

# Resume Drafting Guidelines for MLS Students

Your resume is more than a history of your educational and work experience. It is also a marketing piece showcasing how your competencies, skills and experience align with the needs of a potential employer. Ultimately, your resume reflects your own personality. Because you may be applying to multiple employers and for myriad positions, you may create more than one version of your resume emphasizing different skills or experiences depending upon the prospective employer. Below are suggestions for writing and designing an effective resume. Keep in mind that these are only guidelines.

## Content

- **General Guidelines**
  - Always use action verbs. [This article](#) on The Muse provides 185 action verb suggestions.
  - Use accomplishment statements.
  - Information should only be included once. If something falls under multiple entries (e.g., prepared spreadsheets and controlled costs), select the most relevant section and consider how to demonstrate professional growth.
  - Proofread carefully and run a spell check. Also have someone else read over your resume -- spell check will not find words used incorrectly, only words spelled incorrectly.
  - Be truthful and ensure that your resume is free of inconsistencies.
- **Length** Keep your resume short and ideally to one or two pages. Consider your resume as a document that highlights your accomplishments, not an encyclopedia of everything you have ever done.
- **Contact Information** Make it easy for an employer to contact you by putting your name, address, telephone number and email address at the top of the resume.
- **Headings** Limit your resume to three or four general headings such as Resume Summary Statement, Core Qualifications, Education, Experience, Certifications, Additional Information.

- **Resume Summary Statement** If you are an experienced professional tying together disparate experiences or highlighting a common theme to showcase your brand, you may want to use a summary statement. If your career path is fairly straightforward, you may want to save the space for bullet points under your work experiences.
- **Core Qualifications** Customize this section to match, as much as you can, the requirements listed in the job posting.
  - You may include both hard skills (technical/teachable skills) and soft skills (subjective/interpersonal skills).
  - If you include languages, state your level of fluency, and do not exaggerate your proficiency.
- **Education** If you recently graduated from college, or had a long gap in employment and then went back to school, this will be the first section on your resume. List your education in reverse chronological order.
  - Honors attached to your degree should be lowercase, italicized if Latin, and appear after the degree (e.g., BS, *cum laude*).
  - Decide whether or not to include grades. (This will depend on what is more relevant to an employer and how much work experience you possess.) If you do include grades, list them in a way that makes sense to an employer, such as 3.5/4.0.
- **Experience** If you have years of current work experience, this section will be more relevant to an employer and should appear before education. List your experience in reverse chronological order.
- **Activities and Interests** Are your activities and interests relevant to the job for which you are applying? **IF** you choose to list them ensure that your interests and activities are relevant to the job you are seeking.
- **Potentially Controversial Information** Whether or not to include information which is potentially controversial is a highly personal decision. Even though it is illegal to discriminate, implicit and unconscious bias does occur and is difficult to prove. If you are grappling with whether or not to include information which may be potentially controversial, contact the Online Legal Programs office at [mls@scu.edu](mailto:mls@scu.edu) to set up a career counseling appointment to discuss the pros and cons of this decision.
- **Items to Ditch**
  - The phrase “References available upon request.”
  - Personally identifiable information (e.g., date of birth, marital status, etc.) other than contact information.
  - Reasons for leaving a job.
  - Photographs.

- The word “I.”
- References.
- The phrases “Responsibilities or Duties included . . .”
- Irrelevant experiences from the distant past.

## Formatting

- **Resume Design**

- Make your name, address, telephone number, and email address visually distinct from the rest of the resume. Your name should be the largest and most prominent item on your resume. Your email address must be professional.
- Keep in mind that most employers will be looking for a fairly traditional resume format that is easy to read.
- Be consistent with your language, style and punctuation. If you choose to style information in a certain way, it must be consistent throughout the entire resume (i.e., if you italicize the dates in the Education section, you must also italicize the dates in the Experience section).

- **Formatting Physical Resumes** While most resumes are delivered electronically, you may on occasion choose to hand someone a physical copy of your resume.

- Print your resume using a laser printer using black ink only.
- Look for a high quality neutral color bond or 100% cotton paper.

- **Formatting Electronic Resumes**

- Convert your resume to a PDF file before sending it electronically. This preserves your formatting and hides document history.
- Margins should be a minimum of half an inch all around. Any smaller, and you run the risk of the document not printing correctly if the employer chooses to print your resume.
- Since the filename is visible for electronic submissions, make the filename clear, professional and exclude incorrect identifying information (e.g., don't send a file labeled CompanyABCResume to Company XYZ).