

Resumes & Cover Letters for Master's Students

Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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08/23

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Resumes and Cover Letters **for Master's Students**

What is the purpose of a resume?

A resume is a brief, informative summary of your abilities, education, and experience. It should highlight your strongest assets and skills and differentiate you from other candidates seeking similar positions. Although it alone will not get you a job or internship, a good resume is an important step toward obtaining an interview. Be sure to tailor your resume to the type of position you are seeking. This does not mean that all of your work history must relate directly, but your resume should reflect the kind of skills the employer values.

I'm planning on applying to several different types of jobs. Will I be expected to write different resumes for each one?

As always, it is important to think about your reader. Let's say you are receiving a master's degree in data science and are applying for quantitative positions in investment banks and generalist positions in big consulting firms. You will want to target each resume to the specific employer. For example, investment banks will be interested in your quantitative analysis skills, so you will want to be clear how you developed those skills in the course of your degree or internship experiences. Consulting firms will be concerned with how you've developed leadership and teamwork skills; in that case, you might want to include more information about your involvement with student groups, volunteer work, or internships that may have allowed you to develop these skills.

A friend of mine, who is in business school, told me I need to have a one-page resume. Is that true?

For most master's degree candidates, it is typical to have a one-page resume. Having a two-page resume may send a signal that you're "overqualified" or otherwise not fitting the mold of a typical candidate for entry to mid-level jobs. Normally two-page resumes are acceptable if you are advanced in your career, have years of experience, or have a PhD. For BA/BS, MA/MS, and MBA candidates, a one-page resume is the norm. When in doubt, ask one of the GSAS advisers.

Are there formatting guidelines I should keep in mind?

Stick to a common font like Times New Roman or Ariel, and avoid text boxes, underlining, or shading. Font size should be between 10 and 12 point and kept consistent throughout the document. Margins should be equal all the way around the page and should be at least three quarters of an inch in size.

Can someone at the Mignone Center for Career Success review my resume?

Yes. Each semester the Harvard Griffin GSAS advisers hold weekly drop-in hours for students interested in having their resumes critiqued. Students may also have their resumes reviewed as part of an advising appointment with a Harvard Griffin GSAS staff member (to schedule an appointment, visit our website and follow the directions on [Crimson Careers](#)).

Am I eligible for the Campus Interview Program at Harvard? How does it work?

Master's candidates in the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences are able to search for and apply to many campus interview program jobs and internships. However, students should be aware that the Campus Interview Program is primarily for entry-level hiring of undergraduates. Employers will indicate in their job description and requirements section whether or not they are willing to receive applications from GSAS master's students. In order to participate, all students must complete an orientation session on an annual basis to become familiar with the software used to handle the logistics of the program. These sessions can be found on our website under the "Events" tab. Remember 80% of jobs are found through networking, so be sure to check out our [Building Professional Connections](#) handout for more tips.

Consider describing your experiences with these action verbs:

Achievement

accelerated
accomplished
achieved
activated
attained
competed
earned
effected
elicited
executed
exercised
expanded
expedited
generated
improved
increased
insured
marketed
mastered
obtained
produced
reduced
reorganized
reproduced
restructured
simplified
sold
solicited
streamlined
succeeded
upgraded

Help/Teach

advised
clarified
coached
collaborated
consulted
counseled
educated
explained
facilitated
guided
helped
instructed
modeled
participated
taught
trained
tutored

Administrative

arranged
channeled
charted
collated
collected
coordinated
dispensed
distributed
established
executed
implemented
installed
maintained
offered
ordered
outlined
performed
prepared
processed
provided
purchased
recorded
rendered
served
serviced
sourced
supported

Lead/Manage

acquired
administered
approved
assigned
chaired
contracted
controlled
decided
delegated
directed
enlisted
governed
handled
initiated
instilled
instituted
managed
motivated
presided
recruited
retained
reviewed
selected
shaped
supervised

Communication

addressed
arbitrated
articulated
briefed
communicated
conducted
contacted
conveyed
corresponded
delivered
demonstrated
edited
entertained
interviewed
informed
lectured
mediated
negotiated
persuaded
presented
promoted
proposed
publicized
reported
represented
responded
suggested
translated
wrote

