

## TEACHING WRITING CVs WITH ONLINE RESOURCES

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*Abstract: It is almost impossible to imagine a lesson of English for Professional Communication without up-to-date online resources. So much does the younger generation value the Internet and its facilities that teachers have to adapt their teaching materials to the students' requirements. The digital natives – as we call the younger high-tech oriented generation – are abreast of the current technology and are very informed. Thus, teachers have developed new teaching methods using online resources. The university has to prepare the students to meet the requirements of an increasingly online job market upon graduation. That is why, it should be ready to adapt to the changing needs of the society and respond adequately to the job market demands.*

*The present article analyses students' preferences and priorities regarding online job search methods and instruments. Among them there are trade magazines, discussion forums, job boards, virtual job fairs, search engines, corporate websites and social network websites. Based on the research findings the article proposes didactic activities for teaching CVs using online resources, which makes teaching adapted to the requirements of our society. Careful planning of one's career leads to a guarantee of success in this fast-moving job market. This includes analyzing the skills in demand on the job market, CV templates, the available jobs and job descriptions. In this sense, the students are invited to analyze three types of Curriculum Vitae - chronological, functional and mixed and to adapt each CV to the job description provided in the opening. We consider that updating the teaching materials by using online resources for designing activities is a valuable and effective strategy.*

*Keywords: the Internet, CVs, online resources, teaching activities*

### Students' Career Planning

In an increasingly online job market and with the advent of technology no one can imagine life and work without the Internet. For the new generation of digital natives online job search and identification of adequate career paths by means of technology has become a norm. The “game generation's” (Prensky, 2001, p.65) skills have been identified as follows (Gibson et al., 2007, p.3):

- dealing with large amounts of information
- using alternative ways to get information
- finding solutions to their problems through new communication paths
- simultaneity
- learning by trial and error

That is why, having these characteristics in mind, teachers should adapt their teaching methods and resources constantly to match their beneficiaries' requirements and the trends in the job market.

Teaching students how to plan their career is taught as part of any English for Professional Communication course, and it usually contains three sections: writing successful CVs, writing cover letters and participate in an interview. The changes which have appeared over the last years in career planning have made us understand that the job market is a dynamic area and requires constant improvement of one's skills and competences. Hopefully, the Internet offers instant access to discussion forums, social networks and career tips about what skills are in demand on the job market, various CV templates and about how to behave in an interview. Thus, individual job seekers gain access to information which was once hidden from public view. "Careful planning, strategic resume posting online, and routine monitoring are some of the best guarantees in competing in this new kind of entrepreneurial job market" (Smith, 1999).

It has been reported that career planning is important starting with adolescence (Gati & Saka, 2001; Kracke, 1997; Pyne, Bernes, Magnusson, & Poulsen, 2002). Celotta and Jacobs (1982) found students are concerned about their future and would like to develop better self-management and interpersonal skills in order to meet their future career goals. This awareness of the importance of career planning is related to specific developmental stages. According to Piaget at the age 12 children are able to project into the future and thus develop hypothetical-deductive reasoning. (Piaget 1959, 1967). University students have grown into mature young adults who have already, in most cases, chosen a career path according to their perceived needs, competences and future perspectives. Even if university students have chosen a field of activity which will be the base of their job search, in early years of their studies they find it difficult to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and find a professional goal. Moreover, they are not familiar with the instruments or strategies of job search.

Career planning is what gives professional life a meaning. It involves a process of becoming aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve one's professional goals. Very few of us are born with a vision of they want to do in their lives. For the rest of us, careful planning offers the possibility to self-assess one's competences and knowledge. Before you start any serious job search, you first need to list the skills that you have, and whether they match the needs of your target job. You can do this by using the Internet to keep in touch with your trade and you can use this information to update your resume.

### **Resources for job search**

With increasingly online available resources for searching jobs, the activity of a job seeker has become more effective. However, careful choice of web resources should avoid useless search and waste of time. The internet offers valuable information about pro-active professional skills, tips about adequate answers to interview questions, or about behavior in a job interview, CV templates, samples of covers letters a.s.o. Successful job applicants have reached their professional goal by good preparation and by carefully tailoring their CVs and cover letters to the job requirements and descriptions. This involves good written communication skills, and the ability to know yourself and market your own competences.

