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Level up and crush it:

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO JOB FAIRS



Table of Contents

Putting your best face forward	3
About this Handbook	3
 LEVEL 1: Preparation & Gaining clarity	4
STEP 1: MAKE A LIST	6
STEP 2: DO YOUR RESEARCH	6
STEP 3: FIND YOUR SECRET WEAPON	7
STEP 4: BRIDGING STATEMENTS	8
STEP 5: PREPARE QUESTIONS	9
STEP 6: COMPILE PACKS	9
 LEVEL 2: Writing your CV	10
 LEVEL 3: Job Fair Attendance	13
STEP 1: ESTABLISH A GAME PLAN	14
STEP 2: INTRODUCE YOURSELF	14
STEP 3: SHOW YOUR WORTH	15
STEP 4: END THE CONVERSATION	15
ADDITIONAL TIPS	15
 LEVEL 4: Taking your skills virtual	16
BEFORE THE VIRTUAL JOB FAIR:	17
Seek out Virtual Job Fairs	17
Spring clean and optimise your socials	18
Check your Tech	18
Prepare your materials	18
Choose your look	19
Show Up	19
DURING THE VIRTUAL JOB FAIR	19
AFTER THE VIRTUAL JOB FAIR	19
 WRAP UP	20

Putting your best face forward

About this Handbook

Job Fairs are one of the best ways to connect with employers, hiring managers and recruiters. They allow you to connect with various companies and possibly land your dream job or provide your Work-Based Learning Experience (WBLE) so that you can complete your qualification. Many students find Job Fairs awkward, and at times highly stressful. But the most intimidating part is just not knowing where to begin. It takes more

than “dress like you would for an interview” and “print several copies of your resume” advice to get the job you want and move forward on your career path.

You may not have too many “professional experiences” listed on your CV. Still, you want employers to learn about some of your life-changing experiences or aspects of your life that are as relevant as any other professional experience.



This Handbook has been provided to you by your TVET College career/graduate and Student Placement Centre to help you put your best face forward and succeed at your next Job Fair.

It will:

- Help you understand the value of Job Fairs and change how you might approach them
- Teach you Job Fair hacks that will help you showcase different aspects of your life
- Provide you with a printable cheat sheet that will help you make the most out of your next Job Fair



Did you know that in addition to helping you prepare for your Job Fair, your TVET College career/graduate & Student Placement Centre can help you:

- Explore career options and find direction
- Find WBLEs and internships
- Attend Job Fairs and other relevant career events such as workshops
- Get information about which industry experts are speaking next on your campus
- With mentorship opportunities with designated/ appointed faculty mentors and alumni
- Navigate the workforce
- Access objective and unbiased advice
- Build your CV and develop interview skills
- Get insights into possibly starting your own business

This Handbook will discuss some tips to help you prepare for any Job Fair and impress potential employers.

LEVEL 1

Preparation & gaining clarity



Level-Up and Crush It

Job Fairs can be hectic- fast-paced, overwhelming and busy. Instead of aimlessly wandering from booth to booth in hopes of speaking with all company representatives, complete this *Level-Up and Crush It Cheat Sheet* to prepare yourself. In the cheat sheet, make a list that ranks your high-priority to low priority employers and create a plan of action. You'll feel more in control by preparing, which makes you appear calm and confident during interviews.

The cheat sheet will help you:



Research important information about the company.



Brainstorm academic projects/reports, jobs/internships, and life experiences you can showcase to employers.



Create **bridging statements** that link your skills/experiences to employers' needs/interests



Generate impressive **questions** to ask recruiters.

Once completed, you can bring this cheat sheet with you to the Job Fair to help guide your conversation with each potential employer.

You can access the Level-Up and Crush it Cheat Sheet here: [link to be supplied](#)

Note:

Start a separate cheat sheet for each company you wish to interact with.



STEP 1 *Make a list*

Your TVET college will provide you with a list of all of the companies attending the Job Fair. Familiarise yourself with this list and select 5-10 companies that you're interested in learning more about, either for a WBLE placement or a job opportunity.