Plan/Organize

allocated
anticipated
arranged
catalogued
categorized
classified
collected
consolidated
convened
edited
eliminated
employed
gathered
grouped
monitored
organized
planned
regulated
scheduled
structured
summarized
targeted

Creative

authored
changed
conceived
constructed
created
developed
devised
drafted
established
formulated
founded
illustrated
influenced
introduced
invented
launched
originated
revamped
revised
staged
updated
visualized

Research/Analytical

assessed
compared
critiqued
defined
derived
detected
determined
discovered
evaluated
examined
explored
found
inspected
interpreted
investigated
located
measured
observed
predicted
rated
recommended
researched
reviewed
searched
studied
surveyed
verified

Financial

allocated
analyzed
appraised
audited
balanced
budgeted
calculated
compiled
computed
controlled
disbursed
estimated
figured
financed
forecasted
projected
reconciled
tabulated

Technical

adapted
adjusted
applied
built
computed
constructed
designed
diagnosed
engineered
experimented
maintained
modified
operated
prescribed
programmed
proved
reinforced
repaired
resolved
restored
solved
specified
systematized
tested

RESUME #1: Tobin is seeking a position in fundraising and program coordination at a non-profit organization. You will notice he focuses on fundraising, strategic thinking, research and grant management.

Tobin Fatin (He/Him/His)

54 Dunster Street • Cambridge, MA 02138 • 801-555-5555
xxxx@harvard.edu

EDUCATION

Harvard University Cambridge, MA
MA, Middle Eastern Studies May 20XX
MA Thesis: “Dancing Through the House of Many Mansions: *Dabkeh* in Contemporary Lebanon”
Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) Foreign Language & Area Studies recipient, CMES Summer Grant recipient

University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV
BA, Middle Eastern Studies, History, International Studies; Minor in Arabic May 20XX
Magna cum laude, Golden Key Scholar, Winner of Memorial Paper Competition

EXPERIENCE

The ADC Discrimination Committee Washington, DC
Development & Special Projects Coordinator February 20XX -Present

- Established fundraising goals, planned and administered quarterly fundraising campaigns, identified potential sponsors and managed terms of support.
- Developed organization’s strategic plan and annual objectives with president. Executed entire plan.
- Facilitated outreach efforts with 30+ high school, college, government and non-profit groups; developed and oversaw ADC’s monthly educational lecture series.
- Solicited donations by drafting proposals/appeals, maintained correspondence and negotiated terms of support.
- Managed and reviewed grant phases, and directed grant writer by communicating organizational needs.
- Oversaw Internship Program by reviewing applications, interviewing and selecting applicants, managing intern tasks/complaints, and arranging intern orientation/field trips/brown bags.

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) Washington, DC
Research Intern for the Program on Arab Politics June - September 20XX

- Drafted research memoranda for interviews and publications on subjects including human rights abuses in Syria, rise of opposition groups in Syria, and parliamentary elections in Egypt and Tunisia.
- Monitored key regional political developments such as the rise of the Ennahda Party and ISIS.

Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD) Washington, DC
Intern for the Center for the Study of Terrorist Radicalization (CSTR) May - August 20XX

- Performed research for appearances and publications on subjects including: NGOs in Somalia, economic and political instability in North and East Africa, radicalization in the Horn of Africa, and domestic counter-terrorism efforts.
- Reviewed and edited materials for Daveed Gartenstein-Ross’ publication *Bin Laden’s Legacy*.

Harvard University, Lecturer in Departments of Government & Economics Cambridge, MA
Research Assistant July 20XX - July 20XX

- Revised articles on topics including: identity formation, sectarianism, resource sharing groups and secularism.
- Reviewed and edited manuscript entitled: The Unmaking of Nation-States: Case Studies from the Middle East.

