



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DELL'INSUBRIA

Guide to **Active** Job Searching

This guide is designed to support you on your journey from university into the world of work, providing practical tools and advice to help you take your first steps after graduation with confidence and shape your professional future.



Contents

• University careers and placement services	3
• Glossary of university careers and placement terms	4
• The curriculum vitae (CV)	8
• The cover letter (or motivation letter)	10
• The job interview	12
• Soft skills: the key to your success	14
• Soft skills in the workplace	15
• Active job searching	16
• AI and recruitment: the use of artificial intelligence in selection	18
• Useful websites	19
• Contact details	20



University careers and placement services

The University of Insubria's careers and placement services support students and recent graduates as they move from university into the world of work.

The aim is to provide practical, personalised support to help you define your career goals, write an effective CV and cover letter, prepare for recruitment interviews and connect with companies and organisations seeking new talent.

Careers and placement activities offer practical resources and opportunities to help students and recent graduates enter the world of work:

- **Careers guidance**

Through individual appointments, you can identify your strengths, explore your interests and set more informed, realistic career goals.

- **CV and cover letter review**

Practical support with reviewing your application documents to make them effective, tailored and compatible with the main applicant tracking systems (ATS).

- **Careers fairs and employer events**

Opportunities to meet employers directly, including careers fairs, company presentations and sector-specific recruitment days, held in person or online and aimed at particular industries or job profiles.

- **Extracurricular internships**

Support in finding, arranging and managing extracurricular internships for graduates, enabling you to apply your skills in practice and begin your career.

- **AlmaLaurea platform**

Access to the national database connecting graduates and employers, with tools for publishing your CV and browsing job vacancies and internship opportunities.

Glossary of university careers and placement terms

Terms you are most likely to encounter when you begin thinking about your professional future

AlmaLaurea

AlmaLaurea is an inter-university consortium representing 82 universities and around 90% of people graduating in Italy. It connects universities, graduates and employers. Students and graduates of our University can upload their CVs, be contacted by employers recruiting staff and apply directly for jobs or internships. Companies, institutions and other organisations can access the platform to publish job and internship advertisements or select candidates for vacancies.

[Almalaurea](#)

Job or internship advertisement

An advertisement published by an employer to attract applicants. It sets out the duties, requirements and application procedure.



Tip:

Always read the description carefully to see whether it really matches your profile.



[AlmaLaurea vacancies board](#)

Assessment

A selection process involving group exercises, aptitude tests and interviews to assess a candidate's skills in practical situations.



Tip:

Prepare by practising problem-solving exercises, role-play and simulated teamwork.

Employment contracts

- **Open-ended employment contract**

The standard form of permanent employment: it has no fixed end date and provides greater protection for employees.

- **Fixed-term employment contract**

This has a defined duration (up to 12 months, extendable in certain circumstances). Employers use it to meet temporary needs.

- **Apprenticeship contract**

A contract combining work and training, generally aimed at young people under 30. It enables them to acquire practical professional skills.

- **Freelancer / self-employed professional**

Someone who works independently, providing services to several clients without an employment relationship.

- **On-call (intermittent) contract**

The employee works only when required by the employer. It is suited to work that is not continuous.

- **Agency employment contract**

The employee is hired by an employment agency and assigned to work for another organisation. It combines flexibility with employment protections.

 A meeting, either face to face or online, to assess your suitability for a role. It usually covers your experience, motivation and skills.

- **Hard skills**

Technical and practical skills acquired through study or experience, such as using software, speaking a foreign language or reading financial statements.

- **Soft skills**

Personal and interpersonal skills (e.g. communication, critical thinking, leadership, adaptability, time management, teamwork and problem-solving) that are useful in any job. Often called transferable skills, they reflect a candidate's personal qualities and aptitudes.

Curriculum vitae (CV)

A document summarising your education, experience and skills. It should be clear, concise and tailored to each application.

Cover letter (or motivation letter)

A letter accompanying your CV that explains your personal and professional reasons for applying for a position.

LinkedIn

A professional social networking platform used to look for work.

