

Application Guide

for ETH students and doctoral students

CAREER
CENTER



ANALYSIS
OF APPLICATIONS

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Introduction

The transition from university to professional life

Your imminent graduation or doctorate and the search for your first “real” job mark the beginning of a new and significant stage in your life.

The transition to professional life is a bit like learning to surf. It is a process you have to go through until you learn to ride the perfect wave or slice through the water with the wind in your sail. First you have to get in touch with your body, sense of balance and strength, and get a feel for the wind and waves. You need to learn about the proper technique and good equipment, and **decide what waters are best for you before you can go out** and get your feet wet.

If we apply this analogy to your transition to professional life, it means you need to first get in touch with yourself and in tune with the job market before your applications can succeed. Regardless of what the situation on the job market may be, it is important that you gain clarity about what you want and what skills you can bring to your future job. Finally, you need to know the rules and techniques to polish your application materials to perfection and make a persuasive impression in interviews.

This application guide is here to help you to make the most of every situation on the job market and get off to a good start. It provides advice and encouragement on how to assess your current situation and your professional opportunities, and offers plenty of tips on the application process.





How to use this guide

This is a workbook designed to guide you through the four stages of the application process (see graphic to the right):

If you are just beginning to consider your career prospects, we recommend that you start with the chapter entitled [Analysis](#). If you already have an idea of your personal strengths and interests, but find it challenging to identify industry sectors, companies and jobs that could suite you, then we recommend that you focus on the chapter entitled [Exploration](#). If you already know which industries, companies and fields of activity appeal to you, feel free to dive right into the [Focusing](#) and [Application](#) chapters.



- 1 — *Analysis: Know yourself.*
- 2 — *Exploration: Discover industries, companies and fields of activity.*
- 3 — *Focusing: Take the right approach when looking for a job.*
- 4 — *Application: Present the best you – in your application documents and in interviews.*



The ETH Career Center

Set up in 2010, ETH Zurich's Career Center consists of a team of dedicated experts with HR, recruiting and coaching experience in various industries. We are well-versed in the labour market, keep up with the latest trends in recruiting, and constantly strive to improve our services to help you be well-prepared for the transition to professional life.

Alongside this guide, the Career Center offers comprehensive services for the four stages of the application process. We provide one-on-one and small-group counselling to ease your transition into the working world. This is backed up by relevant information you gain through opportunities to connect with valuable contacts in person, at special events, and in workshops. To this end, we collaborate closely with other ETH organisations and keep up a spirited dialogue with industry and with the career services of other universities at home and abroad.

More information about our services is to be found at the end of each chapter of this guide and on our website at → www.careercenter.ethz.ch.

We look forward to helping you make your next big move and wish you every success!

Your ETH Career Center Team

Feedback from students, doctoral students and alumni

"I participated in different 'soft skills' seminars, but I never experienced that level of competence, confidence, expertise and care I experienced from the staff during the Career Management Seminar."

"This career event was exceptional and I had a lot of fun meeting the companies in this setting."

"I really appreciated the time and expertise of the counsellor. For a while the job search was tough and it felt good to get positive feedback and encouragement."

"Really helpful, fantastic advice!"

"I found this service one of the best that ETH offers. Thank you to the people working there!"

"Great presenters and well-selected panellists from different companies. I really appreciated the honest answers."







1 — ANALYSIS

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The three crucial questions

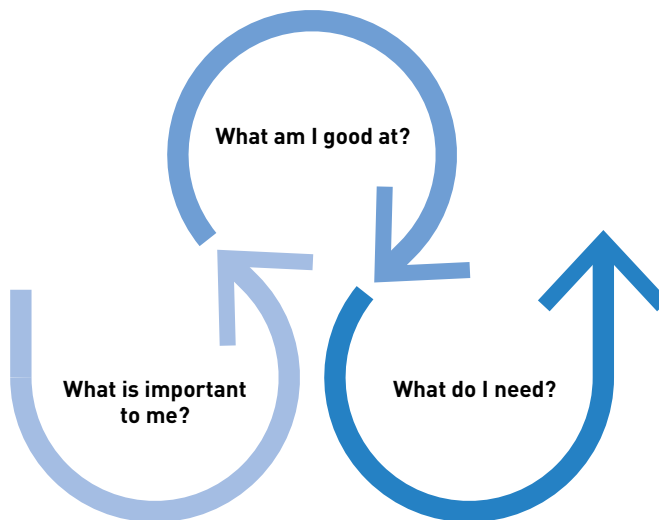
Careful assessment of where you stand is the first step in the application process. It is your launch pad for exploring career options, for focusing on specific sectors and companies, and for the application itself. A rigorous self-analysis will help you focus on organisations and career opportunities that match your personality and abilities. It will also enable you to project competence and confidence when you meet prospective employers.

This assessment is all about you getting a clear picture of your interests, skills, values and needs:

- **What is important to me?**
- **What am I good at?**
- **What do I need?**

On the following pages you will find a variety of questionnaires and exercises that will help you to get to know yourself better. They are meant to encourage you to reflect on and to identify your interests, competencies and values.

Take as much time as you need for this self-analysis. Find a quiet spot, free from distractions, where you can make the most of this exercise.



What is important to me?

My interests

Our lives revolve around our interests – at play and at work. These interests can guide our career choices; they are key motivational factors that influence our job satisfaction. The more we enjoy what we do, the more motivated we will be to engage and excel.

What are your main interests and what motivates you? Take your time answering the following questions to help you identify your interests.



1. What are your main interests? Write down the three topics that immediately come to mind.

2. What were you doing the last time you felt, "this is really interesting"?

3. What do you like to do in your free time?

4. What do you like to read and talk about?

5. What are/were your favourite subjects at university/school?

6. What social issues or problems do you frequently have on your mind?



7. In what activities do you become so deeply absorbed that you lose all track of time?

8. Which successes are you particularly proud of?

9. What kind of people do you prefer to work or share company with?

10. Of all the people in the world, whose job would you like most?

How did it go answering these questions? Was it easy to reflect on yourself like this? Did you perhaps discover something you were not aware of before now?

If you can, discuss your answers with your family or friends and ask them how they see these things.

Another way to explore your interests is to learn more about your preferences. There are **four fundamental preferences** to address:

- **People** – an interest in teaching, counselling, selling, service, etc.
- **Data** – an interest in working with facts, figures, statistics, etc.
- **Things** – an interest in working with plants, machines, buildings, etc.
- **Ideas** – an interest to design, model, invent, etc.

Professions and job functions are usually based on one or a combination of two of these dimensions.

The following questionnaire can help you determine your fundamental preferences.

Do you like to...		😊	😞
Focus on people	Teach people	☐	☐
	Listen to friends	☐	☐
	Help people	☐	☐
	Lead a group or club activity	☐	☐
	Mediate in a conflict between two people	☐	☐
	Run for office	☐	☐
	Entertain children	☐	☐
	Total, focus on people		
Focus on data	Take up research on a given topic	☐	☐
	Take part in a club as its treasurer	☐	☐
	Conduct scientific experiments	☐	☐
	Work with numbers and statistics	☐	☐
	Calculate a car's fuel consumption	☐	☐
	Program software	☐	☐
	Total, focus on data		

Source: <https://collegecareerlife.net/career-interests>



Do you like to...		😊	😞
Focus on things	Bake a cake	■	■
	Repair a car or a machine	■	■
	Make crafts or sew	■	■
	Build things made of wood, metal, etc.	■	■
	Operate devices or machines	■	■
	Garden or do landscaping	■	■
	Total, focus on things		
Focus on ideas	Decorate a room	■	■
	Write poems or lyrics	■	■
	Publish an article in a blog or magazine	■	■
	Solve a problem	■	■
	Perform in a play	■	■
	Play an instrument	■	■
	Invent a new product	■	■
	Total, focus on ideas		

If you scored high in the **people** section, you may feel comfortable in a service-oriented environment or a people-oriented function, or teamwork may be particularly important to you. You should bear these things in mind when applying for jobs.

If your score for the **data** section is high, you are likely to prefer a job that involves analysing and applying data to develop new ideas or proposals.

People who like to work outdoors or with animals, plants, tools and materials are interested in **things**. A high score in this section means that you are likely to feel less comfortable in a job where you sit at a computer all day, working with heavy topics and abstract ideas. A job that involves a lot of hands-on work will probably be most satisfying in this case.

Ideas are becoming increasingly important with advancing technology and globalisation, and they can set us apart from the competition. If you achieved a high score for the **ideas** section, you will probably feel most comfortable in a creative and innovative environment where you can work on new solutions, for example, pursuing an entrepreneurial venture or discovering and developing new medicines or materials.

When reflecting on these four fundamental preferences, do you have any further interests that are not mentioned above? List them in the box below.

To summarize, review your answers (pages 14 – 18) and note your three main areas of interest.

The three areas that interest me most:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How do you see your areas of interest being part of your job?





World of Work

The “World of Work” map graphically shows how occupations relate to each other based on work tasks and preferences. Use it to explore possible job areas in relation to your interests and preferences.

Source:
<http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/multimedia/wwwmap/world.html>

My values



When we assess ourselves to determine our career options, we tend to focus on identifying skills and qualifications rather than taking enough time to reflect on our core values and how they relate to our skills. If you factor your values into this assessment, this can help you identify the employers and positions that are not only the best match for your skills, but are also the best fit for those deeply held beliefs that motivate you most.

Your values are priorities that guide your decisions in life; they help you put your experiences into perspective and lend them meaning. Your core values are the things that you see as being your mission in life.

The more in line your professional life is with your values, the greater the chances of you finding success and satisfaction in your job. Work situations that run counter to your fundamental values can trigger internal conflicts.

It is hard to identify your core values without a self-analysis to see where you stand. The following questions are aimed to get you thinking about the values that guide you through the day and matter to you most. Take your time answering these questions and be sure to consider as many aspects of your life as you can.

1. Who do you admire? List three admirable qualities of this person.

2. What did you love to do as a child? Describe this activity (or these activities) and what you liked about it.

3. Call to mind a significant moment in your life; an experience that stood out. What happened at that moment? What values mattered to you most at that time?

4. Call to mind a situation where you were angry, frustrated or sad. What triggered it? Now turn your thoughts in the other direction: What values were being suppressed at that moment?

5. What does success mean to you?



6. At what moments did you feel fulfilled in your life?

7. What three fundamental values would you convey to your children and why?

8. If we lived in a perfect world, how would people behave differently than they do today?

Reading through your answers above, do you detect a pattern? Can you list the fundamental values that guide you through life? There is no need for concern if this exercise seems a bit challenging at first. It may take some time before you can come up with answers and see a pattern. The important thing is that you start becoming aware of your values and putting them into words.

Please note that a job does not have to – and cannot – honour all of our values. We can also express our values outside of work. So think about this: What values does your job have to honour to keep you motivated? And are there any values that you want to express only in your private life and on your own time?

The following exercise serves to help you identify the values that are important to you on the job. Rate these values from 1 to 4, with 1 being “not important” and 4 being “very important”.

Values	1	2	3	4
Advancement Be able to get ahead rapidly, gaining opportunities for growth and seniority from work well-done.	■	■	■	■
Adventure / risk-taking Have duties which involve frequent physical, financial or social risk-taking.	■	■	■	■
Aesthetics Be involved in studying or appreciating the beauty of things, ideas, etc.	■	■	■	■
Altruism Do something to contribute to the betterment of the world or a greater good.	■	■	■	■
Balance Have a job that allows room and time for other passions, leisure, family, etc.	■	■	■	■
Challenge Work with complex questions and on demanding tasks, troubleshooting and problem-solving.	■	■	■	■
Change and variety Have a wide range of work responsibilities, frequently changing in content, setting, people and/or activities.	■	■	■	■

Values	1	2	3	4
Competition Engage in activities that measure my abilities against others.	■	■	■	■
Creativity / innovation Be able to contribute and work with my creative ideas.	■	■	■	■
Competence Tasks that allow me to demonstrate a high degree of expertise and mastery of job skills and knowledge.	■	■	■	■
Fast pace / time pressure Work in circumstances where work is done rapidly.	■	■	■	■
Flexibility Work according to my own time schedule.	■	■	■	■
Friendships A good working atmosphere and an environment in which I can build good, personal relationships with people.	■	■	■	■
Fun Have opportunities to be playful and humorous at work.	■	■	■	■
Harmony / tranquillity Avoid pressures and stress in job role and work setting, and seek harmonious relationships.	■	■	■	■



Values	1	2	3	4
Help others Be involved in helping or being of service to people, either individually or in groups.	■	■	■	■
Income / financial reward Earn a larger than average amount of income.	■	■	■	■
Independence / autonomy Be in a position with little direction or instructions from others; few regulations and room to make my own decisions.	■	■	■	■
Influence Be in a position to influence attitudes or opinions of other people.	■	■	■	■
Make decisions / power Make decisions regarding courses of action, strategies or the work activities of others.	■	■	■	■
Moral / spiritual fulfilment Feel that my work is consistent with my ideals or moral code.	■	■	■	■
Personal growth Have work which enables me to grow as a person.	■	■	■	■
Recognition Get positive feedback and public credit for work well done.	■	■	■	■

Values	1	2	3	4
Security Have a stable work environment and reasonable financial reward.	■	■	■	■
Stability Have a work routine and job duties that are largely predictable and not likely to change over a long period of time.	■	■	■	■
Status / prestige Gain the respect of friends, family and of the community by the nature and/or level of responsibility of my work.	■	■	■	■
Teamwork Have close working relations with my colleagues; work as team towards common goals.	■	■	■	■
Work alone Do projects largely by myself, with little contact with others.	■	■	■	■

Source: University of Denver



Select the five values that are most important to you. Then prioritise them in order of importance.

My five most important values:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How would you like to see your top five values expressed in your occupation? What corresponding expectations do you have towards your job and employer?



What am I good at?

The second step of the analysis is to clarify where your abilities and skills lie. We all tend to take our abilities for granted. Usually we are capable of a lot more than we realise. It is important to know what you are good at when you start applying for jobs. In every application and every job interview, you have to be able to demonstrate your technical and social strengths and know what your weaknesses are.

Technical skills are reflected in specialised or applied knowledge. This is the knowledge that you acquired at ETH, at school or in further education programs. It can easily be substantiated with grades and certificates. However, this technical knowledge can very quickly become dated as technology and science make strides. That is why it is important to keep refreshing and expanding this knowledge in pursuit of life-long learning.

Recruiters seeking ideal candidates are looking not only for technical skills, specialised knowledge and research expertise. They are actively searching for a broader skill-set that applicants can bring to the organisation. Examples include the ability to work in a team, leadership and communication skills, and the like.

Many employers think that if you are able to use a skill in one situation, you should be able to use that skill in another job – even if the work appears to be unrelated. These are called **transferable skills**. You acquired these abilities in the course of your life, at play, at home, at work and during your studies or perhaps an internship or other extracurricular activities. And you can transfer them other situations and jobs. You put these skills to daily use.



My technical skills



Technical skills acquired at ETH include, for example, your knowledge in mathematics, physics or chemistry. Other examples of technical skills include a knowledge of processes, methods, manufacturing, materials, business management and norms, and a command of computational tools, databases and simulation software.

Making use of all your school and university certificates, employment references and language qualifications, list all of your technical skills in the following table. Confirmations of internships, vacation jobs and voluntary activities may also substantiate special qualifications.

Drawing up a list of your skills is not only the key to determining where you stand. This also helps you analyse job offers and write your CV (see the chapter [Focusing → Job advertisement](#)).

**My technical skills acquired
at ETH or other schools**

University/school	My strongest subject	Subjects that I am/ was weaker in
<i>e.g. ETH</i>	<i>e.g. nano systems</i>	<i>e.g. chemical analysis</i>

**My technical skills gained in internships, part-time jobs, hobbies
and other engagements**

Place of internship, jobs, etc.	Technical knowledge that I successfully applied and expanded	Technical knowledge that I found harder to apply
<i>e.g. internship at Appway</i>	<i>e.g. using PowerPoint for company presentations</i>	<i>e.g. using C++</i>



My character strengths



Each of us has certain personality traits that make us unique and enhance our ability to perform various tasks well. Identifying these character strengths before you start looking for a job can help you discover what kind of corporate culture and team you want to work in. The more a corporate and team culture matches your personality and values, the more motivated and engaged you will be.

The questionnaire on the following pages serves to help you identify your character strengths. Take a few minutes to read through it and then rank yourself for each trait on a scale of 1 (I hardly ever exhibit this trait) to 4 (I often exhibit this trait). Then give the list to a friend or family member and ask them to rank you on each trait.

Character strengths	Me				Friend				Family			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Achiever												
Adaptive												
Affable												
Ambitious												
Assertive												
Astute												
Athletic												
Authentic												
Brave												
Cheerful												
Communicative												
Compassionate												
Competitive												
Conciliatory												
Considerate												
Consistent												
Cooperative												
Curious												
Delicate												
Diplomatic												
Dynamic												

Character strengths	Me				Friend				Family			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Emotional												
Empathetic												
Enterprising												
Enthusiastic												
Entrepreneurial												
Fast												
Fastidious												
Fault-finding												
Fiery												
Flexible												
Focused												
Forgiving												
Friendly												
Generous												
Go-getter												
Good listener												
Hardworking												
Helpful												
Honest												
Humorous												
Idealistic												



Character strengths	Me				Friend				Family			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Imaginative												
Independent												
Inspirable												
Interested												
Inventive												
Knowledgeable												
Leader												
Level-headed												
Logical												
Mediating												
Modest												
Nonchalant												
Open												
Organised												
Original												
Outgoing												
Patient												
Political												
Positive												
Practically inclined												
Proactive												

Character strengths	Me				Friend				Family			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Productive												
Professional												
Quality-conscious												
Rebellious												
Responsible												
Results-oriented												
Self-reliant												
Selfless												
Sensitive												
Sensual												
Sincere												
Skilful												
Social												
Stable												
Strong												
Thoughtful												
Trustworthy												
Understanding												
Warm-hearted												
Well-adjusted												
Well-read												

How does your assessment compare to others' assessment? Do they match? Or are there hidden strengths (e.g. traits where others gave you a higher score than you gave yourself)? Or are there blind spots (e.g. traits where you ranked yourself higher than others did)? List them here:

Character strengths		
Confirmed strengths	Hidden strengths	Blind spots
<i>(My assessment agrees with that of others)</i>	<i>(Others' assessment was higher than mine)</i>	<i>(My assessment was higher than others')</i>

NB:
Hidden strengths – Traits where you ranked yourself lower than others did. Perhaps you are unaware of these strengths and therefore less likely to put them to use. You may avoid situations where you could put them to use because you lack confidence in this trait. This can prevent you from reaching your full potential.

Blind spots – Traits where you ranked yourself higher than others did. Perhaps you are unaware of certain weaknesses in these areas and therefore tend to play down their importance or avoid opportunities to develop these qualities. Do not be upset if you have blind spots – we all have them! The important thing is that you are aware of them and start looking for opportunities to develop these qualities – especially if they are essential to the job you seek.





My transferable skills

As mentioned before, transferable skills are acquired through experiences in and outside the university at campus activities, internships, part-time jobs, sports, etc. These are skills that you can transfer to other situations and jobs. Typical examples include communication, leadership and organisational skills. You may or may not have work experience, but you surely have more transferable skills than you think.

