

## CV and Covering Letters

### **Top Tips for Early Career Researchers from Senior Colleagues in PAIS**

1. Put publications front and centre. These are still the main currency of academic quality and so make it easy for the reader to discern what your publications are, why they are important (e.g. provide impact factors) and how they fit into your narrative.
2. Do not put articles submitted to journals in your list of published works. Put them under a separate heading of 'Under Review', 'Work in Progress' along with intended outlets. This is a good way to communicate your ambition without giving people the impression you are trying to pull the wool over their eyes.
3. Make it relevant. Too many CVs are padded out and covering letters clearly written at the last minute. Keep the latter short (1-2 pages) and guide the reader to appropriate experience and outputs, e.g. apply an asterisk to key publications on CV.
4. Make covering letters statements of purpose rather than working drafts. Covering letters are often written in a speculative fashion and ask for feedback from the would-be employer about how they should present themselves.
5. Provide a unique selling point. This should be made clear in the opening of the covering letter and help to lodge your identity as an academic in the mind of the reader. Offering a distinct empirical, theoretical, methodological, conceptual or pedagogical contribution is a useful way of doing this.
6. Show how you fit in the Department. Pick out research clusters, centres, groups, etc. that you would be willing and able to work with. Link this to previous experience of collaboration around funding bids, high-profile workshop events, etc.
7. Give concrete examples of 'teaching enhancements'. Lots of applicants, especially for teaching fellow posts, emphasise how passionate they are about teaching. But it is helpful to show what distinguishes you from the rest and puts you at the vanguard. Evidence could come in the form of teaching feedback survey data, quotes from Head of Department evaluations, and illustrative examples of where you went beyond the usual Powerpoint lecture plus seminar handout model.
8. Speak to impact and public engagement. REF casts a long shadow over the appointment process and this aspect of REF is only going to become more important in 2020. A distinct section on the CV and covering letter – after and connected to the publications – would be useful.
9. For applications to a research project, show that you are a team player. As with the points above, provide evidence to this effect. This could include your role in joint-authored publications, edited collections, event organisation or experience as a research assistant working under a Principal Investigator and/or on discrete jobs.
10. Explain any 'irregularities'. Rightly or wrongly, there are expectations about what a normal CV and career trajectory looks like, so if you have a large gap in the dates of your publications or took a leftfield turn in your research agenda, try to make sure the reader doesn't assume you are prone to periods of inactivity or moments of madness.