you shown you C.A.R.E.? Are the **Contexts, Actions, Results** and **Evidence** described in section 8.7.B clear? Have you added context using relevant hyperlinks that an interested reader can click on? [See section 8.B.B]
7. Is it in reverse chronological order with the most recent things **first**? Can your timeline be easily followed, with all dates clearly aligned for easy reading? [See Neil Pointer (hyperlinked) as an example with a clear timeline using right-aligned dates]
8. Have you avoided using too many personal pronouns (e.g., I, me, my ...) everywhere? [See section B.B.S]
9. Have you made it clear what you have actually done using **prominent** verbs? Which kinds of verbs are missing? [See chapter 10]
10. Have you given sufficient information on your education without going into too much detail? Have you mentioned courses you are studying now (and next semester)? [See section B.7.3]
11. Have you **quantified** and evidenced the claims you have made where you can? [See section B.7]
12. Is it balanced, including both technical and non-technical (softer) skills? [See section S.3.9]
13. Does it have a good, clear structure? Not too many headings, around five sections for a one-pager? [See section B.7.2]
14. Have you clearly distinguished between paid, unpaid and voluntary **EXPERIENCE**? Have you done the same for your **PROJECTS**? [See section B.T.S]
15. Have you included all the relevant experience that you can fit on including casual work? [See section 5.3.9]
16. Have you expanded the more obscure acronyms or bombarded your reader with a barrage of obscure TLA's (hyperlinked) that they are probably not familiar with?

17. Have you used past tense consistently throughout e.g. developed not develop, collaborated not collaborate, facilitated not facilitate etc? Although some of your projects and experience may be ongoing, mixing tenses doesn't look good so try to stick to past tense consistently.
18. Is the style consistent, with no random changes of font or formatting half-way through? Are your dates always in the same place or do they force the eyes of your reader to slalom all over the page like a downhill skier? Have you avoided ugly underlining [see section 8.8.1]? Have you avoided goofy (hyperlinked) fonts? (Butterick 2013a)
19. On your two page CV, does the page break fall in a sensible place or is it awkwardly splitting a section in two? On your one page résumé, have you wasted any space by having one word taking up a whole line? Can you rephrase the sentence so it fits on one line rather than taking up two? Can you merge sections to save valuable space? [See section 8.7.2]
20. How does your CV compare with the examples in chapter 9. What is stronger or weaker about your CV than the examples given? How could yours be improved?
21. Have you tailored your CV to the job description? While the basic facts about you won't change much, you could emphasise (or de-emphasise) some of your **PROJECTS** and **EXPERIENCE** to fit the roles you are applying for, rather than having a generic one-size-fits-all (but might fit nobody) CV.

## Follow up activity

Now that you've self-assessed your CV and fixed the known errors, swap it with somebody you trust and check each other's work. This peer assessment is a two-way process to help you pair program your CV. Make sure you're both a giver and receiver of feedback, by playing both driver and navigator roles in your pair. Playing both roles will help you write a better CV. Giving and receiving feedback will help you start debugging the trickier unknown errors:

1. Have you got a second opinion from a "résumé robot"? How robot proof is it? [See section 8.8.7]
2. Have you reviewed other people's CVs by doing a CV swap? Reading lots of CVs will give you a stronger sense of what works and what doesn't. This will put you in the shoes of an employer or recruiter, thereby helping you to write a better CV yourself. [See figure 8.26].
3. Has your CV been reviewed by other people? Do a CV swap with a critical friend [see figure 8.32] and score each other's CVs using this rubric (hyperlinked). This is a bit like pair programming (hyperlinked). According to Linus's law "*given enough eyeballs all bugs are shallow*" (Raymond 1999) so the more people who give you feedback the better.