What do you look for when reviewing a CV? What do employers value/search for when reviewing CVs?

There are a few crucial things employers look for when reviewing candidate's CVs. Employers want to see you care about the job you're applying for, that you have the qualifications to do the job, and that you know where your career is going.

At Cobalt, we have a great town planning division with an excellent track record of placing graduates into planning roles. When it comes to recruiting a town planner, we look for a broad range of skills such as 3D design, analytical research and report writing.

We highly value candidates who can use a variety of programs, including CAD and InDesign. It is important candidates show the recruiter how they used these skills, rather than simply writing them.

What are the most common mistakes that you see on CVs?

Many candidates miss out on job opportunities due to errors on their CV. 6 seconds is the average time a recruiter spends reading a CV, so you need to avoid common mistakes. One of the most common CV mistakes candidates often make is including irrelevant work experience.

For example, if you're applying for an urban designer role, we want to see experience related to the job. However, as a student, your working life has been far shorter than seasoned professionals. While you shouldn't disregard any retail or supermarket jobs, it's important you structure your CV around the most relevant experience. This could be projects you completed at university or any personal work related to the built environment.

What do employers want to see in a candidate's portfolio?

An attractive, professional portfolio is essential for urban designers and town planner professionals. Creating a portfolio shows you're willing to go above and beyond to land the job. You should include an optimal number of pieces in your portfolio and employers want to see eye-catching samples that highlight your ability to solve real-world problems.

Also, employers want to see that your portfolio is regularly updated and your content is divided into clear categories. This makes it easier for employers to browse through your work. You will need to tailor work that's most relevant to the position you're applying for.

What should candidates expect to be asked in an interview? What can make them stand out?

In an interview, the questions you'll be asked will be a mix of broad-focused questions about yourself, your motivations, your goals, as well as specific questions about the job.

One simple tip we tell all our candidates is: prepare for the obvious questions. What are your strengths? What attracts you most about the role? Once you've figured out your responses to these kind of questions, you can turn your attention to slightly more abstract ones. Stuff like: What is your most significant achievement?

Research the company thoroughly, including the history of the business and ensure the interviewer gets to know you. You should ask thoughtful questions that demonstrate strategic thinking. For instance, ask about certain trends in the town planning sector. Also, candidates must always convey actual enthusiasm for the role.

What are your top tips for students applying for professional experience?

One of our top tips is to read and learn as much as you can about the company you're applying for. You need to look at the key issues in the industry and how they might affect the company you're applying to.

This means staying up-to-date on all the latest trends by reading relevant blogs, magazines and through following key figures on social media. Another tip is to demonstrate passion for every role you apply for. You need to explain in cover letters what excites you about the company. Also, make sure you network when you're applying for jobs. Research the professionals who work there and send one of them an email to ask what they like about their role and if they have any advice.

At [Cobalt Recruitment](), we believe it's important to try less conventional approaches when applying for work. There a number of ways students can stand out and they should never let their lack of experience hold them back from achieving their goals.