Professional profile

A short description of your professional identity: what you can do, your goals and your strengths.



Tip:

Use LinkedIn to build and keep your professional profile up to date.

Recruitment / selection

The process by which an employer identifies, assesses and chooses the most suitable candidates for a role.



Tip:

Every stage (CV, interview and follow-up) matters. Prepare carefully.

References

People (such as lecturers or former employers) who can comment on your work and reliability.



Tip:

Always ask permission before naming someone as a referee.

STAR method

An acronym for Situation, Task, Action, Result. A technique for answering behavioural questions during job interviews.

Internship / placement

A training experience that allows students to engage with the world of work during or at the end of their studies.

- **Curricular internship / placement (for university students)**

Most undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes include a placement with a company or external organisation that has an agreement with the University. Students earn academic credits during the placement.

How to arrange a curricular internship

- **Extracurricular internship / placement (for graduates)**

An extracurricular internship takes place after graduation and is governed by regional regulations and agreements. It is a period of workplace training designed to help you gain experience.



Tip:

Carefully consider the training content and the duties involved.

How to arrange an extracurricular internship



The curriculum vitae (CV)

1. What is a CV?

Think of it as your calling card, or the trailer for a film: it is a short document presenting your education, work experience and skills. The purpose of a CV is to highlight your abilities and experience so that recruiters will be interested in inviting you to an interview.



2. What should you put in your CV?

Here is the recommended structure for your CV:

first name and surname; date of birth; place of residence (town or city, province, country); telephone number; email address (use a professional, straightforward address, such as `firstname.surname@mail.com`, as an unsuitable address may discourage recruiters); links to social profiles such as LinkedIn (optional).

particularly important when applying for your first job and you have limited work experience. List qualifications in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent (completed or ongoing). Include the university, degree programme, start and end dates, dissertation title and average mark (if good).

as with qualifications, list professional experience starting with the most recent. Give the employer or organisation, your position, the period and your main duties.

list knowledge of specific software (e.g. Microsoft Office, AutoCAD, Python, R, MATLAB), programming languages or tools.

state your mother tongue (e.g. Italian: native speaker) and other languages, indicating your proficiency using the CEFR scale (A1 to C2).

the personal and interpersonal abilities that characterise you (e.g. effective communication, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, time management, stress management, independence, flexibility and thinking outside the box). Unlike technical skills, these are useful in every workplace.

your passions (e.g. sport, theatre, reading or playing musical instruments) can also reveal a great deal about your skills. Include them to add a personal touch and convey interesting aspects of your personality.

at the end of your CV, include: "I authorise the processing of the personal data contained in my CV pursuant to Legislative Decree 101/2018 and the GDPR (EU Regulation 2016/679)."

3. Tips for an effective CV

To write an effective CV, pay attention to the following:

- **Conciseness:** ideally, your CV should be one or two pages long. Keep it brief!
- **Readability:** use a clear layout, suitable margins, 1.15 line spacing and simple fonts such as Arial, Calibri or Times New Roman.
- **Tailoring:** do not use the same CV for every vacancy! Research the employer and the role, then adapt your CV to highlight the skills most relevant to that opportunity.
- **Keywords:** pay attention to the keywords in the job advertisement and try to include them in your CV. They are essential for passing automated screening by applicant tracking systems (ATS).
- **Personalisation:** give appropriate emphasis to your skills, particularly your transferable skills, and tailor them to each job advertisement.
- **Proofreading:** check for grammar and typing mistakes. It is always useful to have someone else read your CV before sending it to an employer.

4. What mistakes should you avoid?

Here is what you should definitely avoid in a CV:

- Being too wordy and writing an excessively long CV;
- Using an unclear layout, confusing formatting or unusual fonts;
- Using unprofessional photographs (a photo is optional, but if you include one it must be professional) or an unprofessional email address;
- Making false or exaggerated claims: recruiters may check what you have written, including at interview (for example, if you claim an advanced level of English, they may conduct the interview in English);
- Making grammar or spelling mistakes;
- Sending the same CV for every vacancy;
- Putting experience in the wrong order: remember to use reverse chronological order, from the most recent to the oldest.