Let's take a look at the following four popular categories of online employment resources in Romania:

- Online magazines and classifieds (for example “Bursa” newspaper, “Carriere” magazine )
- Discussion forums (www.kudika.ro, www.softpedia.com)
- Job Boards and platforms (www.best jobs.ro, www.eJobs.ro, www.findjob.ro, www.ro.indeed.com, www.posturi.gov.ro)
- Virtual job fairs (www.hipo.ro)
- Corporate websites
- Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn)

There are many newspapers which publish job vacancies in a more traditional way without advanced search options by field of activity, type of contract, location etc, which are offered by job boards or platforms. We believe that the most used instruments of searching for employment are job boards, virtual job fairs and corporate websites. Discussion forums and social networks offer interaction opportunities with past candidates or employers in the target industry. These may support the applicants with details of job descriptions, the skills which are needed on the market or tips for career.

### **Writing a CV**

A CV is the most important personal document of a person in search of a job. The purpose of a resume is to market your skills and abilities in a way that results in interviews. The second step of a job search – the invitation to attend an interview – takes place only if the CV well prepared and if it really persuaded the employer that the candidate is a good match for the job opening.

Increasingly, applicants are asked to send a digital copy of a CV. In this case an automated search for keywords may ensure the applicant matches the job requirements. So experts suggest candidates ensure mandatory requirements in the job advert are included in a CV. Other tips for writing a successful CV include:

- Keep it simple and clear – it should be easy to read and memorable. Unless otherwise specified, or if the candidate is not requested to fill in an application form, two pages of A4 is enough with a mini profile included in the first half page
- Tailor the CV to a specific job – that is to adapt each CV to the job requirements, rather than sending a generic CV which you saved in your computer
- Support with evidence your achievements, skills and competences by showing how you acquired those skills, how targets were exceeded.
- Check the CV for any errors

There are three methods of sending a CV online: by email, as attachment or plain text; by filling in electronic forms and by personal web pages. The advantage of electronic forms over email is that you are required to include in your resume specific information and you know exactly what to write. If you want to create a personal Web page that serves as your resume, you will need to create your resume in HTML and transfer the page onto the Web. This requires an understanding of basic Web page design principles, HTML, the tools to create Web pages, how to monitor its effectiveness once it has been posted onto the Web.

Although the Internet is full of CV templates and thus, there are several variations, we may distinguish three basic types of resumes: chronological, functional and mixed (according to Szilagyi, 2008, Smith, 1999).

The chronological CV is organized into sections and comprises information related to professional experience and education in chronological order for Europe and in reverse chronological order for the USA. With this type of CV professional experience is more important. The chronological resume style focuses more on positions held and it may prove ineffective for college graduates or those with little work experience. Also, the format itself may highlight gaps in your work history if there are any. On the other hand, it highlights a steady work record required by more conservative industries such as banking.

The functional CV is used when the candidates want to highlight the skills and competences. The advantage is that it presents skills which can be transferred to other jobs. It works well for job seekers with minimal work history. However, it can appear confusing if it is not well written, as well as suspicious if job hopping appears.

The mixed resume style combines work history with skills and career achievements. This type of CV is the most common as it presents your skills and competences in the light of work history to prove them. Nevertheless, it requires an established track record of career achievements.

A CV is a very important document for getting a job. Students may use various resources to create a successful CV such as: web CV templates, among which the most widely used nowadays is the Europass CV that offers a template, but also explanations about what information to include in the CV, books, career magazines, tips on you tube etc.

In our teaching experience, students make mistakes when they are required to fill in the job responsibilities and skills sections of a CV. Your job responsibilities are synonymous with a job description. A good source of job descriptions are the job vacancies advertised online by employers. For example, a job description may look like this:

“We are looking for a qualified Database developer to design stable and reliable databases, according to our company’s needs. You will be responsible for developing, testing, improving and maintaining new and existing databases to help users retrieve data effectively.