Listed below are some transferable skills that employers often seek. Take a minute to read through the list and then rank yourself for each ability on a scale of 1 (I hardly ever exhibit this ability) to 4 (I often exhibit this ability). Be as honest with yourself as you can. The goal is not to attain a 4 for every ability. Then give the list to a friend or family member and ask them to evaluate you for each skill.

Transferable skills	Me				Friend				Family			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Analysing and critical thinking												
Solving complex problems and managing data												
Teaching and researching												
Creating and innovating												
Formulating concepts and strategies												
Planning, organising and coordinating												
Following instructions and directions												
Accepting and adapting to change												
Coping with pressure and setbacks, not giving up												
Achieving personal goals												
Entrepreneurial and commercial thinking												
Assessing and making decisions												



Transferable skills	Me				Friend				Family			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Taking action												
Taking responsibility and getting things done												
Service-mindedness												
Leading, managing and supervising												
Ability to collaborate												
Networking and establishing relationships												
Persuading and influencing												
Communicating and presenting information												
Writing and reporting												

How does your assessment compare to others' assessment? Do they match? Or are there hidden strengths (e.g. abilities where others gave you a higher score than you gave yourself)? Or are there blind spots (e.g. abilities where you ranked yourself higher than others did)? List them here:

Transferable skills

Confirmed strengths

(My assessment agrees with that of others)

Hidden strengths

(Others' assessment was higher than mine)

Blind spots

(My assessment was higher than others')

Source: shl competency framework,
Future of Jobs Report WEF, Knackonomics



Evidence of my skills

Citing specific examples of where and how you acquired and applied your technical and transferable skills will make your CV more compelling. It will also add credibility to the answers you give to questions during the interview, as prospective employers also want to hear about activities where you acquired, applied and expanded your skills.

To do this, take the list of your identified skills and look for specific examples of situations in which you put them to good use. Make sure you can illustrate each example using the STAR method:

- **Situation:** What was the situation? Describe the example's context and background.
- **Task:** Describe the task and challenge you faced at the time.
- **Activity:** Explain what you did and how you did it.
- **Results:** Show the outcome, including feedback, benefits, rewards, etc.

Skill	Example of how I put it to use
Coping with pressure and change	• Situation: Starting my internship, I was told that I would be using a computer program I knew well. However, many of my job tasks soon changed when the company was restructured. • Task: Now I had to use an unfamiliar computer program, and my supervisor expected me to know what to do. • Activity: I was not going to let this unexpected change throw me off, so I decided to see to my supervisor to talk about the new computer program. I told him that I could quickly familiarise myself with it, but I would need time to learn how to use it properly. I got the training I needed very soon after our talk, which made the job less stressful. • Results: I was able to learn the new program very quickly with some practice and extra evening effort. My supervisor let me know he was very pleased: I had told him straightaway what I needed to be successful rather than hiding the fact that I was unfamiliar with the program. He said that he would surely be assigning challenging tasks to me in the future because I had shown the ability to take the initiative and ask for support.



Skill	Example of how I put it to use
	Situation Task Activity Results
	Situation Task Activity Results

Skill	Example of how I put it to use
	Situation Task Activity Results
	Situation Task Activity Results

What do I need?

My needs and expectations

There are a few additional criteria you need to consider before you start looking for a job.

Ideally, the job you want will suit your needs. However, bear mind that you may need to be a little more flexible with your expectations depending on the situation on the job market.

Further needs and expectations

Do you have specific expectations of your working conditions (e.g. holidays, benefits, workplace equipment, etc.)?

My mobility and availability		
Would you be willing to move for your preferred job?		
☐ Yes	☐ No	
Would you be willing to travel as part of your job?		
☐ Yes	☐ No	
What percentage of the time would you be willing to travel?		
☐ 10–20 %	☐ 20–30 %	☐ 30–40 % ☐ 40–50 % ☐ > 50 %
Where would you be willing to move or travel to?		
Switzerland	Europe	Rest of the world
☐ Zurich area	☐ German speaking parts of Europe / DACH	☐ USA
☐ Eastern Switzerland	☐ Northern Europe	☐ Canada
☐ Central Switzerland	☐ Eastern Europe	☐ South America
☐ North-western Switzerland	☐ South-eastern Europe	☐ Asia
☐ Mittelland	☐ Western Europe	☐ Middle East
☐ French-speaking Switzerland	☐ Southern Europe	
☐ Ticino		
Would you like to work full-time or part-time? (Please note that finding a part-time job is not easy.)		
☐ Full-time	☐ Part-time	



My mobility and availability

Would you be willing to work not only during the day, but also at other times (such as evenings)?

- ☐ Daytime
- ☐ Evenings
- ☐ Nights
- ☐ Weekends
- ☐ Irregular working hours

Reflections:

Compromises

What compromises would you make to get your dream job – or any job?

Source: *Your Complete Job Search Guide*, Emploi Québec;
http://www.emploi.quebec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/00_emp_guide-recherche-emploi_en.pdf

Summary

The building blocks for exploring

The lists of your interests, skills, values and needs that you drew up in this chapter provide the compass points for the next steps in the application process. Your values have an

impact on your selection of potential employers. Alongside your interests and skills, they will flow into your application documents and interviews.

Summary – my analysis	
My interests	
•	•
•	•
•	•
My values	
•	•
•	•
•	•
My needs and expectations	
•	•
•	•
•	•

Summary – my analysis	
My strongest technical skills...	... and where I have demonstrated them
•	•
•	•
•	•
My strongest transferable skills...	... and where I have demonstrated them
•	•
•	•
•	•





→ Tips: Analysis

- Compare the results of the analysis with your personal development: Pay special attention to your strengths and try to maintain and build on them. Determine how relevant the identified weak spots are and if they need to be improved.
- Take every opportunity to explore, try out and apply your interests, skills and values. Talking to colleagues, taking part in clubs, and analysing potential are great ways to do this.
- Bear the results of your analysis in mind throughout the application process. Before each application, remind yourself of what is important to you, what you are good at, and what you need.

→ ETH Career Center Service: Analysis

- Individual counselling to determine your interests, skills and values
- Resource library with books, magazines and brochures covering all aspects of applying for a job
- Career Management Seminar for doctoral students

Information

www.careercenter.ethz.ch –
for students and doctoral students





2 — EXPLORATION

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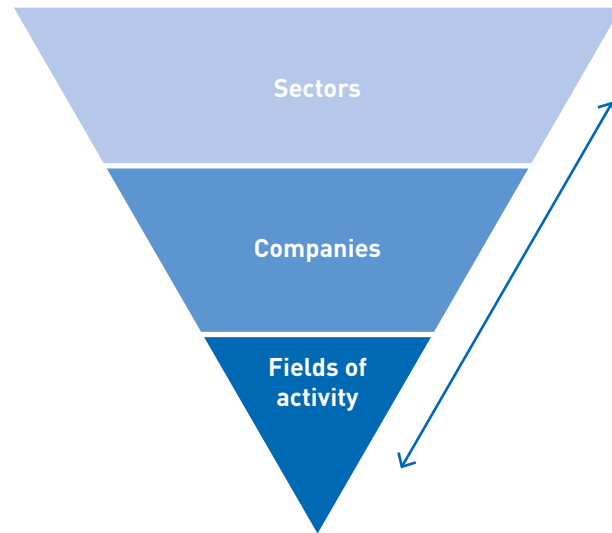


My job market

Exploration is all about getting a good picture of your career options. There are so many different career paths to choose from – more than many ETH graduates realise.

Before you apply to a company or an institution, you should have a clear idea about the sector you want to work in, the companies in the various sectors, and the type of activity you wish to pursue. That means you need to explore “your” job market. Your interests (see the chapter entitled [Analysis → My interests](#)), fields of study, and the topic of your bachelor’s or master’s thesis should steer you in the right general direction.

But there are many other channels that can help you get a clearer picture of your career options. Check out career events at the ETH, company trade fairs, business associations, industry networks, personal contacts, and professional online networks (see also the [Exploration → Networking](#) section in this chapter).



Perhaps your interests or an internship experience have planted the seed of an idea in your mind about the sectors that appeal to you most. You can learn more about prospective companies acting in those sectors through industry associations and then explore potential fields of activity in these companies via their websites and LinkedIn.

Perhaps you already have some wishes or ideas about what you want to do and what the job should do for you, but have yet to find companies and sectors that offer these opportunities. In that case, try reversing the order of your exploration. Search for desired fields of activity on Xing or LinkedIn using keywords, find profiles of people at specific companies, and then look at their jobs to learn more about the sectors.

So you can start identifying your potential job market either by exploring sectors first (top-down), or by exploring fields of activity first (bottom-up) – it works both ways. The important thing is to start exploring!



Overview of industry sectors

The following tables provide an overview of private sector industries and public institutions usually looking for ETH graduates.

Mark and prioritize the sectors that interest you most.

NB:

The following list provides a detailed but not exhaustive overview. The procedure described in the opening paragraphs of this chapter is one way of identifying other sectors.

Public institutions and non-profit companies (examples)	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority
Agricultural advisory service	☐	☐	☐
Associations	☐	☐	☐
Development cooperation/NGOs	☐	☐	☐
Government and public administration	☐	☐	☐
Power companies	☐	☐	☐
Public administration	☐	☐	☐
Public transport	☐	☐	☐
Research institutes	☐	☐	☐
Secondary schools, technical colleges and universities	☐	☐	☐



Private-sector industries (examples)	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority
Aerospace	■	■	■
Architectural services	■	■	■
Automotive	■	■	■
Banking, finance, insurance	■	■	■
Biomechanics, biotechnology	■	■	■
Biomedical industry	■	■	■
Chemical and process engineering	■	■	■
Computer and information sciences	■	■	■
Construction	■	■	■
Consulting	■	■	■
Consumer goods	■	■	■
Drive and control technology	■	■	■
Electronics and consumer electronics	■	■	■
Engineering, planning and surveying	■	■	■
Extractive industry	■	■	■
Fertilizer, feed, and crop protection industry	■	■	■

Private-sector industries (examples)	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority
Food industry	■	■	■
Healthcare	■	■	■
Machine engineering	■	■	■
Media, journalism	■	■	■
Medical technology	■	■	■
Metalworking	■	■	■
Packaging industry	■	■	■
Pharmaceuticals	■	■	■
Plant engineering	■	■	■
Power generation, transmission and distribution	■	■	■
Production and automation engineering	■	■	■
Semiconductor, micro and nanotechnology	■	■	■
Sports, fitness, wellness	■	■	■
Telecommunications	■	■	■
Textiles	■	■	■
Watch-making	■	■	■

Companies and potential employers

As a next step, you need to consider what is important to you in a future employer. You have already taken the first step by analysing your values and needs.

The following table lists additional criteria that may also matter to you when choosing an employer.

Consider each of these qualities and determine if it is important to you in a future employer and job. Rate them from 1 to 4, with 1 being “not important” and 4 being “very important”. Are there other points you need to consider?

This list of your requirements will be useful later, especially when you are assessing different job advertisements or even job offers. Use it as a tool to decide which jobs best meet your requirements or even to help you prepare for job interviews (see chapter [Application](#) → [Interview](#)).



What is important to me in an employer?	1	2	3	4
Size (large corporation, SME, startups, ETH spinoff*)				
National or multinational operation	■	■	■	■
Business offering (products, services)	■	■	■	■
Stability (financial situation, competition)	■	■	■	■
Organizational structure (flat, hierarchical)	■	■	■	■
Corporate culture (dynamic, traditional, conservative)	■	■	■	■
People development (entry-level positions, training programs, career prospects)	■	■	■	■
Location	■	■	■	■
Work/family life balance	■	■	■	■
Job security	■	■	■	■
Pay package (salary, fringe benefits)	■	■	■	■
Flexible working hours	■	■	■	■
Other criteria:	■	■	■	■
Other criteria:	■	■	■	■
Other criteria:	■	■	■	■

→ Tips: Exploration

Where can I learn more about potential employers?

- Company websites (annual reports, organizational charts, press releases, career pages)
- Chambers of commerce and industry and other professional associations
- Business sections of daily and weekly newspapers and trade magazines (information about company and management)
- Other online sources such as Xing or LinkedIn and employer rating platforms such as Kununu and Glassdoor
- Conversations with people in your extended network
- Career events (see chapter [Exploration](#) → [Networking](#))

* ETH startups and spinoffs can also be a great career gateway for graduates. The tips in this application guide apply to these companies as well.

Fields of activity

Now that you have a better picture of the sectors and potential employers that interest you, you can start thinking about what kind of job you would like to find there. When you choose a specific line of work, you are setting an initial course for your future career. That decision has to work for you now. However, the option of changing directions will still be open to you later.

The table on the next pages gives you a big-picture look at potential fields of activity or jobs. Checkmark and prioritize the options that interest you most.

If these fields of activity seem vague to you, or if you don't know what lies behind them, the following sources can help you learn more about them as well as about specific job descriptions:



- The ETH website lists fields of activities for all study programs (in German only: ETH Zürich/Studium/Bachelor/Studienangebot/Studiengang/Berufswelt). Some study programs discuss specific job profiles in their brochures.
- Some ETH departments provide brochures with specific job profiles in PDF format. Available online, they can be found using the following search terms:
 - D-BAUG: Bauingenieur, Bauingenieurin, Der Beruf
 - D-MAVT: Berufe für kreative Köpfe, Maschineningenieure haben Zukunft
 - D-PHYS: Job-Universum Physik, Einblicke in die Vielfalt der Berufsmöglichkeiten
 - D-ERDW: Perspektiven, Berufe in Erdwissenschaften
 - D-USYS: Perspektiven, Berufe in Umwelt-naturwissenschaften
 - D-HEST: Range of Motion, Berufsfelder der Bewegungswissenschaften
- The Schweizerische Dienstleistungszentrum für Berufsbildung, Berufs-, Studien- und Laufbahnberatung has posted fields of activities for all kinds of study programs on its website at www.berufsberatung.ch (professions/career opportunities after university studies).
- You can also find fields of activities that interest you on Xing and LinkedIn and via job ad searches in online job portals using general key words such as “physics” or “environment”.
- ETH alumni are also good sources of first-hand information on jobs. Take advantage of opportunities to talk to them about their current activities or careers by reaching out to them at ETH Career Center and ETH Alumni events and via private channels.

Fields of activity (examples)	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority
Accounting and controlling	■	■	■
Administration	■	■	■
Compliance, legal, corporate affairs	■	■	■
Consulting, planning and strategy	■	■	■
Customer service	■	■	■
Engineering	■	■	■
Human resources, training	■	■	■
Information technology and software	■	■	■
Infrastructure and real estate	■	■	■
Logistics and transport	■	■	■
Management	■	■	■
Manufacturing and commissioning	■	■	■
Marketing and communication	■	■	■
Media and design	■	■	■
Process management	■	■	■
Project management	■	■	■

Fields of activity (examples)	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority
Purchasing and procurement	■	■	■
Quality assurance	■	■	■
Research and development	■	■	■
Sales, distribution and account management	■	■	■
Other fields of activity:	■	■	■
Other fields of activity:	■	■	■
Other fields of activity:	■	■	■

NB:

This list provides a broad but not exhaustive overview of potential fields of activity.





Job profiles

Real-world examples

In this next section of the ETH Application Guide you can read about various and diverse jobs that former ETH students are now performing. Explore them to get a better idea of different job profiles and potential employers.

ABB	Oerlikon
BCG	PwC
Federal Administration	Roche
Helbling Technik	SBB
KPMG AG	Siemens
McKinsey & Company	Sika
Novartis	Tiefbauamt Zürich

Francesca Meyer, 27

MSc ETH in Energy Science and Technology (MEST)

R&D Engineer - Power Electronics at **ABB****How did you find your job?**

While I was still a student, I was already impressed by ABB's tradition and innovative strength. As a member of Femtec, an international career building program for women in engineering and science, I got the chance to talk to employees at ABB. This gave me a better picture of what to expect. I joined ABB as a trainee and now work in the unit I liked most during my 18 month program.

What influenced your decision to join ABB?

ABB opens doors for me not only in Switzerland but world-wide. I was and still am excited about how people from all over the world come together at ABB and work on solutions for tomorrow's challenges. As I did at ETH, I enjoy working in interdisciplinary and intercultural project teams.

What does a typical working day at ABB look like?

My field of expertise as an R&D engineer are traction converters for trains. We are currently developing a completely new product with energy storage systems for tomorrow's mobility. On one hand, I feel like I am in a start-up because we have to plan, calculate and validate many things from scratch. On the other hand, we can rely on years of experi-

ence in our core area of power electronics, which gives my work a comfortable stability.

What in particular do you like about your job at ABB?

In particular, I like the open and innovative atmosphere that we have in our team. I enjoy the mix of independent work, team discussions and also the space for social events which we foster. I am as well grateful for our open feedback culture. My work does not go unseen and I get valuable advice on how to improve.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

Be bold to try out new things, it is the best way to find the tasks which you really like doing if you are not sure yet what that might be. Be open and talk to your friends, ask about experiences they made when looking for a job or during their first job. Do not only look for the technical details in a job description, but also try to find out about the company's work culture. A job interview not only gives the employer the opportunity to get to know you, but also the other way around.





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career stories here: **you.abb.ch**



Lucas Christenson, 28

MSc ETH in Civil Engineering

Consultant at The **Boston Consulting Group****How did you find your job?**

It all started with the three-day BCG GROW workshop in Vienna. While simulating a spectrum auction, we had the opportunity to really get to know the work and the people at BCG.

What influenced your decision to join BCG?

Because of the people. My motivation for a career in consulting was working on interesting projects in a range of different industries and getting insights on various issues and companies. I specifically chose BCG because of the many positive experiences I had meeting the people who work here, whether at the workshop, at job fairs or during the application process.

What does a typical working day at BCG look like?

Since I support clients from different industries and continents, it's never the same. We work closely with our clients on site, so of course we adapt to fit their needs. Consulting is teamwork. Even if you have a lot of responsibility for part of a project, you're still in constant communication with your case and client team to find the best overall solution. I enjoy this, it gets the best results, and it also helps me personal-

ly to learn and grow on a daily basis. My everyday work includes team meetings, client meetings, strategic work (data analysis, interviews with experts, etc.), in-house events, trainings, or office activities.

What in particular do you like about your job at BCG?

The diversity of the topics and the colleagues. Figuring out the best new location for a chocolate factory together with engineers, strategists, and philosophers was fun, but also more challenging than it might at first seem. This mix means I can grow with every new assignment—my next case might be a digitalization project in the construction industry, for instance.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

Two things: 1. Make use of workshops, job fairs, and events to get to know as many people and companies as you can. You'll find out quickly whether you like their work style and culture. 2. Find out whether a company is growing. Growth means personal development opportunities and a positive work atmosphere.





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Reto Ghioldi, 38

MSc ETH in Computer Science

Software Architect at the **Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication FOITT**

How did you find your job?

After 10 years in the private sector in the Zurich area, I moved to Bern with my family. In my search for a new challenge, I found the position of Software Architect at the Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication FOITT on the Federal job portal.

What influenced your decision to join the FOITT?

