



The Candidate

Anna Bradshaw, 21, is a second year studying business mathematics with statistics at London School of Economics. Anna is interested in working in finance: specifically an equities role in investment banking.

Her CV

"Anna has many excellent selling points," explains Sheryl Root, an applications advisor for the careers service at Warwick University. "However, her CV does not make the most of her skills and experiences, and with some basic work on presentation and formatting she could make it much more emphatic."

Sheryl adds: "Remember that employers are busy people and do not have time to plough through large amounts of information. Information should be kept relevant and readable."

"It is important to target a CV to the career you are applying for – especially in a career this competitive. Thus, Anna should be attempting all the way through to emphasise skills and experiences that she feels will be particularly important to investment banking (leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, ability to work under pressure, etc)."

Why do I need a CV?

- Your CV is a life and skills audit. When you're filling in an application form, your CV can help you with some of the tougher questions.
- A growing number of graduates will work for small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs). You'll need to submit a CV.
- You may find yourself registering with recruitment consultancies specialising in placing graduates. These need a CV too.
- The best graduate jobs aren't always advertised. You'll need to send a CV with your speculative application. For details of how to write a good covering letter, head to www.realworldmagazine.com

CV CLINIC

There is no single 'right' way to write a CV. However, there is a wrong way.

Before...

1

A. Bradshaw CV 2

3 Career Objectives: I am looking for a challenging banking career that I can learn from and test out my creativity, individuality and communication skills. I am highly numerate, self-motivated, flexible, a good communicator, IT competent, hardworking, adaptable and a team player. I also believe my high level of determination will lead me to a high level of success due to perseverance.

Name: Anna Bradshaw

Date of Birth: 25/12/82 **4**

Address: 21 Carnes Road

Islington, London, AB12 1CD

Tel: 07900 123 456, 020 7000 0000

Email: abradshaw@somewhere.com

5 Skills and Attributes: Numerical to a high level, creative, fluent understanding of Russian (also Russian basic reading and writing skills), quick learner, 50-60 wpm, individual, very high knowledge and experience in Access, Excel, Word 98 and 2000, PowerPoint, Outlook and Explorer. Also sound knowledge in Visual Basic, Java, html, Sage and MS DOS. Organisational, following through to completion of assigned projects, face-to-face interaction with customers. I also have experience in training and presentations (both under work and university conditions).

6 Education

Bsc Business Mathematics with Statistics at London School of Economics (LSE) (2002-2005)

Holborn, London.

Now in the second year of my degree with an overall prediction of 1st/2.1 Courses include Economics, Mathematics, Finance, Statistics and Psychology. **7**

I have deferred my studies for a year from 2003 to 2004 due to personal circumstances. **8**

6 A-levels at Reigate College
Reigate, Surrey

* Some of Anna's personal details have been changed.

- 1** Anna's CV is too long. A CV should be a maximum of two pages. Poor presentation: lose all that white space.
- 2** Don't write 'CV' at the top. Why take up room stating the obvious?
- 3** "This is a little long," says Sheryl. "The covering letter should allow a further opportunity to expand on points and emphasise relevant skills." If a company receives 1000 CVs, at least 999 will list clichés such as 'team-playing' and 'creativity'. To make yours stand out, you'll need evidence.
- 4** "Anna should keep her personal details in as short a form as possible. No one ever employed anyone on the basis of their personal details."
- 5** This section appears too soon. It needs to be edited. Again, too much information, too many bland skills statements.

(2000-2002)
Economics-A
Mathematics-A
Accountancy-A
Biology-A
Information Technology-B
PE-B

10 GCSE at Greenshaw High School
Sutton, Surrey
(1994-1999)

A's including English, Mathematics, Religion and History. All high passes.

Past Experience

Inland Revenue Internship- Summer 2004
Euston Tower, London
Department of very large business

9 Duties included: Managing and completing projects, case work, interviews and research.

Macmillan Publishers- Database Co-ordinator 4/9/2003- 20/11/2003
Crinan Street, London

Summary of work done: Solving the financial discrepancies between the old IT system and new one. This involved communication with the sales and production team to ensure that all the financial figures are correct in both systems. I also participated in the testing of the new IT system. Have gained good experience of working in a team, working under pressure and meeting deadlines. **10**

ISIS Research- Data Input Clerk (Permanent) June 2003-Present
Putney, London. **11**

Duties Include: Data Input- tedious work but have proven to myself that I can cope with large amounts of this type of work.