As part of our IT team, you will work closely with developers to ensure system consistency. You will also collaborate with administrators and clients to provide technical support and identify new requirements. Communication and organization skills are keys for this position, along with a problem-solution attitude. Ultimately, you should be able to ensure our database systems run effectively and securely on a daily basis”. (<https://resources.workable.com/database-developer-job-description>). The requirements which match the job brief will be the following:

- Designing databases
- Developing, testing, improving and maintaining databases
- Providing technical support to clients and administrators
- Ensuring database systems run effectively and securely

The skills section of a CV should contain the list of competences along with the proof regarding in what context they were acquired. For example social skills and competences: good ability to adapt to multicultural environments, gained through my work experience abroad.

The skills section of the Europass for example may include references to social skills, organizational skills, technical skills, computer skills, artistic skills. Students should select the skills and competences relevant to the job description.

### Findings of the research

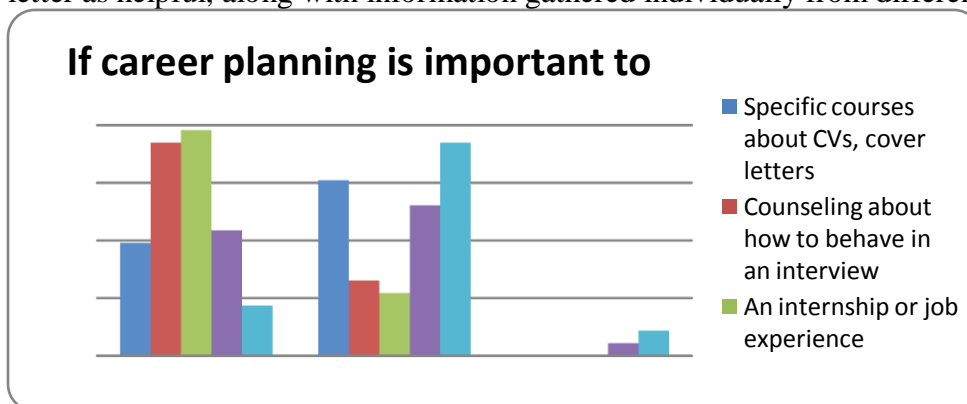
Our research involved the administration of a survey to a sample of 93 students (12F, 81 M) in the second year of study, from the Faculty of Automatic Control and Computer Science at Politehnica University of Bucharest. The survey sections referred to the importance of career planning, job search instruments used by the students, resources for the creation of a CV, the most difficult aspect regarding writing a CV, recommended teaching activities for writing a CV.

Students' answers regarding the importance of career planning reflect a significant preoccupation with career in proportion of 39%, whereas most of them (52%) career planning at this time in their life as "quite important". Most of the students associate the importance of planning a career with the moment of graduation.

Students rate as very helpful for their career planning the following items:

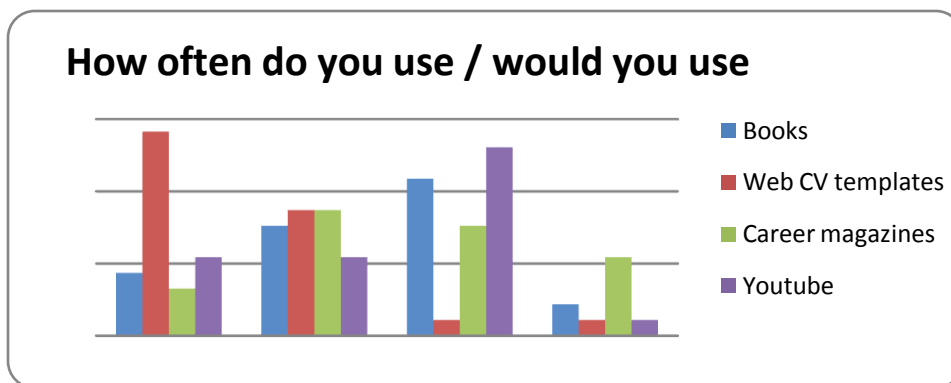
- An internship or job experience (80%)
- Counseling about how to behave in an interview (70%)

60% of the students' answers consider specific courses about writing a CV and cover letter as helpful, along with information gathered individually from different sources.



The job search instruments which are used most often are social networks (almost 55%) and often they use job boards and platforms (45%). Virtual job fairs such as hippo.ro are used rarely and even never by the students. The interviewed students are in their second year of study and we believe they haven't searched the job market to find out all the possible job search instruments. So their answers may reflect lack of knowledge regarding existing job search instruments. This conclusion may be correlated with the answers of the first question regarding the importance of career planning for them. As we noticed earlier, most of the students rate their career planning as "quite important". Thus, the importance of career planning correlates with the awareness of job search instruments.