At the FOITT, I have the opportunity to work directly on Switzerland's IT landscape and thus help shape the future of our country. Technologically, the FOITT is at the forefront and I have many, very talented colleagues. It was the exciting, diverse and collegial environment that appealed to me.

What does a typical working day at the FOITT look like?

I develop individual software, project-oriented and agile. Accordingly, I am a member of a Scrum team and implement requirements that we develop together with our partners. In addition, I create analyses, evaluations or prototypes. I also train apprentices. I find this mixture very varied and motivating. The differences to the private sector are smaller than one might think as an outsider.

What in particular do you like about your job at the FOITT?

We have a very cooperative relationship with our project sponsors from the federal administration. This results in a very good working atmosphere and a high success rate in the projects. Everyone is open and helpful. Suggestions for improvement are taken seriously.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

When starting your career, don't be put off if you are not yet familiar with agile methodologies and various technologies. Lifelong learning is a central career companion in IT. You should therefore always be open to new ideas and feedback.

Note that you have to master two national languages if you want to work for the federal administration.





I fight cyber attacks. I'm working for Switzerland.

Monica
IT Security Officer
Mathematics

stelle.admin.ch



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Federal Administration

Working for Switzerland

Christian Peterhans, 34

Dr. sc. ETH in Biochemistry

Head of Development at **Helbling Technik AG**

How did you find your job?

I applied at Helbling for another job which was published online. Despite the fruitful conversations, we did not find an agreement. 8 months later I got invited again. After many discussions with superiors and during chats with prospective colleagues I was able to convince.

What influenced your decision to join Helbling?

The symbiosis between Consulting and Engineering services. Rather a big company, deep and broad spectra of expertise, solely highly trained and specialized and motivated employees. At Helbling I must act like an entrepreneur and use my business acumen

What does a typical working day at Helbling look like?

Half of the day I spend with planning, Alignment, Exchange, be up to speed, and executive tasks. The remaining time I spend planning for “external” task and activities, like managing and care for the clients, develop the technologies and services. In the evening I handle follow-up tasks. I have about 10 cups of coffee a day and I usually go for sports during lunch time.

What in particular do you like about your job at Helbling?

I am responsible for my own team. I plan the resources, capabilities, trainings, personnel development and I get myself an overview on the projects and tasks. There is always a helpful hand for advice and support. Within 24 hours I get an answer from my off-site colleagues in Germany, china and the U.S. Each employee is intrinsically motivated.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

Be proactive. An ETH degree does not represent an educational plateau. Nobody was awaiting me. This was a hard but important finding. Getting hired is a process, which is non-straight forward and beset with drawbacks. Be self-critical. My doctoral studies made me realize, where and how to launch my career. A clearly stated goal, the belief to take the right decisions will yield visibility and credibility. This will convince (HR) and enables your career. Put your career goals and your values on a few slides and take them to the job interview.



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A good idea is just the starting point. To become innovations, ideas need to be professionally implemented. We like to roll our sleeves up and get to grips with our customers' challenges, finding new ways of looking at existing solutions. Frequently, this requires courage – as well as technical expertise, grounded creativity and the right touch. Leading businesses from a wide range of different sectors have entrusted us with their innovation projects for years. So our team is constantly growing.

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Sebastian Böhlinger, 33

MSc ETH in Chemistry

Senior Manager Audit Corporates at **KPMG AG****How did you find your job?**

After finishing my ETH degree, I wanted to connect my science degree with business management, and added a degree in business administration. One day, I attended a job fair and got to talk to a KPMG employee who inspired me to become an auditor. I am still part of the Audit team and take care of a large pharmaceutical client.

Why did you decide to join KPMG?

I already knew KPMG from my studies, i.e. that it is a global leader in advisory and auditing services. What eventually convinced me were the possibilities to develop and the unbelievable amount of learning you can do at KPMG.

So what does a typical work day look like at KPMG?

My business day is quite varied, depending on which phase of the audit you are in. In my current position, I am in continuous exchange with our clients on upcoming projects and open questions that still need to be answered as well as internally with my colleagues at KPMG. I work on client mandates with colleagues from the Tax, Technology Assurance and Consulting divisions, and above all other KPMG network companies.

What do you particularly appreciate in your activities at KPMG?

Auditing a globally active company is only possible through the interaction of many experts with different backgrounds located in different countries. I really enjoy being in touch with these, also because it makes each day unique.

So what is your recommendation if students would like to begin a career like this?

Before joining KPMG, I did various internships in different companies and different divisions. I really appreciated the experience gained as it helped me orient myself. So my advice is: be open-minded and do try something new every once in a while!



Deep dive into the blue

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kpmg.ch/careers



Franziska Dueffort, 27

MSc ETH in Management, Technology and Economics

Consultant at **McKinsey & Company**

How did you find your job?

I participated in a number of recruiting events with consultancies. Sometimes these were full weekends during which we solved case studies in teams, did fun activities and got to know the company culture through the attending consultants. After the weekend with McKinsey, I decided to apply.

What influenced your decision to join**McKinsey & Company?**

My aim was to learn about different industries, learn how change happens in global organizations, learn about people and how to work with different personality types. And all of this in an inspiring, fast-paced and dynamic environment. Now I am doing exactly that - every day and step by step. That is why I joined.

What does a typical working day at McKinsey & Company look like?

In general it is safe to say that there is no typical working day. However, most of the days usually include powerpoint and excel applications, interesting problem solving sessions with the team as well as client meetings and interactions. And most importantly: something unexpected.

What in particular do you like about your job at McKinsey & Company?

I love that I am constantly surrounded by inspiring people who are caring and energetic. And I am thankful to have the opportunity to take a look into a number of different industries and functions and support large scale projects where change is initiated.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

I think there are two important aspects. First; if possible I would try to take a travel break before diving into a job straight away. Second; during job interviews or while working on the job - do not pretend to be in any way different than you are.





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At your best

Christoph Dumelin, 39

Dr. sc. ETH in Pharmaceutical Sciences

Laboratory Head and Project Leader at **Novartis**

How did you find your job?

Through my network from my graduate and postdoctoral studies I learned that Novartis was looking for someone with my scientific background. Then, I reached out to Novartis associates I had previously met at conferences and applied for the position.

What influenced your decision to join Novartis?

After several years in academia and the biotech industry, I was interested in gaining experience in the pharmaceutical industry and wanted to continue to work on innovative and impactful research projects. This as well as maintaining a reasonable work-life-balance were important criteria for me.

What does a typical working day at Novartis look like?

I lead a lab with two scientists. We mainly focus on the application of novel technologies for the identification of molecules with desired pharmacological effects. In different project teams around the globe, some led by myself, we work on several disease indications. Depending on the project status, we either design or interpret specific experiments or take care of the planning, set-up or future focusing of a

project. This often happens in discussions in person or through videoconferences but also via exchange of emails via computer.

What in particular do you like about your job at Novartis?

Working on complex research projects as well as the continuously evolving scientific and strategic questions present regular challenges and make the job interesting for me. In addition, I enjoy working in teams and find it very motivating that, if the development of a new drug is successful, I can contribute to solve a societal need.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

Ideally, one already spends some time during the studies on identifying occupations and companies that suit oneself well. Starting early to build a network can also be beneficial when you are looking for a job. Once having transitioned into work life there are obviously many new things to learn. For me, this was for example the case with leading project teams in which people with diverse backgrounds collaborate.



A portrait of a man with a dark beard and glasses, wearing a white lab coat. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred laboratory setting with glass partitions and equipment. A red rectangular box with the word "Novartis" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Novartis

Changing the practice of medicine

At Novartis, we harness the innovation power of science to address some of society's most challenging healthcare issues. We are passionate about discovering new ways to improve and extend people's lives.



Mischa Weder, 36

MSc ETH in Material Sciences

Head of Knowledge Management & Training at **Oerlikon Metco**

How did you find your job?

After completing my MSc at ETH Zurich in 2007, I applied to Oerlikon Metco in Wohlen AG, where there was an open position for a Project Manager in the Coating Solution Center, which also provided the opportunity to become a Surface Technology Expert in Thermal Spray. I jumped at the offer!

What influenced your decision to join Oerlikon Metco?

The broad array of industries that Metco serves (aviation, power generation, auto, medical, etc) really convinced me that Metco was my chance to be active in more than a single industry field. I was able to become an expert in specialized surface technologies. Of course, added benefits was having a job close to home and friends in Zurich and the salary was attractive.

What does a typical working day at Oerlikon Metco look like?

I often find myself on the shop floor of the Spray Department, working with the spray process operators, even going fully “hands-on” myself to coat parts in the spray systems. Today, I’m a team leader, which means more managing people and processes and less “shop floor time”.

What in particular do you like about your job at Oerlikon Metco?

One of the most interesting things about my job is traveling to “far-away places”. I stay closely connected with a very diverse group of people – including our sales team and, of course, our customers. It really feels like being a part of an international family!

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

Always be open to the unexpected and don’t worry about stepping outside your “comfort zone” because what you may find can surprise and delight you.





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Anastasia Gavrilova, 28

MSc ETH in Mathematics

Senior Consultant Data & Analytics at **PwC Switzerland****How did you find your job?**

Through a classical job application portal. The idea to apply at PwC came from my visit at their corner at the Long Night of Careers at the ETH Zurich. In the meantime I am working in the same team with the colleague who encouraged me to apply!

What made you choose PwC?

Coming straight from ETH without any work experience, I was curious about any possibilities the job market had to offer. I chose PwC because I knew it would allow me to broaden my horizons by being able to gather experiences in very different projects. I also loved the easy-going atmosphere and the overall flexibility concerning working conditions.

What does a typical working day at PwC look like?

I used to work mostly on innovation projects during my first year, comparable to research work at a university. My day was structured very freely, due to the flexibility of the annual working time. I presented my ideas to clients or during internal meetings. Despite working mostly on my own, I still kept in close contact with my colleagues discussing ideas and further steps or asking them for help whenever I got

stuck. Later I was assigned to a data management project at an international client in Basel. This allowed me to connect with people all over the world and as well get to know the classical consulting business. The dynamic way of working with many internal and external meetings is quite different from the work at innovation projects, and a good collaboration within the team is crucial for success.

What do you particularly like about your work at PwC?

The ability to work independently but still be professionally guided. I love that my team is a small family within a big company, everyone is willing to help out and also to share any experiences unrelated to work. We have a great deal of fun!

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

Be open to new experiences. Being willing and eager to learn is the key to professional success!





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Etzard Stolte, 54

Dr. sc. ETH in Computer Science

Global Head Knowledge Management PTD at Roche

How did you find your job?

Typically, companies will post all open positions on job boards. In Roche's case, you will find the positions on careers.roche.ch. Nevertheless, your professional network will continue to play an important role, especially as your career progresses. Higher level positions, for example, tend to be filled via head hunters, who will ask around for good candidates.

What influenced your decision to join Roche

I have always had a passion for computer & life sciences. The idea that I can help to develop better medicines gets me out of bed in the morning. In addition, Roche has a highly innovative culture driven by a strong commitment to science. This is also reflected in the huge R&D spend.

What does a typical working day at Roche look like?

As a Global Head, my normal working day consists of around 70% videoconferences, telephone conferences, and meetings with project teams & stakeholders, and 30% "practical" work, such as process design, user interfaces, and system architectures.

What in particular do you like about your job at Roche?

The theoretical proof of principle was never sufficient for me. Roche gives me the opportunity to engineer and develop state-of-the-art solutions that help thousands of colleagues. During the last 3 years for example, we developed a semantic integration platform running on a high-performance-compute cluster, using the latest in natural language processing, Artificial Intelligence based schema merging, etc., for more than 15k users.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

My recommendation is to present not only at scientific but also at industry conferences, to be seen and heard. Follow your heart and look for a position that is meaningful for you. Take a look at big international companies like Roche - the life sciences is a fast-paced and innovative environment, with the potential to make the world a better place.





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careers.roche.ch/earlyincareer
code4life.roche.com



Nicolas Müller, 26

MSc ETH in Bauingenieurwissenschaften

Projektentwicklung / davor Technical Trainee bei SBB

Wie haben Sie Ihre Stelle gefunden?

Dank dem Kontakttreffen Höggerberg (KTH) bin ich auf das Traineeprogramm der SBB aufmerksam geworden. Für mich stellt das Traineeprogramm dabei den optimalen Berufseinstieg dar, da sich die Chance bietet, viele spannende Bereiche der SBB zu entdecken, interessante Kontakte zu knüpfen und sich weiterzubilden. Durch das Traineeprogramm bin ich auch auf meine aktuelle Stelle in der Projektentwicklung der SBB gestossen, die ich ohne das Programm nicht gefunden hätte.

Warum haben Sie sich für SBB entschieden?

Hauptanreiz war für mich die Vielfältigkeit der SBB, sowie die Identifikation mit dem Produkt "Bahn" als wichtigster Träger des öffentlichen Verkehrs. Bei der SBB bieten sich zudem gerade als technisch interessierte Person viele Möglichkeiten, sein Wissen einzubringen und gleichzeitig Neues zu lernen. Es ist Tag für Tag eindrucklich zu sehen, wie das komplexe System der Bahn nur dank einem optimalen Zusammenspiel aller Disziplinen funktioniert.

Wie sieht Ihr Arbeitsalltag bei SBB aus?

Meine Aufgaben waren, unabhängig in welchem Bereich ich tätig war, äusserts vielfältig. Bereits als Trainee durfte ich viel Verantwortung übernehmen. Von der Projektierung von Fahrplannerneuerungen, über die Projektleitung eines Innovationsprojekts bis hin zur Erstellung eines Simulationsmodells konnte ich alles machen und mein Wissen einbringen.

Was schätzen Sie besonders an Ihrer Tätigkeit bei SBB?

Die Mitarbeiter identifizieren sich total mit ihrer Arbeit und der SBB. Dies resultiert in eine grosse Hilfsbereitschaft untereinander und schafft ein sehr angenehmes Arbeitsklima. Weiter Pluspunkt ist das Vertrauen, das einem bereits als "Neuling" entgegengebracht wird.

Was empfehlen Sie Studierenden für ihren Karriere Einstieg?

Generell empfehle ich, sich auf mehrere Stellen zu bewerben und Absagen nicht persönlich zu nehmen, denn diese gehören zum Bewerbungsprozess dazu. Für Personen mit breiten Interessen ist zudem ein Traineeprogramm wärmstes zu empfehlen.



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2004-11
Sek und Gymnasium in Brig.
6 Jahre Servicemitarbeiterin.
Junioren-Tennislehrerin.
J+S-Trainer-
Lehrgang.
Pflegepraktikum Spital.

2011-17
Bachelor of Law Uni Bern.
Master of Law, Uni Bern.
§
2014-16
Kundenberaterin im
SBB Contact Center Brig.
Seit 2016
Nutze meine Vielseitigkeit
als Trainee, HOP bei der SBB.
Seit 2018
Stiftungsratsmandat
bei HOPe.

2014 bis heute
Fachdozentin für
Patienten- und
Menschenrechte.
2017
Hochschulpraktikum
im EJPD bei
Frau Sommerogg.

Sarah Preiswerk, 31

MSc ETH in Management, Technology and Economy
Portfolio Manager Smart Space at **Siemens**

How did you find your job?

I submitted an application via the Siemens job portal (www.siemens.ch/jobs). Thanks to the job alert I set up I was regularly made aware of vacancies in my field. I had already met some Siemens staff in my field at a careers fair beforehand.

What influenced your decision to join Siemens?

It was clear to me that I wanted to join a global player, so Siemens – as an internationally positioned technology group – was an extremely attractive prospect. Furthermore, the opportunity to start directly as a Junior Product Manager was ideal. In addition to its professional relevance, I was also won over by the corporate culture: I was able to take on responsibility from the very beginning, and I still feel supported in my further training and development.

What does a typical working day at Siemens look like?

Very diverse: my responsibilities include the rollout of our cloud-based offers in the European market, the development of digital business models and the evaluation of trends and technologies in the field of smart spaces. This often requires me to communicate with internal colleagues from different teams and attend various trade fairs. I also provide

support to innovation projects, where we create solutions with our customers based on a co-creation / design thinking approach.

What in particular do you like about your job at Siemens?

My intermediary role allows me to work with people from different professions and cultural backgrounds, which is very informative and inspiring. I also appreciate the flexible work arrangements, the options for further training courses and support programme offerings as well as the networking opportunities, in the Women's Network for example.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

Think about where you would like to work, and then talk to people already working there – whether at a trade fair or in your personal life. Above all, ask yourself the question: where can I learn as much as possible?





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[siemens.ch/jobs](https://www.siemens.ch/jobs)

Noah Munzinger, 30

MSc ETH in Chemistry

Team Lead BIW Parts Development at Sika

How did you find your job?

I started at Sika in the role of Project Lead in the Technology Department (or Research and Development). This position was advertised on the Sika Job Portal and I just applied to it. After almost four years, I was promoted to Team Lead. Our team develops specialty Bonding Foams. These are used to reinforce vehicles and to improve their acoustics.

What influenced your decision to join Sika?

At Sika we have many technologies under one roof and we serve many different markets. Sika products are well known in the industry and are market leader in a lot of applications. We have a family-like culture and flat hierarchies. Many Sika employees stay with us for a long time and have a lot of know-how. It is a global operating company that has many locations throughout the world and within Switzerland, like in Zurich. I really like this combination of diversity in technologies, know-how and cultures.

What does a typical working day at Sika look like?

The working day as a Project Lead is very diverse. I work both in the office and in the Lab, and I am also regularly travelling in order to meet clients, suppliers or project partners.

I work on product and technology developments, innovation related topics, product testing, patents, etc. As Team Lead, I am now also responsible for personnel and organisational matters, and for administrative tasks.

What in particular do you like about your job at Sika?

As a Project Lead you deal a lot with people – with Sika colleagues and with external stakeholders. The challenges of the job itself and the things I do in the Lab give me a broad spectrum of responsibilities. Sika has a very explicit culture of innovation, that enables the realisation of your own ideas. If you follow an idea with passion, you can have a lot of success.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional career?

I would advise to already consider your first career options at an early stage. If you screen different job advertisements, you get to know the different employers and you also get to know different types of jobs and the requirements involved. Such an insight helps you to render your ideas more precisely and to focus on the right direction later.



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BUILDING TRUST



Simone Alber, 26

MSc ETH in Civil Engineering

Trainee at **Tiefbauamt der Stadt Zürich****Wie haben Sie Ihre Stelle gefunden?**

Ich bin auf das Traineeprogramm des Tiefbauamtes durch die im November angebotene Infoveranstaltung für Studierende aufmerksam geworden. In dieser wird das Programm von ehemaligen Trainees und erfahrenen Projektleitern vorgestellt und ein guter Einblick in die Arbeit der Trainees ermöglicht.

Warum haben Sie sich für das Tiefbauamt der Stadt Zürich entschieden?

Einerseits sehe ich das Traineeprogramm beim Tiefbauamt als eine gute Möglichkeit sich in die Berufswelt einzuarbeiten und andererseits bietet die Stadt Zürich als Arbeitgeberin eine grosse Vielfalt an unterschiedlichen und interessanten Projekten.

Wie sieht Ihr Arbeitsalltag beim Tiefbauamt der Stadt Zürich aus?

