



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER



Creating an Effective LinkedIn Profile

Career Planning Series

Careers & Employability
University House, University of Salford, M5 4WT.
t: 0161 295 0023
e: askUS@salford.ac.uk
w: www.careers.salford.ac.uk
Twitter: www.twitter.com/UoSCareers
Facebook: www.facebook.com/salfordcareers

This booklet aims to help you develop an effective LinkedIn profile.

Whether we like it or not social media is here to stay. Its influence is increasing and if you are not using it already it's time to consider how it might be used to your advantage. LinkedIn is the largest professional networking site and there are several ways in which it can be used to enhance your career prospects.

Too many people set up a LinkedIn profile but then do very little with it. This introductory booklet should help you to create a profile that will get you noticed by the inclusion of an appropriate photograph and key words and phrases. You can then use LinkedIn to look for jobs, make speculative approaches to employers, join groups and network with professionals.

The Careers and Employability team deliver workshops relating to social media throughout the year and you can have your profile reviewed by a member of the team.

This booklet should be seen as the starting point for developing and maintaining an effective profile rather than a one and only venture into using social media.

- Why Should I have a LinkedIn Profile?
- Writing for impact
- Writing your Profile
- Getting Started
- Key Sections
- Additional Sections
- LinkedIn Profile Checklist
- Further Help

Why Should I have a LinkedIn Profile?

LinkedIn is regarded by many as the world's top business networking website and is an important online resource for job seekers. Recent research suggests that the vast majority of employers will research a candidate online during the application process. As LinkedIn could give your first impression to employers and recruiters it is vital that your profile is effective and provides a concise snapshot of your employment history, accomplishments, education and core strengths.

Students and graduates can use LinkedIn in their career planning and development in the following ways:

- **Personal branding:** LinkedIn allows you to develop a professional online profile, this should appear near the top of any google search results on your name
- **Networking:** nurturing existing connections and building new ones with alumni and other professionals can give you access to insider information, work experience, jobs etc.
- **Job search:** LinkedIn is being used increasingly as a source of advertised jobs and internships. Increasingly organisations are approaching potential applicants having sought out suitable candidates from their LinkedIn profiles
- **Careers Information** – LinkedIn enables you to explore your career options by researching what other alumni have done and how they have developed their careers. You can also research companies and industries in your chosen field, by participating in relevant groups

Creating and maintaining an account on LinkedIn is becoming increasingly important for those who are serious about their current or future careers opportunities for networking and new employment. This booklet is designed as a starting point rather than an absolute guide to using LinkedIn.

Writing for impact

This is covered in more depth in our CV guide but it is crucial when writing online that you use language with impact. You have a limited amount of space to capture the reader's attention. As your LinkedIn profile could be giving a first impression to employers and recruiters, it should provide a concise snapshot of your employment history, achievements, education and key skills.

- Please refer to our CV guide for powerful words and effective phrases to use: <http://www.careers.salford.ac.uk/page/careerguides>

Writing your Profile

It is advisable to set some time aside when writing your profile for the first time as it tends to be one of those tasks that take longer than anticipated. It is useful to have a copy of your CV and/or dates and details for your employment and education histories to hand when you are writing your profile for the first time.

To enable you to maximise your visibility to employers and recruiters each key section of the LinkedIn profile is highlighted below, along with recommendations for positive exposure.

Although you can reorder the sections to your personal taste, when deciding what order to use think of **RELEVANCE** and **TARGETTING**. Put the most relevant information about you and your biggest selling points which relate to the types of job you are looking for towards the top of your LinkedIn profile. Include additional sections only if they are relevant and add something extra to your profile.

Getting Started

If you are completely new to LinkedIn you will need to access the 'What is LinkedIn?' option on the menu across the top of the homepage or clicking on the 'Join Now' icon from this link: <https://uk.Linkedin.com/nhome/>

It is an easy process to sign up via the 'Join Now' or 'Join Today' tabs by entering your name, email address and a password in the (it's completely free to join unless you wish to have a 'Premium' account).