SKILLS

Language: Levantine Arabic, *Fluent*; Modern Standard Arabic, *Advanced*; Persian, *Intermediate*
Computer: Raiser’s Edge, WordPress

RESUME #2: Jose is applying for a data science position at a top tech firm. Since Jose's most relevant experience comes from their coursework, they include details on their projects in their experience section. The specific and detailed descriptions are appropriate given the technical nature of the jobs they are applying to.

JOSE ROBERTS (They/Them/Theirs)

54 Dunster Street Cambridge, MA 02138
(773) 999-4103 | joseroberts@harvard.edu

EDUCATION

Harvard University

Master of Science in Data Science

Cumulative GPA: 3.83 /4.00

- Honors: 2018 Recipient of Harper Educational Foundation Scholarship
- Relevant Coursework: Stochastic Optimization, Data Science I, Systems Development for Computational Science

Cambridge, MA
Expected May 20XX

University of Notre Dame

Bachelor of Science in Mathematics

Cumulative GPA: 3.90 /4.00

- Honors: The GE Prize for Excellence in Mathematics (20XX), University of Notre Dame Mathematics Scholar (20XX)
- Relevant Coursework: Probability Theory, Stochastic Modeling, Real Analysis, Numerical Analysis, Data Mining, Abstract Algebra, Differential Equations, Mathematical Statistics

Notre Dame, IN
Spring 20XX

PROJECT & RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Harvard University

Spotify Song Recommendation Project

- Trained random forest model to impute missing genre labels in Spotify's song database (119,064 songs)
- Built recommendation system using cosine similarity to choose similar songs added to a given playlist

Cambridge, MA
Fall 20XX

Harvard University, Data Science Capstone Project

Sentiment Analysis of Radiology Reports

- Built NLP tool for detection of presence/absence of medical conditions in ~20M free-text medical reports deployed via LSTMs in Keras.
- Achieved precision and recall levels of current industry standard of rule-based negations detections approaches.

Cambridge, MA
Fall 20XX

University of Notre Dame

Applications of Brownian Motion in Finance

- Applied Markov chains and random walks in Black-Scholes formula and geometric Brownian motion in Finance
- Presented results to audience of 20 at annual mathematics meeting.

Notre Dame, IN
Summer 20XX - Spring 20XX

University of Notre Dame, Department of Mathematics

Course Participant, Analysis on NBA Real Plus-Minus for 20XX-20XX Regular Seasons

- Applied multiple regression to examine relationship between players' performances and numerical variables.
- Built Python package implementing automatic differentiation.

Notre Dame, IN
Spring 20XX

LEADERSHIP

Harvard Square Homeless Shelter

Volunteer

- Serve food to 50+ homeless on a monthly basis. Prepare food, set up tables and greet attendees

Cambridge, MA
April 20XX-present

Peking University Chapter, Forum for American/Chinese Exchange at Notre Dame

Co-officer

- Organized 20XX China Conference at Peking University, attended by 40 representatives from U.S. and China

Beijing, China
Dec. 20XX - Dec. 20XX

SKILLS & INTERESTS

- Programming: Python (numpy, pandas, scikit-learn, pytorch), SQL, R, Bloomberg Terminal, MATLAB, Latex
- Language: Fluent in Korean and Chinese

RESUME #3: Hitomi is an alumna who sought a position in international business. You will notice she highlighted her research skills as well as her project management skills and experience working with diverse audiences.

HITOMI LEE (She/Her/Hers)

54 Dunster Street Cambridge, MA 02138

(617) 555-5555

xxxx@harvard.edu

EDUCATION

Harvard University

Cambridge, MA
May 20XX

MA, Regional Studies East Asia: Business and Economics Concentration

- Awards: Harvard Foreign Language and Area Studies Scholarship recipient, Summer Research Grant
- MA Thesis: The Failure of Regulatory Reform after the 20XX Beijing Stock Exchange Correction
- Relevant coursework: Econometrics, Upper-Level M.S. Mandarin, Economic History of the Far East, Energy Business and Geopolitics