As regards the resources used for creating a CV the leading resource is by far CV web templates (55%) and the least used are you tube and career magazines.



The answers to the question “How difficult to write do you find the following sections of a CV? “ reflect difficulties in writing about job responsibilities (60%) and skills (45%). These answers correlate with the observations made by the teacher in the classroom. 80% of the respondents don’t find it difficult to write “Education and Training” section.

The activities about how to write a CV recommended as very useful are: “to read about tips for writing a CV” (50%) and to match parts of a CV with job descriptions (45%). A useful activity is “to unjumble parts of a sample CV” (60%).

### Recommendations for teaching CVs

According to the students preferences as they are reflected in their answers the difficulties they encounter in writing a CV are job responsibilities and skills. A first step in teaching writing these sections is to show the students the self-explanatory Europass CV online template. You can complete the online version of the CV by using the instructions and examples. The Europass CV allows the applicants to present their qualifications, skills and competences in a logical order:

- Personal information
- Description of the professional experience
- Description of the educational background and training courses
- List of skills and competences acquired during one’s studies, professional experience, volunteer work, everyday life.

The mistakes which the students make and that were noticed by the teacher during classroom activity make us formulate the following key recommendations about writing a Europass template CV.

When they write the Europass CV students should take into account the fact that they should remove any optional section or those skills or professional experience which is not relevant to the job applied for. Also, the left hand column of the template, which contains the CV headings should remain unchanged. Any additional entries to the Professional Experience and Education and Training sections should be inserted separately together with a new set of headings. The first example below is a good recommendation whereas the second one refers to a bad example. The examples were taken from the students’ CVs.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
2011-2015	<b>Bachelor of Science in Information Technology</b> The Polytechnic University of Bucharest , Faculty of Automatic Control and Computer Science

2007-2011	<b>Highschool graduation Diploma</b> “Al. I. Cuza” highschool, Bucharest
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	
2011-2015 2007-2011	<b>Bachelor of Science in Information Technology</b> <b>Highschool graduation Diploma</b> The Polytechnic University of Bucharest “Al.I.Cuza” highschool, Bucharest

In the list of skills and competences the Europass CV requires the applicant to explain briefly the circumstances in which one acquired them. For example, *good communication skills gained through my experience as sales manager*. This involves that the student who fills in this CV knows his competences very well and is able to provide the reader with proofs and examples of the situations in which they obtained and used them.

Other teaching activities which are relevant for the students, according to their views, would include: tips for writing a CV, matching parts of a CV with job descriptions and unjumble parts of a sample CV.

Tips for writing a CV could be found on various websites such as <https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv.htm>, <https://www.theguardian.com/careers/cv-templates>, or on you Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyYsEghN7Ho>. Certainly, these websites should contain credentials such as the name of a well-known institution (BBC, the University of Kent etc) or reference to HR specialists. The exercises created based on these tips could be: listening or reading exercises with multiple choices or True /False sentences.

For example, after reading several tips on the above mentioned websites, a reading exercise with true/false sentences would look like this:

*Mark the following sentences as True or False*

1. The purpose of a CV is to get you a job (False, the purpose is to get an interview)
2. You may send the same CV to several job openings (False, the CV should be tailored and adapted to the job requirements from the vacancy notice)
3. It is optional to include a photograph in your CV (True)

The second type of activities relevant for the students are matching parts of a CV with job descriptions. Teachers may choose sections of a CV such as Education and Training, Work experience or skills to be matched with job openings. Matching CVs to job openings is a central problem in the recruiting and staffing industry. The standard procedure is to run a CV through a “parser” that extracts fields such as education and previous employment and loads them into an applicant tracking system. Recruiters then sift through CVs using keywords and knock-out criteria, e.g. if the job requires 2 years of experience, anyone with less than two years of experience is eliminated.

The following is an example of such an exercise.