Als Trainee durchläuft man abwechselnd verschiedene Fachbereiche des Tiefbauamtes (Verkehr + Stadtraum, Projektierung + Realisierung, Werterhaltung). Zurzeit bin ich im Bereich der Projektierung tätig und arbeite an Strassenbau- und Werkleitungprojekten. Meine Aufgaben sind die

eines Projektleiters, ich koordiniere das Projekt als Ansprechperson für die Projektbeteiligten und bin zuständig für das Erarbeiten der nötigen Dokumente und Pläne zur Projektabwicklung. Bei meiner Arbeit steht mir jederzeit ein Mentor zur Seite, welcher mir durch seine Erfahrung bei Problemen weiterhilft.

Was schätzen Sie besonders an Ihrer Tätigkeit beim Tiefbauamt der Stadt Zürich?

Was die Arbeit beim Tiefbauamt der Stadt Zürich besonders macht, ist, dass man direkt in die Entwicklung der Stadt involviert ist und eine neue und spannende Seite von Zürich kennenlernt.

Was empfehlen Sie Studierenden für ihren Karriereestieg?

Keine Angst vor «Neuland» zu haben und so viel wie möglich vom Wissen der erfahrenen Kollegen mitzunehmen.



Karriere-Start



Sie schliessen gerade Ihr Studium ab?

Dann dürfte Sie das Trainee-Programm des Tiefbauamts der Stadt Zürich interessieren. Bei uns haben Sie als AbsolventIn der Studienrichtungen Bauingenieur-, Umweltingenieurwissenschaften (Siedlungswasserwirtschaft) oder Infrastruktursysteme die Möglichkeit, eine der weltweit attraktivsten Städte mitzugestalten und mitzubauen. Gleichzeitig bieten wir Ihnen einen einmaligen Einstieg in die Praxis und einen attraktiven Start Ihrer beruflichen Karriere.

www.stadt-zuerich.ch/tiefbauamt-trainees

Entry-level positions

Before you start focusing and looking for specific job offers, there are a few general things you should know about entry-level positions. It is not always clear at first glance if a job posting addresses fresh university graduates or targets people with work experience. Many companies and institutions have internships, trainee programs and entry-level positions specifically for students and recent graduates.

A tell-tale sign of a career-entry position is a job ad that mentions “junior”, “entry level” or “young professional”, for example:

- Junior Product Manager
- Entry-Level Mechanical Services
- Young Professional, Electrical Engineering

Other ads may not mention any of these terms indicating that it is an entry-level position; some may even require a few years' experience. However, you may still stand a chance of getting that job. If the ad does not clearly state that this is a senior or management position and work experience is merely “desired” or “beneficial”, it is possible that the company will consider fresh university graduates (see also the

“Job advertisements” section in chapter entitled [Focusing](#) → [Job advertisements](#)).

Direct-entry and trainee programmes

Companies also distinguish between direct entry, where you jump straight into the job, and trainee programmes that ease you into working life. A direct-entry position fills a specific vacancy in a specific department; a trainee program has you working in various departments throughout the company. In the latter case, you might be able to pick a job in the department that suits you best when the programme ends, provided there is a vacancy to be filled. Although the assignments in the various departments are temporary, a trainee programme is not the same as an internship. It is a real entry-level job with certain responsibilities that gets your career off the ground.



Large enterprises especially offer special trainee programmes alongside direct-entry opportunities. These 12-to-24 month engagements give you plenty of time to get to know the company well. Trainees take part in the day-to-day business of each department and shoulder the responsibility for tasks in projects. This is to prepare you for future project management, leadership or other responsibilities.

Your trainee status usually transitions to a permanent position at the end of the program, but this is not always guaranteed. Trainee programmes are generally available for bachelor's and master's degree holders. Ask the company you want to apply to for details on their trainee programme and about any age limits.



Networking

What is networking?

Networking is using your creative talents to help others achieve their goals as you cultivate a network of people strategically positioned to support you in your goals... Expect nothing in return!

— Larry James

Many students are uncomfortable with the idea of “networking”. But as the above quote says, networking is not just something to do when you need help from someone else. It gets easier when you take an interest in others, their profiles and their background, and consider how you can help them with your skills, contacts or expertise. With that attitude, networking is more about giving than taking, which makes things easier – and the rest usually takes care of itself.

Conferences and company events

Academic and industry conferences and company fairs offer great opportunities to explore and learn more about industries, companies, and fields of activity, and to connect with people in the working world. The same goes for the “Career Breakfast”, “Career Sandwich”, and “Career & Beer” events and panel discussions hosted by the ETH Career Center. Striking up a conversation with interesting business people is easy over a drink or a snack.

Job fairs such as ETH’s Polymesse, trade fairs and conferences are also great places to reach out to prospective employers. This is where companies showcase what they do at stands and in presentations. Their stands are usually staffed with a lot of representatives from various departments of the company.

If you want to make a professional impression, you need to prepare well for your visit to a job fair or conference:





1. First consider which companies you want to approach at the fair.
2. Learn more about these companies before the fair. Company representatives are less than impressed by questions like, “What exactly does your company do?”
3. Make sure your application documents are ready to go so you can submit your CV if you have a promising chat.
4. Prepare a so-called “elevator pitch”. It is called that because it has to be quick and to the point, like a pitch you would give to a CEO, investor or other hard-to-reach decision-maker that you happen to meet in an elevator. You have 30 seconds to sell your business idea well enough for your captive audience to want to know more about it. This method is very well suited for introducing yourself to company representatives with a few well-chosen lines.
5. You should also prepare some good questions. For example:
 - What skills and experience are you looking for, especially from university graduates?
 - What are the biggest challenges for the xy position...?
 - How exactly do you go about recruiting? Do you recruit all year round or only at certain times?
 - How would you describe your corporate culture? What do you personally like most about the company?
6. You should come to some sort of arrangement by the end of the conversation. For example, you could ask whether you can contact the person you are talking to directly or refer to your conversation if you decide to apply to the company.

The most important company fairs and career events are posted on the ETH Career Center website and in the calendar of events.



Where are you headed?



Spring semester



ETH Zürich

poly↔**messe**

During three days more than 130 potential employers present themselves to interested students at the recruiting-fair Polymesse. Also, you have the opportunity to get your CV checked and to take application pictures.

The Polymesse will take place in the main building of ETH Zurich and on the Polyterrasse.

poly→**vortrag**

At Polyvortrag about 30 employers have the chance to provide a better understanding of their activities. The presentations can give students a deeper insight into the work and typical projects of the companies, and show possible career opportunities (not only for employment but also internships or theses!).

Forum&Contact

voeth



polymesse.ch

Senior students and alumni

It is a good idea to stay in touch with senior students and alumni. You may perhaps also wish to keep in contact with tutors and study group leaders after the semester ends. Another option is to get involved in student organisations, where you will meet students of all semesters, some of whom are sure to be applying for jobs or will soon be starting to work. They could all become a valuable source of information for you.

Student associations

Another option is to join ETH student networks. They usually maintain a lot of ties to companies and again can be useful sources of job market intelligence. Additionally, getting actively involved in a student organisation can help you acquire and develop key transferable skills that employers are looking for.

A selection of associations that may be of interest to you follow:

- **VSETH:** Student Association of the ETH Zurich
- Student Associations of each ETH department
- **AVETH:** Association of doctoral students at ETH Zurich
- **ETH Juniors:** Consulting company run by students of ETH Zurich that organises the company fair “Campus Interview” yearly
- **Forum & Contact:** Student organisation that organises the yearly Polymesse fair
- **IAESTE:** The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience organises internships abroad for students in technical fields
- **Femtec:** Career-building program for women in engineering and natural sciences
- **Entrepreneur Club:** An ETH association that brings together students who are interested in entrepreneurship and helps them pursue their business ideas



Femtec.Network

Partner companies and research institutes



Partner universities



Femtec.

Promoting Talents



CAREERBUILDING

For Women Studying in STEM Fields



www.femtec.org

Social networking platforms

Societies, associations and organisations

Interest groups are also useful sources for obtaining information about job opportunities, contact addresses, industry insights and the like. A few examples follow:

- www.ingch.ch: Information about careers, training, further education and job platforms for engineers
- www.industrie-schweiz.ch: A directory of Swiss industrial associations
- www.sia.ch: Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects
- www.stv.ch: Swiss Engineering
- www.scienceindustries.ch: Swiss business association for the chemical, pharmaceutical and biotech industries
- www.sviaf.ch: Professional association for university graduates in the agricultural and food sectors

In your free time

Recreational activities also offer good networking opportunities. Merely being in a club or on a sports team does not mean you are networking, but it does provide a platform for establishing and maintaining contacts.

Professional websites such as www.xing.com and www.linkedin.com – where you can post your profile and search for others' profiles – can also be helpful. They afford you the opportunity to gather information on industries, companies and fields of activity, make new contacts, and even find jobs. These platforms were developed specifically for professionals to share information about jobs, business and common interests, so registered members are generally open to inquiries from other members. Write personal messages to connect with people. Avoid the standard phrase, "I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn". Get proactive on these platforms and keep your profile up to date. Uploading a profile just for the sake of it is not going to be enough.

On the next pages you will find an example of a LinkedIn profile with some key tips.





Sample LinkedIn profile

Photo

Adding a photo on your LinkedIn profile can result in an increased number of profile views. We suggest using a photo taken by a professional. Ideally, your face takes up at least 60 % of the frame.

Headline

Answer the questions: e.g. what type of job/function are you looking for, what do you want to be known for, what are you passionate about? Include keywords you want to be found for.

Industry

Choose the relevant industry you are interested in and you want to be found for.

URL

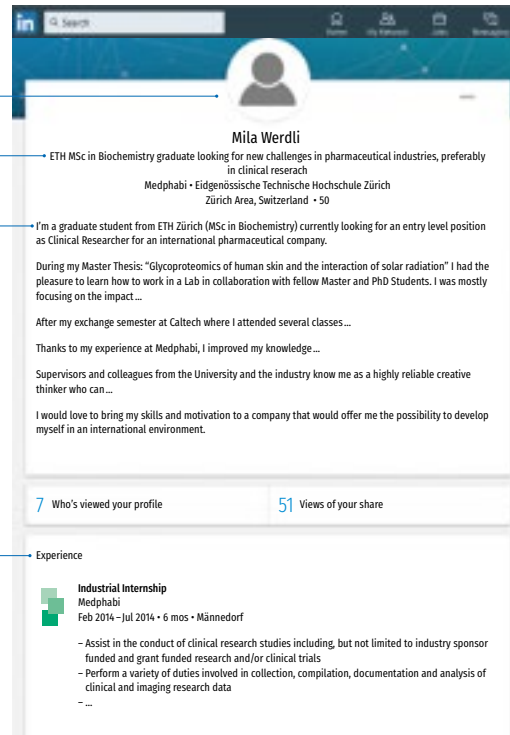
Customize your LinkedIn URL under "Contact and Personal Info" to make it easier for people to find you.

Summary

Write a description of yourself. Talk about your experience, interests and skills using relevant key words. Repeat the key words in the different sections.

Experience

List your practical experience (including part-time jobs) and use relevant keywords to describe your tasks and skills.



Education

ETH Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Master of Science (MSc) Biochemistry
2014–2016
Master Thesis: "Glycoproteomics of human skin and the interaction of solar radiation"
Focus on:
– N-linked glycosylation of secretory proteins
– Enzymatic reactions in the glycoprotein synthetic pathway
– ...
Selected Master Courses:
– Glycobiology
– Enzymatic Chemistry
– ...

ETH Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Bachelor of Science (BSc), Biochemistry
2010–2013
Activities and Societies: ...

Volunteering Experience & Causes

Marketing and Funding Assistant
Swim for Cancer
Oct 2013 1 mo
Health
– advertisement design: poster, flyer, newsletter
– ...

Featured Skills & Endorsements

Biomedical Engin... 1  Endorsed by Jennifer Aytanc and 1 other who is highly skilled at this

Heat Transfer 45  Endorsed by 45 connections

Biocompatibility 5  Endorsed by 5 connections

Education

Include information about degrees acquired and schools attended.

Volunteer Experience

Here you have the possibility to add extracurricular experience or activities, e.g. helping in a student association, team leader in a scout camp, etc. Explain your tasks and list your responsibilities.

Skills & Endorsements

Add skills which you acquired during your education/practical experience. If you don't manage this, LinkedIn may pick random skills from your profile which might not be relevant (Ex: MS Office).

NB:

This example of a LinkedIn profile is by no means complete; LinkedIn offers many other categories that you can add to your profile.

Languages

List your languages and your level of proficiency.

Projects

Add and update projects that you've worked on to demonstrate your skills and experience. Whether you led a team assignment in school or worked in a focus project during your studies, list tasks and skills.

Following

Add groups, companies, etc. that you are interested in to keep up to date to industry trends and companies.

Courses

List curricular and extracurricular courses that support the aim of your profile.

Recommendations

Recommendations add credibility to your profile. Aim to secure recommendations throughout your career.

Accomplishments**4 Languages**

German
Native or bilingual proficiency

English
Full professional proficiency

Spanish
Professional working proficiency

Chinese
Elementary proficiency

1 Project

Young Projekt Switzerland
- leading a mini-company with 4 project members
- development, production and selling of handmade bags
Sep 2009 - Feb 2010

Teammates**Following**

 **Liumus**
85,202 followers

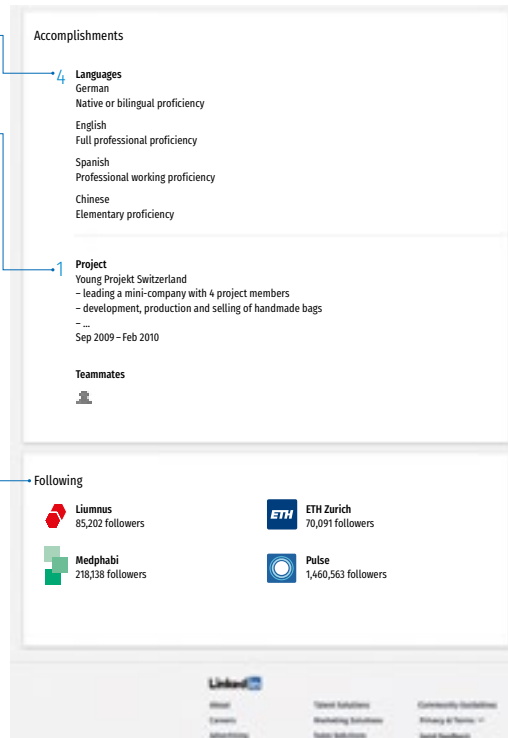
 **ETH Zurich**
70,091 followers

 **Medphabi**
218,138 followers

 **Pulse**
1,460,563 followers

NB:

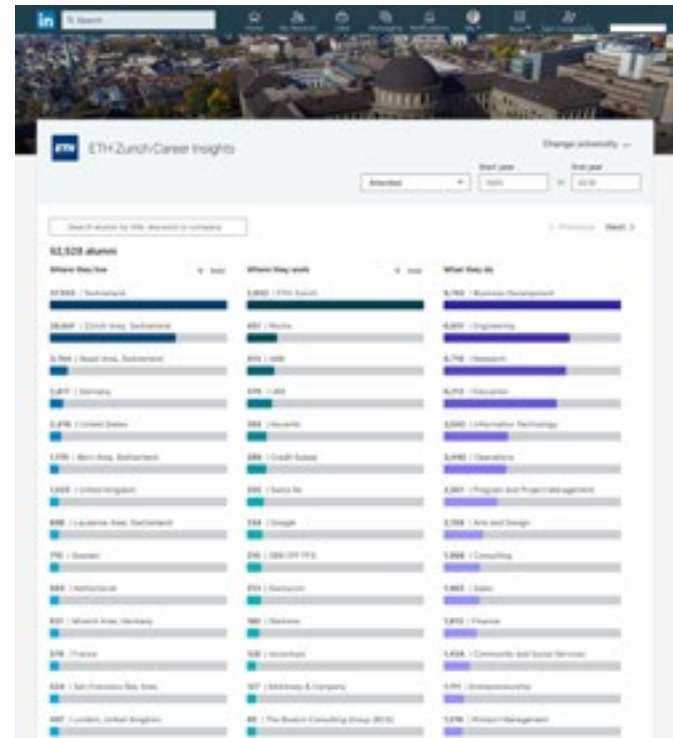
We recommend that you go to *Settings & Privacy / Profile privacy* and set *Share profile edits* to *No*. That way, your contacts will not get a notification every time you update your profile.



ETH networks on LinkedIn

You will also find specific ETH groups that you can join on LinkedIn. One is the Career Center; others include the general Alumni Group and the various departments' Alumni Groups.

On the ETH Zurich Career Insights LinkedIn site (see image to the right), you can also find interesting statistics on the careers of ETH alumni (LinkedIn/School/ETH-Zurich/Alumni).



Summary

The building blocks for focusing

The work you have done in this chapter *Exploration* has given you a good look at potential industries, companies and fields of activity.

To wrap up this section, enter the sectors, companies and fields of activity that interest you most in the table below. Then add the key requirements you identified above (chapter *Exploration* → *Companies and potential employers*).

This summary can help you narrow down your search for a suitable job, by focusing your search on those specific industries/companies and activities that you identified as important to you and by sifting through the job ads based on your requirements. It will make it easier to distinguish between suitable and unsuitable job offers and save you a lot of time and energy during the application process.

Sector	Companies	Fields of activity
My most important requirements for a future employer		



→ Tips: Exploration

- Reach out to everyone who can help and tap their knowledge. Talk to your professors and ETH alumni at fairs and career events to learn more about various sectors, companies and career paths.
- Take the time to dig deep and often, researching websites, online networks such as LinkedIn and Xing, and trade journals in your preferred fields.
- Compare the information you gathered in this chapter *Exploration* with the insights you gained in the *Analysis* chapter to make sure that your chosen sectors, companies and job profiles really do match your personality, skills and values.
- Stay flexible in your choice of industries and employers to keep your options open, regardless of what state the economy happens to be in.

→ ETH Career Center offering: Exploration

- Individual sessions to determine sectors and fields of activity
- Annual Career Weeks in March and October: Various career events with companies to provide insights into various job profiles and establish contacts with company representatives (e.g. Career Breakfast, Career Sandwich, Career & Beer, Active Career)
- Long Night of the Careers at the ETH Zurich (biennially in November)
- Panel discussions

Information

www.careercenter.ethz.ch –
for students and doctoral students

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As Alumna or Alumnus of the ETH Zurich, you are part of our network of 30.527 members worldwide, benefit from an Alumni e-mail, events, benefits, job offerings, and you stay connected to the ETH.

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ENGAGING

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Alumni



«My internship at Panasonic in the heart of Silicon Valley allowed me to learn a lot and connect with many interesting people. An incredibly enriching experience – personally as well as professionally.

Working in another country for a year brings a whole new perspective to life, as you have to reorient yourself in a lot of things. The authorities are not always as efficient as they are in Switzerland. In addition to the more competitive American working world, it was especially important for me to find my way around a very Japanese-influenced company. That's how I got to know two different working cultures. As part of the "Deep Learning Research Team", I was able to apply many of my study skills over the course of a year as well as learn a few new ones. This allowed me to explore different machine learning algorithms and expand my knowledge. In addition to work, there are many other things to discover in California with its many national parks!" And if the bay area is too small, you can fly five hours to the west or east and you're still in the same country – it's just incredible how big this country is compared to Switzerland!»

