# Getting Started with LinkedIn

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# Introduction

LinkedIn is the largest professional networking site and there are various ways in which it can be used to enhance your career prospects. A wide range of sectors are represented, including business and management, creative industries, charity and not-for-profit, healthcare, engineering and many more. Roles advertised can include graduate jobs, internships and placements, and even part-time jobs and volunteering. For those thinking of setting up their own business or working in a freelance capacity, you can find advice, support and maybe even collaboration opportunities by networking with professionals with relevant experience.

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, research different sectors and industries, make speculative approaches to employers, join groups and network with professionals.

This booklet is designed to help you focus on developing and maintaining an effective profile. It is a starting point rather than a definitive guide to using all of LinkedIn. It covers:

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

# Why Should I have a LinkedIn Profile?

LinkedIn is regarded by many professionals as the world's top professional networking site 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**: Maintaining 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 a great resource for advertised jobs, internships and other opportunities. Some potential applicants have even been approached directly by recruiters who have searched for suitable candidates and been impressed by their LinkedIn profile. This can introduce you to companies and employers you were not previously aware of, therefore building on your options and possibilities.

**Careers Information:** You can explore your career options by researching what other graduates and 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 effective account on LinkedIn can make a very valuable contribution to your career research and exploring opportunities for networking and new employment.

## 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.

## 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.

Crucially, do not just add your CV and then not populate the rest of your profile.  Profiles that are not completed effectively are considered 'incomplete' by LinkedIn's algorithms, and don't show up as highly in search results and other user's feeds.  If you can't be easily found, nobody will see the CV you added, so it's a better investment of your time to complete the profile as well as you can.

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.

## Getting Started

It is an easy process to sign up via the '[Join Now](#)' button. 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. Typically this is of more use to 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 need a premium account (but obviously it is down to the individual to decide)   LinkedIn often offer a free trial of a Premium account if you want to explore the features but ***make sure you set a reminder to cancel the trial before you start to be charged*** a monthly fee which, at time of writing this guide, starts at around £25 per month for an individual user.

***TIP***: If you want to use the LinkedIn Learning feature, remember that University of Salford allows you to access some content for free! Visit our [Online Learning](#) page for more details.

## 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 names, so you may wish to include your URL on documents like CVs, especially if you are sending them electronically.

### Photograph
Adding appropriate photos to your LinkedIn account is more important than you may think. According to LinkedIn a profile 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 Instagram or other less professionally focused sites, 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.

You can also add a background photo in the space behind your profile picture.  It's a good idea to look at the profiles of other professionals in areas you'd like to work in and get a sense of how they use this space. Some add examples of their work, some simply add a block of colour, others use the logo of their business.  Whatever you choose, make sure it's something you're happy for a prospective employer or client to see.

If you're confused about why you should add a photo here, but are told not to on a CV, remember that while LinkedIn is focused on employment and the professional world, it is still a form of social media and therefore photos are more typically expected to be included.

***TIP***: Registering if these photos have been added is another way in which the LinkedIn algorithms assess if your profile is 'complete' and helps you to show up more highly in lists of search results when other professionals are looking to recruit or network.

***TIP***: The default photo setting is '**Public**'. If you want to 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. You may find it useful to look at some examples of other relevant profiles to help you think about what you want to say here.

### About
The **About** section of your profile has a similar purpose to the profile in your CV but with the advantage of having plenty of room to say more.  Aim for a factual summary of who you are and your experience to date. 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 or quantifiable achievements or experience.  Write your summary to entice the reader into looking at the rest of your profile.

*TIP*: A common mistake that occurs is when users write everything about themselves here and think they don't need to complete the rest of the profile.  You have more room than in a CV but you still want to include only key, relevant information, not your life story.  And again, if you just add info here but don't complete the profile, you won't get prioritised in search results and even the best summary can't help you if nobody gets to read it.

## 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. Make sure you also cover the skills you used or gained in each role. 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 work better than big blocks of text.  This doesn't mean being so brief that key information is missing, but aim for clear, informative and to the point.

*TIP:* If you're not sure where to get started, rather than staring at a blank space, copy over the details from your CV to give you some information to work with.  Remember though, that CV will be tailored to a specific previous role applied for, so only use this as a starting point.  Make sure you then edit the profile to bring it completely up to date and include additional relevant information that may not have been required at the time of writing your CV.

## 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. Include key projects you worked on or highlight key relevant modules you may have studied and explain what you learned from these.

Don't wait until you complete your degree before you add it.  Even if you're only part way through a course you can still include information about progress made so far or topics and projects currently being focused on.  Make sure to keep this up to date as you progress.

Don't forget that when you add to your Education section, LinkedIn uses American educational terminology, so you'll often see 'School' or 'College' instead of 'University'.