STEP 2 *Do your research*

This may sound like an obvious one, but Job Fair newbies often make the mistake of only gathering superficial information about a company. Although it might be important to know a company's size and location, it's even more important to know the values they practice, their culture, and what their employees do.

Go to the company website and review:

- Their mission statement, vision, and company culture
- Positions available and their requirements/qualifications

Also, look for any recent press/news about the company- although most companies have a Press section on their site, you can always search their name using the "News" filter on Google.

Note:

Use Box 1 of your cheat sheet



STEP 3 Find your secret weapon

Step 3 entails brainstorming ways to SHOW employers why they should hire you. Start by considering the information you gathered in Step 2: what are they looking for and what do they value? How do those things align with your skills, experiences, and interests?

You may be intimidated by this step because you lack an extensive work history, but there are other aspects of your life that are just as relevant as formal jobs experiences.

What I can offer:

- Relevant industry research or practical projects and laboratory work completed in your academic journey
- Heading a student society or club
- Presentations
- Representing your province/nation in a specific discipline
- Volunteer work

Note:

Use Box 2 of your cheat sheet



Pro-Tip:

Traditional CVs that briefly list your education and employment history don't allow much space to highlight your non-professional experiences. Canva is a free design tool that allows you to visually present and draw attention to your work,

skills, and projects using different media. You are more than your work CV.

Find tips on how to convert your Word Document CV into a more visually appealing and personalised portfolio:

<https://www.canva.com/create/resumes/>





STEP 4 *Bridging statements*

Now that you have prepared your CV/portfolio to showcase yourself to employers, it's important to brainstorm a few bridging statements that will link your experiences to the company's needs and interests.



Why bridging statements are helpful:

- Prove that you did your research about the company
- Add relevance to your pitch; why should this project of yours be of interest to them?
- Help you focus on how and what you could contribute to their team

Note:

Use Box 3 of your cheat sheet

Examples of bridging statements:

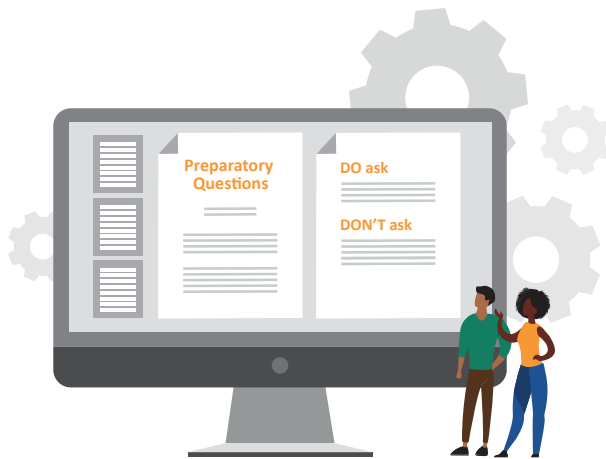
"I recently saw that (company name) was in the news for _____. I found that interesting because I recently completed a project on _____, where I created _____ and found _____."

"I understand that (company name) prides itself on its innovative, forward-thinking approach to product development. I highly value this because I volunteer helping youth in schools, and I can see the need for this firsthand."



STEP 5 Prepare questions

To avoid overselling yourself, it's important to initiate dialogue by asking questions. High-quality questions will show that you're genuinely interested and demonstrate your analytical and creative skills.



Do ask:

How does your company define success?
How is your programme different from others?

Inquire about their Work-Based Learning Experience and internship opportunities

Don't ask:

Simple questions that can be answered online or in their pamphlets
How did you get this job?

Note:

Use Box 4 of your cheat sheet



STEP 6 Compile packs

Use your cheat sheet to help you create a small folder/pack for each company you're hoping to meet with.



Things to remember:

Your CV:

Tailor your CV to match each company's unique culture and goals. Not every employer will value the same skills and experiences.