It is worth noting that as a form of social media LinkedIn is constantly evolving so there may be variations and slight changes in how to access some of the features covered in this guide.

Key Sections

Name

Use the name you're known by professionally, along with any relevant certifications such as "ACII" or "CISA," if desired.

Photograph

Adding an appropriate photo to your LinkedIn account is more important than you may think. Given the high numbers of fake accounts, displaying a picture of yourself adds to your profile's authenticity. According to LinkedIn *a photo makes your profile 7 times more likely to be viewed*, not least because it helps humanise a page that is otherwise just text. Choose wisely: what might seem appropriate for Facebook or Twitter would not be suitable for LinkedIn. You are trying to portray a professional image so your photo should be tasteful and professional looking. It is not necessary to have a professional photo shoot, but a simple, recent headshot with a neutral background works well on LinkedIn.

Headline

This appears just below your username and the challenge is to capture a potential employer's interest in just a few words. Many users simply put their current job title in here, but it's important to compose a headline that says something about who you are, along with your unique value proposition as a professional. Like an advertising slogan for a product or service, a headline should be concise, appealing and memorable.

Summary

The Summary has the same purpose as the profile in your CV and should be a factual account of your major accomplishments in various roles. Avoid clichéd terms such as “motivated,” “hardworking,” and “self-starter” as these do nothing to differentiate you from other professionals. Capture attention with factual and quantifiable achievements, such as number of years of experience, total budget managed or the number of staff you supervised on a specific project. Write your summary to entice the reader into looking at the rest of your profile.

Skills & Expertise

This feature allows you to boost your visibility in searches. Take advantage of this by including several keywords related to your skills, experience, programme of study, job titles and software capabilities. For additional inspiration, research job positions of interest and take note of commonly used words or phrases in their descriptions. If any of these keywords apply to your experience, you can include them here, as employers and recruiters will be likely to research candidates by using key words and terms in this way. Ideally you should aim to start off with at least 5 skills when starting your profile.

Endorsements

Your connections will have the opportunity to endorse the skills and you listed. You, in turn, will be able to endorse your connections for their skills and expertise. There are differing views on the value of LinkedIn endorsements and whilst recommendations are generally seen as more valuable, it doesn't hurt to have contacts endorse your skills. Please note that academic staff also have varying views on LinkedIn and whilst some will be happy to connect with and/or endorse their current students others will not.

Experience

This should concisely explain your responsibilities and achievements in past and present employment roles. Avoid listing every single duty and post and include only the most relevant information to a potential employer possible. Ensure you include accurate start and end dates for each position to build a comprehensive employment history. Bullet points and shorter paragraphs tend to be more reader friendly and tend to work better than big blocks of text (put yourself in the employer's shoes!).

Certifications

If applicable, you should display any professional certifications on your profile, to help you stand out from the competition.

Education

Be as thorough as possible in the Education section. Include both undergraduate and postgraduate schools and fields of study, along with any relevant awards you received. Don't leave employers guessing about what you studied and where. Including the University of Salford in your profile automatically connects you with the main University page which acts as a great tool for networking. The excellent LinkedIn Alumni feature allows you to do the following:

- Look back to see the career trajectory of former students that studied the same course and see how have their careers progressed
- Allows you to approach them for an introduction provide you with an insight to positions being advertised at their place of work.

People often respond positively to students and their fellow alumni.

Making connections

Try and ensure you make at least 5 connections when setting up your profile for the first time and aim to connect with at least 50 people in the first few months of setting up your profile. Try to be strategic when making connections by connecting with people who might be of mutual benefit in terms of your career. Try not to include too many friends and consider colleagues, other students and academic staff. Staff within Careers and Employability departments in universities tend to have large networks so are often good people to connect with. Try to personalize your connection requests as this gives a better chance of your request being accepted.