The cover letter (or motivation letter)

1. What is it?

A cover letter (or motivation letter) is a document that accompanies your curriculum vitae (CV) when you apply for a job. It gives you an opportunity to explain who you are, why you are interested in the position and what you can offer the employer.

2. What is its purpose?

A cover letter helps you to:

- Introduce yourself: show your personality and motivation.
- Demonstrate interest: explain your interest in the employer and the position.
- Highlight your skills: emphasise abilities and experience relevant to the role.
- Stand out: distinguish yourself from other candidates through your unique qualities and motivation.

3. How should you write it?

Here are some key points for writing a good cover letter:

1. Personalise it: tailor it to the employer and position you are applying for.
2. Structure: usually an introduction, main body and conclusion.
3. Tone: professional, but also personal and enthusiastic.
4. Keep it short and concise: ideally one page.
5. Errors: carefully check grammar and spelling.

4. Typical structure:

1. Introduction: introduce yourself and say which position you are applying for.
2. Main body: explain your interest in the role and employer, highlighting relevant skills and experience.
3. Conclusion: thank the reader, express your interest in an interview and close politely.

Example translated from Italian:

Dear [Hiring Manager's Name],

I am [Your Name], a graduate in [Your Degree Programme], and I am very interested in the [Position] at [Company Name]. I have followed [Company Name]'s activities with interest and believe that my skills in [Area of Expertise] could contribute to your team's success.

My experience with [Previous Employers or Organisations] has helped me develop skills such as [Relevant Skills]. I am keen to work for [Company Name] because [Reason for Interest].

Thank you for your time. I would welcome the opportunity to attend an interview.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

Example in English (cover letter):

Dear [Hiring Manager's Name],

I am [Your Name], with a degree in [Your Field of Study], and I am excited to apply for the [Position] role at [Company Name]. I have followed [Company Name]'s work and believe my skills in [Skill Area] can contribute to your team's success.

My experiences at [Previous Experiences] have allowed me to develop abilities such as [Relevant Skills]. I am motivated to join [Company Name] because [Reason for Interest].

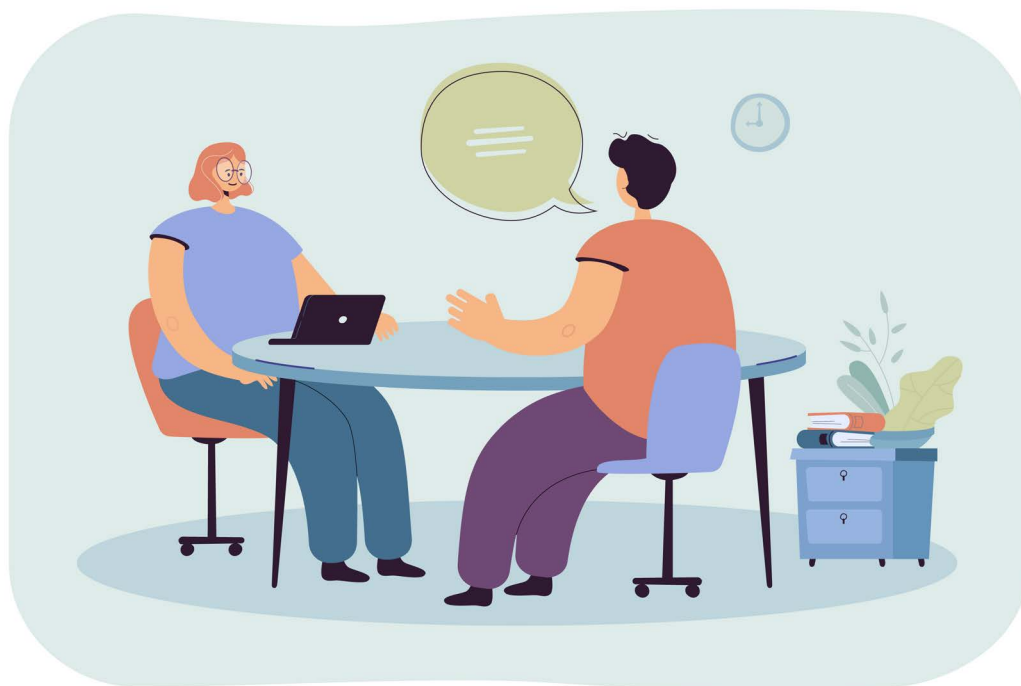
Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my application.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

Tips:

- Adapt it to the context: tailor it to the job and employer.
- Be clear and concise: get to the point and demonstrate your value.
- Show enthusiasm: convey genuine interest in the role and employer.