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*Michael Heinzer, Mathematics Student at the ETH Zürich.
Michael did his 5-month internship at Panasonic Silicon
Valley Laboratory in Cupertino, California, USA in spring
2018.*

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www.iaeste.ch/students/traineeshipoffers



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- ... have a duration from **6 weeks to 12 month**



3 — FOCUSING

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Job search

Strategies and techniques

The ways to finding a job are many. But the most successful strategy is to pursue every avenue. The following section presents the different approaches to looking for a job. The addresses and hyperlinks are intended only as a first step in your research and are by no means exhaustive.

Company websites

Most companies post job vacancies on their corporate website. HR does not want to be swamped with applications, so these vacancies are often not published on other job platforms. Review the websites of companies you would like to work for and look for jobs that fit your profile. If you do not find any suitable listings, you can try submitting a spontaneous application on the off-chance that something is available (see the section [Focusing → Proactive job search](#)).



Job platforms

Companies post job offers on all kinds of internet platforms. Always check to make sure these job offers are current. Use any of the many support tools available to set up a search assistant or post your CV online.

General job portals

- www.eth-gethired.ch
- www.jobwinner.ch
- www.alumni.ethz.ch
- www.markenjobs.ch
- www.careerjet.ch
- www.monster.ch
- www.indeed.ch
- www.science-jobs.ch
- www.jobs.ch
- www.students.ch
- www.jobscout24.ch
- www.topjobs.ch
- www.jobsuchmaschine.ch

Some student associations also maintain small job platforms on their website.

Specialised job portals by sector / field of interest:

- **Architecture / construction:** www.baujob.ch, www.archforum.ch
- **Banking:** www.bankingjobs.ch, www.jobeye.ch, www.efinancialcareers.ch
- **Geology:** www.geologieportal.ch
- **Geomatics / planning:** www.geomatik.ch
- **Computer and information sciences:** www.itjobs.ch, www.job-box.ch, www.workfinder.ch
- **Engineering:** www.ingjobs.ch
- **Life sciences / chemicals:** www.nobel-jobs.com, www.chemiker-jobs.ch
- **Math:** www.math-jobs.com
- **Public sector:** www.publicjobs.ch
- **Physics:** www.tesla-jobs.com
- **Pharma / healthcare:** www.pharmastellen.ch, www.pharmapro.ch
- **Environmental / nature conservation:** www.naturschutz.ch, www.umweltprofis.ch
- **Non-profit organisations:** www.kampajobs.ch, www.cinfo.ch
- **Academia:** www.science-jobs.ch, www.myscience.ch



Events

As you may recall from the [Exploration](#) chapter, career events such as ETH's Career & Beer get-togethers and trade fairs offer very good opportunities to learn more about potential fields of activity, vacancies, entry programs and application processes. Often a good opening chat and a positive impression leads to a job interview. So be sure to prepare thoroughly before you talk to company representatives (see the chapter [Exploration](#) → [Networking](#) for more on this).

Recruitment agencies

Recruitment agencies specialise in searching for candidates to fit a given job profile. Some have contracts with companies, but these agencies are more likely to look for people for management positions or with highly specialised experience. These profiles are hard to find on the job market, so companies are prepared to pay the agency a finder's fee.

These agencies rarely recruit fresh graduates and post-graduates. Relying exclusively on this type of recruiter is not a good idea when you are looking for a job. However, a recruiter with good connections to employers in your field generally knows the market and industry well and may be able to help you with a tip or two.

NB:

Recruiters occasionally publish ads for unavailable or even fictional jobs. They archive incoming applications in a database to generate numbers that will attract and acquire new corporate customers. This could explain why a recruiter who is interviewing you will not disclose the name of the company behind the job ad.

Personal contacts and networking

At career events and at play, nurturing your network is likely to pay off in terms of real job offers. It is not uncommon for employers to first seek potential candidates for a position through the networks that connect employees and colleagues before they officially advertise the vacancy.

A good network affords you the opportunity to learn of a pending or current vacancy at a very early turn because your contacts will tell you about it or even recommend the job to you (see the chapter [Exploration → Networking](#) for more on this).

Social networking platforms

Many vacancies are published on online platforms such as LinkedIn or Xing. In the chapter [Exploration → Networking](#), we showed you how to use these platforms and what to bear in mind when creating your profile. The platform tries to match jobs to your needs, so the better and more detailed your profile, the more suitable the job ads that it proposes to you.



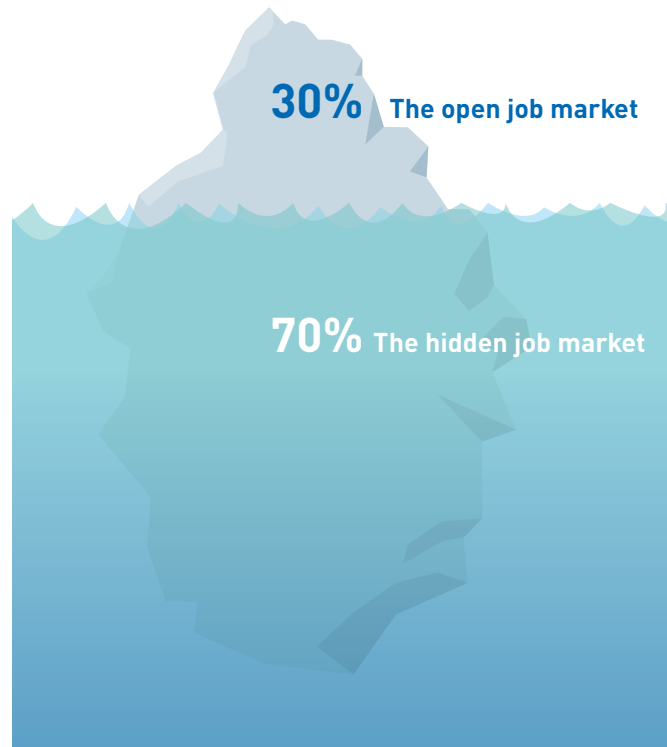


Proactive job search

Another option is to proactively search for a job with an unsolicited application – that is, to submit your unsolicited documents to a company rather than responding to a specific job ad. According to some estimates, up to 70 % of vacancies are never advertised; as outlined earlier, they are filled by way of contacts and employee networks.

This is why it is so important that you do more than just apply to advertised positions where the competition may be great – also tap your network and send out spontaneous applications.

In this latter case, you will not have a specific job ad to refer to, or information about the company and the position, so be sure to use your various information channels (alumni, networks, private contacts, career events, etc.) to learn more about the company's divisions and operations before you apply.



First visit the company's website to see if you can find information about unsolicited applications. It's good to know in advance if the company will accept this type of application; then you need to find a specific address or contact person to send it to. If you cannot find the information you need, call the company and ask.

NB:

Submit an unsolicited application only if this company has no suitable vacancies advertised at this time. A spontaneous application does not make a good impression if the company is advertising positions that fit your profile.

Job advertisements

Analysis

Your application stands a better chance of succeeding if you properly analyse the job ad. The trick is to distinguish between must-have (mandatory) and can-have (optional) criteria. The better your hard and soft skills fit the description, the greater the chance of you being invited to an interview.

→ Tips: Job advertisements

- Read the ad carefully. It will normally describe the company, job specifications, tasks, and perhaps further career opportunities.
- Apply if you meet most requirements, even if you do not meet them all.
- Find out what type of employees the company is looking for. You can usually learn more about this in the careers section of the company's website.
- If the job ad leaves any questions unanswered, ask the person who is listed as the contact or take these questions with you to the interview. However, only get in touch with the company if you have truly relevant questions about the job. Questions like "Is this position still open?" do not make a good first impression.

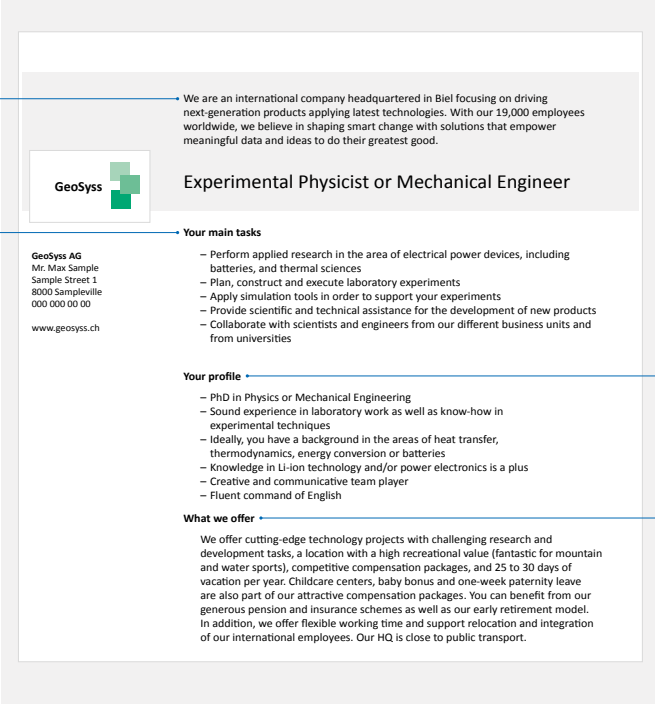
Company description

This part of the job ad profiles the company in a few words. This should give you a rough idea about its size, international scope, and mission. To prepare for your application, be sure to research the company properly rather than relying on these few lines in the job ad.

Position description / key areas of responsibility

This part of the job ad outlines the job's primary tasks. If it is not clear what day-to-day tasks will occupy most of your time, ask about this during the interview.





GeoSys AG
Mr. Max Sample
Sample Street 1
8000 Sampleville
000 000 00 00
www.geosys.ch

Experimental Physicist or Mechanical Engineer

We are an international company headquartered in Biel focusing on driving next-generation products applying latest technologies. With our 19,000 employees worldwide, we believe in shaping smart change with solutions that empower meaningful data and ideas to do their greatest good.

Your main tasks

- Perform applied research in the area of electrical power devices, including batteries, and thermal sciences
- Plan, construct and execute laboratory experiments
- Apply simulation tools in order to support your experiments
- Provide scientific and technical assistance for the development of new products
- Collaborate with scientists and engineers from our different business units and from universities

Your profile

- PhD in Physics or Mechanical Engineering
- Sound experience in laboratory work as well as know-how in experimental techniques
- Ideally, you have a background in the areas of heat transfer, thermodynamics, energy conversion or batteries
- Knowledge in Li-ion technology and/or power electronics is a plus
- Creative and communicative team player
- Fluent command of English

What we offer

We offer cutting-edge technology projects with challenging research and development tasks, a location with a high recreational value (fantastic for mountain and water sports), competitive compensation packages, and 25 to 30 days of vacation per year. Childcare centers, baby bonus and one-week paternity leave are also part of our attractive compensation packages. You can benefit from our generous pension and insurance schemes as well as our early retirement model. In addition, we offer flexible working time and support relocation and integration of our international employees. Our HQ is close to public transport.

Professional qualifications / required experience / desired skills

Must-have requirements

Mandatory or must-have requirements are skills that the employer definitely wants.

If you meet these requirements, make sure they are listed in your CV (see also the chapter entitled "Application"). A candidate who meets all requirements is not always to be found. This is why we recommend that you apply if you meet most requirements, even if you do not meet them all.

Can-have requirements

Companies are generally looking for candidates who meet all their specifications. These are few and far between, which is why some of the less important criteria are designated as being desirable or optional in job ads. You do not need to have all these qualifications, but it is beneficial if you do.

Offer

In this section of the job ad, the company describes what it has to offer to you and what the main advantages of the position are. You can also use this information to prepare your questions for the interview. Let's assume the ad says something like, "We offer a friendly working environment." Then you could ask, "What do you think makes the workplace so friendly?"

Required key competencies

Key competencies and soft skills are tremendously important to your future employer because the company is not just recruiting your mind or professional expertise; it is also bringing your personality on board.

Job ads often explicitly require key competencies such as the communication skills needed to work with clients, or with in-house teams, or the flexibility to roll with changes when the company is in transition.

In the following, we want to show you how to interpret descriptions of these skills. Be sure to mention and provide real-world examples of all the required soft skills in your cover letter (see the section [Application → Application documents](#)).



Required key competencies	Likely interpretation
Able to work under pressure	The job pressure may be greater than the industry norm.
Committed employee	Working hours may be irregular and overtime could be the rule.
Reliable employee	The company does not want a job hopper. Be prepared to stick with this job for several years.
Autonomy/ self-reliance	Experience in the described field of activity is absolutely essential. Do not expect any technical or specialist support.
Flexibility	The task or role may be very vaguely defined.
Independence	Expect to work in various places. You probably have to travel or change locations. Children and family obligations may be a deterrent.
Entrepreneurial mindset	This is a high-pressure job for business-minded people. Business management skills are beneficial. You will have to take several stakeholder groups' interests into account.

Required key competencies	Likely interpretation
Initiative/proactive	You will be expected to outperform the stipulated requirements. You have to be self-motivated and set your own targets; do not expect praise or guidance from management.
Loyalty	This may suggest challenging working conditions and a fickle boss.
A young, dynamic team	No need to try if you are older (perhaps even as young as 30). And no need to apply if your salary expectations are high.
To join at the earliest opportunity	The predecessor may have been fired or quit. This begs the question of why he or she left.

Summary

The building blocks for your application

Analysis, exploration, focusing – these are the steps you need to take when setting out in search of a job. Thoroughly research the job, analyse must-have and can-have criteria, and devise a clear application strategy – that is what it takes to get off to a good start.

To conclude this chapter, define some actions that you can undertake and that will help you give focus to your applications.

My favourite companies	Activities
<i>e.g. Helbling Technik</i>	<i>Participate in the Helbling "Active Career Event" organised by the Career Center</i>
	<i>Talk to Johann (alumnus currently working at Helbling)</i>
	<i>Consult and analyse current job openings at Helbling</i>
	<i>Participate in one of Helbling Technik's evening seminars</i>



→ Tips: Focusing

- Create a folder for all documents you collected during your research (annual reports, job ads, press releases).
- Pursue every avenue using all the different job search strategies, all at the same time if you can. Take the conventional approaches but also send speculative applications.
- Analyse the job ad and write down the must-have and can-have criteria for each application.
- Archive all the details about job ads, contact persons, dates and meetings in an Excel spreadsheet, track the developments and keep this record up to date.
- Save a copy of the ad for every job you applied for. The ad is generally taken out of circulation once you are invited to an interview, but you will need it to prepare.

→ ETH Career Center offering: Focusing

- Individual counselling
- Annual Career Weeks in March and October: Various career events with companies to provide insight into various job profiles and establish contacts with company representatives (e.g. Career Breakfast, Career Sandwich, Career & Beer, Active Career)
- Long Night of the Careers at the ETH Zurich (biennially in November)

Information

www.careercenter.ethz.ch –
for students and doctoral students



4 — APPLICATION

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Application documents

Your business card

Your application documents are very important and it is vital that you are aware of their value. A written application is the prospective employer's first impression of you, and it will determine if your application is considered further or rejected outright.

Its content and form should make people want to get to know you better in an interview.

There are several things you need to bear in mind here:

- HR managers often receive 50 or more applications for an advertised position, but just five to ten applicants are invited to a first interview.
- In the first selection round, HR managers' top priority is usually to assess the CV. They get so many applications that they often have just one to three minutes to devote to each. The CV has to be very persuasive for the other documents to be considered at all. It provides the evidence proving you are an applicant who meets the job's requirements.

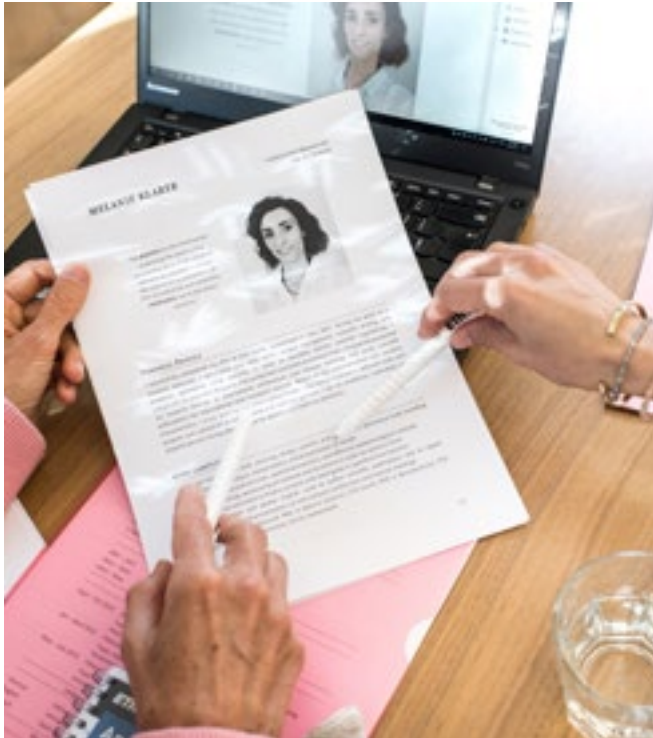
- Employers want to fill vacancies with candidates who have the required job skills as well as the personality and motivation to fit in with the company and team. As the selection process progresses, the focus will gradually shift towards personality and motivation, placing less emphasis on technical qualifications. In the end, it is usually the chemistry between the future supervisor and the applicant that decides who will get the job.



Scope

The full application package includes the following standard documents, whereby the most recent document in each category goes on top:

- The cover letter
- A resume or CV
- Copies of school and university certificates (school-leaving onward)
- Copies of all references, confirmations of employment and letters of recommendation mentioned in the CV
- Copies of training certificates and the like, if relevant to the job



Curriculum vitae

As we mentioned in this chapter's introduction, HR managers usually decide whether or not to invite a candidate to an initial interview based on the CV. This is why it so important for you to present the information in your CV clearly and concisely.

Will Evans of Ladders, Inc., conducted a survey in 2012 using eye tracking technology to measure recruiters' eye movements as they scanned CVs. Here is what the study found:

- Participating recruiters spent six seconds looking at a CV.
- They devoted 80 % of their time on these six items: Name, current position, last employer, start and end date of the last job, start and end date of the current position, and the educational background.

The researcher generated heat maps for two CVs, using colours to show the average dwell time. The red areas indicate what the recruiters looked at longest, on average.

The two sample CVs shown here track the recruiter's eye movements on heat maps. The one of the right got more attention because of its clear and concise structure.





Source: Eye Tracking Online Metacognition: Cognitive Complexity and Recruiter Decision Making. Will Evans, Head of User Experience Design, Ladders Inc., 2012; www.theladders.com.

So be sure to bear the following in mind when drafting your CV:

- It presents your background and career path, so it needs to be individual and unique.
- Its layout should be clear and well-structured.
- Make sure it is complete.
- In each section, the most recent information comes first in reverse chronological order.
- We recommend keeping it to two pages for bachelor and master students and up to three for doctoral candidates.
- Use the same font throughout, with no more than two different font sizes and never smaller than 11 pt. Bold type works well for headings.
- No spelling mistakes or grammatical errors.