Your Portfolio:

This is visual proof of your experiences. This should include real samples and pictures of your coursework, projects, volunteer work, hobbies, etc. Put in anything that you're proud of that's relevant to the job you're hoping to land!

LEVEL 2

Writing your CV



An effective CV

A great CV will captivate any recruiter or hiring manager and help you stand out from other applicants. Your aim is to deliver an easy, visually scannable document that allows employers to instantly see why you're a good fit for the job.

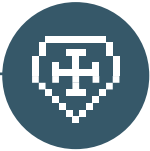
There are different ways of formatting your CV. The three most effective CV formats are:



Chronological

Lists your experience in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent position at the top. It's great for showing a consistent, advancing career path. It includes: contact information, objective or summary statement,

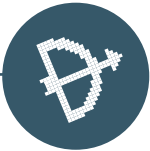
relevant skills, professional experience, education (qualifications and certificates), additional information (i.e., volunteer work and special interests).



Functional

Focuses more on relevant skills, which is a better fit for students. Includes everything listed above but summarises relevant skills upfront. It's great for first-time workers because you can highlight skills that transfer

across industries. You can also choose your most relevant academic, social, sporting and other accomplishments to emphasise the right attributes and aptitudes for the position you want.



Combination

Uses a more flexible format, so you can list your skills or work experience first, depending on which you consider more important for the role. Look for clues in the job posting to understand what is most important for the employer in an ideal candidate. This is best if you're making a

slight career transition or if you have diverse experiences where relevance to the role you're applying for may not be immediately clear. This format can help showcase your leadership accomplishments and transferable leadership skills.

Pro-Tip:

As a first-time employee, it is a good idea to include your volunteer, part-time and intern experiences for all work you've done. Mention your work in retail, waiting, working in call-centres etc. Your combined experiences indicate other attributes and skills you've gained in real-life contexts that you may not necessarily have learnt from your educational journey.



Additional tips

Education and qualifications: These should be written in reverse chronological order (most recent qualification first). Include the following content: institution name and dates of study; name of qualification (e.g. national certificate, diploma or degree) and qualification classification; course modules relevant to the job you are applying for; any short course or skills programmes certificates you have; any other relevant information, like a project or practical assignment report or any research papers. Remember that you may be asked to submit certified copies of your main educational qualifications.

Make sure to focus on your overall competencies: Beyond the content of your formal qualifications, it is important to emphasise what you gained or are gaining from your studies. In other words, the transferable skills you have developed.

Employment history: Organise in reverse chronological order. Include: job title; company name; dates of employment; key duties and achievements. Try to mention other **work experiences** that can be tied to the role you are applying for.

Use keywords: Read the job advert carefully and try to identify any keywords, phrases and action verbs that you can use to tailor your CV to the job

Skills: Highlight skills that are relevant to the position.

Hobbies and interests: Include constructive hobbies like participating in community/ church/sports activities, not hobbies like socialising with friends that are of no interest to employers.

Watch your formatting: Use a combination of bullet points and short paragraphs; use a modern and legible font like Arial or Calibri between 10 and 12 points; aim for two pages; make good use of white space.

Edit and proofread: Double-check your CV for spelling, grammar, punctuation, readability and tenses. Ask a trusted peer, mentor or career centre personnel to read through and provide constructive feedback.

Additional information: This section should be used to mention anything that may help support your application, like having a driving license, speaking a foreign language or volunteering at a local Non-Profit Organisation.

References: Make sure you offer the following information: Their name, job title and company name, their relationship to you, contact information: address, phone number and email address. If you don't have any professional references, it's perfectly alright to use former teachers, lecturers, etc., for character references. Whatever the case, make sure you ask for their permission first.



Pro-Tip:

Sometimes, employers do not want to collect numerous printed CVs and will ask you for a web-based version of your CV/ portfolio. Use tools like Canva to create a digital CV that can be shared via a link.

