How to write a CV for an application

This page gives general recommendations on how to compose a CV if you are a BCCB (or other life science) student looking for an internship or a graduate school position.

Before you start:

- Ask some more senior students - who have already been successful in applying - for their CVs, and look at them. (But do not copy them slavishly - they may not fit you.)
- The CSC give very good CV advice. One example CV from their files that I perticularly liked is here. There is also an online CV tool: http://csc.jacobs-university.de/submit/.

How a scientific CV is special and different from a CV used for company applications:

- The point of the CV is to convince your potential employer that you are professionally minded and competent for the position that you are applying to.
- It adheres to a specific tabular format: the points below ("what should be in the CV") must be listed with their respective dates.
- They can be two or sometimes even three pages (but not more).
- There should be no photograph (exception: applications in Germany).
- You do need to list in detail your practical and theoretical experience, such that the prospective employer finds out what depth your training has had, and how good the BCCB course at Jacobs really is. (See below.)
- There is not usually an 'objectives' section in a scientific CV. If you have to have one, write 'An internship *(or: PhD position, ...)* in Molecular Cell Biology' *(or whatever your field is)*. Nothing else.

What should be in the CV:

- Your educational history starting from primary school, with grades obtained (high school and university).
- Your theoretical education. The strength of the BCCB program is the early exposure to the important topics - you have learnt more BCCB knowledge than in probably any other BSc program in the world. This is one of your strong points. One good way to demonstrate the depth of your theoretical experience is to list the title of your core BCCB courses and your scientific electives, and to provide - since these titles don't say very much - the name of one or two books that were used in the reading material.
- Your practical training. This is another very strong point. List the names of the courses and the methods that you have come in contact with. If you have done any projects (as a student assistant, or during an internship), provide the title of the project, a one-sentence description of the scientific purpose, and list the methods that you used.
- If you are applying for an internship, it is OK to list the courses that you will do in the semester between the application and the start of the internship, since they are important for assessing how much you will know when you start. But of course, one has to be able to see from the dates that you have not done them yet.
- The student jobs that you have held and the internships that you have done. If they were nonscientific do not use more than one line.
- Any scholarships and prizes that you have been awarded, including accession to the President's List and/or merit-based scholarships at Jacobs.
- Extracurricular activities. Keep them short.
- Skills: Languages (with level), software skills (esp. scientific) are the most important.
- Referees' addresses should be provided on a separate sheet.
    - Unless you have been specifically asked for letters of references, you should simply list the referees' addresses (contact them beforehand!), and the potential employer will write to them to ask for a letter.
    - If letters of reference have been specifically requested, it is best to ask your referees to send theirletters directly to the prospective employer, independsntly of the application - this proves to them that you have had no opportunity to see the letter.
    - Sometimes, employers specifically request that sealed reference letters be included together with your application.

Final and important steps:

- Perform a spell and grammar **check**.
- Have your CV looked at by a **native** English speaker. CSC provides a service for this.
- Make sure the **formatting** is appealing and consistent throughout the document. Consistent format (alignments, capitalization, date formats) is often perceived as a confirmation that the applicant can complete a job to 100%.
- Ask one of your professors to look at the CV - send it to them in advance and then come during their office hours.

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