The standard practice is to structure the CV by topics. The following topics and sections are key components of a CV:

- Contact details
- Personal information
- Education
- Work experience
- Language skills
- Computer skills
- Hobbies
- References

You can add the following sections to your CV to reflect your background:

- Military service
- Further education
- Laboratory skills/methods
- Extracurricular activities
- Scholarships/honours
- Two or three select publications

Please note that these are recommendations for Swiss CVs. Some other countries have different rules (see the section entitled *Application → Applying abroad*).





Sample CV – MSc and BSc

Contact details

- First name, last name
- Full home address
- One personal phone number only, ideally a mobile number
- Email address that is appropriate for business use:
e.g. firstname.lastname@xyz.com

Photograph

- A photograph on your CV is optional, but very common in German-speaking countries.
- Have your application picture taken by a professional photographer.
- Dress professionally as you would for an interview.
- Be well-groomed.
- A good picture is no guarantee that you will be invited in for an interview, but an unflattering photograph may sink your application before you even get started.

Personal information

- Date of birth
- Nationality: Indicate all citizenships (e.g. Switzerland / France).
- If you have a work permit, mention it.
- Marital status (optional, e.g. married, single)

Giorgio Buonarico
Zürcherstrasse 37
8610 Uster
Phone: +41 79 598 41 88
E-Mail: giorgio.buonarico@ethz.ch



08.05.1994
Single
Swiss / Italian

EDUCATION

Since 02.2017 **ETH Zurich, Master's Programme, Mechanical Engineering**
Focus: Energy Science
Master's thesis: "Aero-Thermo-Mechanical System Integration and Design of an Axial Compressor in a High Altitude Airship"
Prospective graduation date: April 2020

09.2013 – 09.2016 **ETH Zurich, Bachelor's Programme, Mechanical Engineering**
Focus: Robotics
Bachelor thesis: "Numerical Simulation of Unsteady Separated Two-Dimensional Flow around a Circular Cylinder"

06.2012 **Alte Kantonsschule Aarau, Matura**
Focus: Mathematics and physics

WORK EXPERIENCE

Since 04.2016 **ETH Zurich, Institute of Dynamic Systems & Control, Research Assistant**
– Designed different experiments and prepared manuals
– Successfully modelled a three-way catalytic converter
– Conducted emission measurements and sensor calibration on the engine test bench

10.2016 – 02.2017 **Limmat Scientific AG, Zürich, Research & Development Internship**
– Assisted in two projects to develop solar panels
– Conducted risk-benefit analysis
– Programmed LabView 8.0 and reported results of ongoing projects

10.2014 – 10.2015 **Media Markt, Dietlikon, Multimedia Salesperson**
– Customer service and sales (20%)

06.2014 – 08.2014 **Ansaldo Energia, Baden, Workshop Training**
– Supported in the design and conception of gas turbines
– Recorded customers reports



Education

- List all graduation certificates, diplomas and degrees obtained from secondary school and higher.
- Give the dates you attended each institution in months and years.
- State the name and location of the institution and the received or pursued certificate, diploma or degree at each stage.
- Indicate extension courses, specializations, major subjects and titles of theses or papers if they are relevant to the job you are seeking.
- State the selected track you chose during secondary school.
- Generally, final grades only get mentioned if they are high, in which case you have to be consistent and give the grades for all school-leaving certificates.
- Put foreign grades into perspective by stating the highest possible grade, e.g. "Final grade: 3.8 out of 4.0" or "3.8 / 4.0".

Work experience

- List internships, assistantships, part-time jobs and volunteer work.
- You may have gained practical experience working for a student association when you attended a university. This is unpaid work, but the experience may be relevant to the prospective job. If so, list it alongside other internships and the like under the heading of "Practical experience" rather than "Work experience", indicating your position in the association, tasks and responsibilities. If this experience is irrelevant to the job, you can list it under "Extracurricular activities".
- Specify the time on each job in months and years.
- State the employer, place of work and your function for each job.
- Describe your responsibilities or at least two tasks that you accomplished in your position.
- Describe your activities precisely and expressively using strong verbs ("Successfully developed new method for...") or nominalised verbs ("Successful development of a new method for..."), if possible, in combination with one adjective.
- Mention special accomplishments and successes.

Sample CV – MSc und BSc

Extracurricular activities

List job-specific and non-job-specific pursuits and volunteer work with charities, clubs, associations or community services.

Further education/training

This section includes participations in symposiums and conferences, trade fairs, language courses and personal development seminars such as public-speaking courses, preferably indicated in months and years.

Military service

You can list military service under a separate heading to provide the complete chronological picture of your background.

Scholarships and awards

Notable scholarships or awards should be listed under a separate heading, indicating the dates in months and years whenever possible.

NB: Gaps in your CV

Gaps during or immediately after your studies left by travel, language studies abroad, volunteer work and the like are usually not a problem. However, you should list them under “Interests or hobbies” or “Extracurricular activities” (e.g. 06.2017 – 10.2017: Toured South America).

	EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
Since 09.2015	Member of the AMIV club at ETH Zurich
Since 09.2013	Helping to organize the annual AMIV networking fair Coaching the Greifensee junior football team
	FURTHER EDUCATION
09.2016 – 11.2016	Project Management, Business Tools AG, Switzerland
02.2015 – 03.2015	Memory training techniques, ETH Zurich, Switzerland
	MILITARY SERVICE
09.2012 – 04.2013	Basic training, Payerne, Switzerland
	SCHOLARSHIPS AND HONOURS
Since 09.2015	Excellence Scholarship & Opportunity Programme (ESOP) – Full Scholarship, Mentoring Programme Invited to join the ETH Foundation's network
2012	Best Matura Project Award 2012, Alte Kantonsschule Aarau
	LANGUAGES
German	Native speaker
Italian	Native speaker
English	Excellent; 06.2013 – 08.2013 language stay, LSI Boston, USA
French	Good
Spanish	Basic
	COMPUTER SKILLS
Operating systems	Windows, LINUX, OSX
Engineering tools	Matlab, ANSYS CFX/ICEM CFD/Workbench (Solidmechanics), Aacad, Unigraphics NX4, Labview 8.0, C++
User software	MS Office
Internet / design	HTML, Flash, Photoshop
	INTERESTS / HOBBIES
	Member and player of the Greifensee Football Club and volunteer community tournament organizer
	REFERENCES
	Available upon request



Language skills and stays abroad

- Be honest and realistic in assessing the level of your knowledge.
- For languages, state the skill level or your self-assessment using for example the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the language certificates you have acquired.
- Use just one name for each level, e.g. native speaker, business fluent, basic knowledge, or B1, C2, etc.
- Also avoid terms that refer to school leaving certificates (i.e. A-levels). They do not say much about your actual language skills.
- List stays or language studies abroad, preferably with the dates in months and years.
- Don't forget to list your mother tongue.

Computer skills

IT skills are grouped by type such as programming languages, operating systems, graphics programs, user software, etc. and/or in accordance with the requirements specified in the job ad, e.g. very good knowledge, basic skills, etc.

Interests or hobbies

The aim of mentioning interests or hobbies is to give the reader a better and bigger picture of who you are. This can serve as an opening talking point for the job interview. Do not invent any "strategic hobbies" that you think will make your CV more interesting. Be true to yourself.

References

Do not enclose or mention references by name unless specifically requested to do so. You will be asked to bring them to the interview or submit them later.

Sample CV – doctoral student



Daniel Kaufmann

Date of birth: 02.05.1986
Nationality: Swiss
Aubrigstrasse 47, 8810 Horgen, Switzerland
+41 79 410 86 79
d.kaufmann@master.com

EDUCATION

- 07/2012 – 06/2016 **Doctor of Science in Computer Engineering, ETH Zürich, Switzerland** *
Doctoral thesis: "Investigations of Numerical Aberrations: Origins and Implications"
- 10/2007 – 03/2012 **MSc in Computer Engineering, EPFL Lausanne, Switzerland**
Final grade 5.25/6
- 10/2011 – 03/2012 **Master thesis, Institute for Process Control Engineering, University of Florida (UF), Gainesville FL, USA**
 - Modelled and validated the model for a small articulated robot
 - Developed a modern predictive control algorithm using Matlab/LabVIEW
 - Successfully implemented algorithm on a real vehicle
 Grade 5.5/6
- 09/2007 – 09/2010 **Bsc in Electrical Engineering, ETH Zürich, Switzerland**
Final grade 5/6
- 08/2009 – 05/2010 **Exchange program, Electrical Engineering, Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Pittsburgh PA, USA**
GPA (Grade point average) 3.9/4.0, on Dean's List for both semesters
- 06/2006 **"Maturité Gymnasiale", Lycée-Collège Des Creusets, Sion, Switzerland**
Focus: Mathematics, Biology and Chemistry
Final grade 5.5/6

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

- 07/2012 – 06/2016 **Research Assistant, ETH Zurich, Computational Laboratory, Switzerland**
 - Responsible for control systems engineering in an interdisciplinary collaboration with GreatCorp., Basel, Switzerland
 - Modelled and controlled diesel injectors using Matlab/dSPACE
 - Served as teaching assistant for robust control and control experiments
 - Supervised students writing semester papers
 - Published research results, presented to management, attended conferences

Doctorate

- Doctoral students should list the doctorate under both "Education" and "Work experience".
- Under "Education", indicate the doctorate, chair or institute, university and location along with the thesis title. Under "Work experience", state that you are a staff researcher and then the chair or institute, university and location. State the activities and responsibilities that represent practical experience here.
- The title "Doctor of Science [Dr. sc. ETH Zurich]" is awarded after the candidate successfully completes the required course of studies.
- The term "PhD" is usually only used colloquially or in English-speaking countries.

Methods

- List specific knowledge of laboratory methods or software environments here. If you wish, you can indicate software environments under "IT skills" instead.
- You can rate this knowledge on a scale as required, e.g. very good knowledge, basic skills, etc.

Publications & conferences

- Specify just a few select publications rather than a complete list.



05/2011 – 08/2011 **Summer Intern, Ford Motor Company, Kansas City, Kansas, USA**
 – Assisted Ford Customer Service in the launch of the Ford Mustang
 – Mined large databases and generated reports for management
 – Served as a liaison between the customer and Ford Engineering
 – Organised the annual intern summer party including the communication, event management and the management of 10 volunteers.

02/2009 – 03/2009 **Winter Intern, GreatMachines Ltd., Stans, Switzerland**
 – Completed design projects using Unigraphics software
 – Apprenticed in milling, turning, drilling and welding

LANGUAGES

German	Native speaker
English	Proficient
French	Proficient
Italian	Advanced knowledge
Spanish	Basic knowledge

METHODS

Matlab/Simulink	Very good knowledge
dSpace Control Desk	Very good knowledge
LabVIEW	Very good knowledge
F-DEAS	Good knowledge
Unigraphics	Good knowledge
ANSYS	Good knowledge

COMPUTER SKILLS

Pascal	Good knowledge
C	Good knowledge
LaTeX	Good knowledge
MS-Office	Very good knowledge

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

03/2013 **External Relations, VSI (Verein der Informatik Studierenden) ETH Zurich, Switzerland**
 – Developed a strategy for international networking
 – Acquired customers and supported partners
 – Organised and led excursions

03/2013 **"Go Digital!" workshop, McKinsey & Company, Zurich, Switzerland**
 – Set up an online shop
 – Worked in a team and presented the project

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

– Lorem I., Lorem B., Lorem F., (2016): „Dolor sit amet, egestas fusce amet ornare feugiat vehicula ante, nulla ante pede et morbi. Et sed nam“, 17, 1-2, 163–198
 – Lorem I., Lorem B., Lorem F., (2016): „Dolor sit amet, egestas fusce amet ornare feugiat vehicula ante, nulla ante pede et morbi. Et sed nam“, 17, 1-2, 163–198
 – Lorem I., Lorem B., Lorem F., (2015): „Dolor sit amet, egestas fusce amet ornare feugiat vehicula ante, nulla ante pede et morbi. Et sed nam“, 17, 1-2, 163–198

HOBBIES

– Mountaineering
 – Sailing
 – Scuba diving
 – Reading

REFERENCES

Available upon request

Main differences

Main differences between CVs of BSc / MSc students and doctoral students

Bachelor / master students	Doctoral students
– CV max. 2 pages	– CV max. 3 pages
– List the master thesis under “Education”. The exception is an external master thesis pursued at a company. In this case, you can give the title of the paper under “Education” and the details of the research conducted at the company under “Work experience”.	– List the doctorate under both “Education” and “Work experience”. You can list the title or topic under “Education” and the details of the research, project management, teaching, etc., under “Work experience”.
– Do not list publications unless the master thesis was published in a journal or the like.	– List titles of select publications in the CV if relevant to the position (max. 3).

Main differences in CVs for applications in industry and academia

Industry	Academia
– State the title of bachelor, master or doctoral thesis, but details only if they are relevant to the position.	– List details of bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral theses.
– You can list methods and laboratory experience, but details only if relevant.	– Indicate lab experience and describe working methods.
– Do not list conferences in your CV. If relevant, attach a complete list as a separate document.	– List participations in conferences.
– Names of professors are usually not listed unless he or she is well-connected throughout the company.	– List professors’ names.



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Ramzy S.
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Photograph

You are not obliged to include a picture with your CV, but it is commonly done in Switzerland.

If you decide to do so, we recommend that you have your picture taken by a professional photographer. Selfies taken while hiking, on holidays or for your student union ID do not look professional.

Put on a friendly face and smile. A good photographer will also help you adopt the right posture.

Make sure you look well-groomed. You may wish to look up a good hairdresser before the photo session. Dress professionally as you would for an interview.





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Short profile

In English-speaking countries, it is not uncommon to insert a short profile between the sections “Personal details” and “Work experience” or “Education”. These profiles can also be found in Swiss CVs, but they are not standard practice.

A short profile consists of three or four brief sentences providing additional information. Rather than restating the CV’s content, they answer questions like this:

- What is my goal, where do I stand now?
- What qualifications/expertise do I bring to the table?
- How are my skills relevant to the job?

A short profile could be a good option mainly for students looking for a change of direction after graduating. This may be the case if the academic degree given in the CV does not explain your interest in or qualifications for an advertised job. For example, you could have a master’s degree in chemistry, but would like to get into marketing. A short profile could highlight qualifications that you acquired in elective courses, during the listed internships or outside your studies.

If you opt for a short profile, do not make it all too generic; instead, adapt it to the given job and describe only those skills that are truly relevant to that position.



Cover letter

The cover letter alone will rarely make or break your application's chances of getting preselected. However, it does play an important part in the subsequent selection process. If you are able to word this letter in a way that briefly and succinctly conveys your qualifications and motivation for the given job, your chances of being invited to an interview are good.

No two advertised positions are the same, so you have to address the company's specific requirements in your cover letter. They all require different combinations of technical skills and key competencies, and you have to address each individually [see chapter *Focusing* → *Job advertisements*].

Content is important, but a cover letter also has to have a clear structure to make a good impression.

General tips

- The cover letter should be no more than one page in letter format.
- Use the correct and full salutation, including titles.
- It is best for the letter to match the CV's font and font size.
- Write in your own style; do not recycle pre-worded sentences found online or in guides.
- Convey a brief, precise picture of your qualifications and motivation, always in the context of the job and company, and underscore your experience with examples.
- State your skills and achievements objectively and neutrally without rating yourself on any scale.
- Use active verbs (see the list of "Active verbs" on the next page) and avoid nouns when describing what you did. Example: "During my internship I drew up development concepts and was able to put them into practice."
- Check your cover letter for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors; have someone else proofread it.

Active verbs for German applications

Management	Communication	Research
Analysieren	Abstimmen	Abhandeln
Ausführen	Ansprechen	Abklären
Betreuen	Beeinflussen	Beaufsichtigen
Delegieren	Beteiligen	Befragen
Empfehlen	Entwerfen	Diagnostizieren
Entwickeln	Formulieren	Erforschen
Erwirtschaften	Führen	Erläutern
Evaluieren	Interpretieren	Evaluieren
Führen	Mitarbeiten	Identifizieren
Konsolidieren	Mitverfassen	Organisieren
Koordinieren	Moderieren	Recherchieren
Leiten	Publizieren	Sammeln
Organisieren	Überzeugen	Systematisieren
Planen	Verfassen	Überprüfen
Prioritäten setzen	Verhandeln	Überwachen
Reorganisieren	Vermitteln	Untersuchen
Überprüfen	Vorschlagen	Zusammenfassen

Active verbs for German applications

Techniques	Teaching / Coaching	Accomplishments
Anpassen	Anleiten	Ableiten
Aufbauen	Ausbilden	Abschliessen
Aufzeigen	Bekräftigen	Beheben
Berechnen	Beraten	Beschleunigen
Durchführen	Bereitstellen	Bewirken
Entwerfen	Betreuen	Einführen
Entwickeln	Darlegen	Entdecken
Herstellen	Einführen	Erfinden
Instand halten	Ermöglichen	Erreichen
Instand setzen	Inspirieren	Erweitern
Kalkulieren	Klären	Erzielen
Konstruieren	Lehren	Gründen
Lösen	Motivieren	Konzipieren
Montieren	Repräsentieren	Lösen
Neu gestalten	Teilnehmen	Überzeugen
Programmieren	Überprüfen	Verdoppeln
Zusammenstellen	Unterstützen	Vermehren



Active verbs for applications in English

Management	Communication	Research
Administer	Address	Clarify
Analyse	Author	Collect
Assign	Co-author	Critique
Consolidate	Collaborate	Diagnose
Coordinate	Correspond	Evaluate
Delegate	Develop	Examine
Develop	Direct	Extract
Direct	Influence	Identify
Evaluate	Interpret	Inspect
Execute	Lecture	Interpret
Organise	Mediate	Inspire
Plan	Moderate	Investigate
Prioritise	Negotiate	Organise
Recommend	Persuade	Review
Reorganise	Promote	Summarise
Review	Propose	Survey
Supervise	Publicise	Systemise

Active verbs for applications in English

Techniques	Teaching / Coaching	Accomplishments
Assemble	Assist	Achieve
Build	Clarify	Complete
Calculate	Coach	Convince
Compute	Counsel	Discover
Conceptualise	Demonstrate	Double
Design	Educate	Effect
Devise	Facilitate	Eliminate
Engineer	Familiarise	Expand
Fabricate	Guide	Found
Maintain	Inspire	Improve
Operate	Motivate	Increase
Perform	Participate	Initiate
Pinpoint	Provide	Introduce
Program	Reinforce	Invent
Remodel	Support	Launch
Repair	Teach	Reduce
Solve	Verify	Resolve

Sample cover letter – structure

Contact details

- First name, last name
- Full home address
- One phone number
- Email

Company address

- Correct and complete name of the company
- Name of the contact person, if available

Place and date

Subject heading

- State the job title and a reference number, if available. Example:

- Application for “Change Management”
- Consultant job – your ad on ETH get hired
- Job ad on your homepage – “Consultant, ref. 42810CH”

Salutation

If you know the contact person’s name, address the letter to this individual. Otherwise, use the salutation “Dear Sir or Madam”.

Closing and signature

- “Sincerely yours”, “Yours sincerely”, or “Sincerely”.
- If it is a digital application, you can dispense with a handwritten signature or insert a scanned signature

Enclosures

The term “Enclosed” is outdated and no longer used.