LEVEL 3

Job Fair attendance

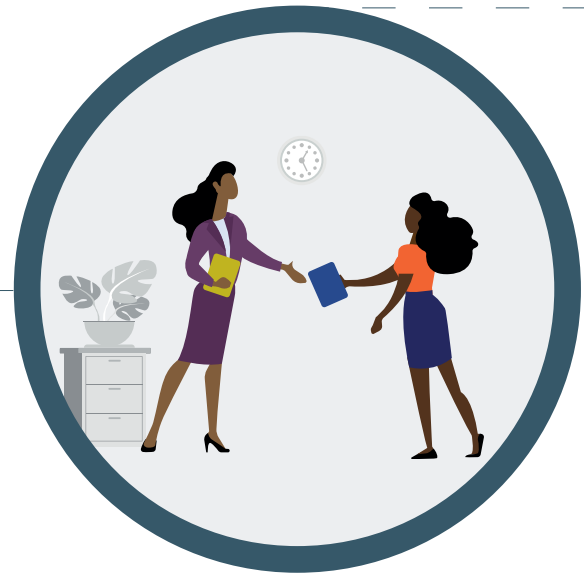


On the day

STEP 1:

ESTABLISH A GAME PLAN

Look at the Job Fair booth map to find where each of the top companies you listed on your cheat sheet are located. Then, organise your packs in the order that you plan to approach each booth. Make your mistakes early and finish off with your top pick so that you build up your confidence along the way. By the time you approach your favourite company, you should have enough practice and confidence to crush it! Remember to keep your cheat sheet on you.



STEP 2:

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Give recruiters a glimpse of who you are and what you're looking for. As you introduce yourself, hand them your pack. This will allow them to take notes as you talk to them.

Always:

- Start with a firm and dry handshake- nobody likes sweaty palms!
- Speak loudly- Job Fairs are often crowded and noisy
- Start with the basics! Include:
 - Your name
 - Qualification level and specialisation
 - What type of opportunities you're looking for

Pro-Tip:

- Show personality: Companies want to know if you're a cultural fit!
- Describe the process: What inspired you to pursue the project/assignment that you are describing? Acknowledge any

obstacles you encountered and how you overcame them. Explain what you learned along the way.

- Say something that is not on your CV.



STEP 3: SHOW YOUR WORTH

Once you've made your introduction and have handed the recruiter your pack, use one of the bridging statements you came up with to begin describing one of your projects or experiences. Your goal here is to prove to them how and why you're a good fit for their company.

"I understand that (company name) prides itself on its innovative, forward-thinking approach to education. I highly value this because I volunteer working with youth in schools, and I can see a huge need for that. As a mentor, I teach young high schoolers how to code. It's been so rewarding giving back but also being able to apply what I've been learning in the lab to a real-life setting."



STEP 4: END THE CONVERSATION

After you have impressed employers with your knowledge of their company and have shown your relevant skills and aptitude, gracefully end the conversation, and leave them wanting more!

If you haven't already done so, hand them your pack. Make sure to remind them that they can find more information about your projects using the links on your CV/portfolio (see Level 2 Pro Tip).

End the conversation by shaking their hand once more and thanking them for their time.



Additional tips:

Dress to impress:

- Approach Job Fairs as you would any other job interview
- Conceal tattoos and excessive piercings
- Do not wear cotton round or v-neck t-shirts, jeans or running shoes!
- Wear well-fitting, formal and modest clothing
- Avoid revealing clothing
- Avoid flashy jewellery
- Wear comfortable formal shoes, flats or heels no taller than 3-inches
- Wash, brush your teeth and use non-intrusive deodorant/perfume
- Iron your clothes
- Avoid chewing gum and keeping your hands in your pockets when communicating with employers.
- Stand tall and smile!

LEVEL 4

Taking your skills virtual



A Virtual Job Fair



Virtual Job Fairs are becoming more popular, and they may be here to stay. This section outlines all the steps you should take to prepare for your virtual Job Fair so that you can attend it with confidence and walk away with results.

Virtual events can be intimidating and are perceived as barriers by many, but they are, in fact, tremendously beneficial and simple to navigate. If you're stressing about the new virtual experience and thinking that you won't

get as much out of it, think of it this way instead; There may be employers at the virtual Job Fair who would not be able to attend a Job Fair on campus otherwise.