The job interview

1. Why is preparation important?

Preparing thoroughly is essential to improving your chances of success at a job interview. It helps you to:

- Present yourself at your best: demonstrate your skills and personality.
- Answer effectively: respond to questions with confidence.
- Show interest: demonstrate motivation and knowledge of the employer.

2. How should you prepare?

1. Research the employer: find out about its mission, values, products or services and recent news.
2. Understand the role: study the job description and think about how your skills match it.
3. Prepare answers: think about your responses to common questions (see below).
4. Prepare questions: devise thoughtful questions for the recruiter or interviewer.
5. Dress appropriately: choose clothing suited to the organisation.
6. Practise: have mock interviews with friends or relatives.
7. Documents: bring copies of your CV, references (if requested) and relevant certificates.

3. Common interview questions:

- “Tell me about yourself”: briefly discuss your education and relevant experience.
- “Why do you want to work here?": show knowledge of the employer and your motivation.
- “What are your strengths and weaknesses?": be honest; focus on your strengths and how you address weaknesses.
- “Where do you see yourself in five years?": demonstrate ambition and alignment with the organisation.
- “Why should we hire you?": highlight the value you could add.



4. Types of job interview

1. Traditional (face-to-face) interview

- Direct interaction with a recruiter or manager.
- May involve one interviewer or a panel.

2. Telephone interview

- Often used for initial screening.
- Requires clear, concise answers.

3. Video (online) interview

- Increasingly common (e.g. Zoom, Skype or Teams).
- Requires technical preparation (connection, audio and video) and a suitable setting.

4. Group interview

- Several candidates are interviewed together.
- Assesses teamwork and interaction.

5. Competency-based interview

- Focuses on specific examples of past experience relating to key skills.
- Typical question: "Tell me about a time when..."

6. Case-study interview

- The candidate presents or solves a case or problem.
- Assesses analytical and problem-solving skills.

7. Stress interview

- A technique to assess reactions under pressure (less common today).
- May include provocative questions or simulated situations.

8. Informal interview

- May take place in a less formal setting (e.g. over lunch or coffee).
- Also assesses cultural fit and personality.

9. Assessment centre

- Includes various activities (presentations, group exercises and psychometric tests).
- Often used for graduate recruitment or management positions.

Tips:

- Be yourself: authenticity matters.
- Listen carefully: keep your answers relevant.
- Show enthusiasm: demonstrate interest in the employer and role.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.
- Follow up: a thank-you email may be appreciated.

Soft skills: the key to your success

In the workplace, technical knowledge alone is not enough. Hard skills are those you have learnt from books or in laboratories. What often makes the difference is soft skills: the transferable abilities that affect how you work, communicate and relate to others.

In simple terms, soft skills are your personal and interpersonal qualities, such as working in a team, managing stress, communicating clearly and adapting to change.

Soft skills are not merely an addition to your CV: they are the invisible thread connecting the way you work, build relationships and deal with complexity. While hard skills describe what you can do using techniques specific to a profession, soft skills help you turn what you know into tangible results, stand out in a team and develop professionally. More and more employers regard them as decisive. In a rapidly changing world of work, where technologies quickly become outdated and new challenges constantly arise, added value lies in the individual: their ability to adapt, learn and build connections.

Soft skills are developed through life experiences. They grow with experience, but above all through self-awareness.

Some transferable skills concern our relationship with ourselves, while others relate to how we interact with other people.

We can therefore distinguish two broad groups:



- **Internal transferable skills:** these concern how we perceive and interact with ourselves (e.g. intuition, ambition, emotional intelligence, perseverance in achieving goals and organisational ability).