Joining Groups

It is recommended students join relevant groups to expand their network of contacts. You can automatically view some profiles of (and send messages to) people in the same group with shared interests, or to see if they can offer insights to the career you wish to pursue. You can see if groups are UK (or other location) specific by entering 'UK' as a keyword. Look for high membership groups with plenty of discussion and low levels of spam. You can change your settings for the group to 'weekly digest' or de-select the Digest email box to avoid high volumes of email.

Note: Most groups are locked and you will need to request membership initially and this is often granted quickly.

Following employers

Do you have particular employers you are interested in working for? If so it is worth 'following' them on LinkedIn as this will help you keep up to date with any developments and potential opportunities with specific organisations.

Recommendations

You should carefully choose three past or present colleagues, managers or clients/customers and ask for recommendations related to your professional performance. Whilst lecturers may not feel it appropriate to write recommendations for their students you could consider:

- people who have experience of managing you
- classmates who you have worked on a group project with
- fellow members of any clubs or societies that you are involved with
- Project Managers for any volunteer projects you have worked on

Recommendations greatly enhance the credibility of your skills and accomplishments.

Additional Sections

There are a variety of additional sections that you may choose to add to your profile listed below. You may choose to have separate sections if there is enough information to justify this. For example, language skills, successful projects and organisations within your *Summary* or *Experience* sections, where they will appear higher up your profile. *Courses* and *Publications* are two additional sections that may warrant being kept separate if you have enough relevant information to include. *Honors and awards* is a particularly useful section in which to highlight key achievements in a variety of settings that you might be particularly proud of.

- **Honors and Awards** (We have used the American spelling of 'Honors' that is used on LinkedIn)
- **Test Scores**
- **Patents**
- **Volunteering**
- **Language**

- **Organisations**
- **Projects**
- **Courses**
- **Publications**

Additional Information

If you have an appropriate personal website, blog or Twitter account, consider including links to these on your LinkedIn profile. Incorporating multiple professional resources gives greater credibility to your professional online presence and strengthens your personal brand.

Proofreading your profile

It is important to be aware that at the time of writing LinkedIn does not have a spellcheck facility so make sure you proofread your profile and then get it checked by someone. You can make an appointment to see someone from Careers and Employability who will review your profile for you.

Consider using a unique LinkedIn URL

The URL you are provided with automatically by LinkedIn when you set up your profile tends to be long. If you want a shorter one you can set up your own within the 'Privacy and Settings' under the profile image in the top right of the screen and then under 'Helpful links', 'Edit Your Public Profile', 'Your Public profile URL'. Students are increasingly including their shorter LinkedIn URL on their CVs.

LinkedIn Profile Checklist

Once you have completed your profile you should check the following:

- Have you included an appropriate photo within your profile? Is it a headshot with a neutral background?
- Have you included at least 5 skills that you can be endorsed for?
- Have you made at least 5 connections with a view to making 50 within the first few months?
- Have you joined at least 2 groups?
- Are you following at least 2 employers?
- Have you used a shorter, unique URL that can be included on your CV?
- Have you proof read your profile and then asked someone else to review it?

Further Help

The Careers and Employability team deliver workshops that cover various aspects of social media and you can find details

here: <http://www.careers.salford.ac.uk/page/careers-workshops>

The main LinkedIn website is a very good source of resources and the following link has some excellent resources of those putting a profile together.

<https://university.Linkedin.com/Linkedin-for-students?trk=micro-mktg-stu-uk-more>

LinkedIn

webinars: https://help.Linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/530/related/1

Managing your account

settings: https://help.Linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/66/related/1

Building your professional

network: https://help.Linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/348/related/1

More help with applications and interviews is available on the Careers & Employability website <http://www.careers.salford.ac.uk> or you can telephone 0161 295 0023 to book an appointment with a Careers Consultant.

You can email us at askus@salford.ac.uk.

We also have CV reviews appointments available every week. For dates and times visit our

website <http://www.careers.salford.ac.uk/careeradvice> or call our number as above.