This means more opportunities for you, and in some cases, depending on the format of your virtual Job Fair, you could be a fly on the wall and see the questions that other students ask other employers and learn from them.

BEFORE THE JOB FAIR

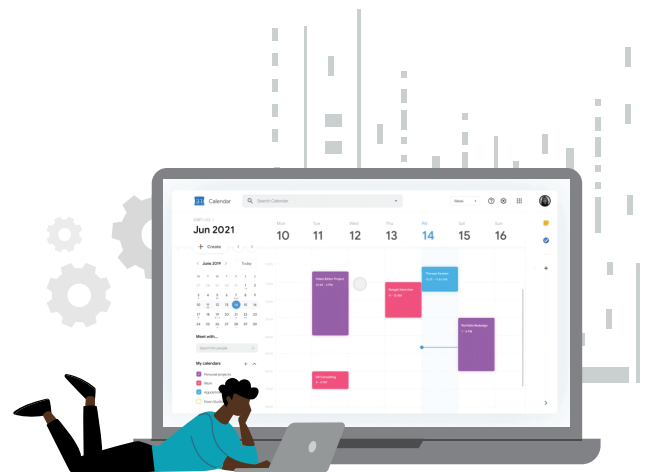
Seek out Virtual Job Fairs

It is so important that you are proactive and find out when these virtual Job Fairs are scheduled for your TVET college for two reasons. First, there may be a limited number of spots to attend, and you want to secure yours; second, if this happens to be a Job Fair at the beginning of your college year, that's typically when the best opportunities are presented because companies start filling their Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE) positions very early. Some of the larger companies with even more established programmes that are competitive start even earlier. So make sure that you're paying attention if there is a specific company you're interested in.

Be aware of the virtual Job Fair registration deadlines and sign yourself up. Check with your TVET college's career centre and make sure that you create an account and register on the online platform that your college is using for the Virtual Job Fair. Once you're registered, get it on your

calendar, set reminders and make sure to follow the next step.

If you do not have access to the internet, find out if your college will be providing some devices for groups of students to access the Job Fair. You may also visit your nearest community centre or library, or any other venue that may offer online resources.





Spring clean and optimise your socials

Make sure that your LinkedIn profile is up to date with all of your latest experience and skills, as well as a summary of your interests and what you're pursuing professionally. If your TVET college uses a social platform through your career centre, then make sure you've updated your information there as well to make it easy for employers to identify you and what you're most interested in. Go through ALL your social media accounts, particularly your Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and ensure that no content is offensive, insensitive, profane, x-rated, or shows questionable values. This is important - most employers will check your social media presence and history.

Check your Tech

There are several different online platforms that colleges use for virtual events like Job Fairs. Ensure that you're connecting with your college's career centre to get the information you need regarding the platform they are using. If you need to download specific software, make sure that you've done that in advance of the Job Fair and that you've tested the functionality on your computer. If it's all accessible online, make sure that you know what browsers are most compatible with the platform.

Get the instructions that you need ahead of time and test your technology. Make sure that you're able to sign on from a place with a solid internet connection so that you don't get cut off and miss important information - or worse, people lose you when you are busy speaking. Plan this out well before the day of the event. Testing the technology also applies to your environment and how you interact with it.

Find a quiet or private space if you can, and make sure that there isn't anything too distracting in the background. If you were asked to join the video by a recruiter, you don't want them to take their attention off you.

Test your audio and visual capabilities and get a good headset to eliminate background noise. Be sure that you're comfortable using the technology and that you've prepped your environment to the best of your ability ahead of time.

Whether you are using your cellphone, laptop, desktop or tablet to join, make sure your device is fully charged or plugged into a power source. Make sure the light is facing you and not behind you so that you can be seen clearly. If you are using a cellphone or tablet, use a stand to prop up your device and ensure that it does not move around.

