



## CV

This handout was originally written to help students of English at Konstanz University apply for a place to study abroad as part of their course of studies. Students from other Departments have also found it useful. Here you will find some useful English expressions, a guideline framework, and some tips for writing your CV.

### **(1)Some useful expressions**

(Where necessary the AMERICAN expressions are given in brackets and CAPITALS)

As each country has its own education system, with different structures, requirements and contents it is difficult to find equivalents for things like "Mittlere Reife", „Realschule“, “Gymnasium“, "Zwischenprüfung", "Grundstudium" or "Staatsexamen". However, I think what is here will make sense to people in an English-speaking country.

Lebenslauf  
*CV (RESUME)*

Die Grundschule besuchen  
*to attend Primary school (GRADE SCHOOL)*

Das Gymnasium besuchen  
*to attend Grammar school (this is the type of school in the UK which comes closest to the German Gymnasium)*  
*to attend Secondary School (this is the general word for all types of school after Primary School) (HIGH SCHOOL)*

Das Abitur/die Matura machen  
*to take one's A-levels (TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL)*

Mittlere Reife; Schulwechsel nach der Mittleren Reife  
*GCSE or O-levels (No American equivalent); When I was 16 I moved from the Junior Secondary to a Senior Secondary School where I took my A-levels in*

20xx.

*(As the A-levels are the important stage of your school education, you can leave out the 'Mittlere Reife' and 'Realschule' completely. Just say when you passed your A-levels.)*

Leistungskurse

*Proficiency courses/Advanced level courses*

Handelsschule; Berufsfachschule; Wirtschaftsgymnasium; Technisches  
Gymnasium

*Commercial school; Vocational school; Grammar school with the emphasis on  
Economics; Grammar school with the emphasis on technical subjects*

Wehrdienst leisten; Zivildienst

*to do one`s military service; to do alternative service/community service*

Fachhochschule

*Technical College (In Germany this is now called a University of Applied  
Sciences)*

Eine Lehre

*(handwerkliche Berufe) do an apprenticeship;*

*(andere Berufe z.B. kaufmännische) to train as (a bank clerk etc.)*

als Praktikant

*I spent 6 months as a trainee in the local Chamber of Commerce*

Studiengang

*a course of studies*

auf Bachelor usw studieren

*to be on a B.A. course / to do a B.A. in English, Physics etc.*

auf Lehramt studieren

*to do a degree course in English, Physics etc. for future teachers*

Studienfach; Hauptfach; Nebenfach

*subject; main subject/principal subject (MAJOR);*

*subsidiary subject (MINOR)*

Wirtschaftspädagogik

*The official translation in Konstanz is/was "Economics Teaching"!*

*I think "Economics and Education" would make more sense, or Business  
Economics and Education*

Studiengebühren

*tuition fees*

Grundstudium; Hauptstudium; Zwischenprüfung/Vordiplom;  
*Basic course of studies; main course of studies; Intermediate examination.*  
*I am in my basic course of studies and will sit my intermediate examination in 20xx.*  
*I passed my intermediate examination in 20xx and am now in my main course of studies, preparing for my diploma examinations/my state examinations.*

Einen Vertiefungskurs besuchen; Vorlesung; Seminar; Proseminar;Hauptseminar  
*to attend an in-depth course; lecture; seminar; introductory seminar; advanced seminar*

Voraussetzung; Arbeitsaufenthalt; Studienaufenthalt; Praktikum  
*Students of Public Administration are required to spend a period of time working abroad/studying abroad/are required to do an 8-month practical (INTERNSHIP), preferably abroad.*

Schulpraktikum  
*I gained some experience as a student teacher; I spent 6 weeks in a local secondary school, learning how to teach English and History*

Referat halten; Hausarbeit schreiben; Klausur schreiben  
*to present a seminar paper;*  
*to write a term paper;*  
*to sit a written exam*

Schwerpunkt setzen; sich spezialisieren auf  
*In my studies I have always concentrated on /put the emphasis on ...;*  
*I would like to specialise in international relations.*

Studieninteressen und Hobbys verbinden  
*I would like to combine my interest in international relations with my hobbies, which are ...*

das Examen machen  
*to take one's final exams/to graduate;*  
*I hope/expect to graduate in 20xx.*

Staatsexamen; Referendariat  
*State Examination (for future teachers);*  
*teacher training, to train as a teacher; after graduation I will train as a teacher.*

Aufbaustudium  
*Post-graduate studies; I would like to do a post-graduate course in Information Management.*

Promotionsstudium, promovieren  
*I would like to do a Ph.D./ a Doctorate in Linguistics.*

## (2) A Guideline CV

CVs can be written in tabular form, as continuous text, or even as a mixture. What you write, and how you write, depend on who you are writing to and why you are writing.