Smith College

BA, East Asian Studies

Northampton, MA
May 20XX

WORK EXPERIENCE

The Corporate Executive Board

Senior Analyst

Arlington, VA
Aug 20XX-present

- Managed over 20 projects across geographically dispersed team
- Analyze business problems for clients at Fortune 500 companies using root cause analysis, hypothesis generation, and surveys. Conduct secondary research to supplement analyses
- Conduct interviews with and present research findings to senior executives and industry experts
- Create project deliverables including white papers, case studies, presentations, implementation tools, e-learning modules, and website pages
- Supervise junior colleagues' projects and development

Harvard University, Department of Economics

Teaching Assistant

Cambridge, MA
Spring 20XX

- Taught section of 30 students for the course: The Economics of Financial Markets
- 90% of students rated over 4.4/5.0 in course evaluations

Maguire Associates

Research Assistant, Market Research Division

Concord, MA
Oct 20XX-Apr 20XX

- Implemented and analyzed customized surveys probing strategic pricing, messaging, and branding for a higher education consulting firm
- Collected, processed, and analyzed data; performed secondary research to inform results
- Prepared, data checked, and edited tables, reports, online surveys, and client presentations
- Provided focus group coordination and management for over 10 projects

Office of Institutional Research, Smith College

Research Assistant

Northampton, MA
Mar 20XX - May 20XX

- Collaborated with senior research team to administer and interpret surveys
- Assisted with data processing and coding/interpreting survey responses
- Created, proofread, and edited reports and presentations for Senior Staff of the College

SKILLS

Computer: SPSS, STATA, Microsoft Access

Language: Five years studying Mandarin

RESUME #4: Michelle is seeking a position as a quantitative analyst in an investment bank. As such, she begins with her business experience and financial analysis skills. She also makes her research understandable to the layperson while emphasizing her analytical and communication skills. In addition, she is careful to highlight her student group involvement in the Leadership section and identifies her programming experience in a separate Skills section.

MICHELLE LU (She/Her/Hers)

54 Dunster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 • xxxx@fas.harvard.edu • (919) 555-6666

EDUCATION

Harvard University Cambridge, MA
Candidate for Master of Science in Computational Science and Engineering, GPA: 4.00/4.00
May, 20XX

Cornell University Ithaca, NY
Bachelor of Science in Mathematics (Distinction) and Economics (High Distinction) with
Concentration in Financial Economics, Minor in Statistical Science, GPA: 3.90/4.00
May 20XX
Phi Beta Kappa, magna cum laude, Dean's List with Distinction & Dean's List

BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

XXXX Seoul Office Seoul, Korea
Summer Intern, Banking & Finance 1 Division June-July 20XX

- Collected articles on Woori bank and subsidiaries, presented research summary to team members and translated 200 pages of Samsung Fire Insurance Accounting Manual from Korean to English

Asset Management Co., Ltd. Ithaca, NY
Summer Intern, Fixed Income Strategy Team May-June 20XX

- Analyzed effects of macroeconomic news on global financial markets, designed tentative portfolios and assisted traders in executing market transactions

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Cornell University, Mathematics and Economics Department Ithaca, NY
Financial Economics Researcher, Fellow PRUV (Program for Research for Undergraduates) Jan 20XX-May 20XX

- Analyzed 13-years of minute-by-minute price data of 8 individual stocks and examined correlation between stocks and S&P 500 as proxy for overall market by developing method for measuring common jumps
- Delivered 20-min talk to math audience and published result in Journal of Economics, 20XX

Cornell University, Mathematics Department Ithaca, NY
Research Assistant Aug-Dec 20XX

- Investigated carbon assets trades in current carbon credit markets and applied Black-Scholes Pricing Model on carbon credit options

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Cornell Math Union (CMU) Ithaca, NY
Guest Lecture Coordinator (2018), Math Meet Proctor (20XX), Member (20XX) Jan 20XX-May 20XX

- Organized 10 guest lectures and proctored high school students during annual Math Meet

Cornell University, Peer Tutoring Program Ithaca, NY
Intermediate Microeconomics Tutor (Spring 20XX) and Intermediate Calculus Tutor (Fall 20XX) Jan-Dec 20XX

- Clarified calculus questions to students during 3-hour session held twice a week and graded weekly problem set

SKILLS

Language: Fluent in English and Korean, Reading knowledge in French
Computer: Python, Matlab, R, SAS, Stata, JMP, Java, Latex

Cover Letter Template:

Note that in an e-mail message, you would omit both your and the addressee's contact information, as well as the date. Simply start with the salutation.