Prepare your materials

Given that this is a virtual event, you don't have to have any physical copies of your CV/ portfolio to hand out or student business cards to exchange with recruiters. However, you should still have a notebook on hand full of your research and your questions for each company,

as well as a space to take notes during your conversations with recruiters. This is a bonus of the Virtual Job Fair because you get to have your cheat sheet in front of you. Your CV should be polished and ready to be sent out immediately to employers, should they ask for it on the spot.

Choose your look

Pick out your outfit and have it ready to go. Dress to impress in case you end up on video with someone during the event. Go for a full outfit, not just your waist up. Dressing to impress from head to toe will help you enter the event with confidence and put you in the right mindset.

Show Up

If you have signed up or registered for your virtual Job Fair, then be sure to show up. DO NOT leave people hanging. Employers from

DURING THE JOB FAIR

If it's a video session, make sure that you're on mute while you're not talking so that you're not disturbing the session with a lot of unnecessary background noise. While you wait to make your introduction, take notes based on the questions that other students ask and develop additional questions based on what the recruiter is saying.

When you have found the right time to interact with a recruiter, make sure that you're engaging.

Here are some tips:

- Start with your bridging statement, find something to connect with them on, show them that you've done your research and ask them thoughtful questions. Smile!
- If you're interacting with them in writing through the Chat function, make sure you're checking your spelling and grammar. Do not treat this like a text message with your friends. Use complete words and sentences and show up professionally in the Chat.
- If you're on video, look into the camera to make eye contact. Smile, speak up and speak clearly and demonstrate confidence with your body language.
- As you close out your conversation with a recruiter, make sure to ask them for their contact information.
- Whether you are applying for WBLEs, internships, or a permanent position, make sure to get the important application details from them. This includes application deadlines.
- Thank them for their time and make your way on to the next session.

each company get a copy of the student registration list so they know who they can expect. Run through your cheat sheet with the list of companies that you want to be sure to connect with and prioritise. Most online platforms for Virtual Job Fairs will have virtual rooms set up for each company that you can then enter, meet and chat with recruiters. Keep an eye on the time. Pay attention and read the room; if recruiters are engaged with another student, don't interrupt them. Pay attention to the conversation and find an appropriate opportunity for when you can jump in.



AFTER THE JOB FAIR

The first thing to do after the virtual Job Fair is to follow up with the recruiters you met. Do this within 24 hours of the virtual event. If they provided you with their email, then send them an email. If not, then look them up on LinkedIn and send them a connection request with a message thanking them for their time.

In all of your follow-ups, be sure to thank them and mention something specific from your time with them in their conversation; that way, they have something to remember you by. It's important to show genuine interest in their company and any potential WBLE, internship or employment opportunities. Let them know that you're going to be following up and submitting your application.

Set up a system to track your opportunities so you can stay on top of all of the application deadlines and next steps. Be proactive!

WRAP UP



Good luck!



Remember, Job Fairs provide you with the unique opportunity to establish relationships with influential people early on. Networking is the most valuable tool you can acquire.



Job Fairs are ideal for practising interviewing, strengthening communication skills, and asking recruiters to critique your CV/portfolio.



Job Fairs are even valuable for students who aren't necessarily looking for employment or WBLEs. No one develops professionally overnight; it's an ongoing process that has no end.



Take advantage of Job Fairs to meet potential mentors and employers and to be inspired. We hope that this guide serves you well. Now, take this wisdom and crush it at the Job Fair! Good luck!

Published by:

Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA)

An initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)

Implemented by:

African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), Johannesburg, South Africa, www.nepad.org

Contact: Unami Mpofu, Email: UnamiM@nepad.org

Supported by:

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

[International Labour Organization](#) [European Training Foundation](#)

Co-funded by:

Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ)

[The European Union](#)

Concept:

[Cheryl James \(SIFA\)](#) & [Concept Afrika](#)

Design:

[Data Innovators](#)

Disclaimer:

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Its contents are the sole responsibility of GIZ and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU or the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

This project is co-funded by the European Union
and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development



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