Campaign for Learning- Project officer (temp position lasting overall 6 months 2002/2003)
19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N **12**

Duties include:
Press releases
Client communication
Database creation (access 2000)
Project management
Telephone researching, etc.

- 6** "The first section should be 'Education.' She has correctly listed it in reverse chronological order, and has detailed some of her courses. This is a good idea, although she should try to emphasise the ones she feels will be relevant to investment banking."
- 7** "Why not expand on the other sorts of things she has done and learned from her university education – relevant projects, skills learned (eg written, presentation, analysis, etc)?"
- 8** Anna's year out was due to family circumstances. Most employers will be sympathetic to this. The covering letter – or interview – rather than the CV is probably the place for further explanation.
- 9** When talking about your work experience, always focus on SKILLS (and what *you* specifically achieved) rather than DUTIES.
- 10** Where's the evidence? Anyone can gain 'experience' of teamwork: what did she achieve in the team that was special? Try to be specific about what you achieved, backed up with credible facts and figures. What was the outcome?

Have gained experience in working in a team, dealing with the media and communicating with various type of people.

Office Shoes- sales assistant (3/2000-11/2001) full time for 9 months and part time for 1 year.
Wimbledon, London

Duties include:
Customer service
Customer communication-phone and face-to-face
Stock control
Deliveries, Etc.
Have gained experience in a commission-based atmosphere, working in a team, dealing with complaints under pressure and communication with everyday people.

13 Hobbies
I am a regular reader of the Economist, Investors Chronicle, The Sunday Times and Financial Times, this I find fascinating as it gives me a chance to apply the theory learned in lectures and maintain my virtual portfolio.

14 I am also an active member of the Finance, Badminton and Russian societies within LSE. I find that this keeps me up to date with the economy and exercises my debating skills.

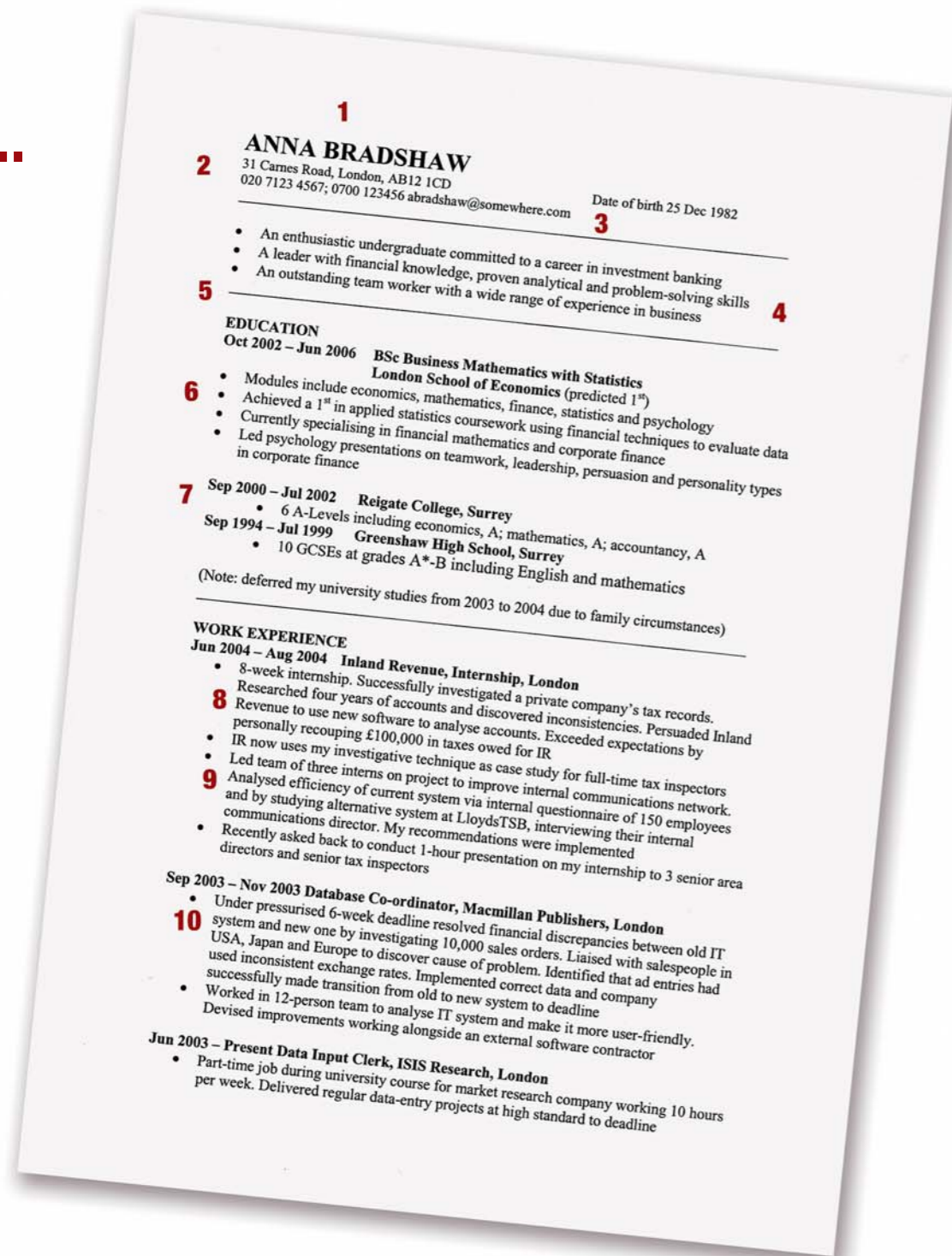
Due to various sports I participated in such as badminton, I have taken part in many competitions, which has made me very competitive. I find this characteristic helps me a great deal as it makes me more determined to reach the highest goal possible. I have also reached a county level status in ice-skating in Russia. I have been singing for around 10 years and this has led me to release a song in 2000 which received radio and event play **15**