Jane Doe
Nellenstrasse 231
CH-8245 Feuerthalen
Phone: +41 52 367 63 47
Email: max.muster@ethz.ch

Management Consulting AG
Ms Felicitas Braun
Viktoriastrasse 15
P.O. Box
3013 Bern

Zurich, 27 October 2017

Application for the position of Junior Consultant, ID # 293754

Dear Ms Braun,

Section 1: Lorem ipsum ut quod ferri definiebas quo, ius graeci laboramus honestatis, id ius nullam soluta partiendo. Duo te corpora prodesset positionum velit doctus an quo, id inani clita. No usu saperet appareat probatus, usu ipsum intellegebat ex.

Section 2: Dico Graecis copiosae per cu, ex eros intellegebat nec, ad mea debet oporteat repudiandae. Id vim graeci molestie takimata, quo nostrum conceptam an. Mei sale dicam eu. Sit porro concludaturque ex. Summo mundi mei ad. Soluta facilis eam no, facilisis pertinacia eu cim. Graece suscipit quo at, nominavi salutatus cu mei. Qui ut illum partem. Cu prima idque aperiri mei, sed modo interpretaris ut. Sea dicta eloquiam id, ea cum.

Section 3: Cu possit fient intellegebat qui. Mei in vocent definiebas, cu assum convenire necessitatibus has. Vis verear quaestio accommodare no, id vis repudiare didi. Et quo vidit dicam dolore, in sed velit eripuit pertinax. Eam ea dicitat zzril, quo aeterno comprehensam cu, his in enim vocent definiebas. Vivendo intellegat sea ut, et liber docendi.

Yours sincerely,
Jane Doe



Sample cover letter – contents

Again, you should summarize your achievements and motivation in a few short and precise sentences in your cover letter. This is by no means an easy task. Application guides suggest that you will have to put in around a full day's work to write your first good cover letter. Our experience bears this out.

It is very important that you align your cover letter with the job you are seeking. You will have to do more than just restate the bullets in your CV as sentences – provide additional information and describe the highlights of your profile that make you an interesting candidate for the job and company.

Section 1: YOU (the company)

- What do I know about the company?
- What fascinates me about the company and job?

Be sure to avoid superficial opening lines like, "I am hereby applying for the job advertised on ETH get hired." Rather than lifting passages verbatim from the company website, put some thought into why you are interested in this enterprise. Describe your reasons in brief sentences. It is the personal touch that makes your message authentic.

Example:

"Management Consulting AG has earned its reputation with innovative strategy projects. I relish the opportunity to put my skills to work in very different projects for various companies and to find solutions in collaboration with customers."

Section 2: ME (my qualifications as a candidate)

- Why am I a viable candidate?
- What qualifications do I have for the advertised job?
- Where did I acquire and prove my skills?

Describe your current job or situation and address the criteria described, required and desired in the ad. Citing the criteria in the job description, provide examples of where and how you have performed these tasks. Do not just list the skills and requirements of this position in your cover letter without providing specific examples. Also avoid using simple phrases such as "I am communicative", "a team player" and the like; instead, illustrate these qualities with real-world examples.



Jane Doe
 Nelkenstrasse 231
 CH-8245 Feuerthalen
 Phone: +41 52 367 83 47
 Email: max.muster@ethz.ch

Management Consulting AG
 Ms Felicitas Braun
 Viktoriastrasse 15
 P.O. Box
 3013 Bern

Zurich, 27 October 2017

Application for the position of Junior Consultant, ID # 293754

Dear Ms Braun,

Section 1: Lorem ipsum ut quod ferri definiebas quo, ius graeci laboramus honestatis, id ius nullam soluta partiendo. Duo te corpora prodesset posidonium velit doctus an quo, id inani clita. No usu saperet appareat probatus, usu ipsum intellegebat ex.

Section 2: Dico Graecis copiosae per cu, ex eros intellegebat nec, ad mea debet oporteat repudiandae. Id vim graeci molestie takmata, quo nostrum conceptam an. Mei sale dicam eu. Sit porro concludaturque ex. Summo mundi mei ad. Soluta facilis eam no, facilisis pertinacia eu cim. Graece suscipit qo at, nominavi salutus cu mei. Qui ut illum partem. Cu prima idque aperiri mei, sed modo interpretaris ut. Sea dicta eloqueniam id, ea cum.

Section 3: Cu possit fereat intellegebat qui. Mei in vocent definiebas, cu assum convenire necessitatibus has. Vis verear quaestio accommodare no, id vis repudiare dide. Et quo vidit dicam dolore, in sed velit eripuit pertinax. Eam ea dicat zzril, quo aeterno comprehensam cu, his in enim vocent definiebas. Vivendo intellegat sea ut, et liber docendi.

Yours sincerely,
 Jane Doe

Example: "During my internship at XY, I learned to quickly get acquainted with unfamiliar topics and to work in an international team. I was also able to further develop my presentation skills when interacting with customers."

Section 3: WE (closing, request)

- How do I wish to sign off?
- What is the next step?

A cover letter usually ends with a word of thanks and a show of interest in a meeting to learn more about the company and job.

Examples:

- "I look forward to meeting you in person and learning more about the job, tasks and team in an interview."
- "I would be happy to talk to you personally and look forward to learning more about the job and its requirements."

Application channels

Most companies tell job applicants to apply by email or online; that is, via the company's application platform. These days, there is very little demand for applications sent by postal mail.

When applying via a company's online platform, attach your CV and cover letter as a document in the desired file format whenever you can. This is the only way you have to determine the look and feel of your message so that it stands out among the sameness dictated by a predetermined format. Then use the "Remarks/Message" box to politely draw attention to your cover letter and other attachments.

ATS software – what is it?

An applicant tracking system (ATS) serves to manage job applications. Many large companies have been using an ATS for years to keep track of thousands of applications; now SMEs are also starting to integrate these systems into their processes.

This means that your personal data, contact information, experience and education, CV and cover letter will be uploaded to a company database as soon as you apply online.

An ATS helps HR staff do things like publish job ads on its website and on job portals, and screen, document and sort applications. Companies also use an ATS to do other things like send automated notifications to applicants to let them know that their application has been received, to conduct online tests, to schedule interviews, and to send rejection messages.



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→ Tips: Online applications

- First read through the online form. Gather up all the information you will need before you start filling in the form (you may not be able save data before completing the form).
- Format the requested documents as instructed.
- Check all documents that are to be attached for completeness and proper grammar and spelling, particularly the company's name and address and the name of the contact person.
- Check everything on the form for proper grammar and spelling before sending it in.
- If possible, print out the completed form and file it with your application records.

→ Tips: Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

- Do not put contact information in a header because the software may be set so that a document's headers and footers are not displayed.
- If possible, use standard fonts like Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Tahoma or Verdana. Unusual or rarely used fonts could be rejected by the ATS software.
- The font size should be at least 11 pt, not smaller.
- Do not use extravagant formatting, graphics, images or logos.
- Do not format information in tables as these may go unrecognized.



An ATS can also automatically filter and preselect applications according to criteria such as keywords, skills, previous employer, work experience and qualifications.

Keywords really are essential because these systems are so widely used. These could be terms that appear in the requirements of the job ad, or they are used as standard vocabulary in the industry and profession. You should in any case seek to identify the key words that are relevant to your application and use these terms in your cover letter and CV. The LinkedIn and Xing social media profiles of the target company's employees are also good sources of keywords. They can also be found in the job and task descriptions.

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Application documents checklist

The following tables recap key important points in your application documents – use them as a checklist when re-viewing your applications before submitting them.

	General checklist for application documents	Checked?
Application documents	Meet the company's requirements (email, online, etc.)	☐
	Save all documents as separate PDF files (CV, cover letter, certificates...)	☐
	Documents are all attributable to you by name (e.g. cv_janedoe.pdf, coverletter_doe.pdf)	☐
	Review all files for completeness before submitting them	☐
	Send only files with certificates, evidence of employment, etc. mentioned in the CV	☐
	Have someone else proofread spelling and grammar	☐

	General checklist for application documents	Checked?
Application via email	Include your contact details in the signature when applying via email	☐
	Write a short, formal email drawing attention to the attached files	☐
	State in the subject line what this is about: e.g. "Application for a job as a development engineer for turbines"	☐
	If you catch a mistake after sending the email, correct it immediately with a friendly follow-up email	☐
Managing your documents	Keep track of all your applications and save the job ads and contact persons	☐
	It is important that you have both at hand if you are invited to an interview	☐

	CV checklist	Checked?
Contact details	First name, last name	☐
	Full home address, incl. the country	☐
	Phone number (mobile)	☐
	Email address	☐
Personal information	Date of birth	☐
	Nationality (residence permit, if applicable)	☐
	Marital status (optional)	☐
Photograph	Business formal attire suitable to the position	☐
Education	Secondary school diploma and university degrees (most recent first)	☐
	A complete record of months and years	☐
	If you disclose final grades, state them for all university degrees and school diplomas	☐
	Uniform structure (name of school, title of degree, etc.)	☐

	CV checklist	Checked?
Work experience	List all relevant positions	☐
	A complete record of months and years	☐
	Describe activities and responsibilities with at least two bullet points	☐
	Uniform structure (name of employer, job title or function, etc.)	☐
Language skills	State your native language	☐
	Indicate the skill level clearly and consistently for all languages	☐
	List language studies abroad	☐
Computer skills	List all relevant skills	☐
	Specify the level according to job requirements	☐
Hobbies	Listed	☐
References	Note: available on request	☐



	CV checklist	Checked?
Military service	Indicated separately	☐
	In the same structure as education or work experience	☐
Continuing education	A complete record of months and years	☐
	In the same structure as education	☐
Scholarships, awards	Listed	☐
Extracurricular activities	Listed	☐
Knowledge of methods	For R&D jobs or where relevant	☐
Select publications	Relevant only for doctoral students, post-docs	☐
Number of pages	Bsc, msc students max. 2 pages	☐
	Doctoral students, post-docs max. 3 pages	☐
Contents	Use keywords found in the job ad and in the company's vocabulary	☐

	Checklist for the cover letter	Checked?
Contact details	First name, last name	☐
	Full home address, incl. the country	☐
	Phone number (mobile)	☐
	Email address	☐
Company address	Correct company name	☐
	Contact person, if known	☐
	Full address	☐
Place and date	Up to date	☐
Subject line	Proper job title, reference number, etc.	☐
Contents	YOU – ME – WE structure	☐
Length	No more than one page	☐
Spelling and grammar	Checked by other people	☐

Applying abroad

There is little difference in the content of applications within Europe. In Switzerland and elsewhere, the focus is on providing a concise overview of accomplishments and the motivation for the application. However, the formal details of applications vary from country to country and need to be taken into account. Consult local universities' career service websites to learn more.

Applying in the USA

There is no fundamental difference between the content of American resumes and cover letters and European applications. However, you should be aware that the priorities are different from those in our latitudes.

As a rule, you will submit only your resume and a cover letter for a non-academic job.

Like a European CV, the US resume is divided into sections by topic:

- No longer than one page
- Contact details
- Heads up: Applications in the USA do not include personal details such as a photograph, nationality, marital status, sex or date of birth.
- Education: Mention exceptional achievements and put foreign grades into perspective by specifying the highest achievable grade (e.g. GPA (grade point average): 5.8/6.0) or quantify your performance as in "top 5% of the class".
- Work experience: Focus on actions and outcomes (projects, activities, results), e.g. "Assessed profitability of expansion strategy in the biotech industry; the results were used by the client to make market entry decisions".
- Language and computer skills
- Other activities (hobbies, voluntary/community work)
- Awards/honours

To learn more about applications in the USA, we recommend that you read the MIT Career Handbook (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). You will find it online at: <https://gecd.mit.edu/resources/career-handbook>.





Interview

How you present yourself

Congratulations! Your application was persuasive and the employer wishes to meet you. This probably makes you one of the top five or ten candidates that are usually selected from a pool of many applicants. You can be proud of this achievement, as you are now a great deal closer to your goal. But the most important part still lies ahead – the interview. Your goal in the interview is to confirm the good impression created by your application. In this section, we want to show you how to best prepare for your interview, what questions to expect, and what to do after the interview. A few days before the interview, be sure to take plenty of time to work through the following checklists and questions.

Different types of interviews

Interview techniques vary. When you get invited to an interview, you may encounter a combination of methods rather than just one. To be well-prepared for the discussion, it will benefit you to understand the fundamentals of the different styles and techniques. An overview and brief explanation of the most important and most common types of interviews follows.

Interviews are usually conducted in a structured, semi-structured or unstructured way. So, what does that mean?

A **fully structured interview** is scripted – all questions and the sequence are predefined, and all applicants for a given job are asked the same questions. This method gives the company a good way of comparing candidates. It will feel more like a question-and-answer session than a discussion. If you find yourself in this situation, make sure your answers tell the interviewer everything you want to convey because there will be few or no follow-up questions.

Most questions in **semi-structured interviews** are scripted, but their order may be changed and questions may be omitted and added during the interview. Most job interviews follow this pattern. If your interviewer asks scripted questions, but also responds to your answers and occasionally follows up on your answers, than this is a semi-structured session.





In an **unstructured interview**, interviewers do not have scripted questions; they respond intuitively to you and your profile. It feels more like a conversation that unfolds naturally. Entirely unstructured interviews are rare. If you find that your interviewers do not have scripted questions, you can steer the conversation in a certain direction. The interviewers, too, can dive deeper into topics and spend more time following up on your replies.

Screening or pre-screening interviews

These types of interviews are usually shorter. They serve to discover if a candidate has the right motivation and meets the fundamental requirements for a job. Usually conducted by phone or video link, these are often the first interviews in the application process. Screening interviews are often conducted by recruiters and HR managers, so be prepared to answer the usual questions about yourself and your motivation, goals and basic qualifications. The questions rarely venture into deeply technical territory.

Phone interview

Keep the following in mind for a phone interview:

- Prepare just like you would for a face-to-face interview.
- Be wide awake and alert even if you are conducting the interview from your living room.
- Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted or disturbed by others.
- Keep your CV in sight and have paper and a pen ready to take notes.
- Make sure you have a good connection, use a landline if available, and switch off call waiting and the like to make sure nothing interferes with your conversation.
- Do not eat, smoke or chew gum during the interview.
- Try to smile – we can hear a smile in someone's voice as it changes the tone for the better. Some people find it helpful to stand or walk around the room during an important phone call. This can also make your voice sound more powerful.
- Speak clearly and do not rush your words. Give some audible feedback during the interview, for example, by saying “Mmmh”, “I understand”, or the like when the interviewer offers more information about the job.



Video-Interview

A video interview usually consists of a set of pre-recorded questions for you to answer using your computer's camera and microphone. It can also be a live interview via Skype or similar software. In addition to the points made above, keep the following in mind for a video interview:

- Dress appropriately as you would for a face-to-face interview.
- Pick a quiet, neutral spot where you will not be disturbed. Places like your shared kitchen are not the best choice; the interviewer may well be distracted by the environment.
- Make sure you have a good internet connection and try your webcam and microphone beforehand to confirm that they work.
- Rather than staring at your tabletop or studying your notes, look into the camera during the interview or when answering questions. During a live interview, try to maintain eye contact with the interviewer.

Technical interviews and questions

Technical interviews are usually conducted by prospective line managers or team members. They focus on your technical skills and knowledge. To prepare for an interview with a prospective superior, be ready to answer questions about all technical requirements set out in the job description and to demonstrate your technical knowledge, for example, by describing your master's thesis or dissertation.

Competency based interviews and questions

The premise for this interview method is that a past behaviour is an indicator of a candidate's future conduct. These questions address competencies that are essential to the advertised job and ask for specific examples. The interviewer may ask you something like, "Describe a situation where you had to make a difficult decision that turned out to be wrong."

To answer these questions well, you should prepare examples of all the required competencies set out in the job description. Use the STAR method to do this (see the chapter entitled [Analysis → What am I good at? – STAR method](#)).

Situational interviews/questions

Although situational questions are much like skill-based questions, they focus on a hypothetical situation rather than a past experience of yours. For example, "Imagine you have a deadline in three days; today you realise that you probably will not meet it. What are you going to do?"

Stress interviews and questions

Rare in Switzerland, this interview technique is usually only used for high-pressure, very stressful jobs. However, interviewers may want to see how you deal with pressure and stress. To this end, they could ask you a provocative question or put you under pressure in some other way. One technique is to repeatedly interrupt you. It is important to stay calm and focused in these situations and avoid being angry, aggressive or defensive.



Preparation

Always bear in this mind when preparing for an interview: If you are invited to an interview, this company sees you as a viable candidate. Businesses have no time or interest in interviewing applicants who are unsuitable for the position. If you keep this in mind during your preparations, it will affect your attitude and behaviour during the interview. You will start to see interviewers as “allies” who are pursuing the same goal as you. Both sides want a good interview and the best match of requirements, qualifications and expectations.

Add these points to your list of important to-dos when preparing for an interview:

- Learn as much as you can about the company beforehand: Read press releases and annual reports on the website and research the trade press.
- Build on your research findings to consider what questions you have about the company. Jot these down on a notepad and take it to the interview with you.
- Find out who will be interviewing you and in what language; research the interviewers' backgrounds (position, CV, skills).
- Reread the job ad thoroughly. Make a list of the stated job requirements, the skills you have to tackle these tasks, and specific examples of these skills in action (see the chapter entitled *Analysis* → *What am I good at?* – *STAR method*).
- A few days before the interview, ask friends or family members to conduct a mock interview with you. Go through each of the interview stages, answering every set of questions just like you would in the actual interview.

Etiquette

Although there is no hard-and-fast rule as to how you should dress for an interview, it is definitely in your best interest to be well-groomed and look professional. This shows respect for the company and interviewers and sends the message that you are serious about this application. It is better to err on the side of being slightly overdressed than showing up in all too casual attire.

If you are unaccustomed to wearing a suit, trouser suit or jacket and skirt, get comfortable in your business attire by wearing it once or twice before the interview. You definitely want to feel at ease during the interview.

→ Tips: Preparing for the interview

- Prepare the application documents and take a copy of each to the interview, including any certificates or grades that you have yet to add to your application.
- Study the directions, train or bus timetables carefully to ensure you will arrive on time rather than stressed out in a hurried rush.
- Bring a pad and pen to take notes during the conversation.
- Note the company's and your contact person's phone numbers for use in the event of emergency.





The sequence and potential questions

There are no fixed procedural rules for interviews. However, you can expect most HR managers to prefer a structured or semi-structured discussion.

The order can vary from interviewer to interviewer, but most sessions follow a pattern in line with the topics to be addressed:

- Warm up
- The interviewer presents the company and the job to be filled.
- The applicant introduces herself/himself and is interviewed.
- Explore the details of the job.
- The applicant asks questions.
- You may even start discussing the terms of a contract.
- Wrap up

Warming up

The company's representatives first want to break the ice and gain an initial impression of you. Be sure to greet all interviewers in an open and friendly manner and with a firm handshake. The various parties will introduce themselves and one will explain the order of the interview. Be attentive and friendly even at this early stage. And remember to watch your body language.