Before you write you have to stop and think: out of all the things you have done in your life so far, which ones are relevant for this CV?

The following is the skeleton framework of a very short CV. It is intended only as a GUIDELINE for a continuous text CV, of the traditional kind that is still written in applications for a place to study abroad. It has useful English expressions you might like to use.

I was born in Königsbad, Bavaria, on 1st May, 19xx.

I attended Primary School in Königsbad, following that the Humboldt Gymnasium (Grammar School) in Augsburg, where I passed my A-levels in 20xx. My proficiency courses were Greek and Technology. As I have always been interested in politics I decided to apply for a place to study Political Science at the University of Konstanz. This is a B.A. course which takes x years.

Before starting my studies, however, I decided to spend a year in community service, caring for old and sick people in their homes. I enjoyed the work very much and feel that I gained a great deal of valuable experience./ Before starting my studies, however, I had to do my military service./ Instead of doing military service in the German Army, I decided to do alternative service/community service and was given a place looking after mentally handicapped people. During this time I learned how to XXXX and YYYY.

In 20xx I was accepted at the University of Konstanz and am now in my Xth semester/ Xth year\*\* of Political Science. My main study interests are contemporary British politics and international relations and I would like to specialise in ..... after my intermediate examination.

Apart from my studies my other main interests are XXXXX/ I have been involved in youth work (etc.) for many years now ...../ I enjoy spending my leisure time doing a variety of sports ....

Spending a year at X University in Y would give me the opportunity to ...../ I am particularly interested in the University of X because ..../ I am particularly keen to study at the University of X as .....

\*\* in other countries it is more common to say what **year** you are in.

### **(3) More tips - for the traditional kind of continuous text CV above**

Leave out your Mum and Dad and sisters and brothers and names and ages and their schooling and jobs. It's you that counts here, not them.

But my family are important, you protest. Of course they are, but in this context you have to focus on yourself. So if you are happy to have five brothers and sisters, you can write something like: "I grew up with five brothers and sisters, and really enjoyed being in our own little community" or "Growing up with five brothers and sisters was an interesting experience. It taught me .....".

Don't drown the reader in irrelevant detail. If you have worked for five different newspapers you do not need to list them all. Instead you can write something like this: "I have experience of working for five different newspapers in different towns. The most important of these for me was X as my work involved ..... and I learned how to ....."

Remember that people outside Konstanz don't know what the "Südkurier" or the "Kreissparkasse" or the "Fachschaft" is so leave these specific names out or explain. For example, "I worked for the local newspaper", "I was a trainee at the local bank", "I was involved with a group of students from the Department of xxxx who ...."

Say what you actually did. For example, when you were working for the local newspaper did you do interviews? Write articles? (Make the coffee?) When you were in the "Fachschaft" did you organise meetings of students? Discuss problems with lecturers? Create flyers?

In general, try not to make yourselves sound like passive bodies on a conveyor belt. After all, everyone was born, went to Primary and Secondary School and you are all now at University..... Say WHY you chose things, decided things, liked things etc. and WHAT you learned from them.

### **(4) Some useful books in the library of Konstanz University:**

How to Write a Winning CV. Jones, 1996 (6 fse 441/j66)

Because of the date of publication I hesitate to leave this book on the list. However, the message is good. What it says in this book is the key to all writing, not just the writing of a CV, namely: "A winning CV is a **relevant** CV".

The next two books can also help you decide what is relevant and what not, and how to present it and interestingly enough, they are now both available online:

Preparing your own CV. Corfield, 1991 (6 fse 441/c67) online 2011  
The Resume Handbook. Rosenberg, 1990 (6 fse 438/r68), online 2008  
(American examples of both good and bad resumes)

The next two books are useful for English expressions:  
Oxford Guide to Writing and Speaking. Seely, 1998 (6 fse 485/s26)

Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the member states of the EC. (1993) edz 905/s94a (It sounds as dry as dust ... but it is GOOD on the terminology of the school system, if you should need other expressions.)

For many good translation dictionaries such as "Der Kleine Eichborn" (legal, administrative, commercial terms) see the handout on Reference Books:  
FyF\_ha\_referencebooks.pdf

The Collins Cobuild is an excellent monolingual learner's dictionary.

### **(5) Absolutely up-to-date European CV format:**

European Curriculum Vitae Format [www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu)

This is available in several EU languages. I think it is good for helping you focus on your abilities, not just on qualifications.

FyF\_ha\_cv.pdf

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