

CV Writing and Interview Techniques for PhD and Master's Applications

Helping Afghan Students Achieve Their Study Abroad Dreams

ICTP Physics Without Frontier - EBRI Science Without Frontiers



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Agenda

- **Preparations:** Tips to Prepare, Goals, Research, Actions, Positive attitude
- **CV Writing:** Key Components and Best Practices
- **Interview Techniques:** Preparation and Presentation
- **Q&A**

Personal Development & Academic Growth

- **Study with the goal of achieving high scores.**
- **Learn how to perform well in exams** (strategy + technique).
- **Think of a project idea and start building it.**
 - **Prepare clear, readable reports with all computations and references linked.**
- **Create a personal website (Google Sites or GitHub Pages).**
- **Learn new skills continuously** (coding, writing, data analysis, presentation skills).
- **Get certificates from Coursera or other platforms.**
- **If a course isn't free, write to them:**
 - Explain you are a **student (girl) from Afghanistan**
 - **Ask for a fee waiver -> many platforms approve this.**
- **Use ChatGPT and other AI tools properly to support your learning.**
- **Always **research first**: Google your questions before asking others.**

Research, Applications & Mindset

- **Contact professors directly, especially in Iran, for project guidance.**
 - Choose mentors who have **strong experience publishing in reputable journals**
 - **(avoid low-quality “second-hand” journals).**
- **Learn about a professor’s research works before writing to them.**
- **Be careful, thoughtful, and critical when reading papers.**
- **Rejection is normal. (often unrelated to your abilities)**
- **Apply widely: 10, 100, even 200 applications if needed.**
- **Do not assume accepted students are better than you.**
selection includes many strange factors
- **Never lose your self-esteem.**
- **Build your **own future**! learn, create, grow .. while continuing to apply.**

What is a CV?

Definition: A CV (Curriculum Vitae) is a detailed document highlighting your academic, research, and professional experience.

Difference: How it differs from a résumé (CVs are more detailed and focused on academic/research credentials).



CV Structure

1. **Personal Information:** Name, contact details, LinkedIn/ ResearchGate (no date of birth or photo).
2. **Education:** Detailed academic history (start with most recent degree)
3. **Research/Work Experience:** Relevant work and research positions.
4. **Publications and Conferences:** Include published papers, presentations.
5. **Skills:** Technical and soft skills relevant to your field.
6. **Languages and Certifications:** Any language proficiency or relevant certificates.
7. **References:** Names and contact info of academic/ professional referees.



Personal Information Tips

- Use **professional email addresses** (avoid casual ones).
- Include **LinkedIn profile** or **personal academic website**.
Make one if you do not have!
- Exclude unnecessary personal details like nationality, gender, or photo unless explicitly required by the country



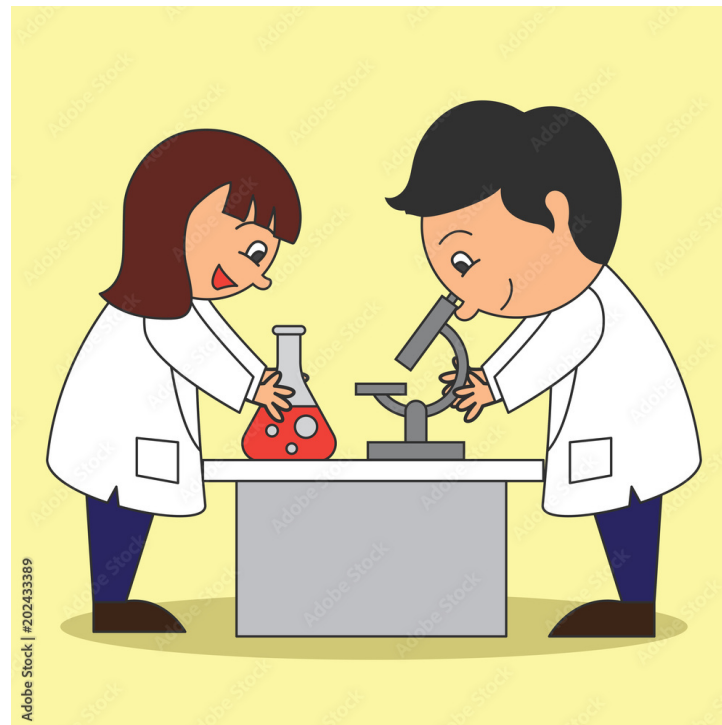
Education Section

- Start with the **most recent degree**.
- Include **GPA** (if it's competitive) and mention relevant coursework.
- Add **thesis/dissertation** topics with a brief summary.