- **External transferable skills:** these relate to how we interact with others, including empathy, listening skills and effective communication.

Soft skills in the workplace

Transferable skills are essential in the workplace: consider that 89% of recruitment failures are attributed to a candidate's lack of personality or motivation, often because soft skills have not been sufficiently explored (sources: Leadership IQ and LinkedIn Global Talent Trends 2019).

Developing strong soft skills enables individuals to navigate the worlds of work and academic study more strategically and confidently. To develop interpersonal skills, it is important to practise regularly the abilities you want to improve, such as active listening, expressing appreciation, leadership and teamwork.

Below are the soft skills employers seek most often:

- **Problem-solving:** tackling obstacles calmly and finding solutions, including unconventional ones.
- **Critical thinking:** analysing information, distinguishing fact from opinion and making considered decisions.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** viewing change not as a threat but as an opportunity to adjust direction.
- **Independence:** working autonomously, taking responsibility and making decisions without constant reassurance.
- **Teamwork:** collaborating with listening, respect and openness.
- **Effective communication:** not just speaking well, but listening actively, understanding context and choosing an appropriate style.
- **Emotional intelligence:** recognising and regulating your own and others' emotions to build healthier, more constructive relationships.
- **Time management:** planning, prioritising and making the best use of available time.
- **Reliability and integrity:** inspiring trust through consistent actions.
- **Multitasking:** handling several activities at the same time.
- **Willingness to learn:** continually seeking to improve, challenge yourself and obtain feedback.

Soft skills are your invisible calling card: how you work says a great deal about how you think, and how you think reflects who you are. It is therefore important to value your transferable skills, describe them honestly in your CV and demonstrate them at interviews through concrete examples and experiences.

It is therefore important to take time to assess your transferable skills, identify those you already possess naturally and consider which ones you could begin to develop.

Soft-skills self-assessment: 30 behavioural questions to evaluate your soft skills.
Reflecting on who you are today is the best way to grow in the future.

Active job searching

Searching for work is not simply a matter of sending CVs at random: it is a strategic, ongoing and multi-faceted process. It means taking charge of your career journey, anticipating opportunities, building connections and presenting yourself effectively.

Before sending your CV, work systematically and effectively. Set a clear goal (role, sector and geographical area), and research your target employers to understand their mission, values and organisational culture. This will help you approach them in an informed and focused way and present your application professionally.

Tailor your CV and motivation letter to each position: every professional role has its own characteristics and required soft skills, which you should highlight to stand out.

Look after your online reputation: keep your LinkedIn profile professional and up to date, and check that your public social media presence is consistent with the values of the employer you aspire to join.

Practise your elevator pitch: introduce yourself effectively and authentically in 30 seconds, choosing the words that best describe you. This will allow you to communicate your strengths clearly to an employer.

Monitor your progress and keep a record of the jobs you apply for: being contacted by a company and not remembering that you applied never creates a good impression. Once you have defined your goals, there are several channels you can use, including at the same time, to promote your skills:

1) Job-search websites and professional social networks, for example:

- **LinkedIn:** essential for qualified professionals and recent graduates. Remember that your University is also on LinkedIn. Its page is regularly updated to support your job search and share opportunities from employers following the channel.
<https://www.linkedin.com/school/uninsubria>
- **Indeed, Monster, Jobrapido, InfoJobs and Trovavoro:** websites advertising jobs and internships.
- **University portals and careers services** (AlmaLaurea, AlmaGo app): AlmaLaurea vacancies board; AlmaGo! app | University of Insubria.
- **Sector-specific websites** (e.g. Tech Jobs Day, Pharma Jobs and FashionJobs).
- **International websites:** EURES (europa.eu/eures), the European Commission's official job mobility portal (Find a job in Europe – European Union); GoAbroad / GoOverseas for international internships, volunteering and trainee programmes; or JobScout24.ch if you are interested in the Swiss labour market.