*TIP:* Including the 'University of Salford'  in your profile automatically connects you with the main University LinkedIn page, which acts as a great tool for networking.

## Skills and Endorsements

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.

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 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.

**Recommendations**

These are similar to a short reference. A fellow LinkedIn member that you have previously worked with can supply a quote or summary that can be posted on your profile (only if you ask them to). 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 in work, on placement or during other work experience.
- Managers for any volunteer projects you have worked on.
- Clients who have bought your products or used your support and services.

*TIP*: Recommendations enhance the credibility of your skills and accomplishments. Endorsements (mentioned above) can be given even if the person endorsing you doesn't have direct experience of you using that skill. Recommendations however are more detailed and specific. They add more value as another LinkedIn contact, typically a professional person, has agreed to give their comments on your performance, skills or abilities in a very visible way. When you ask for a recommendation, whatever your contact writes will be sent directly to you. This enables you to review it before you choose whether or not to then add it to your profile.

## 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
- Volunteering
- Language

**Certifications**

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

## Making Connections

Try to ensure you make at least five to ten connections when setting up your profile for the first time, the ensure you continue to connect with more 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***: Always personalise 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.

**Note:** Most groups are private and you will need to request membership initially.

***TIP:*** If you would like to [start a group yourself](#) there is nothing to stop you doing this and it is a very straightforward process! Make sure you have the time to monitor and contribute to this group, including initially trying to build a good number of members to ensure posts and content are valuable and there are plenty of people in the group to network with.

## Following Employers

Do you have particular employers, professionals or organisations you are interested in? If so, it is worth 'following' them on LinkedIn as this will help you keep up to date with any developments and potential opportunities. Try to 'follow' at least five employers or organisations you are interested in working for or learning about 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 if they should look at your profile.

## What Are Graduates Doing Now?

Go the LinkedIn page for [University of Salford](#)  and click on the 'Alumni' tab.  This feature allows you to:

- See the career trajectory of former students that studied the same course and see how their careers have progressed and where they are now.

- 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.

## Additional Information

If you have an **appropriate** personal website, blog or other social media account, consider including links to these on your LinkedIn profile. You can also add links to e-portfolios containing examples of your creative work, or links to videos and showreels if relevant. Incorporating multiple professional resources gives greater credibility to your professional online presence and strengthens your personal brand.

### Personalise Your LinkedIn URL

The URL you are provided with automatically by LinkedIn when you set up your profile tends to be a combination of your name and a string of numbers. You can [customise your public profile](#) URL, most people typically use a version of the first name or initials and surname. If you have a popular name, some versions will already have been used by other LinkedIn members, so think creatively, maybe add middle initials or use underscores or hyphens but keep it professional.

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:** It's very common to include your LinkedIn URL on 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. A personalised URL also looks neater on documents and business cards and is easier to remember if you want to share it with someone but don't have it written down.

## Looking for Jobs 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.

If you are job hunting you can indicate to recruiters that you are 'Open to Work' This feature also allows you to indicate the types of roles and opportunities you are interested in. Employers may contact you directly if your profile matches what they're looking for. If you choose to use the Open to Work feature, you can set it to 'public' which adds a green 'open to work' frame on your profile picture and can be seen by anyone with access to your profile. If you set this feature to 'private' only recruiters who are using LinkedIn's recruitment tools will see that you are looking for jobs. This is a useful function if you do not want your current employer to know you're looking for other opportunities.

*TIP:* While it is an option to have your contact details on your profile, this also raises the risk of spam emails and nuisance calls. A better option is to use your account settings to ensure you will be notified, by text or email, if you receive a message to your LinkedIn profile. This keeps your contact details private but ensures you will quickly know if you've been contacted and can respond appropriately if it's a recruiter wanting to discuss an opportunity.

In the Jobs section you can also set up job alerts which match your job search criteria and set how often you will receive these alerts. You can edit what you're looking for to refine the results you receive, or switch this function off to remove the alerts at any time.

*TIP*: You can apply for some jobs directly 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 may then be asked to add additional information such as direct contact details and to upload your CV and other documents in Word or PDF. While this is an easy option and using social media can seem less formal, don't forget that this is still a job application and what you send will create the recruiters first impression of you. Take time to check whatever you submit is up to date, tailored and professional looking,

**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.


# LinkedIn Profile Checklist

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

- Have you included an **appropriate photo** within your profile?

- Have you included **relevant skills** that you can be endorsed for?

- Have you made at least **five to ten connections** when you set up your profile and plan to add more regularly within the first few months?

- Have you joined at least **two relevant groups**?

- Are you following at least **five employers or organisations**?

- 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?

**Further Resources and Help**

The 'Building a Student Profile' and 'Profile Checklist' resources can be 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. Alternatively, you can book online through Advantage.