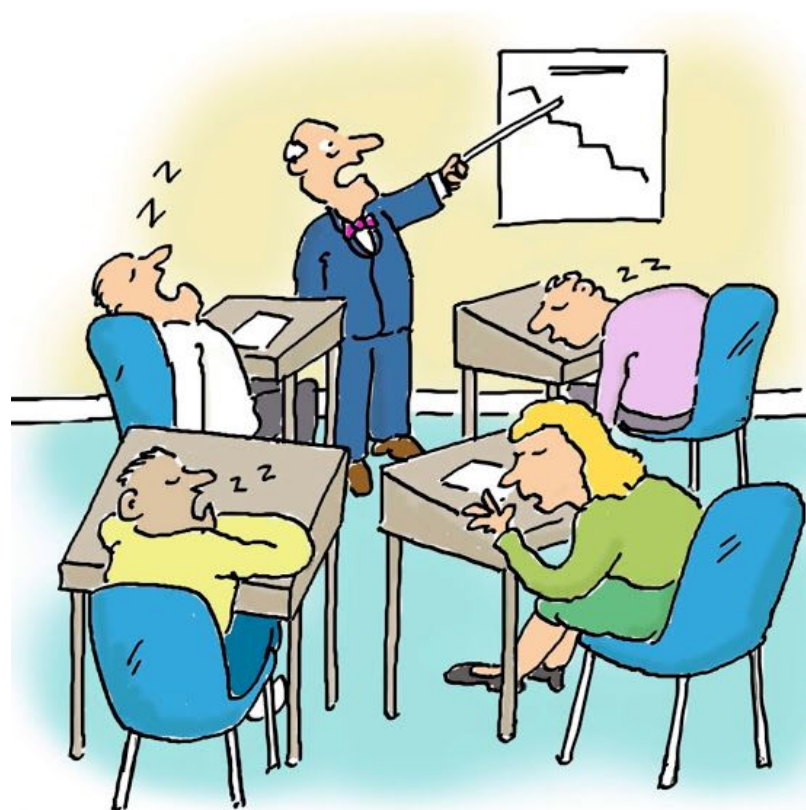
Research and Work Experience

- **Focus on relevance:** Emphasise work that aligns with the program's focus.
- Use bullet points to describe your role, highlighting achievements and skills used.
- Include research assistantships, internships, and academic projects.



Publications, Presentations, and Conferences

- List **journal articles**, **conference papers**, and **posters**.
- Mention **presentations** you gave, especially at international conferences.
- **Co-authorship** should be acknowledged (clarify your role).



NORMAN NEEDED SOME HELP WITH HIS PRESENTATION TECHNIQUE!

Skills Section

- Divide into **Technical Skills** and **Soft Skills**.
 - **Technical:** Programming languages, lab techniques, software (e.g., MATLAB, Python, HTML, R, etc).
 - **Soft Skills:** Communication, leadership, time management.

Prioritise skills relevant to the field of study.



Writing Tips for CV



- **Tailor the CV** to the program and university requirements.
- Use **action verbs** (e.g., developed, managed, led).
- **Proofread (use AI)** carefully to avoid grammar mistakes.
- **Concise, clear formatting:** Easy to read, no long paragraphs.

Common CV Mistakes to Avoid

- Writing something that is **not really true**.
- Overloading with unnecessary details.
- Including outdated or irrelevant information.
- Not tailoring the CV to the specific program/university.



Interview Techniques



What to Expect in a Graduate School Interview?

- Interviews focus on understanding:
 - **Your motivation** to pursue a PhD/Master's.
 - **Your research interests** and how they align with the program.
 - **Your future goals:** Academic or professional.
 - **Your soft skills:** Communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Academic or professional.

Preparation for the Interview

- **Research the Program:** Know the faculty, research areas, and facilities.
- **Understand Your CV:** Be prepared to discuss everything on your CV in detail.
- **Prepare Questions:** Show interest by asking insightful questions about the program or faculty.



Typical Questions You'll Be Asked

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why this program/university?
- What are your research interests?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Tell us about a challenge you faced in research and how you overcame it.



In some master or Diploma programs they may ask you technical basic questions!

How to Answer Interview Questions?

- Use **STAR Method** for behavioural questions (Situation (Your lack of opportunities in Afghanistan), Task, Action, Result).
- Always **connect your answers to the program** or your research interests.

Be **honest** about areas where you need growth, but frame it as learning potential!

Body Language and Communication

- Maintain **eye contact** (for online interviews, look into the camera).
- **Speak clearly** and avoid jargon.
- **Smile and stay calm:** Confidence without arrogance.
- For online interviews, ensure good **lighting** and a **quiet environment**.



A Good English Proficiency is Always an Extra Bonus

What to Avoid in Interviews

- **Rambling:** Keep answers focused and concise.
- **Negative talk:** Don't criticize past employers, programs, or experiences.
- **Lack of preparation:** Not knowing enough about the program or your own research.



Questions?

Sample reply to what is your questions to us?

During a PhD or Master's program interview

About the Program

- What kind of support does the department provide for publishing papers or attending conferences?
- Are there opportunities to collaborate with other departments or external organizations?

About Research

- What are the most important skills or experiences that students in this program need to succeed in their research?
- Can you tell me more about how students choose their dissertation topic or research focus?

About Funding and Resources

- Are there any funding opportunities for international conferences or research trips?

Supervision and Mentorship

- How often do students meet with their advisors, and what is the typical mentorship style in the program?
- How flexible are advisors in terms of guiding students in their own research interests?

Program Structure and Opportunities

- What opportunities are there for teaching, and how are teaching assignments typically decided?
- How does the program prepare students for post-graduation careers, both inside and outside of academia?
- What is the typical timeline for completing the program, and what support is available if students fall behind?

About the Community and Culture

- Can you tell me about the academic and social community within the program? How do students typically support one another?
- How does the program foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students of different backgrounds?