

School of Nursing

Nurse Education: Formatting CV's, Application Writing, and Interviews for Higher Education (HE) Teaching.



Part 2

Leadership & Recruitment Series

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Following on from the first article entitled Nurse Education: A Guide to Getting Started in HE Teaching, I wanted to share my insight into formulating a Curriculum Vitae (CV), application writing, and preparing for interviews.

Having reviewed quite literally hundreds of CV's and applications throughout my career in nursing, to say they have been varied would be an understatement. In this article I seek to highlight good practice that you can implement when applying for a nursing role, along with points to consider to revise and refresh your CV and project yourself into the shortlisting process.

With the digital world constantly evolving, the introduction of new technologies, nurses and healthcare professional must evolve with them. This also includes CV and application writing, the interview and the process associated with them. There are various platforms that can assist in this process, from templates to use, to hints and tips. However, you need to ensure these are amalgamated with your own professional touch.

The first thing that normally jumps of the page and appears to be coming a trend is a photograph of the applicant, it is not clear what value this adds to the application, as all applications should be anonymous from categorising features such as gender and race as well as other demographic features. The application also does not want to mislead anyone, seeing a photograph with an individual wearing a white coat and a stethoscope around the neck recently, could be interpreted as a doctor and the applicant was a mental health nurse for example the concerns maybe early unintentional deception. If this was the case, it may raise concerns of what else on the submitted documents could be misleading, the recruitment advertising network, Indeed (2023) emphasise the importance of first impressions and how these can be long lasting.

There is also an air of professionalism that must be continued throughout, therefore, consider is a photograph with a wine glass, uniform, friend/family, pets in them appropriate for the promotion you are submitting your CV for, consider if a photograph is appropriate at all.

Another visual variation noted on reviewed CV's are the use of font within the document. Some documents are submitted using a variety of fonts, although they say variety is the spice of life, the variety of fonts on a CV does not make it easy to read. It appears rushed and the possibility of cut and paste may have been utilised, which could be frowned upon. Ensure the CV is also refreshed regularly, if you are submitting for a particular role or job make sure the CV reflects the role.

When compiling your CV, the dates, and roles which you have held need to be in a logical order, start with the newest and then work backwards for 10 years. It is not necessary that you include secondary school if you have formal university qualifications and left school 25 years ago. Be prepared to answer questions on your CV, answering any clarifying points, although you want to self yourself, you also need to be truthful. You do not want to struggle to answer simple questions about yourself.

Remain focused on the role and skills you have to offer, consider if the information is relevant to the HR department or appointing officer. Do they need to know what your father's name and occupation is. This maybe a cultural variation to applications and CV but you need to ensure you present yourself to the organisation as an independent professional.

If you need to complete an application form instead or in conjunction with the CV, also follow these standards regarding font, presentation, style, and formatting. Some points that are not recommended include typing in capitals, as this can be interpreted as shouting and do not highlight any areas, of the application form, as this can be interpreted as a derogatory towards the reader.

Cross reference your statements and application form with the personal specification, job descriptions alongside the advert, this will enable you to demonstrate you meet the criteria for shortlisting.

Invited to interview the hard work continues, ensure you prepare yourself for this meeting/event. Interviews have evolved, and they now take on many formats, from meeting on virtual online platforms with a limited panel, to recruitment events that require you to be on site for the day participating in several workshops possibly in conjunction with formal interview with several different staff members.

Every organisation will approach this differently; this also includes the questions that could be posed. However, they will relate to the role advertised and you can start to predict areas and themes. Start to document these at home writing the answer in full, research the organisation and what are they focusing on, what are their values. You need to relate and translate your skills, attributes, and knowledge into your answers. Ensure you listen to the questions, ask them to repeat if you forgot what is being asked. If you don't understand ask them to re word so you are clear on what is being asking. Make your point, consider including a short example you have been involved in to cement the points you are making. You may also be asked to present a short presentation to a given question or scenario. You need to remain focused, consider the points made for the CV, consistency, presentation, reduce personal elements and consider the content you do have, does this remain focused, to the task in hand and have answered the brief clearly. You will need to practice this section, practice presenting and with the platform going to be used.

Once you have left the interview environment, write down and document as many questions as you can remember. Once the adrenaline reduces and you can focus again, start to answer these in full. You will start to notice a theme and pattern emerging, and you will start to formulate your own bank of questions, for when you are invited to another interview in the future you will be more prepared. Consider doing a reflection, you will be able to identify what went well and what didn't, so you are able to develop and improve, the Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle is considered a straightforward one, simple to use and adapt to your situation and is a good place to start (The University of Edinburgh, 2022)

If you receive the outcome you desired, then congratulations, however, if it is not, you need to learn from this experience, request feedback even if this means making an appointment with the appointing officer or HR department. Research shows that receiving feedback could improve performance by 72% (Zenger & Folkman, 2014), collating this with the question bank you have started to formulate will assist in your professional development. This should also be a process for your next application, but this time you will have progressed and developed further both personally and professionally.

If you missed my first article 'Nurse Education: A Guide to Getting Started in HE Teaching, please visit <https://doi.org/10.25416/NTR.25196558.v1>

Good luck in your next career venture, wherever that may take you.

Reference list

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