2) Speculative applications: employers value initiative. Choosing companies that interest you and sending an unsolicited application is an excellent way to get noticed. Follow these steps:

- Check the “Careers” or “Work with us” section of company websites.
- Prepare a personalised, targeted cover letter (see the relevant section).
- Express your interest on LinkedIn too.

3) Events and careers fairs: attending careers fairs or targeted recruitment events is an effective approach increasingly used by employers to identify suitable candidates. You can also introduce yourself to several companies at one event. University careers and placement services | University of Insubria.

Look for and attend:

- Online and in-person job fairs (university careers fairs or job fairs).
- Events organised by universities and professional associations.
- Hackathons, workshops and company open days.

4) Networking: your network of contacts is very important for finding information about employers and vacancies and making strong applications for the roles you want. Build LinkedIn connections with alumni, former interns and managers who may have studied at your university. You can also contact student and professional associations and establish a mentoring network: approach former students or lecturers who could mentor you as you enter the world of work.

5) Employment agencies and recruiters: visit the websites of well-known recruitment agencies, as they often have sections specifically for graduates and can help you enter the job market. Examples include Adecco, Manpower, Randstad, Michael Page, Hays and headhunters.



AI and recruitment: the use of artificial intelligence in the selection process

When sending your CV, consider how employers use AI to select suitable candidates. Increasingly, they use artificial intelligence for automated CV screening through applicant tracking systems (ATS) and for semantic analysis of skills, matching job descriptions to candidate profiles.

Video interviews are also frequently analysed using AI systems to evaluate answers and body language.

Even at the application stage, an HR chatbot is often used to answer candidates' questions or guide them through the process.

Finally, automated predictive hiring systems are increasingly used to predict a candidate's success in a role.

What does this mean for you? It means paying attention to keywords in your CV. Using the terms found in the job descriptions you are reading is important to improve your chances in AI-based selection.

Give structured answers in video interviews (STAR method), and use AI-based tools such as ChatGPT, Interview Warmup or Jobiri to practise interviews and receive feedback.

Finally, remember that AI is a useful tool, but it cannot replace human contact. It remains essential to present yourself authentically and continue practising your interactions with real people.



Useful websites

Before concluding our job-search guide, here are some links you may find useful:

- University careers and placement page, where you can find recruitment events organised by your university, seminars, useful advice and procedures for arranging extracurricular internships: University careers and placement | University of Insubria.
- AlmaGo application: AlmaGo! app | University of Insubria.
- Soft-skills self-assessment: 30 behavioural questions to evaluate soft skills.
- Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies: Home page | Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.
- CV templates:
Canva Italian: https://www.canva.com/it_it/creare/curriculum-vitae/
Canva English: <https://www.canva.com/create/cv/>
Google Docs Italian: <https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/?tgif=d>
Europass Italian: <https://europa.eu/europass/it>
Europass English: <https://europa.eu/europass/en>

• Job-search websites

Province of Como jobs portal: Portale Lavoro Provincia di Como
Province of Varese jobs portal: Job and Internship Advertisements – Province of Varese
Province of Milan jobs portal: Vacancies from employment centres
Italian-speaking Switzerland jobs portal: Job-search portals | lugano.ch
European jobs portal: EURES

Jobs portals for people with disabilities:

- SIISL (INPS / Ministry of Labour and Social Policies): Login | Information System for Social and Employment Inclusion (SIISL)
- JOBMEETOO: Join Jobmetoo and find the right job for you
- ClicLavoro – “People with disabilities: access to employment and services” | Cliclavoro

Varese Careers Guidance and Placement Office contact details: Service desk: Careers Guidance and Placement Office – Varese | University of Insubria.

Como Careers Guidance and Placement Office contact details: Service desk: Careers Guidance and Placement Office – Como | University of Insubria.

Contact details

Download the Uninsubria app



Contact us

Contact Centre

From a landline: freephone 800 011 398.

From a mobile: 031 2389988 (Como); 0332 219988 (Varese).

Contact Centre opening hours:

- Monday to Friday: 9.00 am–8.00 pm.
- Saturday: 9.00 am–12.00 noon.

Infostudenti

For information and appointment requests: <https://www.uninsubria.it/infostudenti>

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