








University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

# Writing an Effective LinkedIn Profile

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**CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE**

## Introduction

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 now is time to consider how it might be used to your advantage. LinkedIn is the largest professional networking site and there are various ways in which it can be used to enhance your career prospects.

Many people set up a LinkedIn profile but then do very little with it as they are not sure how to use the platform. This introductory booklet should help you to create a profile that will get you noticed with 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 Enterprise team at the university deliver workshops relating to social media throughout the year (see the 'Events' section of the Careers pages on the website) and you can have your profile reviewed by a member of the team.

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

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

### 1. Why Should I have a LinkedIn Profile?

LinkedIn is regarded by many professionals as the world's top business networking website and is an important online resource for job seekers. Recent research suggests that many employers will research a candidate online during the application process. As LinkedIn may present 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 skills.

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 that 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 and Jobs. Connecting with current employees can help to extend your knowledge of a company and provide insight to others' job searching methods.

**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. This can introduce you to companies and employers you may never have known about therefore building on your options and possibilities.

**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 joining and 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 career opportunities for networking and new employment. This booklet is designed as a starting point rather than a definitive guide to using LinkedIn.

## 2. 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. Please refer to our CV guide for powerful words and effective phrases to use.

## 3. 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 takes 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 (the Summary, Education and Experience sections are the sections that students often do not populate effectively).

**TIP:** Some students include their CV on their LinkedIn profile. Think carefully about this as your CV may include contact details that you do not want sharing. Also a CV should be tailored to each vacancy and if you are applying for vacancies through LinkedIn you are given the opportunity to upload your CV when applying.

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 re-order the sections to your personal taste, when deciding what order to use think of relevance and targeting. Put the most relevant information about you and your biggest selling points which relate to the types of experience 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. Employers have limited time to read LinkedIn profiles and CVs.

## 4. 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 click on the '[Join Now](#)' icon from this link.

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 (it's completely free to join unless you wish to have a 'Premium' account). LinkedIn, like all social media platforms, is constantly evolving so there may be variations and slight changes in how to access some of the features covered in this guide by the time you come to read this!

**Tip:** People often ask if it's worth having a Premium account. Generally speaking it is employers and recruitment agencies that pay for Premium accounts to allow them to use a range of features to search candidates. The vast majority of students and professionals do not have need of a premium account, but obviously it is down to the individual to decide.

## 5. Key Sections

### Name

Use the name you wish to be known by professionally. It can sometimes be hard to find people on LinkedIn if they have a very common or long names, so you may wish to include your URL on documents like CVs, especially if you are sending them electronically.

### 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 may not be suitable for LinkedIn. You are trying to portray a professional image, so your photo should be professional looking (or at least not a selfie). It is not necessary to have a professional photo shoot, but a simple, recent headshot with a neutral background works well on LinkedIn.

**Tip:** The default photo setting is '**Public**'. If you want to check or change the settings go to '**Me**' then '**Settings and Privacy**' and then '**Showing Profile Photos**' and you can then decide which groups of people you would like to be able to see your photo.

If you change your profile photo visibility setting from '**Public**' to '**Connections Only**', that change will be applied to your public profile as well, and your photo will no longer appear as part of your public profile.

### **Headline**

This appears just below your username and the challenge is to capture a potential employer's interest in just 120 characters. Many users simply put their current course or job title in here, but it is important to compose a headline that says something about who you are, along with your unique selling points as a professional. Like an advertising slogan for a product or service, a headline should be concise.

### **Summary**

The Summary has a similar purpose to the profile in your CV and should include a factual account of your major accomplishments in various roles. Try to avoid clichéd terms such as "motivated," "hardworking," and "self-starter" as these do nothing to differentiate you from other professionals and tend to be overused on LinkedIn. 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.

**TIP:** Some people include a specific email address at the end of this section so that potential employers can contact you directly.

### **Skills & Expertise**

This feature allows you to boost your visibility in searches. Take advantage of this by including skills related to your experience, programme of study, job titles and extracurricular activity. For additional inspiration, research job positions and other professionals of interest in your sector 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 10 skills when starting your profile.

### **Endorsements**

Your connections will have the opportunity to endorse the skills you have 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 does not 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, especially whilst you are a current student.

### **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. 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 (if relevant) postgraduate study, along with any relevant awards you received. Do not 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 their careers have progressed.
- Approach alumni for an introduction, which may then provide you with an insight to positions being advertised at their place of work. People often respond positively to students and their fellow alumni.
- Learn about job opportunities and any mentoring partnerships

Click on the 'Alumni' tab to access this feature.

### **Making connections**

Try to ensure you make at least five 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 to include colleagues, other students and academic staff. Staff within Careers and Employability/Enterprise departments in universities tend to have large networks so are often good people to connect with (if you connect with people with large networks this then gives you access to a wider network).