References
(Work) **16**
Joe Smith
21 Chelsea Street
London
WC2N
0207 123 4567

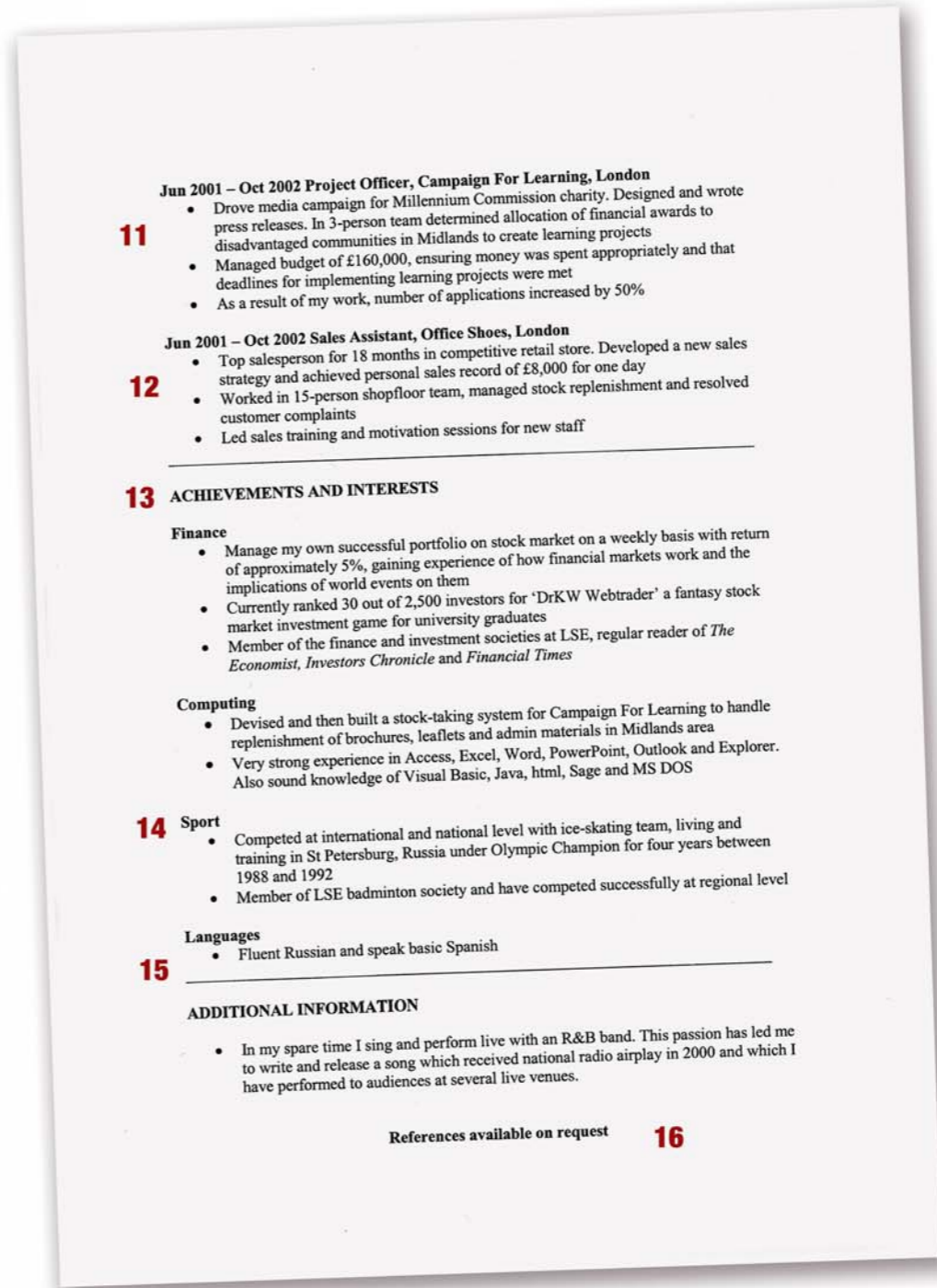
Jonathan Walker -Economics Teacher (A-level)
(Academic)
Beattie Road
Reigate
Surrey
RH1 1WD
01234 123456

