

Checklist Before Submitting Your CV and Application

A Recruiter's Pre-Submission Checklist for Job Seekers in the United Arab Emirates

Recruiters in the UAE receive hundreds of applications per vacancy and typically spend less than ten seconds on the first scan of a CV. The candidates who pass that scan are rarely the most qualified, however they are the best prepared. Work through this checklist before every single submission. Do not skip items; the details below are precisely where strong candidates are separated from the rest.

1. The Role and Your Targeting

- ☐ **You have read the full job advertisement twice** and can state, in one sentence, what problem this role solves for the employer.
- ☐ Your CV headline and profile summary mirror the job title and the three to five most important keywords from the advertisement.
- ☐ You meet, or can credibly bridge, the essential requirements. Applying to roles where you meet fewer than 70% of the requirements damages your profile with that recruiter for future roles.
- ☐ You have identified the company's ownership type (multinational, family conglomerate, government-related entity, start-up) and adjusted your tone accordingly.

Recruiter's tip: Most UAE employers use ATS software (Applicant Tracking Systems) that filters CVs by keyword before a human sees them. If the advertisement says, 'business development' and your CV says 'sales growth', the system may never match you. Use their exact terminology.

2. CV Content and Structure

- ☐ **Length:** maximum two pages (three only for very senior or technical profiles). Page one must be able to stand alone.
- ☐ **Professional summary:** four to five lines at the top stating your title, years of experience, industry, key strengths and importantly for the UAE — your regional experience or relocation readiness.
- ☐ **Achievements, not duties:** every role lists 3–5 bullet points with quantified results (AED values, percentages, team sizes, timelines) rather than job descriptions.
- ☐ Reverse chronological order with no unexplained gaps. UAE recruiters always ask about gaps, address them proactively in one line if needed.
- ☐ Education section includes full degree titles and institutions. If your degree requires attestation for the UAE work visa, you know the status of that process.
- ☐ **UAE-specific details included:** nationality, current location, visa status, languages spoken, and driving license if relevant. These are standard and expected on CVs in the UAE market.
- ☐ Photo decision made deliberately: a professional headshot is common and accepted in the UAE (unlike in some Western markets). If you include one, it must be recent, formal and high quality. A poor photo is worse than none!
- ☐ Contact details are complete and professional: full name, phone with country code, professional email address, LinkedIn URL and current city.

Recruiter's tip: Write your availability directly in the CV header, e.g. 'Available: 30 days' notice' or 'Immediately available in Dubai'. Availability is one of the first three filters every UAE recruiter applies and stating it upfront signals that you understand the market.

3. Language, Formatting and File Hygiene

- ☐ Zero spelling or grammar errors, check clearly, then have one other person check it. A single typo can eliminate you for roles requiring attention to detail.
- ☐ Consistent formatting throughout: one font family, aligned dates, identical bullet styles, uniform spacing.
- ☐ Simple, ATS-friendly layout: no tables, text boxes, graphics, headers/footers containing key information, or multi-column designs that scramble when parsed.
- ☐ **File name is professional:** 'Firstname_Lastname_CV.pdf' — never 'CV_final_v7_NEW.docx'. Recruiters see the file name first.
- ☐ Saved as PDF unless the employer specifically requests Word format.
- ☐ The document opens correctly on a phone. Most UAE recruiters do their first screening on mobile.

4. The Cover Letter / Application Message

- ☐ Written specifically for this role and company. The hiring manager's name used if known, and one concrete, researched detail about the company included.
- ☐ Maximum three short paragraphs: why this company, why you (your two or three strongest matching achievements), and your availability and visa status.
- ☐ No repetition of your CV, the letter adds context and motivation, not a second copy of your work history.
- ☐ Your commitment to the UAE is stated clearly if you are applying from abroad. Employers hesitate on overseas candidates who look uncommitted to relocating.

Recruiter's tip: *If applying by email, the email body IS your cover letter. Subject line: the exact job title and reference number, plus your headline value — e.g. 'Application: Finance Manager (Ref 2214) – 10 yrs GCC experience, CMA'. Recruiters search their inbox by reference number.*

5. Your Digital Footprint

- ☐ **LinkedIn profile matches your CV exactly**, identical job titles, dates and companies. Discrepancies are treated as red flags in the UAE, where LinkedIn checks are near-universal.
- ☐ LinkedIn headline, photo and summary are current and professional; location is set to the UAE or states relocation, e.g. 'Relocating to Dubai – May 2026'.
- ☐ Your public social media would survive a review by a conservative employer. UAE companies do check, and cultural sensitivity applies.
- ☐ Your voicemail greeting and WhatsApp profile are professional — UAE recruiters frequently make first contact by phone or WhatsApp.

6. Documents and Practicalities

- ☐ Scanned copies ready in one folder: passport, current visa page (if in the UAE), degree certificates, professional certifications, and reference letters.
- ☐ Degree attestation started or completed if you are serious about the UAE — it can take several weeks and is required for the employment visa.
- ☐ Two to three references briefed and reachable, with current contact details. Do not list them on the CV; state 'References available on request'.
- ☐ Your realistic salary range in AED (total monthly package) is defined, benchmarked against UAE salary guides, you will be asked in the first call.
- ☐ Passport is valid for at least six months beyond your intended start date.

7. The Final 60-Second Check

- ☐ The correct, tailored CV version is attached, not the version customized for a different company.
- ☐ The company name in your cover letter is the right one (the most common and most fatal copy-paste error).
- ☐ All links in the document work and the email addresses of the recipients are correct.
- ☐ You have noted where and when you applied, in a simple tracking sheet, so you can follow up professionally after 7–10 days.
- ☐ You are submitting Sunday–Thursday during UAE business hours where possible, applications sent mid-morning early in the week get the fastest attention.

A final word from the recruiter's side of the desk: *in the UAE market, precision is perceived as professionalism. A candidate who submits a flawless, tailored, complete application is assumed to work the same way. Make these checks a habit, and you will consistently outperform more qualified but less prepared competitors. Good luck.*