Your Name
(Pronouns)
Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Your Email

Month Day, Year

Contact Name
Title (if known)
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear (Name/Title):

Opening paragraph: Clearly state why you are writing. If applying for a job, indicate the position title and where you saw it advertised. If you were referred to the position from someone within the organization, or by someone the addressee knows, mention that as well. You may want to add a sentence on why you feel you are a good fit for the position.

Middle paragraph(s): You should have one or two paragraphs that elaborate on how you have developed the relevant skills required for the job, and any relevant experiences or education you have acquired. Providing an example can help you emphasize your point. Of equal importance is your argument for how your interest in both the *job* and the *organization* developed. You will want to ensure that you include why it would be a logical decision on their part to hire you.

Closing paragraph: Express interest in speaking with the addressee further in a personal interview, and indicate that you will follow up within an appropriate time frame. Thank them for their time and consideration of your application.

Sincerely,

Name

(Pronouns)

(typed)

Sample Cover Letter #1:

Yasmine is applying to paralegal positions to help her gain experience in the field of law. You will notice she provides clear examples and references for how she can contribute to the organization.

Yasmine Young (She/her/hers)

54 Dunster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 • (617) 555-5555 • yasy@post.harvard.edu

June 21, 20XX

Children's Rights
330 Seventh Ave
New York, NY 10001

Dear Ms. Maeder,

I am writing to apply for the position of paralegal at Children's Rights. I learned of the position through a posting at Harvard's Office of Career Services. I received an M.A. from Harvard in May 20XX in East Asian Regional Studies, with a concentration on modern Korean history and Japanese sociology, and received a B.A. with a *magna cum laude* distinction from Smith College in 20XX in East Asian Studies and American Studies. I believe working for Children's Rights would provide an excellent opportunity for me to become tangibly involved in the world of law, where I would be able to apply my knowledge and skill sets into concrete practice.

Throughout my years of study at prominent educational institutions in the U.S. and Japan, I have demonstrated an outstanding level of academic achievement and have shown a particular strength in social science research that requires analytical and speculative approaches. I have been consistently engaged in conducting long-term and short-term research projects, most of which involved meticulous investigation and qualitative research - the experience that I believe would transfer well to the position of paralegal. My salient past research experience includes a year spent in Tokyo, where I conducted extensive research and a series of interviews in English and Japanese to examine the issues regarding gender roles and equality in Japan. Based on the interviews and research findings, I successfully produced a paper that was selected for presentation at a renowned academic conference at Smith College. For my master's thesis, I researched heavily in English and Korean to examine today's pressing immigration issues in South Korea. My thesis, according to a prominent professor from Harvard, carries "the most extensive state-of-the-field analysis of multiculturalism in South Korea [to date]."

In addition to my strong academic background, I have experience working for various not-for-profit organizations where I have acquired skills in planning events, developing and managing organizational programs, communicating with a diverse group of people, and administering logistics. For example, at United Nations University Press (UNUP) in Tokyo, I worked closely with the Editor and Sales Coordinator to organize the UNUP online publications database and communicated with various scholars and authors regarding book recommendations. More recently at the Asian University for Women Support Foundation, I assisted in coordinating large-scale fundraising events and writing grant proposals to help young women from South and Southeast Asia receive quality education at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh.

With these qualifications, I am convinced I have the capability to provide the best assistance to your attorneys in their practice of litigation. Thank you for considering my application and please let me know if you would like further information regarding my candidacy. Please feel free to contact me at (617) 555-5555 or via email at yasy@post.harvard.edu. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Yasmine Young

Sample Cover Letter #2:

Ginnie is applying online to a global consulting firm that recruits Harvard students but expects cover letters and resumes to be uploaded to its website. As such, they use a formal business letter format, and indicate their preferred offices.