**Tip:** Try to personalize your connection requests as this gives a better chance of your request being accepted. You are usually given the opportunity to 'Add a note' when connecting and we would advise you take this chance to explain your reasons for connecting. You cannot always access the 'Add on a note' feature on all devices so try and use a tablet/laptop/PC if possible.

### **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 some people in the same group with shared interests once the administrator has accepted you into the group. 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.

**Tip:** If you feel you would like to start a group yourself there is nothing to stop you doing this and it is a very straightforward process!

### **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. Try to 'follow' at least five employers you are interested in working for when you set your profile up.

**TIP:** If you are applying for a role follow that employer when you start the application process: it may help with research but also shows the employer you are interested in working for them specifically.

### **Recommendations**

You should carefully choose past or present colleagues, managers or clients/customers and ask for recommendations related to your professional performance. Whilst some 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

**TIP:** Recommendations enhance the credibility of your skills and accomplishments.

## **6. 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. *Honours 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.

- Honours and Awards (We have used the American spelling of 'Honours' 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.

### **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 with generic numbers. You can customise your public profile URL when you change what appears on your public profile. To change your public profile URL:

- Click the '**Me**' icon at the top of your LinkedIn homepage.
- Click '**View profile**'. On your profile page.
- Click '**Edit your public profile**' in the right rail.
- Type the last part of your new custom URL in the text box. Click '**Save**'.

**TIP:** Students are increasingly including their shorter LinkedIn URL on their CVs. It is often included in the contact details and is especially useful if you send your CV electronically as the reader can click straight into your LinkedIn profile.

### **Looking for Jobs on LinkedIn**

More and more employers are putting their opportunities on LinkedIn. It is easy to search for vacancies by sector and within this you can also search by job title, keyword and location. There are some useful features such as 'Date posted' (which allows you to search vacancies posted in the last 24 hours/week etc. if you wish) plus you can search by level and there are other suggested job titles like the one you are looking at. [This link](#) is a good starting point.

You can also set up a 'career interests' profile within the 'Jobs' section that allow you to specify industry, job title, size of company and type of opportunity. You can have this set up so that recruiters know you are looking for opportunities and you can also write a 'note to recruiters' (300-character limit) if you wish. Your employer cannot see this even if you have the 'On' setting switched on.

**TIP:** You can apply for some jobs through LinkedIn. If you see the LinkedIn logo with the words 'Easy Apply' next to it, you can apply directly by clicking on the vacancy. You can add a phone number and then upload your CV and other documents in Word or PDF up to a maximum of 5MB.

Once you have applied for a job on LinkedIn, you can't amend your application or withdraw it. If there is a problem, you will need to contact the person who has posted the job.



You can set up job alerts which match your job search criteria and set how often you will receive these alerts. To set up alerts, in the **Job Search Results** page, there is a symbol of a bell in the top left of the results page. Switch the toggle to **on**. You can switch this to off to remove the alerts at any time.

### **Creating a LinkedIn profile in a second language**

Creating a profile in another language makes it easier for local business contacts and recruiters to find you on LinkedIn. Translations are NOT done for you. You'll need to add or translate your own personal content by editing your secondary language profile later.

To set up a second language follow these steps:

- Click the **'Me'** icon at top of your LinkedIn homepage to go to your profile.
- Click **'View profile'**.
- Click **'Add profile in another language'** on the right rail of the screen.
- Choose a language from the dropdown list and update your first name and last name if they're different in the new profile's language.
- Translate your existing Professional Headline. Click **'Create Profile'**.

**TIP:** Viewers will see your profile in the language that matches the one they're using the site in. If they're using the site in a language that you haven't created a secondary profile for, they'll see your profile in the language of your primary profile. It's not possible to make a secondary profile your primary profile.

### **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](#) with as member of the Careers and Enterprise team who will review your profile for you.

## **7. 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 **10 skills** that you can be endorsed for?
- Have you made at least **five connections** with a view to making 50 within the first few months?
- Have you joined at least **two groups**?

- Are you following at least **five employers**?
- Have you used a **shorter, unique URL** that can be included on your CV?
- **Have you proofread** your profile and then had it reviewed by a member of the Careers and Enterprise Team?

We also have LinkedIn reviews appointments available for you to book with our advisers. You can book a review via Advantage as LinkedIn Reviews are listed as a specific appointment type.

## **8. Further Resources and Help**

The Careers and Enterprise Team deliver [workshops](#) that cover various aspects of social media and you can find details here.

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.

**TIP:** The 'Building a Student Profile' and 'Profile Checklist' resources are especially useful when starting your profile

[The LinkedIn Help](#) section is a useful feature and can be accessed by clicking on your picture on your homepage.

[Managing your account settings](#) and [Building your professional network](#).

More help with your profile is available from the Careers & Enterprise Team in a 1-2-1 appointment. You can telephone 0161 295 0023 to book an appointment or email us at [careers&enterprise@salford.ac.uk](mailto:careers&enterprise@salford.ac.uk). Alternatively, you can book online through [Advantage](#).