More on the company and job

Your interviewer will usually describe the company and the position to be filled before the questions start. Listen attentively and show you are interested. If you have any questions, make a note and address them at the end of the interview or ask politely if you may raise them immediately.



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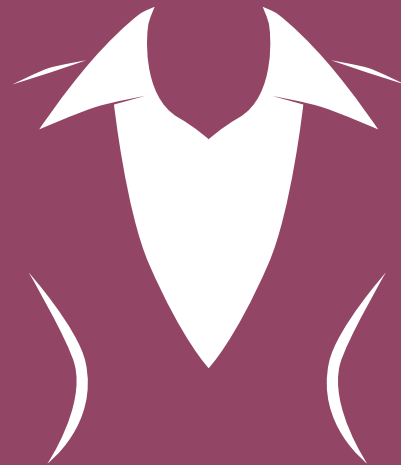
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Your turn to present yourself

The actual interview commences; now it is time for you to sell your skills and strengths to the interviewers. Keep it natural, answering the questions briefly and to the point. Strike a clear, friendly tone and do not rush your words.

The following examples aim to help you prepare yourself well for this interview stage. Come up with a good answer to every question and rehearse its delivery with friends or your family in a mock interview. The better prepared you are for the actual questions, the less inhibited and the more comfortable you will be talking to your interviewers.

Below are some typical questions you should be prepared for.

Background

- Talk about your CV, emphasizing what you feel are the important points.
- What motivated you to choose your particular field of study? Why did you choose that particular university?
- How would you describe your attitude to academic life?
- What aspects of your field did you specialize in, and why?
- Share some insight into your bachelor's or master's thesis.
- How do you see your future career, and why?
- Do you think that your studies have prepared you well for your professional future, and in what way?

Motives

- Why did you apply for a job with us? What do you know about our company?
- Do you have any special connection with our company or products?
- What interests you particularly about this job?



Motivation

- Why should we employ you rather than someone else?
- What achievements are you particularly proud of?
- What has priority for you at work?
- Have you ever been dissatisfied with your performance and how did you deal with it?
- If you got the job, what would you do in the first 30 days?
- Where do you want to be in five year's time?

Personal and social background

- How do you spend your free time?
- In a nutshell, how would you describe yourself?
- What do you think your last boss would say about you?
- Have you ever had difficulties getting along with people, and what consequences did you draw from that?
- What three positive character traits would you like to further develop?

Professional skills and inclinations

- How well do you know our profession?
- Which technical books and articles have you read recently?
- In which fields do you still have gaps and what do you intend to do about them?

Challenges

- Why is there a gap in your CV?
- Why is the grade for your bachelor's degree so poor?
- You realise that it is impossible to meet the deadline for a job because members of your team are not reliable. What do you do?
- If I were your boss and I asked you to do something you had reservations about, what would you do?
- Do you have other applications currently under consideration?

Competency-based questions

- Describe a situation in which you had to work in a team.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to assert yourself.
- Can you give me an example of where you had to explain something complicated to another person in easily understood terms?

Situational and hypothetical questions

- Picture this: Two of your teammates do not get along; each approaches you on their own to complain about the other person. How do you react?
- What would you do if you were a team leader and a customer called you to complain about one of your employee's behaviour?
- If you were our company's sales manager, what would you do first to boost our sales?

Exploring the details of the job

After the prospective employer has asked all the questions, he will probably describe in detail the main and secondary tasks of the job at hand. This may include targets, requirements, development possibilities and on-boarding. Again, listen attentively and with interest, and ask questions if you can.

Applicant's questions

At this stage of the interview, you will be given the opportunity to ask any questions you may still have. This is your cue to take out the notepad with the questions you prepared earlier and demonstrate that you did your homework for this interview. You may ask any product-related, job-related or technical questions that were not answered earlier in the interview. Salary is a topic best left to the company representatives to bring up. Be prepared to give an annual salary range when asked about your expectations.



Examples of an applicant's questions

- How does the department fit into the overall organization?
- What departments will I be working with?
- What is the average seniority and educational background of my prospective colleagues?
- How will I be on-boarded?
- What other projects do you have planned?
- May I ask you how long you have been with the company and how you would describe your experience?
- Can you tell me something about your corporate and management culture?
- What do you expect of me in the first three months?
- Would it be possible to see the prospective workplace and meet team members?
- What further training programs do you offer?
- What are the next steps? Will there be further interviews?
- By when can I expect to hear from you?

Discussing contract terms

Once you have asked your questions, the HR manager may explain the standard terms of employment with the company. This could happen even if the salary has yet to be discussed. Listen closely, for you are getting key information about a prospective employment contract, such as:

- A description of your functions
- Earliest starting date
- Probation period
- Notice periods
- Leave time
- Salary policy
- Social security benefits

If any of this goes unmentioned, it is best not to bring it up. Often these talking points – and the salary, especially – are not discussed in detail until you have been selected as a candidate for the position.

Wrapping up the interview

First impressions count; last impressions last. Be as mindful about your conduct at the end of the interview as you were at the beginning. It is important to arrange the next steps, particularly who calls who. If this is not clear, ask which of you will be getting in touch. Thank your interviewers for the interesting discussion and for their time.

→ Tips: Things to do throughout the interview

- Be true to yourself in every situation and authentic in each answer. There is nothing wrong with admitting to the odd occasion where you failed to think about something, or didn't know or do something.
- Watch your body language, facial expressions and gestures.
- Maintain eye contact with all interviewers.
- Pay close attention to and show interest in what your interviewers are saying. Look them in the eye and signal that you are listening attentively by nodding or saying things like "I understand".
- Think before you reply; ask the speaker to repeat a question that you did not quite understand.
- Keep it short and be specific.
- Always use examples to show what you are good at and what you want. Take every opportunity to tie your answers in with your background and CV, and be sure to mention extracurricular activities.
- Skip the personal stuff. Problems, worries, concerns or negative experiences have no place in a job interview.
- Let your interviewer lead the conversation and do not interrupt.
- Speak in the active voice with strong verbs and keep it positive and optimistic.



Body language

Body language sends a powerful message – we often underestimate how much we are saying without speaking. This is why we want to give you some key pointers about body language.

Smile

Try to smile even if you are nervous. This demonstrates a friendly, open attitude that can have positive impact on the course of the conversation.

Posture

Adopt an open and alert posture, keeping your arms and hands on the table rather than folded over your chest. You may hold a pen if this calms you down.

Handshake

Greet your counterpart with a confident, firm handshake.



Eye contact

Make eye contact. It is through eye contact that we establish a connection with others and are perceived as an individual.

Voice

Pay attention to your voice and try not to speak too softly even if you are a shy person.

Companies' assessment criteria

Applicants never see what goes on behind the scenes of the selection process and are often left in the dark about what makes or breaks an interview. All you can do is give it your very best; the final decision will inevitably be based on an aggregate of impressions.

To give you an idea of what plays into this decision, let us recap the key assessment criteria:

- What motivated you to apply for this job?
- What are your professional and soft skills?
- What impression do your appearance, comportment and manners make?
- What are your character traits?
- How open are you to cooperation and teamwork?
- Are your ideas about the job realistic?
- Do your statements sound genuine and truthful?
- Have you given serious consideration to the question of why you are suitable for the position?
- How perceptive are you?
- How well are you able to express yourself; how strong are your communication skills?
- How does your overall behaviour come across?
- Are you a good fit for the company, institution or team?



→ Tips: What to do after the interview

- Recap the interview in your mind. How did it go? Were there any unexpected questions? What went well; what could you do better next time?
- Use your wit and intuition to assess the big picture: On the whole, did you feel comfortable? Did your potential superiors and staff colleagues seem likable? Did the described position match the expectations raised by the job ad? What is your gut telling you: Would you accept an offer?
- Follow up on the next day by emailing some brief feedback to your contact person. Thank them again for the interview. If you still wish to pursue this job, reiterate your interest and let them know that you look forward to hearing from them again soon.
- If you have not heard from the company by the agreed date, get in touch with your contact person.
- If you get a job offer, you can ask for a day or two to consider it if you need this time or have questions that you want to clarify. Use this time to discuss and clear up any doubts with a company representative before accepting the offer.

Starting salaries

Differences by industry, company and position

The amount of your starting salary depends on the industry, the size of the company and your position. There are also strong regional differences within Switzerland.

When you consider a salary offer, you need to look at the whole package. The total compensation can roughly be divided into the following components:

- Base pay (annual salary, paid out in 12 or 13 instalments)
- Performance bonus
- Fringe benefits (non exhaustive):
 - Pension fund contributions
 - Paid vacation days
 - Public transportation allowance (e.g. half-fare travel card)
 - Discount on products

→ Example A

CHF 70,000 annual salary
+ 25 vacation days
+ discount on company products
+ discount in the company cafeteria
+ employer pension contribution above the legal minimum
+ overtime compensation
+ further education
≈ CHF 95,000

→ Example B

CHF 82,000 annual salary
+ 20 vacation days
+ minimum employer pension contribution mandated by law
+ discount on company products
+ no overtime compensation
≈ CHF 85,000



There are all kinds of statistics about starting salaries to be had, but these should serve merely as indicators. You can find them on the ETH website (Studies/Bachelor/Advice/Comparing degree programs), at Swissengineering, Swiss ICT and so on.

Compensation is just one of many criteria when choosing an employer. The tasks, team, company culture, development opportunities and further education programs are other important aspects to consider when you make your decision. And what matters most to you is very much a personal thing.

Alternative selection procedures

Tests and assessment centers

Before you are invited to a face-to-face meeting or an initial phone interview, you may be asked to take one or more **online tests** as part of a preselection process. There are many different types of tests that companies use to suit their purposes and the position to be filled. Some gauge personality, cultural fit, performance, or numerical and verbal skills; others test candidates using case studies. There are many online platforms where you can try out these tests. It pays to take some practice tests – then you can step up to a real test situation with the peace of mind that comes with knowing what to expect. Keep it authentic when taking personality tests; do not answer questions the way you think the company expects you to. It is hard to stay consistent if you do this in a test, and the skewed results are of no use to anyone. Stay calm and focused in performance tests. They often leave you little or no time to answer all the questions to see if your concentration slips under pressure.

Some firms use **assessment centers** to find potential employees. Companies that go down this route to select employees want to get a big-picture look at their applicants. They are interested not only in technical qualifications, but also in learning more about candidates' personalities.

Large firms especially use assessment centers to recruit young talent. This intensive recruiting method has the advantage that it serves to assess several candidates simultaneously (group assessments as opposed to individual assessments) as they interact with one another. A team of HR officers and line managers monitor the candidates for a day or two, observing how they present themselves, communicate, behave in teams, and tackle problems. This situation puts applicants under time pressure and constant observation to test their endurance and ability to cope with stress and frustration.



Assessment criteria

Assessment centers serve the sole purpose of evaluating candidates. To this end, they often assess the following key competencies:

- Analytical and strategic thinking
- Problem solving
- Planning and organising
- Initiative and decision making
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Communicating and presenting
- Flexibility and resilience

Try to sell yourself well without exaggerating and be as natural as you can.

→ Tips: Preparing assessments using online resources

Here are some examples of online platforms where you can view and practice taking various tests or find more information:

→ Case studies

www.preplounge.com
<https://graduateconsultingclub.org/>

→ Assessment centers

<https://www.shldirect.com/en/assessment-advice/about-assessments/>

→ Other types of tests

<https://practicereasoningtests.com/>
<https://www.einstellungstests-ueben.de/>

Structure of assessment centers

Assessment centers may incorporate the following components:

- Presentation
- Group discussion
- Case study
- In-tray exercise
- Conversation with a client or an employee
- Interview or case interview

Assessment centers vary from company to company and may include other components such as personality, ability and concentration tests.

Presentation

The company wants to test your communication skills with this exercise. You receive a topic and some time to prepare, after which you have to present something on the topic. Often you are given a standpoint and have to argue persuasively in favour of it.

Here is how to make your presentation a success:

- Take a differentiated approach to your topic and structure your arguments logically.
- Try to present your thoughts in a lively, entertaining manner, and smile while speaking.
- Maintain eye contact with your audience.
- If you suddenly draw a blank, pause to think of something constructive to say rather than “um-ing” and “er-ing”.
- Use your time wisely.





Group discussion

A group discussion can address a global topic (e. g. “Smoking ban in the workplace”, “Pros and cons of phasing out nuclear energy”) or a specific business problem that needs to be solved. Participants are at times assigned specific roles.

In a group discussion, it is best to:

- Look at the person who is speaking
- Stay attentive
- Respond in a calm, level-headed way
- Be enthusiastic
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Argue rationally and do not get emotional
- Show that you are eager to promote harmony in the discussion group
- Take others’ arguments seriously and expand on them constructively
- Keep your arguments balanced
- Show that you understand others’ viewpoints before expressing your opinion
- Admit mistakes in your thinking: “that’s right; I didn’t think of that”
- Try not to come across as a know-it-all who has an answer for everything
- Throw your opinions into the ring for discussion: “I’d like to know what you think of this”



Case studies

Case studies test your analytical, logical and organizational skills. They are often interactive, but may also be an individual assignment. They usually deal with a complex problem involving one of the company's fields of activity. The object is to analyse the problem and develop potential solutions within the allotted time. The object of a case study is not to find the "right solution" in a given scenario; it is to develop approaches to solving problems that demonstrate your ability to employ various skills in completing the assignment. This evaluation also looks at your ability to concentrate, analyse and quickly grasp complex situations, and work under pressure. Group assignments serve to assess you as a team player.

When tackling a case study, methodically analyse the task, carefully read and understand the assignment, put the information in order, and take all aspects into account. If it involves direct interaction, always share your train of thought with your interview partners. In group exercises, it is best to map out your path with documentation; evaluators can then see clearly how you arrived at your solution.

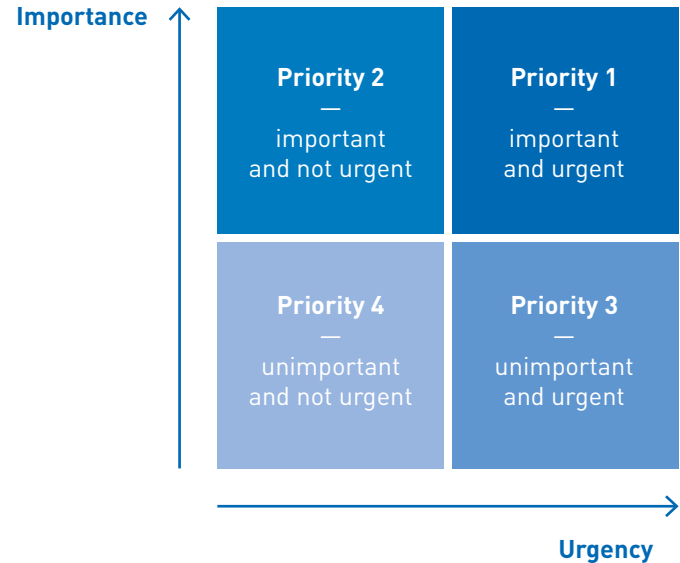
→ Tips: Case studies

- Take notes.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Ask questions.
- Listen carefully to the answers.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Think out loud.
- Map out your approach clearly and logically. Use frameworks and concepts to structure your solution when it is beneficial to do so.
- Briefly summarize your results.
- Take your time.

In-tray exercise

The point of this exercise is to allow the observers to assess your ability to work under time pressure and prioritize tasks. You are given a pile of documents to review and make decisions about. The challenge is to determine the order in which you would process the documents and to explain your priorities. Time pressure figures prominently in this exercise. You need to see the big picture and get the priorities straight – important and urgent matters come first.

The following decision-making matrix can be helpful for this exercise:



Conversation with a client or an employee (role play)

The idea behind role play is to put yourself in the position of an HR manager, a CEO, your superior or a team leader. You will have 5 to 15 minutes to prepare, after which you will act out a typical conflict situation with a company representative. You may have to fire, reprimand or otherwise criticize for a lack of motivation or the like. The pointers given for group discussions in the previous section also apply to role plays.

Interview

The assessment center interview is usually much like a “normal” interview (see the chapter entitled [Application → Interview](#)). But it could also be a stress interview and may focus on addressing a weakness or on posing provocative questions, e.g.:

- What speaks against our hiring you?
- What goals have you yet to attain in your (professional) life despite having resolved to achieve them?
- What is your greatest failure or disappointment, and what lesson did you learn from it?
- How do you define the terms “leadership”, “responsibility”, and “performance”?
- There seems to be no common thread running through your CV!

Do not let the questions in stress interviews throw you; just try to argue matter-of-factly. Bear in mind that your interviewer is pushing your buttons not to make a fool of you, but to see how well you stand up under pressure.

Summary

→ Tips: Assessment center

- Show up at the assessment center well-rested and comfortably but appropriately attired.
- Always be authentic; never put on an act for the observers.
- Make an effort to introduce yourself to the other participants before the exercises start.
- Stay open, friendly and alert.
- Tackle all assignments with a total focus and whole-hearted effort.
- Never allow yourself to be provoked; always respond in a businesslike, matter-of-fact way.
- There will be no feedback given during the assessment, but do not let that bother you.
- Let others finish speaking and maintain eye contact during discussions and team assignments.
- Bear in mind that you might also be observed during breaks and meals. Steer clear of complicated issues and politics when you are making small talk and keep it innocuous during discussions.

The actual application is the final step in this process. This is where all your efforts to analyse, explore and focus come together. First you need to know your skills, weaknesses and professional and personal interests and values; only then can you put together a purposeful application and prepare well for an interview.

Do not be discouraged by a rejection or a lack of response. You learn something new with each application, and success will soon follow with patience and proper preparation.



→ Tips: Application

- Know the value of your application documents: They decide if you will be deemed an interesting prospect and afforded the opportunity for an interview.
- Invest plenty of time and money in preparing your documents – the effort and expense will be worth it, particularly for your photograph.
- Show up for your interview well-prepared, properly attired and in a composed frame of mind.
- Take plenty of time to recap the interview and apply what you learned to be even better prepared for other interviews to come.
- Keep good track of your application process. Retain copies of job ads and set up an Excel file to list all contacts, applications, and the status of applications that are underway.

→ ETH Career Center offering: Application

- CV workshops and checks
- Interview/video interview training
- Presentations on applications, CVs, LinkedIn and job interviews

Information

www.careercenter.ethz.ch –
for students and doctoral students

Closing remarks

If you worked your way through this guide, you are sure to have learned a little more about yourself and your interests and skills. You also know how to gather information about the job market and prospective jobs, and present yourself well in your documents and interviews. We hope that the wealth of tips and pointers in this application guide will ease your transition into working life and get your career off to a great start.

Now it is your turn to get your feet wet, hop on your board, and ride the wind and waves. Even the well-trained surfer needs patience and strength when the weather changes quickly, a wave breaks sooner than expected, or the wind suddenly shifts. The job market is like that – despite the best preparation, some things are simply beyond our control. The economy runs hot and cold, sectors and companies are changing, and new fields of activity are emerging.

It will take a little luck to catch the wave at the right moment, to get that gust of wind in your sails that will send you off on the perfect ride.

We wish you all the luck in the world and every success as you embark on your career. And we are delighted to have helped you set off on your important journey.

Your ETH Career Center Team





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All our thanks goes to these four ETH students!

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