*Match the CV sections to the corresponding sections of the job openings:*

1. <b>Qualifications</b> - 2009-2014 PhD Degree in Engineering and Management of Technological Systems - 2007-2009 Master of Science Degree in	a. American Company looking for software programmers. Requirements: - one-year programming experience in Xhtml, MySQL,PHP - a degree in Computer Science
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<p>Industrial Robotics          - 2004-2007 Bachelor of Science Degree,          Politehnica University of Bucharest,          department of Engineering and Management          Technological Systems</p>	<p>-good command of English</p>
<p>2.  <b>Education and Training</b>          2014-present student at the Faculty of          Automatic Control and Computer Science, the          Polytechnic University of Bucharest  <b>Work experience</b>          2015-2016 internship at Oracle, Junior          software programmer</p>	<p>b. Customer service representative          Requirements:          - Good command of English          - Good communicator          - Ability to work under pressure</p>
<p>3.  <b>Consulting and Negotiation Skills</b>          - provided consulting services regarding          mobile technology          - mediated an agreement between corporate          beneficiaries and mobile networks providers</p>	<p>c. We are looking for a Lecturer at Politehnica          University of Bucharest, Faculty of          Engineering and Management of          Technological Systems</p>

Alternatively, the exercise may contain fully written CVs to be matched with job openings.

Since we are interested in teaching the students to differentiate between three types of CVs – chronological, functional, mixed we can create the following exercise with the help of the CV samples from <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/chronological-resume-or-functional-resume>, <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/cv-templates/2073/classic-chronological-cv-example>, <https://www.careeronestop.org/ResumesInterviews/ResumeAdvice/SamplesTemplates/CombinationResumeSample.aspx>

*Match the following CV parts to the corresponding types of CVs:*

*a. Mixed CV    b. Functional CV    c. Chronological CV*

<p>1. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE</p> <p><b>Communication: Reports/Presentations/Technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare complex reports for managed-care organizations and insurance companies, ensuring full compliance with agency requirements and tight deadlines.</li> <li>• Author professional correspondence to customers and vendors.</li> <li>• Design and deliver series of classes for local businesses and associations, providing ergonomic counseling and educating employees on proper lifting techniques to avoid injury.</li> </ul> <p><b>Customer Service/Marketing/Problem Solving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee front-office operations and provide impeccable customer service:              --Built a clientele supported by 60% referral business.</li> </ul>
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## **2. EMPLOYMENT**

2009 – present            **Nonesuch University**  
   Examination Officer

- Responsible for accurate coordination of exam preparation and compilation of results
- Liaise with department heads on day-to-day exam related issues
- Manage a team of three
- Reported findings of annual survey to senior management
- Successfully work to strict timelines
- Organised and implemented new working procedures to streamline process

## **3. SELECTED SKILLS**

### **General Office**

- Organized and implemented group activities in an efficient manner
- Scheduled appointments and assured timely arrival
- Maintained accurate financial records, and paid all invoices on time
- Answered phones and took accurate messages
- Prepared reports and created documents using MS Word and WordPerfect
- Located desired information using the Internet

### **Communication**

- Utilized Internet email as an effective communication tool
- Answered phones in a courteous and professional manner
- Established rapport with diverse individuals and groups
- Demonstrated ability to express ideas in a team environment and influence action

### **RELATED VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

General Office Volunteer	Salvation Army – Tucson, AZ	5 Years
Elected Secretary	Parent Teachers Association (ISD 01) – Tucson,	5 Years
Event Coordinator	Neighborhood Involvement Program – Phoenix,	3 Years

## **Conclusion**

The Internet offers teachers a variety of resources which can be used to present types of CVs and to teach how to write a successful resume. The amounts of information refers to tips for writing a CV, CV templates with lengthy explanations regarding what information should be inserted in a resume or details about what CV type to choose depending on the candidate's professional experience. Various classroom activities can be created, such as the ones proposed above, which raises students' awareness about the information that should be included in a resume or what type of CV is most adequate.

Career planning in a student's life is quite important, mostly associated with graduation. Still, their interest in CV writing is increased as it is revealed by the survey findings. Therefore, a lecture about writing resumes is legitimate and it becomes more valuable as it uses Internet resources which offer information to satisfy the candidate's needs to find useful career tips and to become aware of the labour market demands and his/her own professional profile.

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- <https://www.theguardian.com/careers/cv-templates>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyYsEghN7Ho>