

Zoology Postdoc CV Workshop

28 October 2014

Panel: Prof Michael Akam, Prof Nick Davies, Prof Becky Kilner, Prof Tim Weil, Anne Forde

Compiled by Alecia Carter, 28 Oct 2014

Organised by Postdoc Committee members: Alecia Carter, Matt Schrader, Tim Smithson

The Zoology postdocs gathered to ask a panel of academics in the Department what they look for in academic CVs, including CVs for postdoc positions, fellowships/grants and lectureships. Below is a summary of the **questions** that were asked by the postdocs, and some notes of the responses (bulleted) and some *general comments* from the panel as the discussions continued. Important, reiterated points are underlined.

Personal statements on CVs should be relatable to real achievements, not what you think of yourself

How does one convey independence in a CV?

- No obvious coherence in your publications looks bad—no evidence that you’ve got your own agenda; you look like hired help
- Put your role in the publication under your 5 best papers
- Awards and funding should be prioritised higher on the CV, under publications
- List of positions held: helpful if they have 3-4 lines saying what you achieved during the position; summarise the key achievement of the time in the lab—but keep it short!
- Say what your achievements are briefly in your CV, can be bullet pointed.

Should the CV be longer, more than a list of facts?

- No, just be better highlighting your achievements
- Use the phrase “I discovered that...” when describing what you did in your position/paper

How long should a CV be?

- For lectureship: 4 pp, Fellowship 2 pp,
- 3 pp—people are paying less attention by p3: ORDER IS IMPORTANT

Show that you’re an active member of the community

Use clear headings

Write a brief summary of your interests (depending on the structure)

Publications included—if lots, take out 3-4 and explain why they are important

Complete publication list; but if long, academics won’t look in detail at all publications

What are you studying, why is it important and what have you discovered

How do you get around sub-par career choices/family choices/breaks?

- Use the cover letter: tell the story retrospectively in the cover letter, not in the CV
- Highlight positives of any position, techniques learnt etc.
- Not taken as a negative if you are explicit that the position was taken for family reasons: two body problems are acceptable and expected!
- Don't leave a gap in your CV!

Maternity leave written up

- HAVE to put it in, and show where you were part-time, etc.
- Bias: academics are trained to deal with it! So don't worry.
- Committees have to take career breaks into consideration. Be explicit. Don't be apologetic.

How do you deal with prior professional life, if there's been a change?

- Put it all in: be clear
- Non-standard CV: have a statement about how your path changed/justification
- It's not a bad thing! It's nice to have a change of view and will work in your favour
- More tricky if there's more a dramatic move e.g. investment banking to science, then be explicit about why you changed and how it's a benefit

Pick and highlight key publications:

- Wherever you publish, highlight which are best by adding a statement underneath
- Don't highlight middle-author papers as key/highlighted (just because they're in *Science*)

Keep publications and funding sections apart

- Don't link them; if you really want to: number them, and link these numbers to the funding section

Altmetrics?

- People don't really use altmetrics or citations
- Citations difficult to interpret, but some people would use them
 - Note that there was some disagreement about this among the panel: it depends on who is reading it!

Sections to include? Conference presentations/press coverage?

- Press coverage good, include it
- Blog: include!
- Relevant pieces of information that show you're involved in the academic community
- Conference presentations: don't have a page full, but highlight invited ones

How do you gauge community involvement? Important?

- Have an “Outreach” section
- Committees: put them on AND list your involvement

Should we try to build our CVs by getting involved, or focus on getting publications out?

Not mutually exclusive, being a lecturer is about balancing all components

Should we put teaching on a CV?

- If you WROTE/DESIGNED lectures/practicals, highlight that
- Feedback is important: if you have it, highlight it
- Explain what you’ve done esp. supervisions, highlight independence of them
- Research supervision also good

Is teaching relevant just for lectureships?

- Shorten that section if you’re applying for a research post; it’s not as important

Order of presentation

For postdoc positions:

Publications, funding, awards, invited speaking

For lectureship positions

Publications, ... (not dealt with)

Jobs, Departments and Research labs the person has been in: seeing who they’ve worked with already is important, collaborations important

What’s a good way of linking collaborations?

- Add a statement under the job description

Is there guidance at an earlier stage about what is important to ‘build a CV’?

- Scepticism about advising people to CV-build
- Strategically one wants to look good, but don’t set out to do this

Be unique!

Be passionate

There’s no formula: the best CVs are original

- Organising NEW things is important, show initiative, leadership (have a leadership section!)
- Add some personal things
- How much personal information:

- Name, address, email, Nationality, NOT D.O.B

How important is presentation? Photo?

- No photo in UK, but yes in continental Europe: find out what's acceptable
- Presentation is key. Use bold and subheadings well etc.

Experience before PhD

- Put it on your CV!

Promotion criteria are online: see how a Department weights and names criteria

For British panels, don't show off: the panel should decide whether your stated achievements mean you're good.

Impact:

- Highlight this for other Universities (other than Cambridge)
- Metrics are more important if applying to a place where your work is less familiar.

Is it worth asking who is on the panel?

- Explain what you're doing and why you're doing it, even if the panel are familiar with your work

Should you contact the people you'd like to collaborate with?

- If you get to shortlist stage, highlight who you'd like to meet and why

Tailor your CV for the applications! Take the time to reorganise it! Keep it up to date.

MOST IMPORTANT:

- ***What are your questions***
- ***What have you discovered***
- ***Why is your approach a really important approach for the future***