For companies that recruit Harvard students, including those who use Crimson Careers to take resumes, it is not necessary for them to say they will follow up with the recruiter the way they might with companies they find on their own. However, they do indicate that they have spoken to a consultant and expresses interest in continuing the conversation about opportunities within the firm.

GINNIE LEE (They/Them/Theirs)
ginnielee@fas.harvard.edu

1212 Palm Blvd., #34
Los Angeles, CA 90669
(111) 222-3333

54 Dunster Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(222) 333-4444

September 21, 20XX

Seth Kassenberg
Management Consulting, Inc.
123 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 00000

Dear Mr. Kassenberg:

Kamina Jackson suggested I apply for the associate position with Management Consulting, Inc. when I recently spoke with her at your information session for Harvard University students at the Charles Hotel. Please accept this letter as an application for the position of associate consultant with Management Consulting, Inc. Based on my research of your firm and my qualifications, I am confident you will agree that I am a good match for your organization. I will complete my master's in Computational Science and Engineering in May 20XX from Harvard University and look forward to the possibility of joining Management Consulting, Inc.

My interest in a business career is long standing and is coupled with strong research, analytical, communication, leadership, and teamwork skills. While exploring my passion for statistics during my master's degree, I have kept up my interest and knowledge of the industry through the business press. I also have taken part in various business classes at Harvard. In one project, while working in teams of four, we analyzed a case and presented recommendations to consultants. I received positive feedback on my analytical abilities and teamwork skills, and I am confident I can make a significant contribution to your firm and its clients.

I look forward to speaking to you about the possibility of my joining your team at Management Consulting, Inc. I am most interested in working in your offices in Boston or Los Angeles as, through my research, I have discovered that many of the firms these offices serve fit best with my area of expertise. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Ginnie Lee

(They/Them/Theirs)

Sample Request for Informational Interview:

This e-mail message is not designed to accompany a resume as a job application, but rather to request an informational interview to learn more about the field of not-for-profit consulting. As such, Suzanne is careful to avoid asking for a job, or for anything other than the chance to listen and ask questions about the alumna's experience making the transition from academe to non-profit consulting.

Dear Director Ramos:

I found your name through Firsthand Advisers and saw that you completed your master's in East Asian Studies before beginning your work as a non-profit consultant. I will be completing my master's in East Asian Regional Studies at Harvard next summer and am interested in learning more about how I might use my background in non-profit consulting.

Working in the field of non-profit consulting is a career option that I have been reading and thinking about for some time. I have had the opportunity to intern at two large non-profit organizations in the Boston area and have spoken to a few former members of my department about their own decisions to leave academe and use their skill sets in the private sector. Working in non-profit consulting appeals to me because I feel it would allow me to continue to use and develop my strategic thinking, analytical and research abilities while helping others on a broad scale.

I will be available by video chat or phone the week of October 9 and would greatly appreciate the chance to speak with you about your experience at Care for Kids. If this time frame is not convenient for you, I am happy to arrange another time.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Lilly
(She/Her/Hers)

Sample Thank You Letter:

Having completed a formal interview with this organization, Charles sends out a thank you note within 24 hours. He sends it via e-mail, as the interviewer has indicated that the organization intends to make a decision about his candidacy within a few days.

Dear Dr. Funahashi:

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me yesterday morning about employment opportunities with Global Education Associates. I am even more enthusiastic about the work you do now that I have had the chance to learn more about it.

As we discussed, my experience at WorldTeach and my extensive international travel have instilled in me the desire to foster educational opportunities worldwide, and to promote cross-cultural understanding of educational methods and adapt them, as appropriate, in developing countries. I am particularly interested in the Educating for Global Citizenship Program due to its commitment to meeting the educational needs of the emerging global community by offering teachers, youth leaders, and community organizers ways to comprehend and respond to the critical and creative task of educating the world in the 21st century.

Thank you once again for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you further about the contribution I could make to your organization and its constituents.

Sincerely,

Charles Cestari

(He/Him/His)