- 11** "She shouldn't describe her data-inputting job as 'tedious' (even though it probably was!) as this sounds negative. Dwell instead upon what she gained from it."
- 12** No need for addresses, either for educational establishments or companies, although she could say where they were (London).
- 13** "Anna wisely points to an interest in finance, and details skills learned from society and sport involvement. Again, this information could be briefer and better presented."
- 14** So she was a member of societies... but in what ways was she proactive? What did she learn? What did she contribute?
- 15** Ice skating in Russia? This sounds like a serious achievement yet it is hidden in a wadge of text.
- 16** "Her references could be listed in a way that takes up less space. Anna would do better giving an academic reference from LSE as this is her current educational establishment. She also needs to say from which company her work reference is taken from: the most recent would be best."

After...



- 1** Anna's name stands out.
- 2** You can experiment with fonts like Arial, but we recommend Times New Roman as it's clear and easy to read.
- 3** It's much better to use a private e-mail address where you can be reached all the time rather than a university address that will expire and not be accessible during holidays.
- 4** The mission statement gives Anna's CV a sense of direction and is tailored to a role in equities. Lehman Brothers, for example, look for 'meaningful examples of leadership, teamwork and problem-solving skills.' Throughout the CV we tease out examples of these three competencies.
- 5** Good, clean layout with hairlines dividing the various sections.
- 6** Rather than listing every module she has taken, we focus on relevant subjects and projects that will emphasise her suitability for a job in equities.
- 7** Much less space is assigned to her school subjects.
- 8** Anna's work experience is much easier to understand. We emphasise her achievements and draw out her ability to deliver results. Too many people are overly modest in their CVs and applications.
- 9** Again, note the deliberate emphasis on leadership, teamwork and problem-solving. This required some reflection on Anna's part. Also note the use of facts and figures to add credibility: that way she's showing the readers how good she is, not just telling them.
- 10** Rather than focussing on her duties, we emphasise what she has achieved.



- 11** Note: plenty of action verbs such as headed, delivered, identified, evaluated, increased etc. Avoid passive phrases such as 'responsible for' and 'involved.' Instead go for active, action verbs.
- 12** Compare the impact of this description of Anna's part-time retail job with the first version. Quite a difference!
- 13** A chance to emphasise some of Anna's extra-curricular achievements that are still relevant to her job.
- 14** Investment banking is highly competitive, so sporting achievements are relevant. Okay, the ice-skating achievement is a long time ago, but it is pretty remarkable and a good anecdote – something to discuss at interview.
- 15** Use pastimes space to define what makes you different.
- 16** It's up to you whether you list your references or handle it as we've done here, for space purposes.

Special thanks to Sheryl Root, applications advisor, Warwick University



DO

- ...get someone – preferably a careers advisor – to have a look over your CV before you send it out.
- ...type and laser-print your CV. If you're sending out hard copies then go for a heavy, high-quality paper in white or cream, possibly with a grain.

DON'T

- ...spend so long procrastinating about your CV that you never send out any applications.
- ...send the same CV to everyone. Tailor your CV to the role you are applying for.
- ...play hard to get. Put in all your contact details and, if necessary, where you'll be when – stick this is your covering letter if you run out of space.
- ...send off a CV without a covering letter. Why miss out on another chance to sell yourself and reiterate your suitability for the job?