Graduate Student Resumes: Best Practices

- **Resumes can (and often should) be up to two pages in length**. Maximize the space you have to highlight experiences and skills relevant to the position of interest. Use clear headings, bullet points, and white space to make it easy to scan.
- **Your resume is a "snapshot" of relevant experience.** Unlike an academic CV, your resume is not comprehensive- it focuses on the skills and experiences most applicable to the position you are applying for.
- **Tailor your resume to the job.** You should be analyzing the skills and values described in the job description in order to highlight these same traits in your resume. Mirror the language the job ads use, and pay attention to what skills they prioritize. Consider creating a "master resume" with all of your experiences and skills that you can incorporate into job-specific resumes!
- **Keep it structured!** Your resume will include a number of sections, including contact information, education, skills, and research/work experience. Experience sections should have brief, descriptive headers to help orient readers. Start with skills and experiences that align most closely with transferable skills highlighted in the job ad! Check out some resume templates and examples here.
- **Transferable skills are key.** Your graduate student experience is a valid experience. You do not have to have a perfect experience/background match for a position to apply! It is all about perspective. Identify your transferable skills that align with the requirements of the position, and show the employers that you can meet their work expectations.
- **Keep things simple.** Make your resume comprehensible and avoid excessive technical jargon.
- **Be specific.** Use action-oriented language to highlight how and why you utilized certain skills (e.g., technical, interpersonal). Be clear and specific regarding the products, outcomes, and/or function of your work. Use bullets instead of complete sentences, and quantify your outcomes whenever possible!
- **Make your resume ATS friendly**. Most companies use applicant tracking system (ATS) software to review resumes. Your resume should include exact keywords from the job posting, but you should avoid any tables, columns, graphics, headers, or hyperlinks.
- **Publications are important, but focus on your skills.** While it may sometimes be appropriate to list publications (e.g., industry research position), the goal of your resume is to demonstrate how you implemented your skills to achieve certain goals. If you have publications you want to show off, highlight all of the work that went into that process (e.g., synthesizing literature, data analysis)!
- **Be intentional in including awards/honors.** Only include awards/honors on your resume if they speak to the skills you are highlighting in your application. If it is unclear why you received an award, include a brief description to tell readers why it is impressive! For grants and funded awards, a general rule of thumb is to include and report values ≥ $2,000.
- **Include undergraduate experience on a case-by-case basis**. You always want to prioritize more recent graduate experience when possible. However, it may be

appropriate to include undergraduate experience for graduate students with less experience or those pivoting back to an area that they have past experience in.

- **Consider including your LinkedIn.** LinkedIn is a great way to network and show off your experience**.** If you are going to include it on your resume, create a custom URL with your name. Make sure your profile is up-to-date and aligns with the experience, skills, and values you are highlighting in your applications! Check out some more tips on making the most of LinkedIn.
- **Cover letters are meant to compliment- not copy- your resume.** Your cover letter should serve as a narrative that shows employers why you are a good fit for the position and why you have the skills needed to succeed. It will reference some of the experiences and skills mentioned in your resume while incorporating more information about your values, goals, and organizational fit. Here are more tips on crafting a strong cover letter.

Graduate Student Resumes: Best Practices (Abbreviated Version)

- **Resumes can be up to two pages in length**. Use clear headings, bullet points, and white space to highlight relevant experiences/skills and make it easy to read.
- **Your resume is a "snapshot" of relevant experience.** Focus on the skills/experiences most applicable to the position, and avoid technical jargon.
- **Tailor your resume to the job.** Analyze the skills and values described in the job ad to highlight these same traits in your resume. Consider creating a "master resume" with all of your experiences/skills to pull from!
- **Keep it structured!** Include contact information, education, skills, and research/work experience. Use brief, descriptive headers to orient readers, and start with the most relevant experience. Find resume templates/examples here.
- **Transferable skills are key.** Graduate school experience is valid experience! You do not need a perfect background match for a position to apply. Identify your transferable skills and demonstrate how they align with the job expectations.
- **Be specific.** Use action-oriented language to highlight how and why you used your skills (e.g., technical, interpersonal). Be specific regarding the products, outcomes, and/or function of your work. Use bullets, and quantify when you can!
- **Make your resume ATS friendly**. Most companies use applicant tracking system (ATS) software to review resumes. Include exact keywords from the job posting, and avoid any tables, columns, graphics, headers, or hyperlinks.
- **Publications are important, but focus on the skills.** If you have a publication you want to show off, treat the manuscript like a product and highlight all of the skills that went into that process (e.g., synthesizing literature, data analysis)!
- **Be intentional in including awards/honors.** Only include awards/honors that speak to skills you are highlighting in your application. Include brief descriptions when award criteria are unclear. Report grants/funding ≥ $2,000.
- **Include undergraduate experience on a case-by-case basis**. Prioritize graduate experience. Undergraduate experience may be appropriate if you have less graduate experience or are pivoting back to an area from your past.